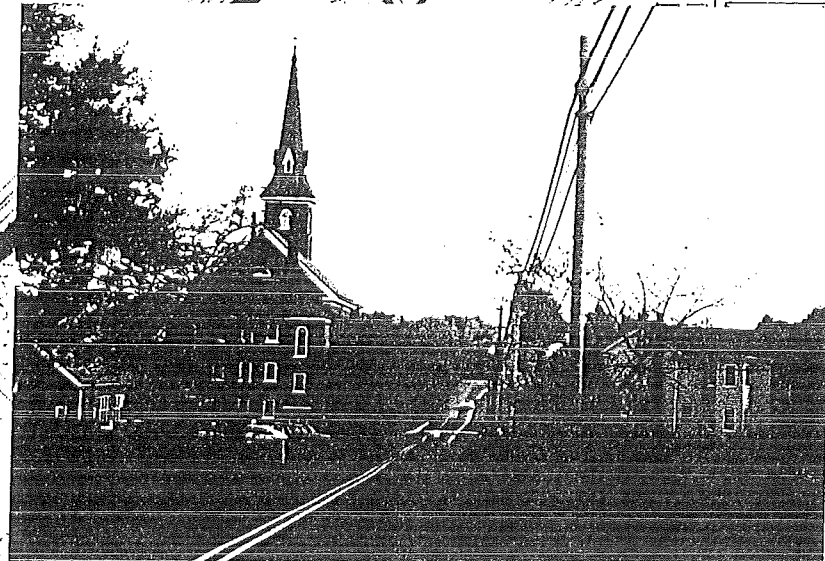
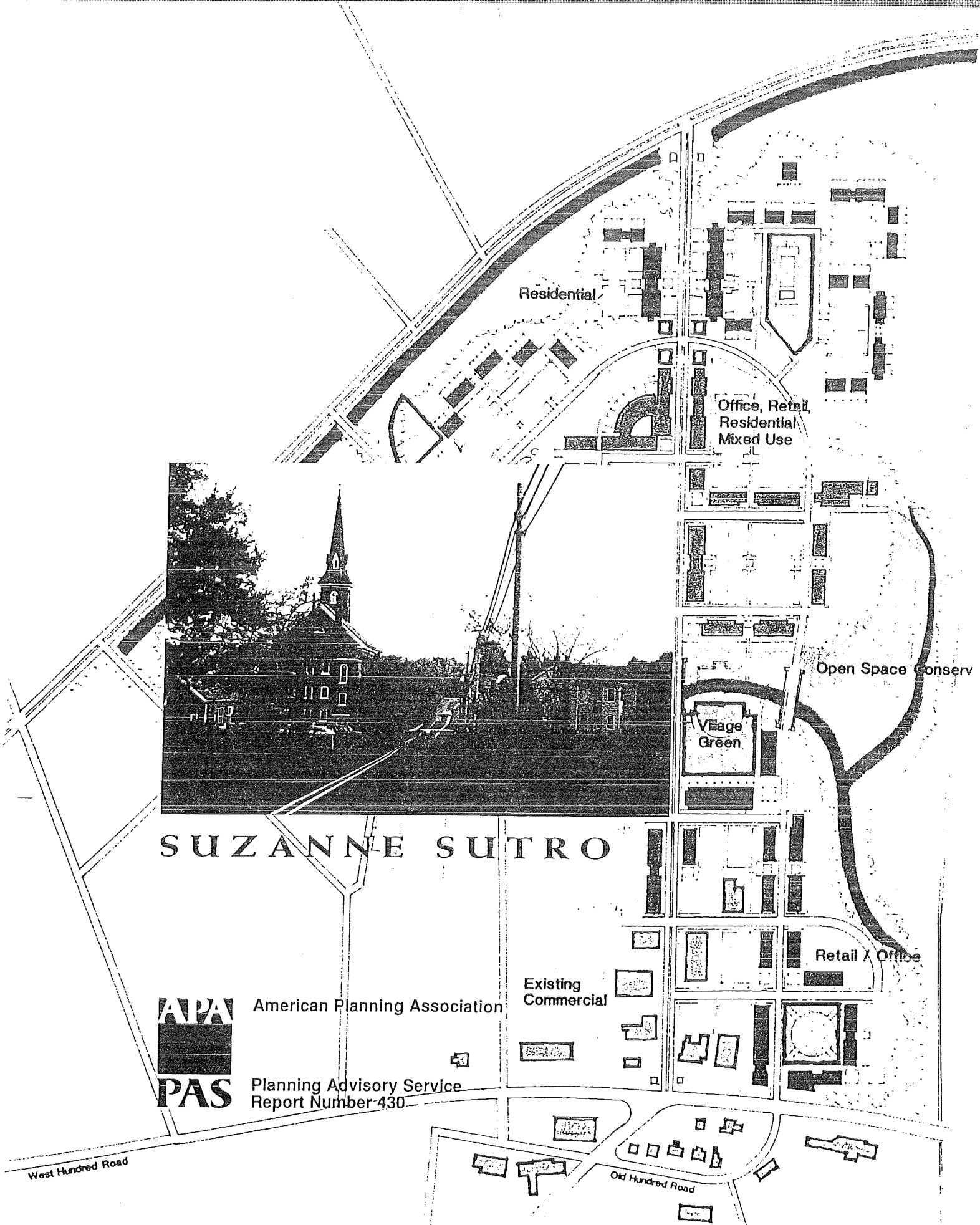


REINVENTING THE VILLAGE



SUZANNE SUTRO



American Planning Association

Planning Advisory Service
Report Number 430

West Hundred Road

Old Hundred Road

RECEIVED

APR 09 1991

Planning Department
City of South Portland

Suzanne Sutro, AICP, is a senior community planner with the Montgomery County Planning Commission in Norristown, Pennsylvania. The author thanks her co-workers at her agency and the many planners and local officials who have contributed their time and effort in the preparation of this report.

Cover design by Toni Thanasouras Ellis. The plan on the cover was prepared by the Chesterfield County, Virginia, Planning Commission; the photo was taken by Suzanne Sutro. Unless noted otherwise, all photos in this report were taken by Suzanne Sutro. This report is printed on recycled paper.

The Planning Advisory Service is a subscription research service of the American Planning Association. Eight reports are produced each year. Subscribers also receive the PAS Memo each month and have use of the Inquiry Answering Service. Israel Stollman, Executive Director; Frank S. So, Deputy Executive Director; Sylvia Lewis, Publications Director.

Planning Advisory Service Reports are produced at APA. James Hecimovich and James Schwab, Editors; Marya Morris and Paul Thomas, Assistant Editors.

Copyright December 1990 by the American Planning Association, 1313 E. 60th St., Chicago, IL 60637. APA has headquarters offices at 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Reinventing the Village: Planning, Zoning, and Design Strategies

Suzanne Sutro, AICP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. The Village in Suburbia	1
The Village Form in American History	1
Defining the Modern Village	2
The Village Principle in Regional Planning	3
Chapter 2. Village Zoning	5
Village Commercial Zoning	5
Village Residential Zoning	6
Conditional Uses	8
Setbacks and Dimensional Standards	9
Incentives	10
Zoning in Practice: Developing a Village Commercial District	10
Chapter 3. Village Design	12
Architectural Compatibility	12
Historic Districts and Design Review	14
The Control of Parking	15
Sidewalks and Walkways	17
Squares and Public Spaces	18
Landscaping and Street Furniture	19
Combining Design Strategies:	
Ursinus College's Residential Village	20
Signs	20
Chapter 4. The Village in the Landscape	23
Infrastructure: Central Sewers and Water	23
Controlling Traffic	24
How Large Should a Village Grow?	25
Expanding the Village of Cranbury	26
The Village Greenbelt	28
Preserving Rural Character Through Easements:	
The Maryland Environmental Trust	29
New Villages and Hamlets: An Alternative	
Development Pattern	30
Public Involvement: Visual Preferences and	
Building Blocks	32
The Future of the Village Form	33
Appendix A. Selected Village Zoning Ordinances From	
Bucks and Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania	35
Appendix B. Ordinance Excerpt from Douglas Township,	
Montgomery County, Pennsylvania	38
Appendix C. Excerpts from the Hereford Community Plan,	
Village of Hereford, Baltimore County, Maryland	40

Chapter 1. The Village in Suburbia

The village form, long disregarded or ignored as a vestige of the rural past, is now back in fashion as the "neotraditional town." Increasing numbers of architects, designers, planners, and developers are abandoning the spacious, euclidean, auto-dependent suburb—with its curvilinear streets and strict separation of uses—for the self-contained, tightly gridded, walkable village—identified by narrow streets, front porches, and a seamless mix of residential, commercial, and civic uses. The popularity of the village's image is evident in the many developers who have seized upon it as a marketing tool, producing instant "villages" that may differ from the standard subdivision only in their inclusion of a central square or some gingerbread trim.

At the same time, countless historic villages still exist on the urban fringe, albeit often threatened or engulfed by suburban development. Eighteenth or nineteenth century crossroads villages in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states are surrounded by new, large-lot subdivisions on former cropland, infiltrated by commercial strip development, and swamped by commuter traffic on now-inadequate roads. Many villages have, in fact, vanished beneath widened and "improved" intersections that may still bear their names. The situation is complicated by the fact that villages often have no municipal identity; they are islands within larger towns, townships, or counties, whose officials may give little thought to their preservation.

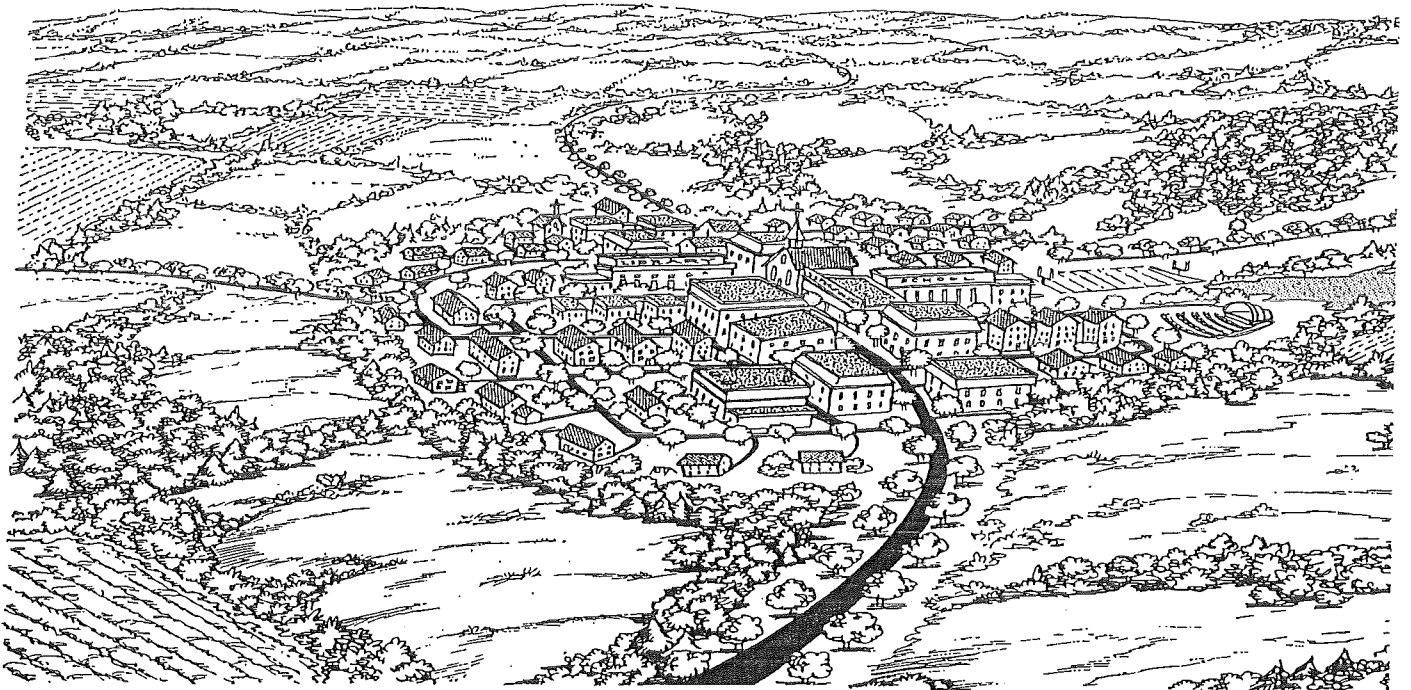
If land-use controls are carefully designed, however, the village can assimilate new development and,

in fact, be strengthened by it. In seeking the new, "traditional" village, planners and developers should consider the protection and even the expansion of these existing village centers.

This report will examine the various strategies that planners and designers are using to retain or restore the historical and architectural integrity of suburban villages, and to redefine them as new "town centers" for the often diffuse suburban development around them. These strategies include specific Village Center zoning districts, architectural and design guidelines, historic districts, traffic management and circulation plans, and comprehensive planning efforts, leading in some cases to the creation of new villages. Many of the design strategies of the rapidly evolving neotraditionalist town planning movement can also be applied to existing villages and their settings. Most examples are drawn from the Mid-Atlantic and New England states, with particular emphasis on the author's own territory of southeastern Pennsylvania.

THE VILLAGE FORM IN AMERICAN HISTORY

The epitome of the village form in America is the New England village, with its classic public buildings and stately homes grouped around a central green. This settlement pattern, which grew out of Puritan social and religious philosophy, was based on an ancient model common in England and elsewhere in Europe: a nucleated settlement surrounded by common fields and then by wilderness. The symbolic center of the community was the meetinghouse on the commons. As geographer D.W. Meinig describes it,



"each family was given a house lot in the village and one or more parcels of farmland in the adjacent arable fields, and each was granted rights to share in the use of pastures, haylands and woodlots." This settlement pattern has shaped much of the New England landscape. However, as discussed in the recent book, *Vermont Townscape*, these villages began as frontier communities, and only gradually evolved into their popular image, which began to take shape in the early to mid-nineteenth century. According to historian John Reps, "the very real visual distinction of the New England village stems less from the merits of their two-dimensional plans than from the combination of buildings and plant materials that developed by semi-accident many years after their layout."

Reps defines two basic New England village types: the elongated linear village along one or more main roads, and the compact "squared" village around a common. Commons differ widely in size and shape; *Vermont Townscape* contains illustrations of oval, triangular, and irregularly shaped commons, some divided into two or three parts by intervening streets, and some reduced in size to a narrow strip along the main street. Another key feature of the New England village, according to Reps, is its limited size. It was designed for a certain number of families, and population increases resulted in the founding of new satellite villages, so that a town that began with one central village often ended up with several more.

Although Pennsylvania's territory was planned and surveyed by William Penn and his heirs, it was settled in a more dispersed pattern than New England, and its villages evolved more randomly, as a gradual outgrowth of an agrarian economy. As John Stilgoe describes it, the village was simply a location for farm services and for "socializing, buying and selling in small amounts, and for exchanging news." Thus, the Pennsylvania village is not centered around a "green" or "common" like the New England prototype. Instead a range of types exist—the cross-roads hamlet, consisting of a cluster of homes and perhaps a post office or inn; the linear strip of homes and small businesses strung along a main road; and the more substantial settlement with a grid pattern of streets and alleys extending back from the main road. Villages that grew to a certain size and began to develop an industrial base generally incorporated themselves as self-governing boroughs, while the smaller settlements remained within their rural townships.

In the southern colonies of the Eastern Seaboard, villages were even slower to evolve. The plantation economy of the Tidewater region was dependent on waterways, not roads, for trade and was largely self-sufficient, with little need of town centers. As Reps describes it, numerous efforts of the colonial government to stimulate town formation through legislation and land grants had little effect. County courthouse

complexes became the seasonal headquarters of local government, but few commercial villages evolved before the late eighteenth century.

As the frontier moved westward, settlement proceeded according to the national grid of the Ordinance Survey, which contained no rules or guidelines for the location of villages or towns. New England emigres did establish towns in the traditional mold in the Ohio Reserve beginning in the early nineteenth century. But, in much of the Midwest, villages only began to appear when the farm population had reached a sufficient degree of prosperity to be able to support them. Unlike the New England village, these settlements were occupied not by farmers but by the commercial establishments that served them.

Speculation was also a factor in village formation. According to Stilgoe, "owners of farmland near a mill or along a frequently traveled road and surrounded by prosperous farms sometimes determined to survey or 'plat' a village site of two or three streets crossing at rectangles and surrounded by square or rectangular lots." Deception was common; maps were printed to trick the unwary buyer into believing that the proposed village actually existed. "By the 1830s, buying and selling village lots ensnared thousands of Americans in a real estate frenzy that culminated in the panic of 1837," Stilgoe adds. In those villages that survived and took hold, wooden storefronts gave way to brick "blocks," followed by sidewalks and streetlights. However, the village remained only one lot deep on either side of Main Street, surrounded by farmland on all sides.

While it is beyond the scope of this report to survey the evolution of the village form in other parts of the United States, readers who wish to pursue this subject are referred to John Reps' many works on the history of town planning, to John Stilgoe's *Common Landscape of America*, and to the other references cited at the end of this chapter.

DEFINING THE MODERN VILLAGE

Definitions of the village in current use among planners tend to emphasize certain common elements: a compact form, a mix of residential and commercial uses, a well-defined edge, and a pedestrian orientation. Urban development consultant Lawrence O. Houstoun, Jr., in a recent article in *Small Town*, offers the following definition:

A village is a predominantly residential area with supporting commercial and public activities lying near its center. It does not have a clear distinction between residential and nonresidential areas.

A village is compact relative to its surroundings and to traditional suburban tract development, and it is easily distinguishable from the surrounding undeveloped land.



The density mix and arrangement of land uses encourages pedestrian movement among local origins and destinations.

Houstoun cites a study of three New Jersey villages which revealed that all of them shared a common radius of a half-mile, within which population density was high (about 1,500 people per square mile) and beyond which it dropped to more rural densities. This half-mile also represents an effective walking radius from the village center. In this total area was a central core with a radius of about a quarter-mile, within which virtually all pedestrian destinations were located.

This spatial arrangement has social and cultural ramifications: the pedestrian orientation encourages the frequent, casual social interaction that forms the basis of village life and that the low-density suburb so obviously lacks. Coffee shops, hardware stores, volunteer fire company breakfasts, and church bazaars all reinforce the fabric of community life.

The New Jersey State Plan defines villages and hamlets as part of a "hierarchy of central places," an element of its regional design system. The village is defined as:

A community offering a choice of housing types, employment, basic services, and shopping for its residents as well as for those in the immediately surrounding rural area. A village typically includes a post office, church, meeting places, and public open space. It may also offer specialized jobs appropriate to its character. It is a compact settlement with a design that permits its evolution to a town.

The hamlet is defined as:

A small cluster of homes with a distinct identity in a rural area. They are located at a crossroads. They may or may not have a meeting place, such as a park, green, tavern, or restaurant. The meeting place has an intentional nature, distinguishing the

hamlet from the standard residence-only suburban subdivision. A hamlet has a compact nucleus with a layout and design that enables it to evolve into a village.

The Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Planning Commission, which has published both a guidebook and an award-winning planning handbook for that county's villages, classifies them into three categories: the hamlet, a cluster of houses with no commercial uses; the residential village, which often includes community services, such as a church or post office; and the commercial village, defined as the twentieth century or "motorized" form of a residential village, which now serves a larger region with goods and services.

Many of the villages discussed in this report would, according to both the New Jersey and Bucks County standards, be classified as hamlets or as evolving villages that still lack certain basic services. Their evolution into true villages is uncertain, depending upon environmental constraints, existing infrastructure, and the growth policies of the larger jurisdictions that govern them. Whether this evolution should be encouraged or not is one of the central questions in village planning.

THE VILLAGE PRINCIPLE IN REGIONAL PLANNING

Although villages have received little attention in recent years, a vision of the village as an ideal settlement pattern runs through the writings of many regional planners of the 1920s and 1930s. As the regionalists looked back to the English model of the garden city as an ideal civic and spatial form, they also looked to the rural villages of New England as a vernacular American expression of this model. In *The Culture of Cities*, Lewis Mumford describes the New England village as "a perfect unison of man and nature." In his later work, *The City in History*, he states that, "in these urban forms [seventeenth century Dutch and New England villages], we find an early empirical anticipation of the pattern for a

dynamically balanced environment, urban and rural, like that we must eventually create in terms of our own culture, for a whole civilization."

Benton McKaye, in *The New Exploration*, uses the same idealized image of the New England hill village to represent the "Rural" environment, midway between the "Primeval" and the "Urban." He describes the village as a community whose being is reflected in its physical layout: the placement of town hall, church, school, store, and homes around the common, surrounded by cultivated lands, woodlots, and mills for small-scale manufacturing. The main thesis of McKaye's work is that the flow of population outward from the city should be redirected into groups of such rural villages, each group centered on a small city to which it would be linked by a "motor transportation" network. He envisioned the extension of both the electric power grid and the state highway system (which he argued should be zoned to prohibit strip development) as a means of decentralizing the metropolis into this new pattern. While McKaye's proposals may seem naive in hindsight, given the impact of the state highway system and the automobile on rural areas, they represent one attempt to revitalize the New England village (at that time severely depopulated) by making it part of a

regional system.

The planned communities of the twenties and thirties, such as Radburn and the federally funded greenbelt towns, were developed at a village scale, using many "Garden City" planning principles, although their designers generally rejected the grid street pattern in favor of courtyards and cul-de-sacs. After World War II, however, such publicly funded town-building efforts were replaced with private development of housing on a massive scale, subsidized with federal home loans and massive federal highway construction. This postwar transformation depopulated the cities, turned existing villages and towns into bedroom suburbs, and established a pattern of use-segregated, automobile-dependent suburban growth that continues today. Only in the 1980s did employment as well as housing move outwards to the suburbs, creating "suburban downtowns"—loose groupings of office, retail, and entertainment uses, separated from nearby residential areas by increasingly congested highway systems. The fact that this mix of uses mimics the traditional town but cannot function as one, since it is designed to accommodate the automobile rather than the pedestrian, may have stimulated some of the growing interest in neotraditional town and village planning.

REFERENCES

- Houstoun, Lawrence O., Jr. "Living Villages: Thoughts on the Future of the Village Form." *Small Town*, November-December 1988, 14-25.
- McKaye, Benton. *The New Exploration*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1928.
- Meinig, D. W. *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*. Volume I: *Atlantic America, 1492-1800*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986.
- Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961.
- _____. *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1938.
- New Jersey State Planning Commission. *Draft Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan*. Volume II. Trenton, N.J.: January 1988.
- Reps, John. *The Making of Urban America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965.
- _____. *Town Planning in Frontier America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- _____. *Tidewater Towns: City Planning in Colonial Virginia and Maryland*. Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1972.
- Stilgoe, John R. *Common Landscape of America, 1580 to 1845*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Williams, Norman, Jr., Edmund H. Kellogg, and Peter M. Lavigne. *Vermont Townscape*. Rutgers, N.J.: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1987.

Chapter 2. Village Zoning

Insofar as most villages lack separate identities within their towns or townships, they are often covered by town zoning districts that are clearly a "bad fit." In the typical suburban residential zone, permitted lot sizes and front-yard setbacks are likely to far exceed those within the village; this problem is compounded by the fact that setbacks are often measured from the edge of the street's ultimate right-of-way, which may be deep enough to take in existing front yards, porches, or even houses. (The ultimate right-of-way includes all the land deemed necessary for future road widening, sidewalks, and utilities; dedication of this land is often required when a subdivision or land development is proposed.) The result is infill development that is out of scale with its surroundings. The zoning may not permit large single-family homes to be converted for apartments or office uses. If conversions are permitted, parking requirements for two off-street spaces per dwelling unit, plus more spaces for home occupations, may result in additional curb cuts and the loss of front or side yards to parking.

If the village is zoned commercial, the standards for permitted uses, signs, paving coverage, and parking may be designed for the commercial strip on the highway, permitting the intrusion of traffic-intensive uses, such as gas stations and convenience stores, as well as front-yard parking lots and oversize signs.

The remedy is, as one New Jersey planning commissioner put it, "to create an ordinance that would allow the existing village to be built." Seemingly a simple recipe, this is actually a delicate task; the ordinance must accommodate the demands of the automobile while designing for the pedestrian, provide for uses not in existence when the village was first developed, and encourage the retention of existing buildings, sometimes for entirely new uses.

In order to foster the diversity inherent in the traditional village, zoning standards must be at once more flexible and more sensitive to design issues than conventional zoning. Regulation of uses and dimensions alone is insufficient; building scale and compatibility with surroundings must also be considered.

These issues have been addressed by several county planning commissions in southeastern Pennsylvania through the development of a variety of Village Commercial, Village Residential, and Village Center ordinances, which many of the more rural townships in these counties have adopted. (In Pennsylvania, county planning commissions are advisory to local municipalities and often act as consultants to them.) A sampling of these village zoning ordinances from Bucks, Chester, and Montgomery counties shows both their common elements

and the ways they have been adapted to the needs of each township and its villages.

VILLAGE COMMERCIAL ZONING

The typical Village Commercial or Village Center district permits a mixture of residential, commercial, and civic uses. Commercial uses, however, are restricted to those that seem to fit the size, scale, and intensity of the village setting. Typically, these include:

The personal service shop—like those for hairstyling, tailoring, shoe repair, and dry cleaning;

Specialized retail—commonly defined as "shops selling gifts, novelties, flowers, books, periodicals, jewelry, apparel, tobacco, toys and crafts, stationery, and similar uses."

Antique stores are sometimes included in this category; and

Business or professional offices—real estate and insurance offices, travel agencies, medical, dental and veterinary offices, banks and other financial institutions (minus the drive-in windows).

The intent of these regulations is to encourage the sort of enterprise that can easily be conducted in a converted residence and that nearby residents might be inclined to walk to. Some ordinances permit more general purpose retail uses, such as grocery stores, bakeries, small appliance repair shops, and hardware stores. The risk in these cases is that, if a large enough lot is available, the grocery store may grow into something resembling a supermarket. Hilltown's ordinance addresses this problem by specifying a maximum floor area of 10,000 square feet for any retail use in its Village Center district.

Whitpain's Village Preservation district illustrates another approach. In this primarily residential district, the "mom and pop" store (defined as a grocery or drugstore of no more than 1,200 square feet in size, operated by an owner living on the premises) is permitted as a special exception. East Rockhill defines a similar retail type: the Village Oriented Shop, which includes such uses as a corner grocery, drug store, soda fountain, stationery store, barber or beauty shop, and which may not exceed 2,000 square feet in size.

A range of quasi-commercial, civic, and institutional uses are also commonly permitted in the Village Center district. Studios for art, dance, music and photography, churches, day care centers, funeral homes, libraries, and post offices are typical. The post office, in particular, often functions as the nerve center of the village; in areas without home delivery

routes, it brings many residents to the village center on a daily basis.

Many other uses are potentially compatible with the village setting, but only if they are carefully handled. For example, a garage for automotive repairs is a common use in many existing villages. If located behind a village building or housed in a building of a similar scale and materials as its neighbors, a garage might fit in well. However, this type of discretionary design review is generally handled under the conditional use or special exception procedure discussed later in this chapter.

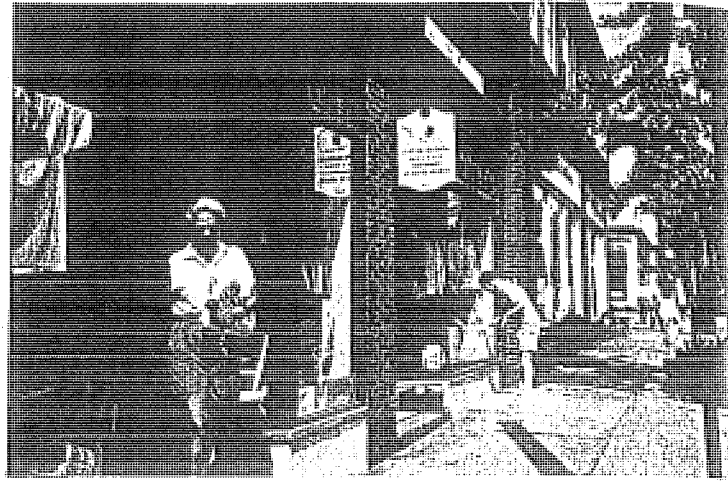
An important element of village zoning is the mixing of several uses in one or more buildings on a single lot. Most of the ordinances surveyed permit a combination of uses on a lot, either as a by-right use or a special exception, with a minimum separation of 20 to 25 feet between buildings. A traditional combination found in many villages is the ground-floor commercial use with apartments upstairs. The Bucks County Planning Commission defines this type as a



"dwelling in combination" and encourages it as a permitted use in village districts. In Quakertown's ordinance, the dwelling unit must be located on the second floor of the building, with its own outside door (exterior staircases are not permitted). Although parking for both the residential and commercial use must be met, the ordinance uses a flexible parking standard based on the number of bedrooms rather than the typical "two spaces per unit." An efficiency apartment would require one space; a two-bedroom apartment 1.5 spaces (or three spaces for two apartments).

VILLAGE RESIDENTIAL ZONING

Most small hamlets are predominantly residential, with homes grouped around a single commercial use such as an inn or general store. Most larger villages contain a small "downtown" of mixed commercial, residential, and civic uses, surrounded by a largely residential neighborhood. Many municipalities, therefore, have adopted two village districts, one for



the mixed-use village center and one for the surrounding neighborhood or the largely residential hamlet. These residential districts encompass a wider range of dwelling types than those of the typical "segregated" suburban district. All the ordinances surveyed permitted both single- and two-family dwellings, and many permitted multifamily conversions, although only one district permitted townhouses.

Multifamily conversions are recognized as one

Typical Village Commercial or Village Center uses include hairstyling shops (above) and business and professional offices in homes (left). Some ordinances permit more general retail uses like hardware stores (below).

way to encourage retention of large existing residences that may now be impractical to maintain as single-family dwellings. Typical standards for conversion (here taken from the Tylersport Village Commercial-Residential district in Salford Township) permit conversion of one single-family dwelling into three apartments, or of one twin house into two apartments, provided the lot contains a minimum of 4,000 square feet per dwelling unit. This minimum lot size, while somewhat arbitrary, can be justified by



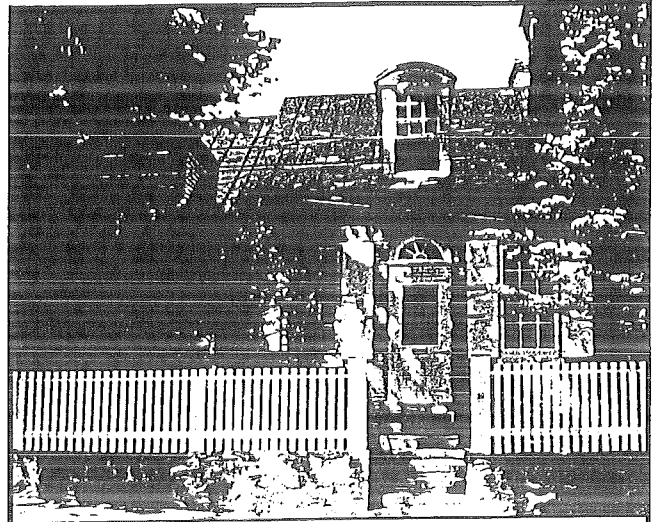
the need for one or two parking spaces per apartment, plus a reasonable proportion of green area.

An approach strongly advocated in neotraditional town planning is to permit a secondary residential building on each lot. Whether used as an "elder cottage" or rented to one or two tenants, the secondary unit is a means of providing affordable rental housing in a nonintrusive manner, thereby encouraging a far wider range of ages, incomes, and lifestyles than the typical income-segregated suburban neighborhood. The size and scale of the secondary building must be regulated to ensure that it continues to serve this purpose and to avoid overburdening the lot with parking or paving. Few existing communities have adopted such standards, although consultant Lane Kendig recently developed an ordinance for Provincetown, Massachusetts, that permits two principal structures per lot, an approach that fits the town's existing pattern of accessory, seasonal rental units.

A limited number of professional office uses may also be appropriate in a largely residential district. One example of this practice comes from Amherst, Massachusetts, which recently adopted village center zoning for several of its crossroads village areas. The Village Center Residence district permits business or professional offices "not dealing directly with the general public" under a special exception procedure. As expressed in a report by the town planning staff, "High housing costs make owning and living in the numerous larger historic homes in our village centers increasingly impossible. Few people can afford to use them as single-family homes, and proper multi-unit conversions are costly. . . . Allowing some business office uses in a 'transition' residential zone and slightly increasing residential density will help ensure the survival of these historic buildings by allowing owners more choices, including remaining in their own homes."

Many village ordinances in Bucks County include a unique dwelling type specifically tailored to the village setting. Developed by former county planner Carter Van Dyke in the mid-1970s, the Village House (see sidebar) was modeled after his analysis of the homes that surround the courthouse in Doylestown, a borough that, in spite of its role as the county seat, shares much of the historical character of Bucks County's rural villages. These houses, some of which have been converted to professional offices, are set back only 10 or 12 feet from the sidewalk but retain a sense of privacy and elegance through the use of retaining walls, porches, wrought-iron fences, low hedges, and shrubs or trees. The various front-yard options in the Village House regulations soften the very narrow front-yard setback and encourage a varied, carefully articulated streetscape.

Although the Village House concept has been incorporated into many township ordinances, so far it



THE VILLAGE HOUSE

A village house is a single-family detached dwelling on a separate lot. It differs from other forms of single-family detached housing in its lot size and its placement on the lot, which are similar to houses found in the historic villages and towns. The unit is located at the building setback line and is additionally distinguished from other single-family houses by planting or architectural treatments.

1. Each unit shall require a minimum of two of the following characteristics:
 - a. One canopy tree per lot, or two flowering trees per lot.
 - b. An unenclosed porch, running across at least three-quarters of the house front and being at least seven feet in width.
 - c. A front yard raised above sidewalk grade by at least 18 inches, with a retaining wall of at least 18 inches at the sidewalk line.
 - d. A front yard enclosed by a permanent wall or fence of wood or masonry construction at least 30 inches in height.
 - e. Hedge yard: One of the following or similar species per 18 inches:

(1) Azalea species	15-18"
(2) Berberis species	15-18"
(3) Buxus species	12-18"
(4) Ligustrum	2-3'
(5) Taxus species	18-24"
(6) Viburnum species	18-24"
2. Garages must be at least 20 feet back from the front of the dwelling unit. Garages may be placed within five feet of the side or rear-yard property lines.

The village house concept has been incorporated into many Bucks County zoning ordinances. This version was developed by Carter Van Dyke Associates for Union Township, NJ.

has not been used for infill development in existing villages. Rather, it has proved to be an ideal single-family detached housing type for cluster development in agricultural areas, both in Bucks County and central New Jersey. Van Dyke, now a private consultant, has designed many of these developments, which function as residential hamlets with lots laid out in a modified grid pattern and with over 80 percent of the tract kept as farmland and open space. However, most of them contain no commercial services and thus lack the pedestrian focus of the true village.

CONDITIONAL USES

The appropriateness of a given use in the village setting often depends less on the use itself than on its size, scale, and design. A garage for automotive repairs, for example, is a typical village use that can be perfectly compatible with its surroundings if appropriately designed. Almost all the ordinances surveyed permit certain uses that are considered more traffic intensive or potentially inappropriate on a conditional use or special exception basis. The conditional use method gives the township's governing body the ability to review a proposed use based on a set of criteria and to impose conditions upon it to ensure compatibility with the village setting. In the case of a special exception, the authority lies with the zoning hearing board.

Typical conditional uses include general-purpose retail stores (as opposed to specialty shops), restaurants and taverns, banks, professional and business offices, funeral homes, bed-and-breakfast establishments, and warehouse or storage uses. (Almost all the ordinances surveyed specifically prohibit fast-food or drive-in restaurants and drive-in bank windows.) The conditional use review process can be employed to impose a level of design review and to encourage preservation of existing buildings.

Lower Salford's Village Commercial district sets criteria that can be applied to a conditional use:



A garage for automotive repairs is a typical village use that can be perfectly compatible with its surroundings if appropriately designed.

- 1) The proposed use may not create large traffic volumes, require more than one curb cut, or create greater "noise and congestion" than a permitted use;
- 2) If there is an existing building on the lot, it must be preserved; a conditional use will not be permitted following demolition. No alterations of the building's front and side facades are permitted; expansion must be to the rear and must match the scale and building materials of the existing building;
- 3) New buildings, whether on vacant lots or sharing a lot with an existing building, must be compatible in size, scale, general appearance, and building materials with surrounding buildings.

One problem with these criteria is the failure to define what is meant by "large" traffic volumes, which gives the governing body considerable freedom of interpretation and could pose problems for the developer.

In the more rural and largely residential village of Tylersport, Salford Township, nonresidential uses are permitted only as conditional uses and only if existing buildings are used. The application must outline the architectural features of the building and its relationship to the overall character of the village.

A more radical approach to the conditional use is that taken by the Brandywine Conservancy, a non-profit land trust and consulting firm that works with many municipalities in southeastern Pennsylvania and Delaware. In the proposed ordinance developed by the conservancy for the villages of Jennersville and Kelton in Penn Township, Chester County, village commercial uses are permitted by right only in existing buildings or when additions comprise no more than 30 percent of the area of the existing building and/or parking. Whenever new buildings are constructed or additions exceed the 30 percent threshold, the same uses become conditional. For a conditional use approval, the applicant must demonstrate that the proposed building or addition reflects the historic village character according to the following design criteria:

1. Building massing (height and bulk of structures, type and angle of roof line);
2. Building width-to-height ratio (maximum of 2.5:1);
3. Location and use of yard areas;
4. Location and design of landscaped and paved areas;
5. Ratio of landscaped area to areas covered by impervious surfaces (minimum of 1:2.5);
6. Location, size, and type of projections (porches and roof lines);

7. Location, scale, and design of signing.

This approach introduces the elements of design review into the zoning process and gives the municipality a degree of control over architectural and design factors more typical of a historic district ordinance than a zoning ordinance. According to John Snook, the planner with the Brandywine Conservancy who developed the Penn Township ordinance, this approach is based on the premise that the village is a unique enclave within the township and therefore merits additional standards for new development. The Pennsylvania planning code permits the imposition of special requirements in areas that are environmentally sensitive or historically significant. However, the legality of this approach has yet to be tested in court.

The conditional use procedure is not applicable in every state, nor is it always necessary; in some states, design requirements can be applied to by-right uses without fear of a legal challenge. There is also a danger that, if the conditional use standards are vaguely written, the process can be misused to impose arbitrary delays on the applicant. If used responsibly, however, it can be a valuable tool for the municipality, making it possible to influence the design of potentially intrusive projects.

SETBACKS AND DIMENSIONAL STANDARDS

Prescribed lot sizes in most of the districts surveyed, while not as small as many actual village lots, represent a substantial reduction from suburban standards. Lot sizes of 8,000 to 15,000 square feet are typical, although sizes range from 2,100 square feet for townhouses and 4,000 square feet for single-family homes to a high of one acre (43,560 square feet) in one of the more rural villages. By contrast, the typical medium-density residential lot in this area ranges upward from around 25,000 square feet to an acre in size. The wide range of village lot sizes in the ordinances relates to the "rural" or "urban" character of each village and to the availability of public water and sewers. Soils in much of southeastern Pennsylvania are poorly suited to on-lot septic systems and are slow to recharge groundwater; large minimum lot sizes (from 30,000 square feet to two acres or more) are needed when on-lot septic systems and wells are used.

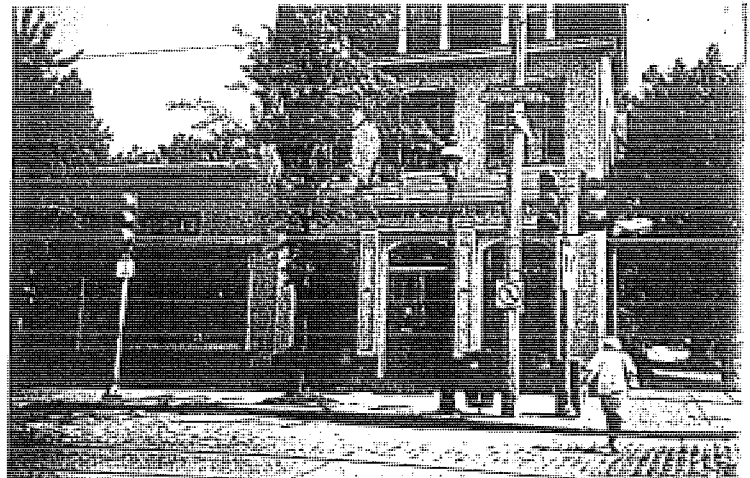
Required lot widths in the districts surveyed range from 40 to 100 feet, consistent with the typical village lot, which tends to be deep and narrow. (Tax maps of villages in Pennsylvania seem to indicate that the settlements were often originally platted in 20-foot increments.) Front-yard setbacks are also smaller than the suburban norm, ranging from 15 to 35 feet. When a pronounced street line exists, most ordinances provide the option of using the existing front-yard setbacks of the buildings on either side.

It is important to note that these are *minimum*

setbacks, which the developer may exceed at will. Randall Arendt of the Center for Rural Massachusetts advocates a more stringent approach: the use of a maximum setback or "build-to" line as a way to ensure that new buildings respect the common "street line" within the village. This approach, while not yet common in Pennsylvania, has been used in two rural village districts in Baltimore County, Maryland; in the county's Resource Conservation Commercial zone and Commercial Rural district, the front-yard setback must be a minimum of 15 feet from the street right-of-way line but may not exceed the average setback of adjacent buildings. (The Baltimore County districts are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.)

Another approach suggested by consultant Lane Kendig is to permit variable lot widths as a means of achieving variety in village infill development. He points out that most villages were originally platted in strips 20 or 25 feet wide; purchasers would buy as many strips as they needed or could afford. Flexible lot widths could be achieved by specifying a "module" width of 15 to 25 feet, a minimum number of modules per lot, and a required range of lot widths per block. For example, with a 15-foot module and a minimum of three per lot, lot widths of 45, 60, 75 feet, or more could be achieved. A simpler method for achieving some variety would be to specify both a minimum lot width and an average lot width for an infill development of several lots.

Additional standards can be used to prevent overly massive buildings. Several ordinances limit building width facing the street to 75 or 125 feet. The Penn Township ordinance limits building width to 2.5 times building height. Preserving this ratio is an important means of ensuring consistency with the scale of surrounding village buildings. Building height is limited as well, generally to 35 feet or three stories, a standard that applies to most suburban development in these townships.



Banks are normally allowed as conditional uses. The conditional use review process can be employed for design review and to encourage preservation of existing buildings.

INCENTIVES

Many ordinances provide incentives to encourage the preservation or adaptive reuse of existing older buildings in villages. Lower Providence's Village Commercial district contains separate, less stringent standards for building and impervious coverage for pre-1940 buildings; any dimensional standard for a pre-1940 building may also be modified through a special exception procedure.

Lower Salford Township's Village Commercial district permits an increase in the amount of development permitted in a pre-1940 building. Permitted development in this district is linked to lot size by a formula: for every 7,500 square feet of lot area, an applicant is permitted either one dwelling unit or 1,250 square feet of nonresidential floor area; nonresidential uses and dwelling units may be combined on a lot. To qualify for the bonus, the developer must preserve the front and side facades and front porch (if any) of a pre-1940 building; the permitted development is then increased to two dwelling units or 1,750 square feet of nonresidential floor area per 7,500 square feet. A similar bonus is provided for use of a shared driveway and a common parking area by two adjoining lots.

ZONING IN PRACTICE: DEVELOPING A VILLAGE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

How well do village zoning districts function in practice? How difficult has it been to enforce their more restrictive standards? In many cases, imposition of village-oriented standards has undoubtedly acted as a brake on development, halting the intrusion of large-scale commercial uses and suburban-style residential development. In these villages, the success of the ordinance can be measured only by what has *not* happened. In villages under more intense development pressure, the ordinance may be "tested" or challenged by developers or local merchants.

Harleysville, in Lower Salford Township, Montgomery County, is one such village. Stretching for almost two miles along Sumneytown Pike (Main Street), a busy arterial road, Harleysville still functions as a neighborhood service center in its suburban township. The early 1980s saw the village surrounded by new residential development. The presence of this nearby market area increased the pressure to replace small village buildings with larger commercial uses. The main obstacle to this trend was the fact that most parcels were too small and narrow to meet the requirements of the commercial zoning district that encompassed the village. Landowners had the choice of assembling several parcels or requesting multiple variances.

Township officials were prompted to rethink the commercial zoning when the Harleysville National Bank, a major presence in the village, expanded. The

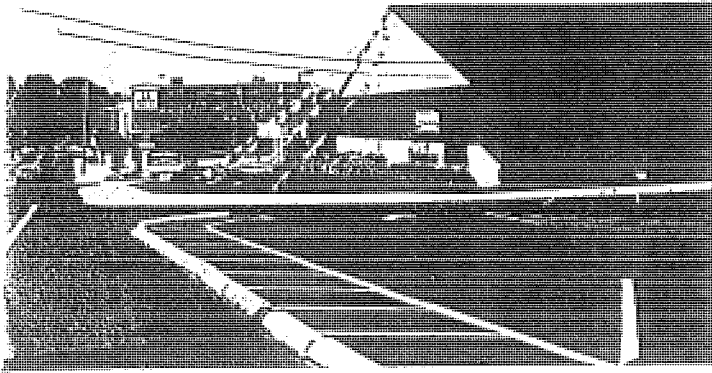
bank bought and demolished several older buildings and erected a large, modern office wing and parking lot, dominating the streetscape at the village's central crossroads. At the same time, a convenience store chain filed an application to demolish the Harleysville Hotel, another village landmark, in order to erect a new store. Although this plan was later dropped, township officials recognized that the village needed some type of protection.

A Village Commercial District ordinance was developed over the course of a year by the county's community planning staff with the oversight of both the township's planning commission and a special committee, which included a township supervisor, several business leaders (including the president of the Harleysville Bank), and other area residents. The district, as discussed above, was designed to encourage small-scale office and commercial uses, rear-yard parking, shared driveways, and retention of the older buildings on Main Street. Unlike the existing commercial district, it permitted multifamily conversions and mixed uses on a lot.

While the committee's membership helped establish a base of support for the rezoning in the business community, other businesses vehemently opposed the change as a threat to their future development potential. "Who wants this growing community to stop, turn around, and go back to the dark ages?" asked the owner of a computer firm at a public meeting. "What makes the board think that the businesses in the proposed district want to reduce traffic and commerce that they have worked so hard to build?" Some of the businesses in opposition were those that the new district would not permit: a hardware store, a brickyard, and several wholesale operations.

After several stormy public hearings, the supervisors decided on a compromise plan: a large cluster of properties in the center of the village, including the bank, the hotel, and the hardware store, would remain in the existing all-purpose commercial district. For the most part, these were businesses on large lots that already conformed to commercial district standards. Unfortunately, several are also historically significant and remain vulnerable to demolition since no incentives exist for their protection. The ordinance's requirements were also relaxed to increase the permitted impervious coverage and to permit new construction on several side streets without a conditional use permit (on Main Street, a permit is required).

The new ordinance was adopted early in 1987. Several building conversions have occurred since then. One of the more successful is a conversion of an older home (with an addition to the rear) into five efficiency apartments to be used for short-term rentals. The developer used the bonus for retaining a pre-1940 building, plus the bonus for providing



Before Harleysville adopted its Village Commercial district, oversized buildings and parking lots meant unusual visual breaks in the village's streetscape.

common parking and a shared driveway. The only drawback of his plan was that it called for the enclosure of the front porch and its incorporation into one of the apartments, an alteration that the supervisors permitted. (The ordinance calls for "retention" of the front porch but says nothing about its enclosure.)

Another ordinance requirement that has been called into question is the use of the year 1940 as the cut-off between older buildings, which qualify for a bonus if the front and side facades are preserved, and newer ones. The 1940 cut-off was based not on historical documentation, but rather on an intuitive sense that it marked a divide between pre-war and post-war construction; it also meant that buildings of that vintage were almost 50 years old when the ordinance was developed, making them potentially eligible for National Register designation. After a recent request for a variance from this requirement in order to add a new office building behind a 1950s house, the supervisors suggested that the ordinance be revised to provide an easier "override" of the 1940 rule in cases where a later building fits in with the predominant village architecture.

In spite of these minor flaws, township staff and officials are pleased with the results of the village district. According to Township Manager Loretta Romanowski, most of the businesspeople who initially opposed the rezoning are now pleased with

the new district, since it makes their small lots conforming and permits them more intensive development than the old commercial district. In terms of enforcement, the sign standards in the ordinance (discussed under "Signs" in the following chapter) were the most difficult to interpret and enforce, and problems with oversize signs and excessive use of temporary signs occasionally occur. She expects that a new townshipwide standard for temporary signs will alleviate this problem.

Looking at Harleysville today, Romanowski points out that "it will never be mistaken for a Skippack Village" (a well-preserved, tourist-oriented village nearby). Its primary function is that of a local service center, and its appearance had already been altered irretrievably by the bank expansion prior to adoption of the district. However, she feels that recent multifamily and office conversions under the new regulations preserve the appearance of the existing buildings to such a degree that it is difficult to notice any change.

Montgomery County planner Brian O'Leary, who developed much of the ordinance and also reviews development proposals in the township, stresses the importance of viewing the Village Commercial district in the context of all other commercial development in the township. If strip commercial development is permitted to surround the village, the vitality of the commercial core will be gradually leached away. Although Lower Salford has thus far been successful in limiting the spread of standard commercial development on the outskirts of Harleysville, it does face pressure for commercial rezonings. Instead of creating a strip, the township's strategy is to designate a few large tracts outside the village for intensive, but compact and internalized, commercial development.

REFERENCES

Town of Amherst Planning Board. "Village Center Rezoning Summary." April 1990.

Zoning Ordinances:

Pennsylvania:

East Rockhill Township, Bucks County
Lower Providence Township, Montgomery County
Lower Salford Township, Montgomery County
Penn Township, Chester County (draft)
Quakertown Area, Bucks County
Salford Township, Montgomery County
Whitpain Township, Montgomery County

Other States:

Town of Amherst, Massachusetts
Baltimore County, Maryland

Chapter 3. Village Design

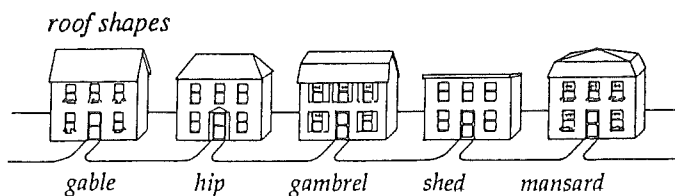
Design principles are often better expressed through good examples, persuasion, and negotiation than through the blunt instrument of an ordinance. Attempts to achieve good design through regulation can become stifling to the creative spirit and constraining to the imagination. They can also result in lengthy, cumbersome ordinances. At the same time, certain basic principles, familiar to any urban designer, can be used to establish the framework for compatible infill development—and even “outfill” development—in the village setting. This chapter discusses these principles and their realization through ordinances, design guidelines, and actual project designs. While planners will generally play the role of regulators or reviewers rather than designers, the intent of the design examples is to indicate the range of possibilities that can be suggested or encouraged through regulation or review.

Design guidelines are voluntary by nature and depend on an informed local planning agency or review board to persuade residents to follow them. However, guidelines can be reinforced by linking them to an ordinance that outlines the key elements to be considered in design review. Another approach is to include design guidelines and other performance standards in a master plan for the village and to mandate—or at least recommend—compliance with the plan in the zoning ordinance. Finally, creation of a village historic district regulated by a separate review board can provide a greater degree of control over architecture and design. Each of these regulatory approaches is illustrated in the following case studies.

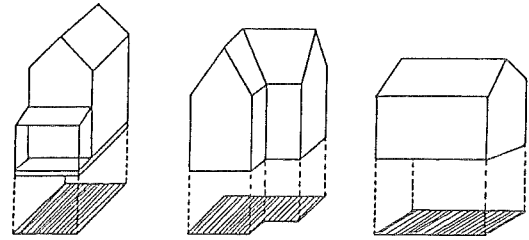
ARCHITECTURAL COMPATIBILITY

When new buildings or additions are considered, compatibility rather than conformity is key. Rarely is a village a perfectly preserved relic of a particular period; rather it is an eclectic collection of architectural styles spanning many decades or centuries. The elements that unify these styles can be applied to new construction as well. The Bucks County Planning Commission’s *Village Planning Handbook* lists the following elements and provides illustrations:

Roof shape: gable, gambrel, hip, mansard, and so on. If a given type predominates, it should be used in new construction or additions.



Directional expression: Is the building footprint narrow, wide, or square?



footprints of various house shapes

Proportion and scale: How do building heights and widths relate? Are most buildings in scale with each other?



building out of scale with its neighbors

building in scale with each other

Rhythm of openings: number and spacing of windows and doors.



original rhythm of openings maintained

rhythm of openings disrupted

Platforms: Are buildings elevated above street level by retaining walls or slopes?

Massing: Are buildings simple and boxlike in shape, or articulated by porches, turrets, and bay windows, like most Victorian buildings?



house with one mass

house with varied massing

Sense of entry: Do porches, steps, or porticos predominate?

Placement on the lot: predominant setback and location in the center or to the side of the lot.

Materials and details: New buildings should use materials compatible with existing ones, such as stucco, brick, shingles, or stone. Architectural details should be preserved on existing buildings, although new buildings need not precisely replicate them.

Every village displays its own distinctive combination of these elements. This diversity points to the need for a set of design guidelines that are tailored to the individual village. One example of such a design manual is the *Southampton Village Designbook*, also produced by the Bucks County Planning Commission. Developed for the Upper Southampton Township Planning Commission in 1985, the emphasis of the design manual is on "re-establishing the identity of Southampton as a turn-of-the-century village" and, by so doing, enhancing the economic competitiveness of the village businesses.

The book identifies the prevalent building style in the village as a simple "folk Victorian" style, featuring a symmetrical front, overhanging eaves with brackets beneath, clapboard or shingle siding, front porches, and "two over two" windows. It then provides examples of how each of the above-mentioned elements of style (i.e., roof shape, proportion, scale) can be realized through sympathetic new construction or rehabilitation. The designbook also includes recommendations for landscaping, signs, sidewalks, and street furniture.

Another issue that may arise is the treatment of side and rear facades of new buildings that face existing buildings or side streets. Chesterfield County, Virginia, located on the outskirts of Richmond, has adopted standards addressing this issue. (In Virginia, as in most other Mid-Atlantic states, zoning and land-use controls rest with counties, not townships.) The county has recently developed and implemented village plans and zoning districts for two of its historic villages, Chester and Midlothian. The Village District development requirements state that "no building exterior (whether front, side, or rear) shall consist of architectural materials inferior in quality, appearance, or detail to any other exterior of the same building." While a variety of materials are permitted, sheet metal and cinder block are specifically prohibited, and mechanical equipment must be shielded from public view. The ordinance also specifies that buildings "shall possess architectural variety, but enhance an overall cohesive village character as reflected in existing structures."

An example of the expression of general design standards in an ordinance and more specific stan-

dards in a master plan is provided by Baltimore County, Maryland. The county (which surrounds the city of Baltimore and extends north to the Pennsylvania line) has established two zoning districts: a Commercial Rural overlay district, applied to villages that already function as commercial service centers, and a Rural Conservation Commercial zone, designed to meet the needs for small crossroads or "spot" commercial development in rural, largely agricultural areas.

The new districts were created to prevent the type of out-of-scale commercial development that was occurring under the previous zoning. The rural areas of north Baltimore County, about 15 miles from the Baltimore city limits, lie outside the urban-rural demarcation line, a municipal services boundary. However, rural business districts were identical to those in the urban area, which allowed a floor area ratio of four to one, equivalent to covering the entire lot with a four-story building! Although environmental constraints made it impossible to "build out" a rural lot to these standards, developers tried to maximize their building coverage, creating boxy, out-of-scale buildings and forcing parking for those buildings into adjacent residential districts.

The Commercial Rural overlay, intended to apply to business districts within established rural villages, allows a floor area ratio of .20, or 8,800 square feet of floor area, by right. No more than three-quarters of this area, or 6,600 square feet, may be located on the ground floor. This figure was arrived at by taking a typical one-acre village lot and subtracting the lot area needed for a septic system, a landscaped buffer, and parking. All new buildings and additions must comply with the site design guidelines. (See page 14.) Buildings exceeding these bulk standards are permitted only in compliance with both the site design guidelines and other performance standards, which include:

- Documentation that a market exists for the commercial services being proposed;

- No disturbance of steep slopes, vegetated areas, wetlands, or streams;

- Preservation of architecturally or historically significant buildings and their settings;

- Siting of buildings to preserve scenic views from public roads; and

- Proof that existing roads can accommodate anticipated traffic without addition of new traffic lanes.

The Rural Conservation Commercial zone is intended to meet the need for very small-scale commercial uses in residential rural hamlets. Its coverage standards are stricter than those of the overlay district: impervious coverage of only 20 percent and a maximum building area of 3,000 square

feet on a maximum lot size of two acres. (Use of a maximum rather than a minimum lot size is intended to further limit the size of any individual building.) New buildings and building additions must meet the same set of design guidelines that apply to the Commercial Rural district.

As expressed in the Baltimore County Council's resolution, the intent of both rural business districts was to "permit only those uses and buildings that are compatible with the agricultural uses and scenic beauty of the surrounding area," while creating "a village atmosphere reminiscent of New England."

The two districts were adopted by the county council in 1988 and applied to two large villages, Hereford and Jacksonville, and a number of smaller rural villages and hamlets. A master plan for the village of Hereford is now being considered for adoption.

Hereford is the rural town center for northern Baltimore County. It dates back to the mid-1700s and was a thriving market town on a major turnpike as early as 1797. It now occupies an equally central location a mile from an interstate highway interchange, resulting in pressure for new highway-oriented commercial development. The plan contains design standards specifically tailored to Hereford that supplement the more

general design standards in the county ordinance. (See Appendix C.) For example, the guidelines define a streetscape of paired, two-story buildings facing the street, with linear front porches and cross gable roofs with a moderate pitch. Any building that would exceed the strict bulk and coverage standards of the Commercial Rural district would be required to use these elements in new construction under a special exception procedure. For buildings that meet the district's standards, the guidelines are advisory.

According to county planner Wallace S.

Lippincott, Jr., the development plans that have been submitted since adoption of the two new districts are far more sensitive to the village context than those that preceded the ordinance. However, actual construction has been stymied by the environmental constraints that still prevail in Hereford and other villages: lot sizes are too small for parking, septic

systems, or detention basins, and there is a lack of suitable stream outfalls for disposal of stormwater runoff. The proposed Hereford Master Plan recommends several solutions to these problems, including shared septic systems, a community well system, and community parking locations.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND DESIGN REVIEW

While the control of architecture and site design through a zoning ordinance is legally questionable in some states, a local historic district can provide a far greater degree of authority over a wide range of activities, even going so far as to prevent demolition of significant buildings.

This type of local district should not be confused with a district listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Federal designation, if unaccompanied by local designation, carries no authority over building alterations, demolition, or new construction, although it does impose

certain limits on the use of federal funds for projects that would affect the district, such as highway construction. A National Register district also provides economic incentives for building rehabilitation in the form of federal tax credits for nonresidential and rental properties.

As in planning and zoning, the enabling legislation for historic districting differs from one state to another. In Pennsylvania, for example, historic districts can be established independent of zoning or can be integrated with zoning, either as an overlay or

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR RURAL VILLAGE DISTRICT, BALTIMORE COUNTY

In determining the appropriateness of buildings, design elements of proposed buildings shall be evaluated in relation to existing adjacent or surrounding buildings. In most cases, to be considered appropriate, new buildings shall be rural in character and similar to existing buildings in the following respects:

1. Height;
2. Bulk and general massing;
3. Major divisions or rhythms of the facade;
4. Proportion of openings (i.e. window to wall relationships);
5. Roof treatment;
6. Materials, colors, and textures of buildings and signage. In general, natural materials such as stone, brick, wood siding, shingles, slate, etc. are preferred to industrial or artificial materials such as raw or exposed aggregate concrete, anodized or galvanized metal, tinted glass, plastics, vinyls, etc.;
7. General architectural character:
 - a) Horizontal or vertical emphasis;
 - b) Scale;
 - c) Stylistic features and themes (i.e. porches, colonnades, pediments, cupolas, cornices, coins, detail and ornament);
8. Relation to street;
9. Except where physical constraints, site configuration, or safety considerations preclude strict compliance, all parking must be accessible by driveway to the parking lots of adjacent nonresidential uses and land zoned for nonresidential uses.

Guidelines for development in Rural Conservation Commercial Zone and Commercial Rural District, Baltimore County Code, 1978 as amended, Section 22-104.

a mapped district. In order for a Pennsylvania municipality to create an official local district, it must submit to the state historical commission a comprehensive survey of all buildings and structures in the district and must map district boundaries. Following state certification, the local governing body must appoint a Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB), which will have the power to review almost all activities—new construction, alteration, reconstruction, repairs, demolition—within the district. However, these review powers apply only to building facades visible from a public street or way. The HARB is advisory to the governing body, which makes the final determination to issue or deny a “certificate of appropriateness.” The HARB must include at least five members, including an architect, a real estate broker, and the municipal building inspector.

are those that do not meet National Register criteria but have been documented and are considered of local importance. The district functions as an overlay that applies to historic buildings or structures wherever they are located—not only within the township’s villages. Class One resources can be converted to certain special uses in many zoning districts; these include guest houses, inns, restaurants, offices, studios, and combinations of permitted uses. The intent is to ensure the survival of these buildings by providing more options for their reuse. A Historic Resource Impact Study is required when any Class One resource is involved in a subdivision or land development, or when demolition of the resource is proposed.

The greater control afforded by a historic district comes at a price—it takes a tremendous amount of volunteer effort to document, map, and gain certifica-



Baltimore County Office of Planning and Zoning

The Baltimore County guidelines define a streetscaped, two-story buildings facing the street, with linear front porches and cross gable roofs with a moderate pitch.

Most district ordinances include design guidelines quite similar to those of the zoning ordinances discussed above, although the level of detail may be greater. For example, Pennsylvania’s model ordinance includes guidelines for building scale and proportion, rhythm of building openings, spacing of buildings on streets, entrance or front porch treatments, materials, textures, color, paving materials, and landscaping. The design, location, and height of signs may also be controlled. The Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings” are generally used as a guide to rehab of existing buildings.

Some municipalities have taken the historic district one step further, integrating it with the zoning ordinance and imposing different standards for different “classes” of historic buildings. West Whiteland Township, in Chester County, designates three classes of historic resources. Class One resources are defined as those listed on or eligible for the National Register; Class Two and Three resources

are those that do not meet National Register criteria but have been documented and are considered of local importance. The district functions as an overlay that applies to historic buildings or structures wherever they are located—not only within the township’s villages. Class One resources can be converted to certain special uses in many zoning districts; these include guest houses, inns, restaurants, offices, studios, and combinations of permitted uses. The intent is to ensure the survival of these buildings by providing more options for their reuse. A Historic Resource Impact Study is required when any Class One resource is involved in a subdivision or land development, or when demolition of the resource is proposed.

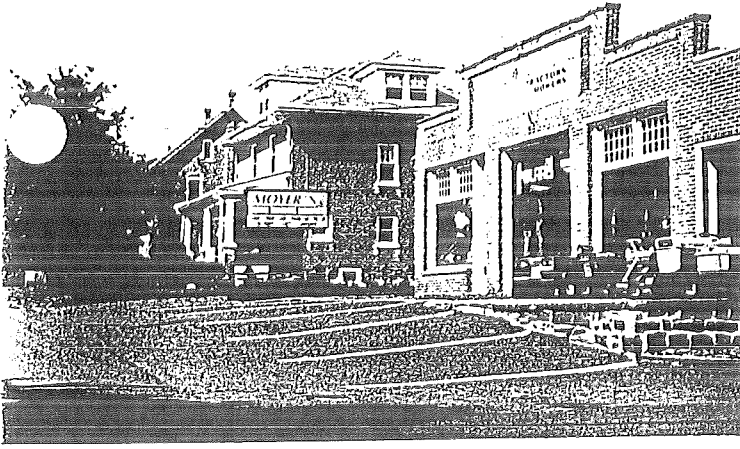
Most district ordinances include design guidelines quite similar to those of the zoning ordinances discussed above, although the level of detail may be greater. For example, Pennsylvania’s model ordinance includes guidelines for building scale and proportion, rhythm of building openings, spacing of buildings on streets, entrance or front porch treatments, materials, textures, color, paving materials, and landscaping. The design, location, and height of signs may also be controlled. The Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings” are generally used as a guide to rehab of existing buildings.

Some municipalities have taken the historic district one step further, integrating it with the zoning ordinance and imposing different standards for different “classes” of historic buildings. West Whiteland Township, in Chester County, designates three classes of historic resources. Class One resources are defined as those listed on or eligible for the National Register; Class Two and Three resources

tion of a historic district. There is also the difficulty of achieving political acceptance of the concept. Many local governments and residents are wary of giving a HARB the authority to prescribe elements like siding materials and paint color. A historical society or other preservation group must generally take on the task of surveying, publicizing, and promoting a district. Involving as many residents as possible in this process is one way to increase public awareness of historic and architectural resources and to broaden the base of support for a district.

THE CONTROL OF PARKING

The domination of the streetscape by front-yard parking is a key element of the commercial strip, and one of the most common and visible intrusions into the village setting. Most of the village commercial ordinances discussed in the previous chapter do not permit parking in front yards and many require screening of parking in side yards. While this pattern is often common around existing buildings, where



front-yard setbacks may be too narrow to permit much parking, it can be a bitter pill for a commercial developer to swallow when undertaking new construction. However, even a fairly large new commercial building can be made to appear compatible with the village setting simply by orienting it perpendicular to the street. The side of the building that faces the street should be similar in size and scale to the surrounding buildings. The main entrance can face a parking lot in the side yard, screened by a low hedge or wall from the street. The convenient relationship of parking to store entrance is maintained. The same principle applies when an addition is placed to the rear of an existing building, convenient to parking but largely invisible from the street.

Parking lots must be connected to the street by driveways, which can interfere with on-street parking, conflict with pedestrian traffic, and result in confusing, sometimes dangerous traffic patterns. Shared driveway entrances and rear-yard driveways between parking lots can simplify traffic circulation. The ultimate goal is to establish an interconnected circulation system of parking and drives to the rear of the buildings, bypassing the street frontage. Another advantage of shared driveways is that they make it possible to increase the number of parking spaces and the amount of landscaping on a small, constrained lot.

The shared driveway concept can be promoted through incentives like those in Lower Salford's village district, discussed in the previous chapter, which permits more intense development in exchange for a shared driveway. Or it can be treated as a requirement, as in Baltimore County's design standards for rural village districts, which mandate that all parking areas for commercial uses be connected to adjacent nonresidential (e.g., other commercial,

(Top) This typical retail use would blend in well with its surroundings but for the front-yard parking. Side-yard parking is far less obtrusive. (Right)

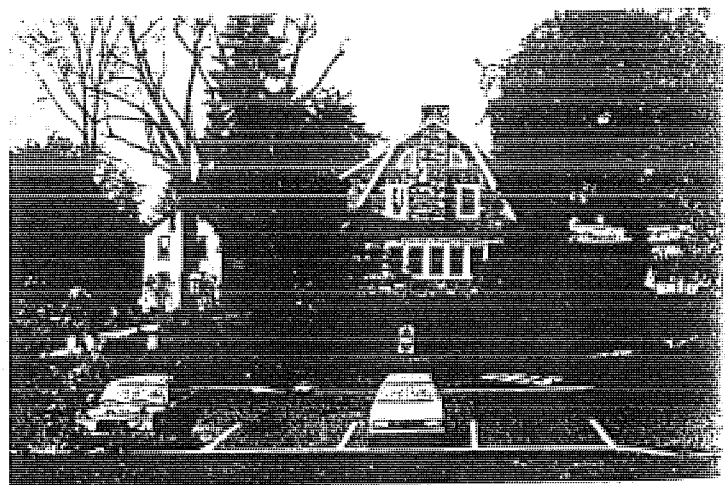
institutional, or civic) parking.

An idea that finds greater favor with developers is the use of on-street parking to fulfill a portion of the parking requirements. According to many of the neotraditional town planners, on-street parking is essential in order to buffer pedestrians from moving traffic while enhancing the sense of enclosure provided by building walls and street trees, making the street feel like a comfortable, intimate place. On the other hand, local planning boards may fear conflicts between parking and through traffic, or the possibility that future road-widening will eliminate needed parking.

In Chesterfield County, Virginia, the Village District permits the use of "improved, designated," on-street parking spaces to meet the parking requirements for a site, provided that the spaces are directly adjacent to the site. On-street parking is not, however, encouraged along arterial or collector streets. The Chester Village Plan also permits the use of nearby off-site parking to serve a historic area within the village center.

The typical village pattern of rear-yard and on-street parking is difficult to achieve in a large commercial development, where the visibility of the parking lot is considered by most developers as the key to success. One successful example of the adaptation of this concept to a small shopping center is the Sycamore Center development in Newtown Township, Bucks County. The center is located just a few blocks from the Borough of Newtown, a thriving small town surrounded by the larger township.

State Street in the borough is a lively main street lined with shops, offices, and upstairs apartments. White Hall Equities, developer of Sycamore Center, drew upon this model to create a complex of six detached buildings, incorporating three existing buildings, containing nine "specialty retail" shops and professional offices on the ground floor and 10 apartments upstairs. The buildings have variable facade setbacks, based on the setbacks of the existing buildings, between five and 20 feet from the curblines.



Parallel parking is available along the street and in two large parking lots to the rear; each building thus has double frontage. Landscaped walkways surround the buildings and link parking lots with the street.

According to Allan Smith of White Hall Equities, almost every element of the project required a variance, since the zoning at the time permitted no mixing of commercial and residential uses. He was able to convince the township to accept the project by pointing to the nearby borough's downtown as a successful example of mixed-use buildings, variable setbacks, and on-street parking. "Township officials," he says, "weren't as fearful of the idea of upstairs apartments as those in more rural townships because they could see the concept in action on State Street."

On-street parking was achieved by a curious subterfuge. The state highway department insisted that the developers add a new right-turn lane to Sycamore Street (a state road). The developers added the lane as required, but then painted stripes in it and made it available for parking! Surprisingly, the highway department raised no objections, perhaps because it was in the process of constructing a bypass around the town center to divert much of the through traffic and hoped to eventually give the township jurisdiction over Sycamore Street.

Since the project's completion, the Sycamore Street corridor has been rezoned to Town Commercial, a district that permits this type of "specialty-cultural shopping center" as a conditional use and allows front-yard setbacks to be reduced to match surrounding buildings. The center is fully leased, and the upstairs apartments have proved very desirable. According to Smith, "People are looking for alternatives to the typical apartment complex."

Where parking is the limiting factor inhibiting the success of a commercial village, the development of shared community parking lots may be the solution. The Chestnut Hill Parking Foundation offers one successful example. In spite of its location in the northwest corner of Philadelphia, Chestnut Hill was one of the early garden suburbs and still retains a village character. Planned by a few enlightened developers around a commuter rail line in the late nineteenth century, its housing stock includes elaborate Italianate villas, small row houses, and some important early experiments in English-style grouped housing. The commercial district consists of rows of small shops and restaurants lining cobblestoned Germantown Avenue for almost a mile along the length of "the hill." The shops meet neighborhood needs (groceries, hardware, ice cream, and videos) and provide more specialized products (antiques, prints, clothing) for a wider market.

Chestnut Hill merchants have been involved in "Main Street"-type activities like coordinated opening hours, special events, and shared advertising since the

early 1950s. The parking foundation dates from this period. It was founded as part of a comprehensive strategy to rescue the then-dilapidated shopping district from decline. Local merchants were persuaded to lease their rear yards to the foundation for the sum of one dollar a year while continuing to pay taxes on the property. Small areas of rear yard were also leased from nearby residents. Eight small lots, containing a total of 434 spaces, were paved and landscaped. Today the lots are well shaded and heavily used by shoppers, merchants, and employees. Lot attendants—mainly retirees who work part-time—are present six days a week. The lots operate on a ticket system; shoppers can "validate" their parking tickets by obtaining stickers good for free parking time at local shops. Merchants buy the stickers from the parking foundation by the roll and are also asked to buy shares in the foundation. Monthly parking permits are also available, and restaurants pay a fee for their customers' evening use of the lots.

The parking lots still face the problem of visibility: they are so well-hidden from the main street and directional signs are so unobtrusive that outsiders are frequently unaware of them and seek parking meters on the street. For local residents, however, the presence of the lots, combined with the merchants' other joint activities and events, has helped instill a strong loyalty to the local shopping district and a conviction that it is infinitely superior to the typical suburban shopping center with its front-yard parking lot.

SIDEWALKS AND WALKWAYS

Sidewalks are an essential element of the pedestrian-friendly village, yet one that many villages lack. In the past, installation of sidewalks required a conscious decision by the local government. If the village evolved from a hamlet along a rural road, it may be that people simply walked in the road until forced to the shoulder by increasing traffic. Many thriving "tourist villages" continue to function without sidewalks; pedestrian flow coexists uneasily with stop-and-go traffic along busy roads. However, in any village that aspires to function as a neighborhood service center, sidewalks are a key public improvement that should be considered. This is a capital improvement expenditure that must be approved, budgeted, and supervised by the larger jurisdiction (township or county) that surrounds and controls the village. Sidewalks can be justified to this local government as a means of enhancing pedestrian and traffic safety on what is frequently a major arterial road. Community Development Block Grants may be available for such projects; Hilltown Township, Bucks County, used grant funds to install sidewalks along the main street of the village of Blooming Glen.

Most subdivision ordinances require construction of curbs and sidewalks along the frontage of a property to be developed, although this requirement is frequently waived for small subdivisions in rural areas. In a village setting, a more sensible approach would be to require a contribution towards sidewalk construction; these funds could then be placed in escrow until enough money had accumulated to install sidewalks along an entire street.

Another strategy for constructing sidewalks is to make them a component of a road improvement project. Unfortunately, such projects often involve road widening and the addition of turning lanes, resulting in removal of shade trees, encroachment onto front lawns, and increased traffic speeds—all thoroughly destructive to the village setting. When road widening is inevitable, negotiating with the state or county highway department for the construction of sidewalks and replacement of shade trees can help to mitigate these effects. This approach has been used in Chesterfield County, Virginia.

The Chester Village Plan was initiated in 1988 largely because of a road improvement project (already programmed by the state highway department) that would widen West Hundred Road, the village's main street, from two lanes to five lanes, destroying shade trees and reducing front yards. The village plan, adopted by the County Board of Supervisors in 1989, called for restoration of the streetscape through installation of sidewalks, planting of rows of large shade trees within five to ten feet of the sidewalk edge, and installation of benches, streetlights, and trash receptacles. Low fences and hedges were also encouraged as a means of giving visual definition to the street edge and increasing privacy. Since adoption of the plan, the road widening has been completed, sidewalks have been installed by the state

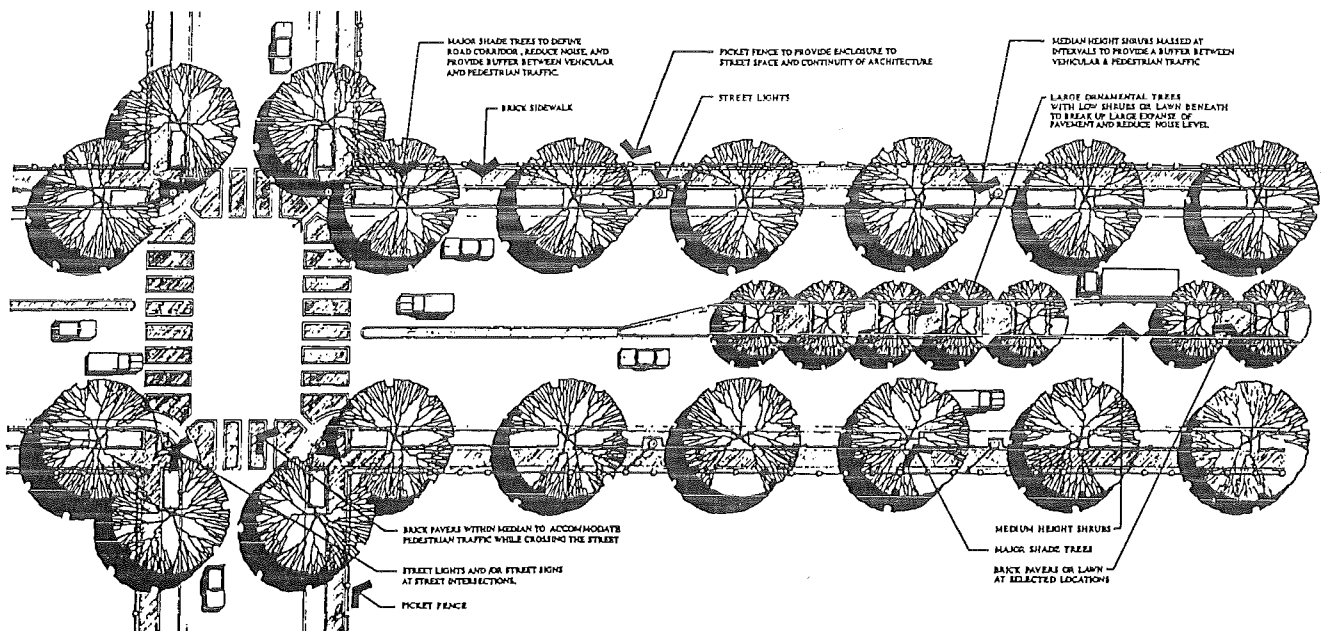
highway department, and local civic groups, with some county assistance, have begun raising funds to purchase street trees.

In addition to sidewalks, walkways should also be considered behind and between buildings, linking parking lots with each other and with the street. Construction of walkways can be encouraged by exempting them from impervious coverage limitations or by providing a floor area bonus in exchange for their construction.

SQUARES AND PUBLIC SPACES

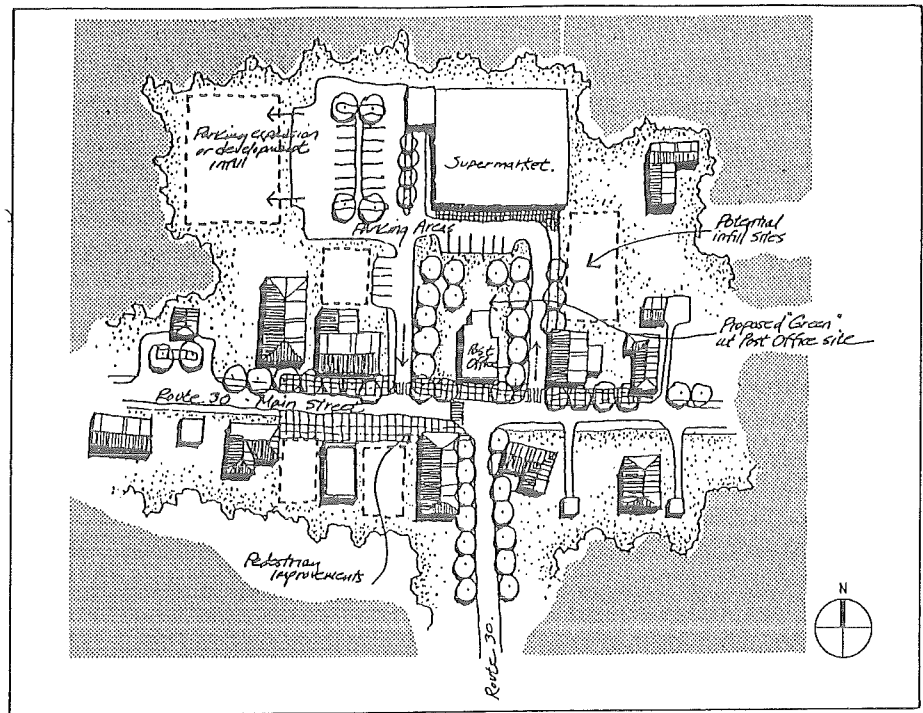
The classic New England village green or common is rarely found in Mid-Atlantic crossroads villages, which were not consciously designed as town centers and tended to evolve in a more casual manner. However, if a village is to assume a more central role in its community, it is important to develop a focal point that can be used for community functions. It may not be possible to "shoehorn" a village square into the tight settlement pattern of an existing village, but, if a large enough vacant tract exists, it may be possible to create a square to serve both that tract and its surroundings.

Chesterfield County's Chester Village Plan identifies such a tract at the edge of the village center and includes an illustrative plan for its development. The village green is shown surrounded by public buildings and retail uses; it links existing commercial use along the main street with office, retail, and residential development in the interior of the tract. According to principal county planner Bradley Peterson, any future development proposed for this tract must implement this concept since it is included in the adopted master plan for the village. Development may be delayed for some time, however, by lack of road connections; access to the north side of the



A streetscape plan for Midlothian Village in Chesterfield County, Virginia.

Hamlets of the Adirondacks: A Manual of Development Strategies shows how existing hamlets can be "retrofitted" to create public spaces. Indian Lake has the capacity to develop a village green. The post office would be the focal point and become the building on the village green.



Source: *Hamlets of the Adirondacks*, p. 101

tract depends upon construction of a new road on an abandoned railroad grade now owned by the county.

Where space is limited, smaller gathering places can also foster a sense of community—a wide walkway between buildings with benches or low walls for seating, a widened sidewalk in front of a building, or a restaurant with outdoor seating in a front or side yard. New construction may offer the greatest potential for creating these types of spaces, which can be encouraged through incentives built into a zoning ordinance.

A study of the small hamlets of New York's Adirondack Park Region offers numerous examples of such public spaces, both large and small. The study, initiated in 1983 by four counties in the park region, has resulted in two guidebooks that link economic development with improvements to the physical environment. The second of these, *Hamlets of the Adirondacks: A Manual of Development Strategies*, shows how existing hamlets can be "retrofitted" to create public spaces in order to create focal points, slow through traffic, attract and inform visitors, and thus leverage additional private investment around the village core.

Public spaces range from pedestrian crossings, expanded sidewalks, and traffic islands, to small squares, greens, and community parks. In the hamlet of Indian Lake, for example, the parking lot surrounding the post office (an existing focal point) is transformed into a village green, linked to Main Street by street tree plantings. The parking is relocated to the rear of the Main Street area beside the supermarket. The design for another hamlet, Star Lake, shows a

small public square and tourist information center on an empty lot in the center of the hamlet, surrounded by curbside parking and connected to the nearby lakefront via a landscaped walkway. In a third hamlet, Wilmington, a landscaped traffic island, consolidated curb cuts, and dense street tree plantings are proposed in order to replace the hamlet's "commercial strip" character with a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

LANDSCAPING AND STREET FURNITURE

Landscaping is a crucial factor in the appearance of a village, softening its narrow yards, screening parking areas, and creating a sense of enclosure that transforms a street into an outdoor room. In addition to shade trees, hedges, shrubs, and ground cover, the many varieties of street furniture should be part of an overall landscaping scheme. Planters, street lights, benches, trash receptacles, fences, walls, and pavement patterns all contribute to a lively, richly detailed streetscape.

Bucks County's *Southampton Village Designbook* illustrates specific guidelines for a coordinated landscape program in that village. A limited number of hardy species are suggested in five categories: street trees, ground covers, bedding plants, shrub masses, and window box/container plants. Sample designs illustrate typical planting arrangements for small and large yards. The guidebook also includes a schematic street tree and landscaping plan for the entire village, including entrance plantings and locations where paving should be removed.

COMBINING DESIGN STRATEGIES: URSINUS COLLEGE'S RESIDENTIAL VILLAGE

One project that illustrates the principles of compatible building additions, central parking, effective landscaping, and pedestrian circulation is the "Residential Village" developed by Ursinus College. A small liberal arts college in the aptly named borough of Collegeville, Pennsylvania, Ursinus owned a number of large, former single-family residences on Main Street that were used as student housing. By the early 1980s, the buildings had become inefficient to heat and maintain, and college administrators faced a choice of demolishing them to construct new dormitories or renovating them and bringing them up to code. Prompted by a desire to preserve the historic "college town" character of Main Street and maintain good relations with the community, they chose the latter alternative.

Over the next two years, new mechanical systems, windows, roofs, insulation, fire stairs, and doors were added. The buildings were also repainted, and exterior repairs were made. Two buildings received additions to the rear, which were compatible with the scale and texture of the original buildings, although they were not visible from the street. The complex now houses some 200 students (20 percent of the campus population) and includes a faculty residence and the fine arts classroom building.

The most innovative element of the project is not the renovations themselves, however, but the creation of a new parking and pedestrian system. Consolidation of all the properties' rear yards enabled the project architects to consolidate parking, driveway access, and open space. Landscaped parking lots were placed behind the buildings, with main entrances on the side streets; most of the individual driveways on to Main Street were closed. The remainder of the block's interior was given over to landscaped open space, which includes stormwater



Ursinus College made sure that additions to its dormitories were compatible with the scale and texture of the original buildings, even though the additions were not visible from the street.

detention basins and a system of walkways linking the buildings. The project won an award from the county planning commission for design excellence, and has proved popular with both students and borough residents.

A project involving so large a number of individual buildings and properties is difficult to achieve without the control of a single institution. However, a civic or business association can achieve similar improvements in the public realm, as the success of "Main Street" programs in many small towns demonstrates. In order to implement streetscape, parking, or pedestrian improvements on a villagewide scale, the involvement of village residents and the business community is an absolute must.

SIGNS

As with most other design elements, the type, size, and location of a sign can be determined by a zoning ordinance, but the sign's material, colors, and design must generally be determined through voluntary guidelines and friendly persuasion by the planning board.

This discussion is geared mainly to commercial village districts; the primarily residential village district would be covered by the same sign standards that apply to other residential districts. In other words, small signs advertising uses such as home occupations would be permitted, as would the usual For Sale signs, contractor's signs, and political signs. The model ordinance contained in PAS Report No. 419, *Sign Regulation for Small and Midsize Communities*, includes provisions permitting one small sign of this type on each residential property. Sign content could include noncommercial messages or advertisements for activities that are legal on the property, such as home occupations.

Sign Control Through Zoning

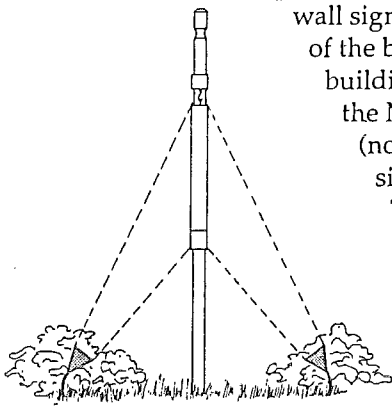
The general principle that applies to village signs is that the village should be treated as a pedestrian and a "slow traffic" environment. In keeping with the principles of Mandelker and Ewald's influential book, *Street Graphics and the Law*, narrow streets, small buildings, small front-yard setbacks, and slow-moving traffic all demand small signs. As such, the village is similar to any historic Main Street business district, and the design guidelines used in many such downtowns are equally applicable.

Most sources seem to agree that only a few sign types are suitable in the village: freestanding signs, projecting signs, and wall signs (which may include window or awning signs). Several of the ordinances surveyed in Chapter 2 also regulate the location and dimensions of these signs. Lower Salford's Village Commercial district controls both the size and location of signs through a Minimum Sign Setback Line (MSSL), set at five to 10 feet from the curbline. The

line provides a reasonable setback for village signs; the township's general sign regulations require signs to be located outside of the ultimate right-of-way, which in the village would generally cut across the building's front porch.

Each village lot is allocated a maximum "sign face area" of 60 square feet, which may be divided among wall signs (defined as parallel or projecting) and freestanding signs. The actual size of any sign face is determined by a table, correlating both size and height (for freestanding signs) to distance from the MSSL. For example, if a sign is located right on the MSSL, its maximum area would be 16 square feet and its maximum height four feet. At a distance of 14 feet back from the MSSL, the area would increase to 30 square feet (the maximum permitted) and the height to 10 feet. Wall signs may not exceed a height of 15 feet or the top of the second-story windows, whichever is higher. A single property is permitted no

more than one freestanding sign per street frontage, and one wall sign for each major wall of the building. When a building itself "touches" the MSSL, only parallel (nonprojecting) wall signs are permitted. The Bucks County Planning Commission has developed a model village sign ordinance that has been adopted by several townships and is



shrubs hide uplights from view

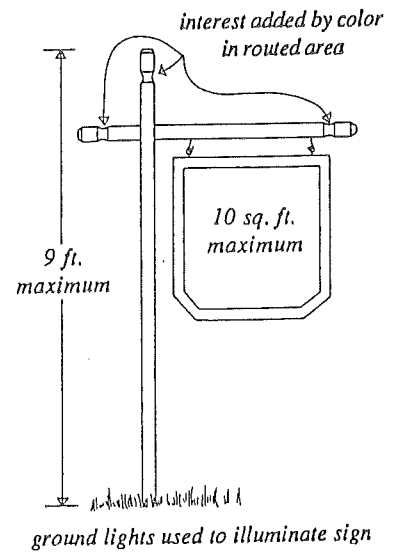
included in the *Village Planning Handbook*. It defines a limited number of sign types and allows various combinations of them to be used on a property. Each permitted use within the district is permitted one freestanding sign of up to 10 square feet or one projecting sign of the same size, plus one wall or window sign. The applicant may select one of three choices for a wall or window sign:

- A wall sign of up to eight square feet;
- A wall sign consisting of individual letters or symbols, occupying no more than 15 percent of the wall area; or
- A window sign consisting of individual letters or symbols, occupying

The Bucks County Planning Commission has a model sign ordinance. The ordinance provides illustrations of sign limitations (above right); lighting suggestions (above); and simple sign types (right).

no more than 30 percent of the window area.

(As with most sign ordinances, the area of the "individual letters" sign is defined by the smallest rectangle that would encompass all the letters or symbols.) Free-standing signs are restricted to a height of seven feet from ground level to top of sign, and nine feet



to the top of the sign support. The ordinance does not specify a setback between the sign and the edge of the street. It also does not regulate the placement of signs within the right-of-way; the assumption is that sign setbacks would be covered elsewhere in the community's sign ordinance. It does provide for temporary signs of up to 12 square feet per side; these can be authorized by permit for a period of up to 30 days per year.

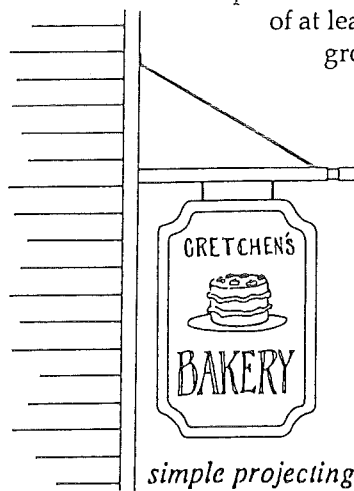
Another model sign ordinance is included in the handbook produced by the Center for Rural Massachusetts, *A Design Manual for Conservation and Development*. The model ordinance covers all signage within small towns and rural areas and includes standards for village and town centers. Sign height and area of freestanding pole signs are keyed to typical traffic speeds; in the village center, a maximum height of 10 feet (with a minimum of seven feet of clearance from the ground) and a maximum area of 10 square feet are specified. The size of a wall sign is linked to the size of the building it is attached to: either 10 percent of the wall area or 1.5 square feet for each linear foot of the building's face, whichever is

less. Projecting signs may not exceed 10 square feet in size, with a clearance

of at least eight feet above ground level. Awning

signs, common in many village centers, are also permitted; individual letters may not exceed 10 inches in height.

The ordinance also includes numerous design standards governing sign



simple projecting sign

color, materials, and location on the building. The number of signs permitted on a building is tied to the number of occupants. Each ground floor occupant is permitted two signs; each upper story occupant is permitted one sign. No more than three sign types are permitted for any building (e.g., freestanding, awning, and window; or wall, window, and awning).

Most of the other village districts surveyed for this report provide a few specific standards for village signs. Chesterfield County's general sign standards require a unified sign system for each development, with consistent letter style, graphics, and colors. Different standards apply to the villages of Chester (a commercial center) and Midlothian (a largely residential village). In Midlothian, freestanding signs are restricted to five feet in height, while sign area is calculated based on lot frontage (one square foot per two linear feet of frontage) up to a maximum of 24 square feet. In Chester, freestanding signs may be up to 10 feet high, and sign area is tied to sign height—the lower the sign, the larger the permitted area, to a maximum of 24 square feet. In both districts, sign setbacks may be reduced to five feet from the street edge instead of the typical setback of 20 feet.

Design Guidelines for Signs

Most local ordinances and village plans contain no detailed design guidelines for signs, although compatibility with local architecture and building materi-

als is encouraged. A few sources, such as the Center for Rural Massachusetts' *Design Manual* mentioned above, provide more detailed guidelines, stressing simplicity and readability. The guidelines recommend use of no more than three colors (for background, lettering, and emphasis) and no more than two type faces. On storefront-type commercial buildings within town centers, signs should be confined to a long, continuous "information band" directly above the storefront or applied directly on the display window. Natural materials like wood and metal are encouraged, although neon may have a place in certain districts. Illumination (except for neon) should be external; the internally illuminated "box sign" is generally discouraged.

The Bucks County *Village Planning Handbook* contains similar guidelines. Wall signs are encouraged on older commercial "block" buildings since the lintel that extends above the storefront of these buildings was designed to accommodate such signs; window signs placed on the storefront glass are also appropriate. Buildings that were originally residential should be identified primarily through a freestanding sign. Projecting signs are especially appropriate when buildings are located very close to the street, with little or no front yard. The handbook encourages diversity among signs in order to express the individual character of each business, although simplicity of design and a limited color scheme are still key.

REFERENCES

- Baltimore County Office of Planning and Zoning. *Hereford Community Plan*. Towson, Md., 1990.
- Bucks County Planning Commission. *Village Planning Handbook*. Doylestown, Pa., 1989.
- _____. *Southampton Village Designbook*. Doylestown, Pa. 1985.
- Chesterfield County Planning Department. *Chester Village Plan*. Chesterfield, Va., 1989.
- _____. *Midlothian Area Community Plan*. Chesterfield, Va., 1989.
- _____. *Zoning Ordinance*. Chapter 21.1. Chesterfield, Va., 1989.
- Kelly, Eric Damian, and Gary J. Raso. *Sign Regulation for Small and Midsize Communities*. PAS Report No. 419. Chicago: American Planning Association, November 1989.
- Mandelker, Daniel R. and William R. Ewald. *Street Graphics and the Law*. Washington and Chicago: APA Planners Press, 1988.
- Trancik, Roger. *Hamlets of the Adirondacks: A Manual of Development Strategies*. Ithaca, N.Y., 1985.
- Yaro, Robert D., et. al. *Dealing With Change in the Connecticut River Valley: A Design Manual for Conservation and Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy and the Environmental Law Foundation, 1989.

Chapter 4. The Village in the Landscape

Zoning regulations and design guidelines are vital in preserving and reinforcing the key features of existing villages. Looking beyond the village boundaries, however, the central *planning* issue that must be addressed is the village's role in its rural or suburban setting. Should the village be preserved intact within a rural landscape, which in turn is protected through the use of agricultural zoning, cluster development, or the acquisition of easements? Should a certain amount of "outfill" development be permitted on the village fringe, while keeping the outer edge well-defined? Or should the village function as a nucleus for higher-density residential development, thereby strengthening its role as a potential town center?

The answers to these questions will differ for each village and will depend on a host of factors, including environmental constraints, existing and potential infrastructure, regional location and growth pressures, and the goals of both the village and the larger community.

INFRASTRUCTURE: CENTRAL SEWERS AND WATER

Lack of central sewer facilities in a village can create problems for existing homes and forestall opportunities for new development. Most village lots were laid out in the era of the outhouse or, at best, the cesspool, and lack sufficient area for an on-site septic system meeting today's standards. If new homes will use on-site septic systems, lots must be of adequate size and contain suitable soil types for percolation. This is a common problem in southeastern Pennsylvania, where heavy, poorly drained clay soils predominate; lot sizes of an acre or more are typical where on-lot systems are used.

Public sewers, while they represent a simple solution to this problem, are not always feasible or desirable. In the case of a small village surrounded by farmland, it may be prohibitively expensive to run sewer lines to serve a few homes; extending lines across rural agricultural land will also increase the pressure for residential development of that land.

When existing septic systems are failing, several alternatives exist, most of which require some public investment. A central community treatment plant is one possibility; spray irrigation of treated effluent onto existing farmland should be considered as an alternative to conventional stream discharge. Yet, many local governments oppose such "satellite" systems out of fear of future maintenance problems. Another problem is that, as with central sewers, private funding will be needed in most cases—in other words, new development must be part of the package.

Private development of a central sewer system was recently attempted in the village of Palm in Upper Hanover Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The village is plagued by failing septic systems and surrounded by farmland and woodland zoned for half-acre lots. A developer acquired over 400 acres of land on the village outskirts and proposed to develop it with central sewers, which could be extended to the village. The development, known as Mill Hill Village, was to include townhouses, small-lot, single-family detached homes, and a light industrial area. Some 150 acres of open space—a stream valley and Mill Hill itself—would be protected. In exchange, the developer requested a zoning change to permit construction of townhouses and a higher overall density. Unfortunately, the plan was a fairly conventional suburban one with strict separation of uses. Furthermore, although township supervisors were interested in the project, the sudden prospect of nearby development at higher densities horrified many residents of Palm, who were attached to the village's rural setting. To them, the project has assumed NIMBY status, and its future is uncertain. This example points up the absolute necessity of a community goal-setting process to enable village residents to establish some parameters for new development, rather than waiting for a developer's proposal.

Another approach to the sewer problem can be used when a large tract of land directly abutting a village is proposed for development. By concentrating all the density permitted on the tract on that portion at the edge of the village, the remainder of the tract can be kept as a protected greenbelt and used for sewage treatment. Those homes that abut the greenbelt could employ individual septic systems, with the drainfields extending into the greenbelt through a system of cross-easements. Homes elsewhere in the village could be connected to a common treatment system that would employ spray irrigation. As in the case of Mill Hill Village, this approach requires both a large tract of adjacent land and an outside developer willing to work with village residents to construct the system.

In areas where groundwater is scarce, or where existing wells have been contaminated by on-site septic systems or other pollutants, the lack of public water can be as severe a limiting factor for growth as the absence of central sewers. Limerick Township, Pennsylvania, has struggled with this issue throughout the preparation of its comprehensive plan and new zoning ordinance. The plan envisions the township's two villages, Limerick and Linfield, as

centers for new infill residential, office, and small-scale commercial development. A limited amount of expansion is also proposed for the village of Limerick, which is located on a main highway and surrounded by developable land. However, groundwater is scarce in the township, and another principle of the plan (based on study of local geologic formations) is that, where on-lot wells are used, a lot size of at least two acres will be required in order to ensure sufficient land area for groundwater recharge.

Unfortunately, the township's central water is provided by a private company that has no desire to extend its lines to Linfield, and, although a water line goes through part of Limerick village, not all residents have chosen to hook up. The two-acre lot size runs directly counter to the concept of village infill. At present, the township is considering an awkward compromise. The village zoning district will permit typical "village lot" dimensions like a 60-foot lot width, combined with a two-acre lot size. This pattern will result in narrow, excessively deep lots—quite similar, in fact, to the historical lot layout of both villages. In the long run, however, the township will have to rely on an outside developer or consider funding its own water system if it wants the villages to evolve as commercial and residential town centers.

CONTROLLING TRAFFIC

Villages historically tended to spring up along main roads. This fact now threatens the existence of these villages. Heavy traffic, especially truck traffic, combined with the narrow front-yard setbacks of the village, can destroy any vestiges of peace and quiet, while making pedestrian movement unpleasant and hazardous. Handling this through traffic while attempting to retain or restore the village's residential and pedestrian character is one of the most intractable problems that planners face.

Road widenings, as discussed in the previous chapter, are often the solution imposed by state and county highway departments, which tend to view a village street as a bottleneck that constricts free traffic

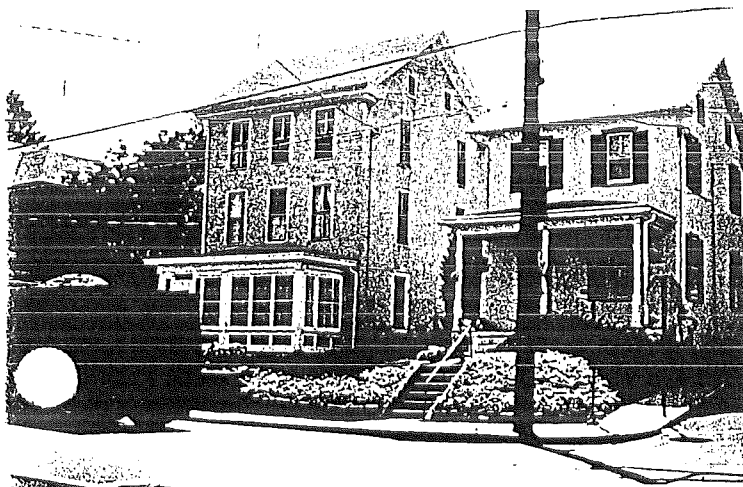
flow. While widenings may solve the *traffic* problems created by the village, they may ruin the streetscape in the process, wiping out front yards and shade trees. A far better solution, although more difficult to achieve, is to create a bypass around the village to separate the regional from the local traffic.

The research for this report turned up few successful examples of village bypasses, perhaps because the planning, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of a bypass can take decades. In some cases, a fortuitous alignment of several local roads can be used as a bypass. Bucks County's *Village Planning Handbook* mentions several examples of this method, including the village of Pipersville, Bedminster Township, where truck traffic was rerouted around the village center on existing roads.

Lower Salford Township has been working to develop two village bypasses since the early 1970s, when both were proposed in the township's comprehensive plan. The plan proposed a realignment of Route 113, the main highway through the village of Harleysville, using existing roads except for a short stretch that would cross vacant land. Route 113 was also proposed for relocation around the village of Lederach, where it forms part of a baffling and dangerous six-way intersection. The township has acquired almost all the necessary right-of-way in Harleysville and about half of it in Lederach through negotiations with developers. The Lederach bypass has been "programmed" by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) as part of its 12-year road improvement plan. PennDOT has been reluctant to commit to building the Harleysville bypass, however, apparently because the agency foresees opposition by those new residents outside the village whose homes abut the proposed route.

While most residents of a village that suffers from heavy traffic are likely to support a bypass, merchants may oppose it on the grounds that they will lose business if traffic diminishes. There may be some truth to this fear, especially for the highway-oriented business. On the other hand, it can be argued that the village as a whole is likely to gain popularity as a destination if shoppers can benefit from an uncongested, pedestrian-oriented environment.

Where a bypass is infeasible in the immediate future, other techniques can be used to reclaim the village from traffic domination. One approach is to "reconfigure" an arterial street to make it more compatible with its village context. Limerick Township's transportation plan takes this approach to Ridge Pike, the arterial street that cuts through



Heavy traffic, especially truck traffic, combined with narrow front-yard setbacks, can destroy any vestiges of village peace and quiet.

Pleasant, narrow, tree-lined streets in Mechanicsville, Pennsylvania, are made less so by the 45-mile-per-hour speed limit.

Limerick village. The plan provides for a variable ultimate right-of-way: 100 feet outside the village, narrowing to between 72 and 80 feet in the village—a dimension that still encroaches on front lawns, but does not cut through houses and porches.

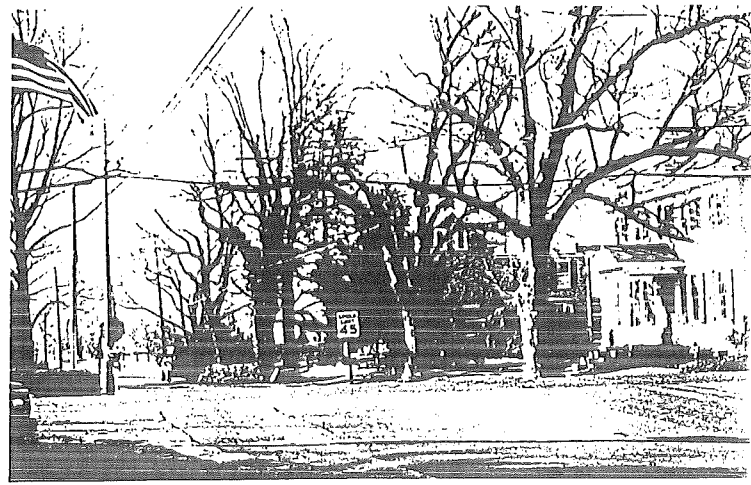
At present, Ridge Pike in the village is a two-lane highway with parking lanes on either side, although residents admit that parking can be hazardous. The transportation plan proposes a three-lane road with the center lane occupied by a landscaped median, except at designated locations, where turning lanes would be provided. The median would serve the dual purpose of consolidating turning movements and improving the streetscape with a canopy of shade trees. The loss of on-street parking, most crucial in front of the post office, would have to be compensated for by the creation of additional side-yard parking lots. Township planning commission members have discussed the long-term possibility of creating new streets to the rear of the existing village buildings as a way to provide access to rear-yard parking and to ultimately expand the village outwards, away from the busy arterial street.

If the goal is to slow traffic down as it passes through the village, other techniques include lowering speed limits, permitting on-street parking, adding crosswalks of different paving materials, and even narrowing the roadway by widening sidewalks or adding planting beds. Unfortunately, such practices are likely to violate all the principles of the state or county highway department, which may have jurisdiction over the main street. Traffic studies may be required to demonstrate that increased pedestrian or traffic safety will result from such changes.

HOW LARGE SHOULD A VILLAGE GROW?

When the policies of a municipality encourage some degree of growth around the edges of the village, the amount, location, and type of growth must be determined. While no "cookbook" approach is valid everywhere, a few basic principles—all frequently encountered in the work of the neotraditional town planners—are worth considering.

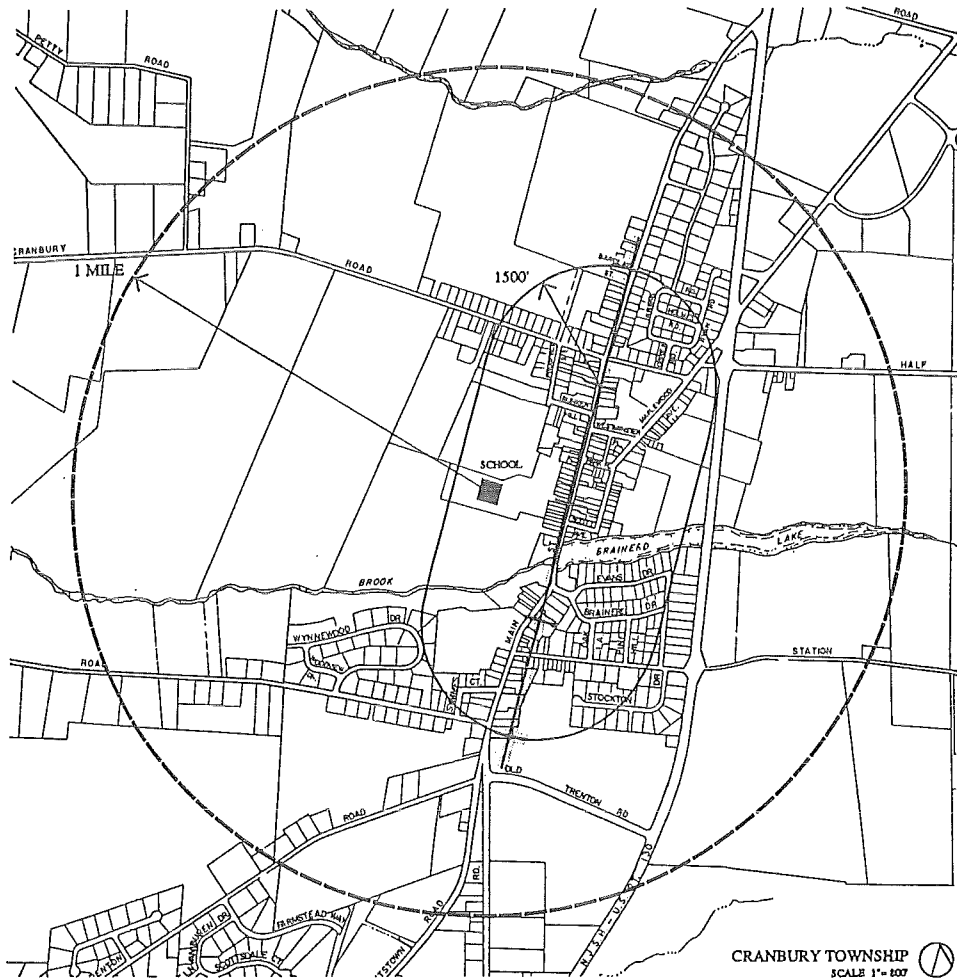
The first of these is keeping the "pedestrian radius." The quarter- to half-mile radius from the village center is generally considered to mark the limit that most people are willing to walk. The study of three New Jersey villages discussed in Chapter 1 showed that the half-mile radius effectively delimited each village. Urban development consultant Lawrence Houstoun, Jr., a resident of the village of Cranbury, cites a classic principle of neighborhood



planning as practiced by Clarence Perry and the other new town planners of the 1920s and 1930s—a neighborhood should be defined by walking distance from the elementary school. This principle was also used in the most successful new towns of the 1960s, notably Columbia, Maryland. Although not all villages possess their own elementary school, the approximate radius of a quarter- to a half-mile still applies. Since most existing villages are composed of narrow lots along one or more main streets, there is usually ample vacant land to the rear to permit expansion within these limits.

The second principle of village expansion is that the mixed-use character of the existing village should be carried through in any new development. Even the introduction of dwelling types new to the village, such as townhouses, can be accomplished if they are integrated into a varied streetscape. However, a single-family detached neighborhood next to one of townhouses or apartments perpetuates the typical suburban segregation of uses. Unfortunately, most developers specialize in building and marketing a specific housing product and are uneasy about mixing it with other housing types. A village district ordinance can foster the integration of such uses by allowing for variable lot widths for different dwelling types and requiring a mix of uses on each block in all but the smallest developments.

The third principle is that new streets should extend the pattern of existing streets. Most American towns were laid out in a grid pattern, and most of today's neotraditional town planners embrace some variant of the grid as the best means for dispersing traffic and maximizing connections between streets and neighborhoods. The rigidity or looseness of the grid will be determined by topography, natural breaks such as stream valleys, and the existing street pattern. Short blocks, diversity of housing types, and streets that terminate at some sort of destination, like a central green or a public building, help to avoid the monotony that an uninterrupted grid pattern can create. Moreover, the grid need not be entirely



Keeping the "pedestrian radius" in mind is a simple, but effective, principle for village planning.

rectilinear. Peter Brown, of the architectural firm EDI, designers of several neotraditional villages, points out that low-volume residential streets need not intersect at right angles; an angle of 30 or 60 degrees is adequate for slow-moving traffic and increases the visual interest of the street pattern. He points to street designs of this type in Raymond Unwin's classic work *Town Planning and Practice*, which have been adapted by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk in the model neotraditional village of Seaside, Florida.

Village street widths also represent a departure from typical suburban subdivision standards. While street widths differ greatly depending on local preferences, most sources recommend widths for local streets ranging from 20 feet (two travel lanes, no parking, or a one-way street with one parking lane) to 28 feet (two travel lanes, one parking lane). Even if parking is permitted on both sides, street width should not exceed 30 feet. With on-lot parking now required in all codes, on-street parking should be sporadic enough to permit oncoming cars to pass, even if some "weaving" is required. The objective should be to slow down and control vehicular traffic, not to increase its speed. On a street with commercial uses, however, where on-street parking is combined with larger traffic volumes, a four-lane width of 32 to

36 feet (two travel lanes, two parking lanes) may be needed.

Alleys are a key element in the local street pattern. Where lot widths are narrow (40 to 60 feet), alleys are an alternative to multiple curb cuts for individual driveways, thereby providing more room for on-street parking on the main street. By removing the driveway from the front yard, alleys reduce the visual impact of the automobile; they can also be used to carry utility lines, to take trash collection activities off the main street, and to give children a sheltered play network removed from traffic. A 1980 publication by the Bucks County Planning Commission, *Performance Streets*, discusses the design and dimensions of local streets and alleys in detail.

EXPANDING THE VILLAGE OF CRANBURY

An example of a "village extension plan" that demonstrates these principles is the one developed for the village of Cranbury, New Jersey, by the Philadelphia architectural firm of Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham (GBQC). Although only 10 minutes from Princeton and the congested Route 1 corridor, Cranbury Township is still largely agricultural. The majority of its 2,500 residents live in the village, which contains a thriving downtown shopping district, its own elementary school, and its own

small lake for recreation. In the 1980s, however, new suburban-style subdivisions were being proposed and built around the edges of the village. With their quarter- to half-acre lots, curvilinear streets, and streetscapes dominated by garage doors, these subdivisions represented a sharp departure from village traditions—a departure that made some township officials uneasy. Their image of Cranbury as a compact village surrounded by acres of farmland was threatened. This unease, combined with the township's obligation to provide areas for low- and moderate-income housing (under New Jersey's "Mount Laurel" requirements) led to development of the plan.

Architects Robert Brown and Charles Kelly of GBQC began by trying to quantify Cranbury's unique character. They measured its dimensions—street width, length of blocks, front-yard setbacks, and spacing of buildings. This last dimension provided an important indicator of the settlement pattern. In the village center, which dates back to the eighteenth century, they found buildings spaced at distances of about 30 feet, center to center. On the village fringe, built in the nineteenth century, they found a 60-foot spacing. And, in the newer suburban developments at the far edge of the village, buildings were, on average, 150 feet apart. This spacing, which translates roughly to lot width, was used to establish a pattern for the extension of the village. According to Brown, "small changes in dimension change people's interaction." Very narrow separations between residences tend to promote a kind of mutual avoidance in order to preserve privacy, while wide separations offer few opportunities for casual encounters. Based on discussions with the mayor's advisory committee and their own intuition, Brown and Kelly decided that the 60-foot spacing was "just right" for new single-family detached homes. They also found that front yards should be no deeper than 30 feet to retain some relationship to the street.

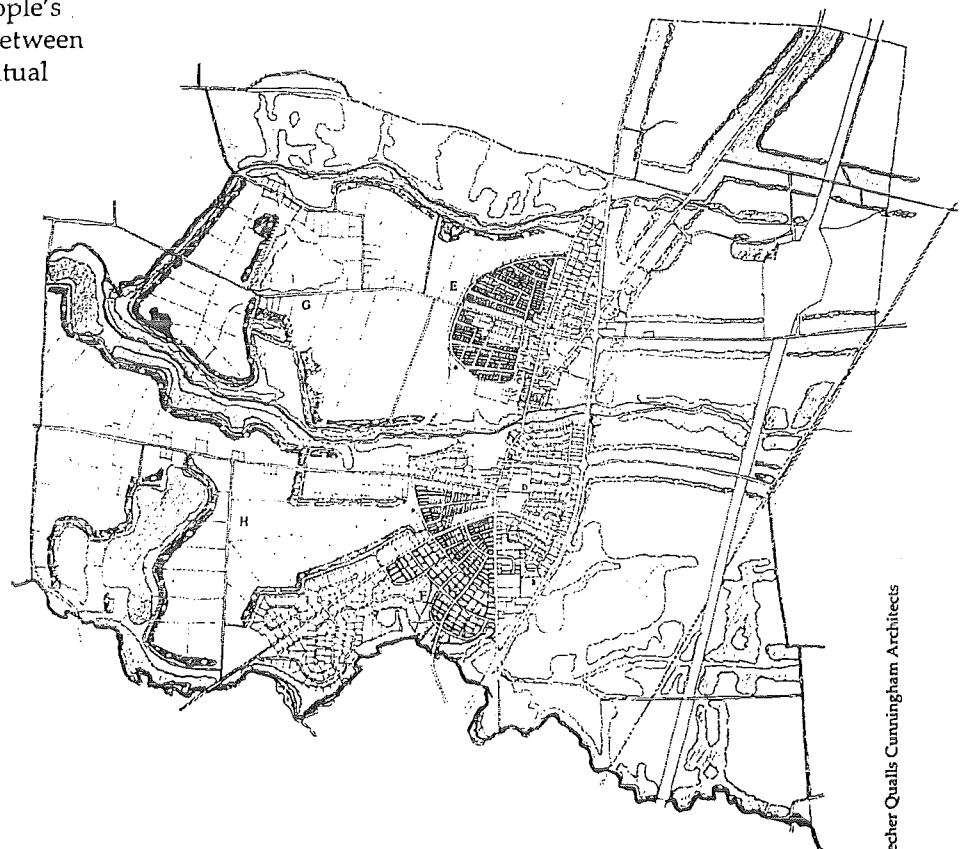
The village was already built out to a quarter-mile radius, so the street extension pattern was based on the half-mile radius mentioned above, modified to preserve favorite views of farmland and extended to fill in the gap between the village and one of the suburban subdivisions. Topography, surrounding roads, and the locations of wetlands and hedgerows were analyzed to refine the boundaries of the

village. The street pattern consisted of short blocks in a loose grid pattern, with no dead end streets. Alleys were not used, however, because of the preferences of township officials.

A mix of dwelling types on each block—singles, twins, townhouses, and apartments—was proposed for the extension of the village. Given the boundaries that had been established, the consultants calculated that between 540 and 650 new units would be added to an existing base of about 1,000 homes.

The village plan was well-received by township officials and the mayor's advisory committee. The main stumbling block to its adoption was the treatment of the farmland surrounding the village. The consultants and the committee had rejected the idea of requiring low-density cluster development around the village, or even the creation of new hamlets in the township, reasoning that this would encourage dispersion rather than concentration of settlement. Instead, they proposed zoning the farmland for very large "estate" lots—10 to 25 acres—with some type of deed restriction that would keep much of the land in agriculture.

The township's farmers questioned the fairness of a plan that concentrated all new development within a half-mile radius of the village center, leaving their land in agriculture or very low-density development. Without a program for the transfer of development



CRANBURY TOWNSHIP VILLAGE DESIGN PLAN

Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham Architects

Geddes Brecher Qualls Cunningham Architects

rights or some other type of cooperation, how could an equitable balance between village and farmland densities be achieved? The debate over this issue within the township has delayed adoption of the village plan and the development of a zoning ordinance to implement it. The township is now reexamining the option of cluster development on its agricultural land. The township did commission a financial feasibility study of the village plan that compared its impact with that of conventional large-lot development. The study showed that the variety of dwelling types proposed in the village plan appealed to a wider range of buyers, and thus would be absorbed more rapidly, than a development of exclusively large-lot, high-end, detached homes.

THE VILLAGE GREENBELT

As Cranbury's plan illustrates, a critical part of village planning is the protection of the rural agricultural landscape beyond the village edge. The creation of a greenbelt or buffer is one of the greatest challenges that planners face. A sharp break between village and countryside runs counter to American zoning practice, which tends to create fine gradations of density, so that the village would be surrounded by a series of transition zones shading outwards to the lowest densities. If municipal officials can be convinced that a departure from this pattern is legally justifiable, several possibilities exist. An ideal situation would be one in which a large area of land outside the village falls under single ownership, enabling development to be clustered on that part of it adjacent to the village boundaries while the remainder is kept rural. Even with a more typical, fragmented land ownership pattern, the idea of clustering development at very low densities should

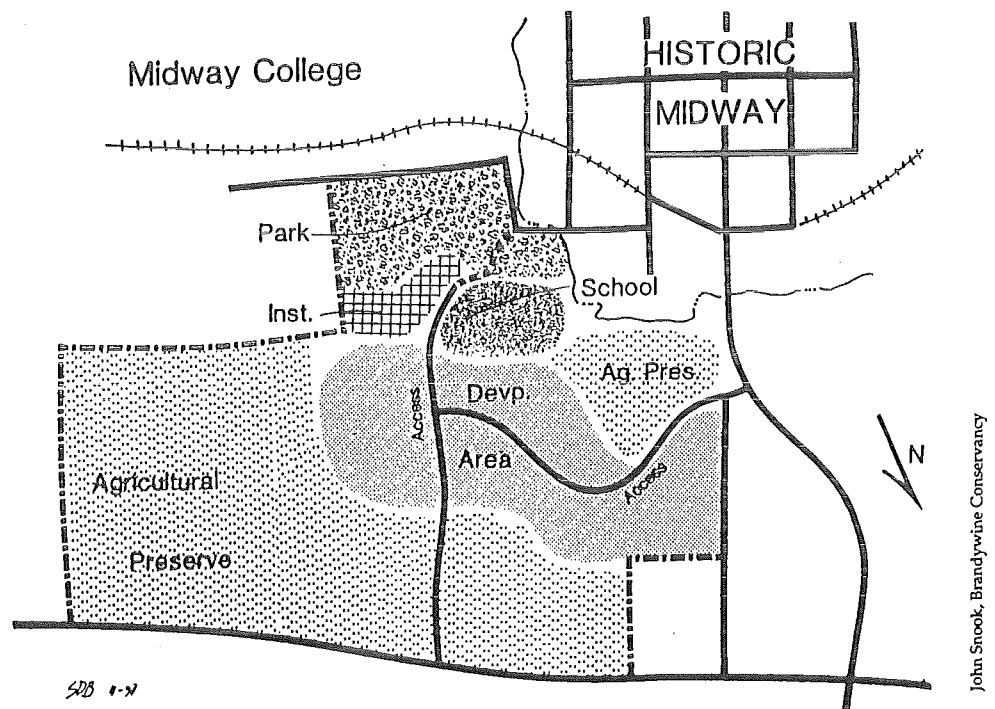
still be explored.

Cluster development, if not contiguous to the village, will create a dispersed settlement pattern. However, if designed to minimize intrusion into scenic views, farmland, and other sensitive land, clustering can do much to preserve these elements of the rural landscape. The Center for Rural Massachusetts' *Design Manual* includes many examples of this type of rural cluster development. One of the development scenarios in the manual shows how a combination of clustering and infill development could be used in and around "Parsons' Mills," a typical New England village of the upper Connecticut Valley.

The most effective means of creating a village greenbelt through zoning, however, is probably through transfer of development rights, whereby the density that would otherwise be permitted in the rural area (the "sending area") is transferred to the village (the "receiving area"). Unfortunately, few examples of successful TDR programs exist, and fewer still are found at the local level. It is difficult for a single municipality to establish a program of that complexity. TDR programs require a careful analysis of regional market forces and the demand for various lot sizes and housing types in order to establish a fair system of exchange between development rights and densities in sending and receiving areas.

One New Jersey municipality that is undertaking a pilot TDR program is Chesterfield Township in Burlington County. This still largely agricultural community has developed a master plan that calls for the preservation of much of its farmland by transfer of development rights to a 1,400-acre "receiving zone" in the northwest corner of the township, near the New Jersey Turnpike. New development in this area would follow a village pattern, with a "downtown"

The Brandywine Conservancy's plan for Midway, Kentucky, is intended to: 1) allow for new development reflecting the existing townscape; 2) create a greenbelt that will be a focus for both the town and new development; and 3) create a permanent green "edge" to the town through agricultural preservation.



retail and municipal center and eight distinct new villages, each with a different overall density and range of dwelling types. Another receiving zone surrounds the existing village of Crosswicks. The basic principles and design standards for these areas were developed with substantial public involvement through a "community image preference survey," a technique discussed later in this chapter.

One example of a successful effort to concentrate new development on the edge of a historic village while creating a greenbelt around it is a plan developed by the Brandywine Conservancy (a land trust based in southeastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware, discussed previously in Chapter 2) for the town of Midway, in Kentucky's bluegrass region. With a population of about 1,500, Midway is the oldest railroad town in the state, established in 1835 "midway" between the cities of Lexington and Frankfort. Its main street still straddles the railroad line; its architecture is an eclectic mixture of small bungalows and larger Victorian homes.

The conservancy, which had just completed a scenic corridor study of the Lexington-Frankfort area, was asked to mediate a dispute between a developer who owned 220 acres surrounding the northeast quadrant of the town and a citizens' group opposing his plan. The plan involved the construction of 26 new homes on 13 acres abutting the town, as well as a change from agricultural to residential zoning to permit construction of an additional 100 homes on 30 acres. Plans for both tracts showed a typical suburban street pattern, with no visual or architectural relationship to the adjacent neighborhood.

The conservancy's plan took the entire development value of the 220-acre tract (based on its current residential and agricultural zoning) and concentrated it on 53 acres abutting the town. Lot sizes ranged from 6,000 to 15,000 square feet, with a street pattern that connected to existing streets and reflected the curvilinear alignment of the nearby railroad line. A community park and a site for a new school were proposed on an adjacent 40 acres in order to preserve one of the town's major scenic views while offering a new community focus for both the existing town and the new development. An existing farmstead in this area was preserved as a large "mini-estate." The remainder of the 220 acres was placed under easements restricting the land to agricultural use, creating a permanent greenbelt around the northeastern edge of Midway.

According to John Snook of the Brandywine Conservancy, the proposal was successful because each side in the dispute had a reason to compromise. The citizens' group had no assurance they could win in court and faced the long-term prospect of periodic requests for zoning changes, resulting in incremental change. The developer hoped to avoid a protracted dispute. All parties therefore agreed to a rezoning

that would permit the plan to be implemented. Other goals were achieved as well. Both the developer and the citizens' group agreed to stipulate that one-third of the units would be market-rate "affordable"; the developer also agreed to make improvements to the town's sewer system to correct problems with infiltration. A design review board has been established, and design guidelines will be developed to ensure that the new homes architecturally complement Midway's eclectic mix of one-and-a-half story bungalows and larger "Carpenter's Gothic" style homes.

PRESERVING RURAL CHARACTER THROUGH EASEMENTS: THE MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

One important alternative to the control of land use around a village through zoning is to control the land itself through acquisition of easements. The Maryland Environmental Trust, in a pilot project partially funded by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is working to create permanent greenbelts around eight historic rural villages through donation or acquisition of easements on agricultural land and historic properties.

The Rural Historic Village Protection Program was initiated in response to uncontrolled suburban development on the outskirts of the state's rural villages. Land-use regulation through zoning appeared uncoordinated and ineffective, especially in rural areas where planning capability was limited and local residents were deeply suspicious of "top-down" state or federal preservation efforts. Controversies like those surrounding the proposed development of the Manassas Battlefield in Virginia pointed to the need for alternative conservation techniques. Private and quasi-public negotiations with individual landowners seemed to offer a faster, more effective protection strategy.

The trust, therefore, embarked on a project involving a variety of conservation groups and state agencies, using a variety of techniques: voluntary donations of easements on land or historic properties, purchase of development rights on farmland, and the development of local land trusts in many of the targeted villages in order to provide a continuing active presence.

The village of Sharpsburg offers an example of the need for private alternatives to zoning in order to protect a rural landscape. The village, with about 900 residents, is adjoined on two sides by the Antietam National Battlefield and Cemetery, site of one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. The battlefield, managed by the National Park Service (NPS), occupies only 800 acres and is surrounded by farmland zoned for a one-acre minimum lot size. NPS recently completed a landscape analysis of views around the battlefield that could be affected by development. A planning committee that included NPS representa-

tives, state and county officials, and local residents also evaluated zoning around the battlefield and recommended the establishment of a historic overlay district to protect the appearance of major approaches to the battlefield and the village.

Adoption of the overlay district by Washington County generated substantial opposition from area farmers, who organized under the name Save Historic Antietam through Responsible Policies (SHARP) to challenge the ordinance in court. The group opposed land-use regulations, fearing that they could affect property values. Instead, it advocated the use of voluntary methods; specifically, the sale of easements on farmland around the battlefield to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation. Local opposition may have stemmed in part from suspicions about the acquisition of two farms contiguous to the battlefield by the Richard King Mellon Foundation for eventual donation to NPS. Some residents feared state-sponsored tourist development on these sites.

In this polarized setting, the role of the trust has been to provide the public with information about the various state easement programs available and to assist local farm groups and county officials in forming a new local land trust. State support in the form of additional funding for easement purchases has helped to allay fears of tourist development. The state is now negotiating with NPS to limit or avoid condemnation of land around the battlefield in favor of voluntary easements.

The trust does not discount the role of zoning and other land-use controls in protecting historic villages but advocates a "carrot and stick" approach, combining incentives for land preservation with regulatory approaches. The trust also recommends that historic villages be exempt from concentrated development policies. As stated in its report on the village program, "While it generally makes sense to . . . cluster new development in and around existing developed communities, to avoid sprawl and utilize existing utilities, some historic towns should be identified for protection from this strategy, because of the importance of the surrounding countryside to the character of the villages." As a means of keeping this rural setting intact, easements are undoubtedly a more permanent tool than a zoning ordinance, which is always vulnerable to political change.

NEW VILLAGES AND HAMLETS: AN ALTERNATIVE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

There is no doubt that existing villages can absorb only so much growth if they are to retain their village qualities—and it may be that some villages should be exempt from any new development. In such cases, the creation of new "satellite" villages and hamlets should be considered. This pattern, similar to the historical evolution of the New England town, is a

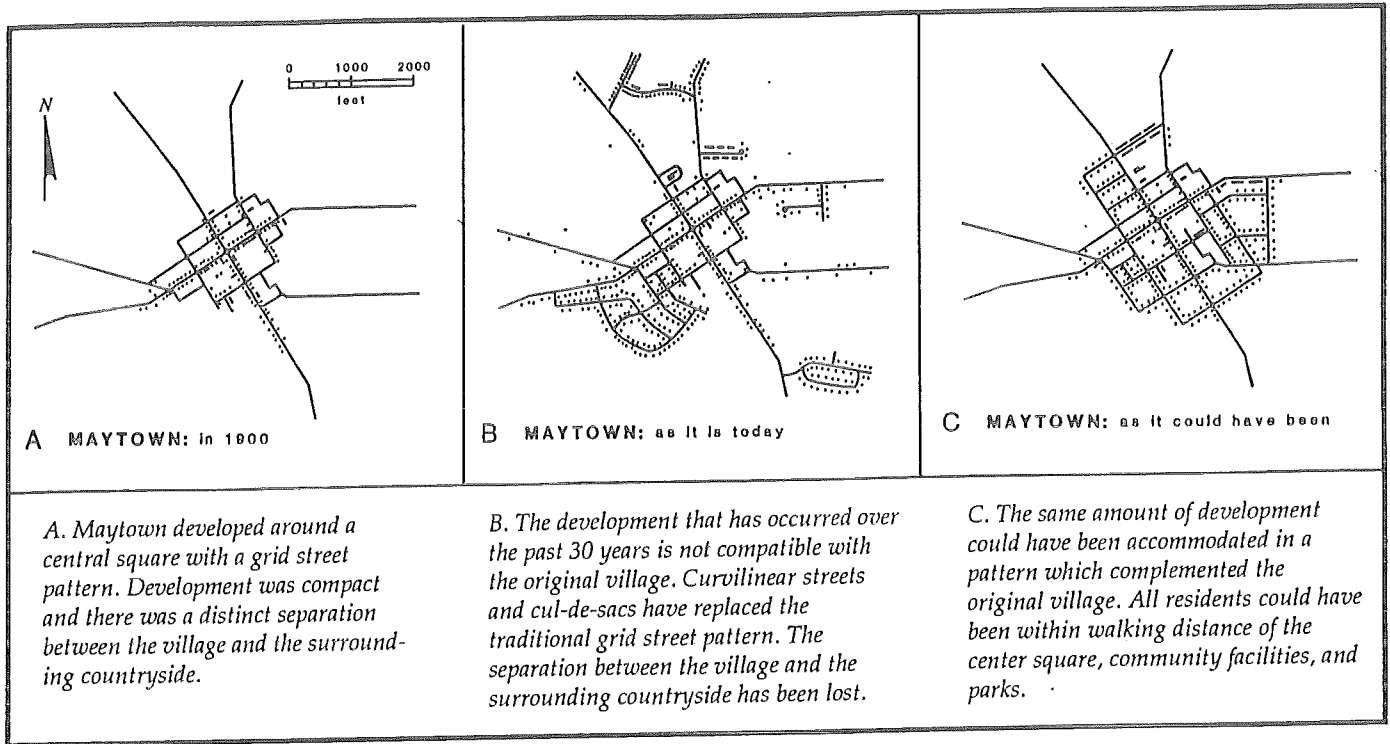
way of extending the village concept beyond a single village or township to a larger region. This concept is gaining adherents in the Mid-Atlantic states, largely due to the influence of the neotraditional town planners and proponents of rural cluster design.

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, is well-known for the quality of its farmland and for the Amish culture that still flourishes there. Its proximity to the suburban fringes of Philadelphia and Baltimore, its relatively affordable land prices, and its attractiveness as a tourist destination have also resulted in increasing strip commercial development and large-lot rural residential "sprawl." The county planning commission, now working to update its comprehensive plan, has focused on the county's rural landscape and its historic villages as key resources to be protected. The recently released Policy Plan envisions a return to the county's historical development pattern, with Lancaster City as the hub, surrounded by a ring of secondary towns. A well-defined urban services boundary would be established, encompassing both existing suburbs and many of the county's existing villages. In the rural area beyond this boundary, new growth could occur around existing villages or in new ones on lands that are not prime agricultural soils or environmentally sensitive areas. The plan thus advocates the village model in both urban and rural areas as an antidote to the present land-consumptive suburban/rural sprawl and as a means of distinguishing "town" from "country." As described in a recent newsletter:

A municipality must first identify if a new village would be appropriate and if so where it should be located. Prime farmland, environmentally sensitive areas, and unique cultural, historic, or scenic landscapes should be avoided. Careful planning of the amount, pattern, and type of development will ensure that a new community develops in an efficient and attractive manner. The same criteria (building design, site design, etc.) that are important in ensuring compatibility between an existing village and adjacent development are also important in ensuring that a new village develops an identity of its own and becomes a recognizable community.

The policy plan will be followed by a growth management plan that will define urban growth boundaries. As part of this process, county staff will evaluate existing villages to determine which ones are suitable for limited expansion. The county is heavily involved in public education efforts, including plans for a design charette to develop standards for new villages.

Although the role of Pennsylvania counties is



R. Todd Martin, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Planning Commission

The central planning issue is the village's role in its setting. Consider what happened with Maytown.

advisory, Lancaster County officials hope to persuade individual municipalities to comply with the plan through legally binding agreements. Pennsylvania's local jurisdictions guard their powers jealously, yet the response to the plan so far has been positive. According to Scott Standish, head of the county's advanced planning department, "People are ready for something different. They're realizing that the reason they're sitting in traffic is separation of land uses."

Loudoun County, Virginia, on metropolitan Washington's urban fringe, is implementing an ambitious plan to allow development of villages and hamlets throughout its rural western half as an alternative to the three-acre minimum lot size prescribed by the current zoning. (Depending on soils and topography, current zoning results in a mix of three- to seven-acre lot sizes.) The plan, known as Loudoun VISION Initiative, evolved out of a series of workshops the county held in 1988. (See *Planning*, August 1989, and the *PAS Memo*, November 1990.) Since that time, the planning commission and county staff have prepared zoning ordinances for rural villages and hamlets with the assistance of neotraditionalist Andres Duany; the hamlet district was adopted in June 1990.

The hamlet is essentially a variant of clustered residential development. Consisting of five to 25 single-family detached lots, often grouped around a central green and surrounded by common open space, the hamlet may include home occupations and bed-and-breakfasts, but no other commercial uses. With at least 80 percent open space, the hamlet is a highly desirable living environment, but one that

includes no diversity of housing types and in no way lessens its residents' dependence on the automobile.

The proposed village district is much more of a self-contained community, established through transfer of development rights from a larger surrounding area. A village would contain from 100 to 300 houses on a site 60 to 160 acres in size, surrounded by a village buffer at least twice that size, and additional lands from which density has been transferred. The ordinance requires that land be reserved within the village for greens and squares, civic uses, commercial storefronts, townhouses (usable for certain commercial purposes), detached houses, and accessory apartments. "Workplaces," or light industrial uses, are permitted to be located on the periphery but are not required.

Design standards provide for a generally rectilinear street pattern, on-street parking, sidewalks four to eight feet wide, and a varied pattern of lot widths and building types on each block. The draft ordinance provides for village government through a private association, established through a charter. Designation of a specific site for a village would require county approval through a comprehensive plan amendment followed by a specific rezoning. The applicant would be required to demonstrate the suitability of the site in terms of environmental factors, road connections, and utilities.

A task force established by Loudoun County to review the ordinance recommended a financial feasibility study of the village concept. Two sample designs were developed by a team led by Andres Duany and analyzed for their sales potential by a

20 feet. Participants can use these blocks to design a prototype hamlet: a grouping of less than 40 building units, consisting mainly of single-family houses with a few two-family and townhouse units; outbuildings (garages or secondary dwellings); a civic building such as a church or town hall; and a few mixed-use commercial buildings. The hamlet is designed according to criteria developed by Nelessen. Buildings are grouped around a central green where several roads intersect and where civic and commercial uses are located. The street pattern consists of short blocks, with streets terminating at focal points such as civic buildings, flagpoles, or water towers. Because of its small size, the hamlet is surrounded by protected open space, with most rear yards facing it. Two or more hamlets can be grouped together to make a larger village.

Participants arrange their set of blocks on a sheet of tracing paper according to these criteria, adding roads, street trees, sidewalks, street furniture, and other elements, such as front yard fences or hedges. By tracing around the blocks, a complete two-dimensional plan is produced. While Nelessen's criteria may seem somewhat rigid (many existing villages evolved in a more linear and casual fashion than his prototype), the exercise can be tremendously effective in bringing local officials and residents into the design process. Most professional planners are generally in the position of trying to convince their citizen boards to accept their recommendations regarding road layout and site design. Involving these board members in the design of a hamlet enables them to draw their own conclusions about this development pattern and gives them a new awareness of the role that they can play in design review.

THE FUTURE OF THE VILLAGE FORM

The creation of new villages does not guarantee that they will function as, or evolve into, real communities. Some observers point to problems inherent in trying to create a settlement form as fundamental and idiosyncratic as a village from scratch. Matching commercial services with residential demand is difficult. As the financial feasibility study of Loudoun County's new villages points out, the residential population may not be sufficient to support the planned commercial facilities until the village reaches maximum build-out. Until then, some subsidies are needed—or else residents must drive to shopping outside the village.

The need for public facilities is also difficult to predict. Consultant Lawrence Houstoun points out that most new planned communities attract young families in their early years, providing enough children to fill a grammar school and enough commercial demand to support local food stores. As the population ages, however, these facilities are left underused.

Most importantly, Houstoun is convinced that village character is almost impossible to replicate. "The reality of village life is a melange of apartments over stores; large homes next to small ones; the mortician's establishment next to comfortable homes. It is a mix of cemeteries, traffic, on-street parking, sirens, bars, and school children." This untidy mixed character is difficult to design and even more difficult for a developer to market. Thus, the new village may be a shiny, "sanitized" version of the real thing, targeted to a specific income range and demographic profile.

Another danger in new village development is that it will further fragment an already dispersed suburban growth pattern. Thomas Jacobson, Planning Director of Chesterfield County, Virginia, in a letter to *Planning* (November 1989) points out the need for a well-defined urban services boundary to prevent leapfrog development through creation of far-flung new villages and towns. Jacobson states that "we must acknowledge the urban nature of suburban development. An organized and publicly managed expansion of the urban edge, from large and small communities alike, will reduce commuting distances, provide efficient delivery of public services, and create predictable development patterns." At the same time, existing villages and new suburban activity centers should provide a "vibrant mixture of activities and lively pedestrian spaces." Chesterfield County's plans for the villages of Chester and Midlothian illustrate the application of this concept to villages within the urban growth boundary.

Given all the problems inherent in creating new communities, it should be noted that the success of older communities was never a sure thing. Most American towns and cities were originally "planned communities," whether the planners were religious leaders, real estate speculators, industrialists, or government agencies. Many of these communities have failed and disappeared, while others have survived and flourished, although often in an entirely different shape or form.

Most existing villages, once the service centers of an agricultural economy, function today as bedroom communities for larger towns and cities, with perhaps a local post office, a general store, an inn, or a church as their remaining focal points. Whether these villages can be revived and retrofitted as town centers depends on the many factors discussed previously—infrastructure, location, growth pressure, local support, and political will.

The strong appeal the village form holds for many architects, planners, and developers is partly rooted in nostalgia for an imagined small-town past. It is also based on a longing for both a sense of place and a sense of community—qualities that most present-day suburbs clearly lack. A sense of community is created through casual social interaction among neighbors,

chance meetings at the coffee shop or hardware store, children walking to school, and adults going for a stroll after dinner. These simple patterns of daily life seem to flourish in the small spaces of the village setting. A sense of place can be derived from the sharp break between village and landscape, from the compact, diverse, yet ordered streetscape of the village, and from the sense that a community has evolved over time.

An effort to recreate these qualities, whether in a new or existing village, requires a willingness to break with conventional zoning, subdivision, and highway engineering practices, to mix uses, to narrow streets to a pedestrian scale, and to reinforce the

village edge. Some of the new tools and techniques needed for this process have been provided by the neotraditionalist planners, drawing on historical town planning principles. Others must be invented through trial and error, with the involvement of local officials and village residents. The willingness of suburbanites to abandon their large lawns and automobile dependence for the village setting, however, remains to be seen. The ultimate success of a village as a place to live may not become evident for many years and will depend on the people who live and work there as much as on any strategies that planners, designers, or architects can invent.

REFERENCES

- A. Nelessen Associates. *Community Image Preferences: A Guide to Future Development in Chesterfield Township*. Princeton, N.J., 1990.
- Bucks County Planning Commission. *Performance Streets*. Doylestown, Pa., 1980.
- Knack, Ruth Eckdish. "Repent, Ye Sinners, Repent." *Planning*, August 1989, 4-13.
- Lancaster County Planning Commission. *Comprehensive Plan: Policy Plan*. Revised Draft. Lancaster, Pa., June 1990.
- _____. "Rural Development Patterns." *Update: Lancaster County's New Comprehensive Plan*. No. 3 (January-February 1990): 2-3.
- Loudoun County Department of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development. *General Plan*. Preliminary Draft. Leesburg, Va., 1990.
- _____. *Rural Land Management Plan*. Leesburg, Va., 1984.
- _____. "Vision for the Future of Loudoun: Rural Village Financial Feasibility Study." September 1989.
- Slater, David C. and Marya Morris. "A Critical Look at Neotraditional Town Planning." *PAS Memo*, November 1990.

**Appendix A: Selected Village Zoning Ordinances From Bucks
And Montgomery Counties, Pennsylvania**

MUNICIPALITY (VILLAGE)/ ZONING DISTRICT	PERMITTED USES	CONDITIONAL USES/SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS	LOT AREA	LOT WIDTH	YARDS Fron/Side/Rear (feet)	COVERAGE Bldg./Impervious	OTHER COMMENTS
BUCKINGHAM (SIX VILLAGES)/ VILLAGE CENTER (VC-1)	Forestry SFD Access. office Access. pers. svce. Religious use Municipal bldg. Res. conversion Comm. conversion Mixed comm./res. Retirement comm.	CU: Agriculture Nursery, ag. retail Village-orient. shop Medical/vet. office Guest house Utilities/emerg. svces. SE: Family day care Group home Rooming house Access. trade business Access. repair bus.	SFD: 20,000 sq. ft. Other: 1 acre	SFD: 100 ft. Other: 150 ft.	SFD: 50/15/50 Other: 50/30/50	SFD: 20%/-- Other: 50%/80%	Intent is to preserve the residential and limited commercial character of six villages in Township.
(BUCKINGHAM, FURLONG, LAHASKA)/ VILLAGE CENTER (VC-2)	All VC-1 uses (see above) plus: School Comm. school Community center Nursing home Medical office Office Retail store Pers. services shop Financial institution Funeral home Restaurant Repair shop	CU: Agriculture Rec. facility Vet. office Guest house Utilities/emerg. svces. SE: Group home Rooming house Access. day care Access. trade business Access. repair business Tavern Auto repair Shopping center Specialty shop center Service station	SFD: 10,000 sq. ft. Other: 1 acre	SFD: 70 ft. Other: 150 ft.	SFD: 35/10/40 Other: 50/30/50	SFD: 30%/-- Other: 50%/80%	Intent is for these three villages to serve as centers for commercial and office uses for surrounding residential areas.
DOUGLASS (DOUGLASS- VILLE)/ LIMITED COMMERCIAL	SFD, 2-Fam., MF Prof./bus. office Pers. services shop Specialty retail Studio Mixed use. bldg. Municipal utility office	SE: Small appliance repair Bakery Day care center Funeral home MF conversion up to 5 dwelling units Any SE or perm. use on lot 50-60 feet wide in existing building	7,500 sq. ft. (3,000 sq. ft. per addit. d.u.)	60 ft.	10/(8/20)/20	40%/80%	Residential conversions: 4,000 sq. ft. required per unit Maximum building dimension: 100 ft. Parking must be located behind building setback line or 25 ft. from ultimate right-of-way Public sewers are required Existing buildings may be converted to permitted uses without meeting all dimensional standards Landscaped buffer 25 ft. wide required along side and rear property lines
LOWER FREDERICK (ZIEGLERVILLE)/ VILLAGE COMMERCIAL	SFD, 2-Fam., MF (3 du's max.) Prof./bus. office Specialized retail Pers. services shop Mixed-use structure (max. 3 du's) Utility office	Bank (no drive-in) Restaurant (no drive-in) Funeral home Day care center Studio (art, dance, etc.) Variety & hardware stores (no lumber sales, outdoor storage) Food stores Similar uses	10,000 sq. ft.	50 ft.	15/(8/20)/20	--/70%	CU stds: no disruption of surround. neighborhood; no greater traffic volumes than permitted uses; no loading in front yard Max. bldg. dimension: 100 ft. Min. distance between bldgs: 16 ft. Conversion side: must meet all req's for new use; appearance must be con- sistent w/surround. bldg. Shared parking permitted Access limits: 1 driveway if less than 100 ft. frontage Landscaped buffer 10 ft. wide required along property lines abutting residential uses

MUNICIPALITY (VILLAGE)/ ZONING DISTRICT	PERMITTED USES	CONDITIONAL USES/ SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS	LOT AREA	LOT WIDTH	YARDS Front/Side/Rear (feet)	COVERAGE Bldg./Impervious	OTHER COMMENTS
LOWER POTTSGROVE (SANATOGA)/ LIMITED COMMERCIAL, OFFICE	SFD, 2-Fam., MF Prof./bus. office Pers. services shop "Retail services" - bakery, tailor Specialized retail Studio (dance, etc.) Public utility Mixed use - any combination of above uses	CU: 2-Fam. res. MF conversion Antique shop Restaurant (no drive-in, fast food) Funeral home Warehouse ancillary to retail (floor area < 7,500 sq. ft.)	Permitted: 8,000 sq. ft. CU: 15,000 sq. ft.	Permitted: 75 ft. CU: 100 ft.	Permitted: 30/15/30 CU: 50/20/50	Permitted: 25%/80% CU: 20%/80%	Min. vegetative cover: 20% Max. building dimension: 125 feet Min. distance of 20 feet be- tween bldgs. on same lot. No outdoor display/ storage except seasonal items Lot line development permitted for non- residential or mixed use buildings; must abut non-res. use, no doors, windows on lot line; party wall permitted, access easement onto abutting property Access restrictions: 1 access for lots <100 ft. wide, 2 access points max. Area within 5 ft. of ultimate right-of-way must be landscaped
LOWER PROVIDENCE (EVANSBURG, AUDOBON)/ VILLAGE COMMERCIAL	SFD, Prof./bus. office Pers. services shop Specialized retail Produce shop Studio (dance, etc.) Civic, municipal uses	CU: 2-Fam. res. MF conversion Antique shop Restaurant (no drive-in) Tavern Bed & Breakfast Other retail SE: combination of uses on a lot, modification of dimensional standard (pre-1940s bldg)	20,000 sq. ft.	150 ft.	30/20/50	30%/50% Incentive Standards: 40%/60%	Min. distance between bldgs: 25 feet Min. bldg. width facing street: 75 feet Parking area setbacks: from ultimate right-of- way: 30 feet from all prop. lines: 10 feet from buildings: 10 feet No parking in front yards; parking in side yards is a SE Any dimensional std. may be modified as SE for a pre-1940 building Landscape plan required Only one driveway per property may have access to arterial or collector street
LOWER SALFORD (HARLEYSVILLE)/ VILLAGE COMMERCIAL	SFD, 2-Fam. Townhouses, apts. Prof./bus. offices Banks (no drive-in) Pers. services shop Specialty retail Sale/repair of small appliances Studio (dance, etc.) Small equip. repair	CU: Restaurant (no fast food) Sales of appliances, electronics, furniture Bakeries Wholesale uses Auto parts/supplies Drugstore, hardware store Rental facility Convenience food store Funeral home Club, lodge Hotel, Bed & breakfast Day care, elem. school Permitted use on existing noncon- forming lot	10,000 sq. ft.	60 ft.	35/10/20 Sideyard must be 30 ft. if there is a driveway	80%	List of prohibited uses: incl. drive-in banks; fast food; gas station; car wash; bldg. supplies; mini-storage; "large stores"; outdoor storage; auto sales/svce; indoor/ outdoor amusement Max permitted develop- ment ratio: 1 d.u. or 1,250 sq. ft. nonresiden- tial use per 7,500 sq. ft. of lot area No parking in front yards, must be landscaped Side yard driveways must have planting strip, sidewalk Parking setbacks: from property lines, alleys, buildings: 5 ft. 20 ft. from boundary of more restrictive district CU standards: no demoli- tion of existing bldgs. on Main St. must preserve front and side facades, porch; new "compatible" bldgs. may be erected on same lot

MUNICIPALITY (VILLAGE)/ ZONING DISTRICT	PERMITTED USES	CONDITIONAL USES/ SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS	LOT AREA	LOT WIDTH	YARDS		COVERAGE Bldg./Impervious	OTHER COMMENTS
					Front/Side/Rear (feet)			
NEWTON AREA (VARIOUS LOCATIONS)/ VILLAGE COMMERCIAL	SFD Twin, duplex School Rec. facility Day care center Office Financial institutions Pers. services shop Hotel, motel, inn Restaurant Access. retail Utility/emerg. svces. Residential/com- mercial combination	CU: Bed & breakfast SE: Relig. institution Comm. center Specialty-cultural shopping center Tavern Funeral home	Public sewers: 3,000 sq. ft. On-lot system: 1 acre	Public sewers: 60 ft. On-lot system: 150 ft.	Public sewers: 20/6/20 On-lot system: 50/30/50	Public sewers: 50%/75% On-lot system: 50%/75%	Newton Area Joint Municipal Zoning Ordinance applies to Newton Borough and three surrounding townships in Bucks County. Front yard may be de- creased to average alignment of existing buildings within 300 feet, but must be at least 5 feet from ultimate right-of- way. Minimum lot size applies to each dwelling on lot. No outdoor storage, and only seasonal outdoor displays permitted. New buildings may not exceed the average area, bulk, and height of adjacent structures in district by more than 1.5 times.	
SALFORD (TYLERSPORT)/ VILLAGE COMM/RESID	SFD, Twin Munic. use, home occupation Agriculture	CU: Conversion of SFD to MF res. Conversion of res. to nonresidential or municipal use Prof. office Personal svce. "Small-scale retail" Restaurant, bar, Bakery	SFD: 25,000 sq. ft. Twin: 15,000 sq. ft.	SFD: 100 ft. Twin: 60 ft.	SFD: (15/50)/60/60 Twin: 25/20/60	SFD: 15%/- Twin: 20%/-	Conversion requirements: min. floor area of 750 sq. ft./d.u.; 2 pkg. spaces/d.u. Non-res. conversions: min. 25,000 sq. ft. lot; no non-res. uses except thru conversion of existing buildings; CU application to include statement of arch. fea- tures of bldg., relation- ship to "overall character" Signs: res. district signs: 15 sq. ft.; multiple-use signs: one 15 sq. ft. sign per lot; plus one 6 sq. ft. sign per bldg.	
UPPER GWYNED (WEST POINT)/ VILLAGE COMMERCIAL	SFD, 2-Family Prof./bus. office Grocery/bakery Pers. services shop Specialized retail Agriculture	SE: dry cleaners, laundry	8,000 sq. ft.	40 ft.	15/(5/20)/40	25%/80%	Landscaped 5-foot buffer adjacent to resid. district Public sewer and water required No parking in front yard Plan Commission must review plans for conversions	
UPPER PROVIDENCE (MONT CLARE)/ VILLAGE PRESERVATION	SFD, 2-Fam	SE: Home occupations MF conversions: 600 sq. ft. fl. area max; 3 d.u.'s; 'lg. dwellings' only; lot area reduction up to 33%	SFD: 6,000 sq. ft. 2-Fam.: 3,000 sq. ft.	SFD: 40 ft. 2-Fam.: 20 ft.	SFD: 20/15/40 2-Fam.: 20/8(one)/40	SFD: 30% 2-Fam.: 40%	Central sewer and water required	
WHITPAIN (W. AMBLER)/ VILLAGE PRESERVATION	SFD, 2-Fam. Townhouse (7 d.u.'s max in row)	SE: Grocery, drugstore (max. floor area 1,200 sq. ft.; must be owner-operated) Church; Pub. library; Rec./comm. ctrs.; MF conversions; Home occupations	SFD: 4,000 sq. ft. Twin: 3,000 sq. ft. Dup: 4,000 sq. ft. SFA: 2,100 sq. ft.	SFD: 40 ft. Twin: 20 ft. Dup: 40 ft. SFA: 14 ft.	SFD: 15/(5/15)/25 Twin: 10/5/35 Dup: 15/(5/15)/25 SFA: 10/5(end)/35	SFD: 45% Twin: 40% Dup: 45% SFA: 50%	Conversion stds: lot area per fam. may be reduced up to 33% Fire escapes, stairs, to rear ZHB specifies max. no of families	

Appendix B. Ordinance Excerpt from Douglass Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania*

LIMITED COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Section 900. Declaration of Legislative Intent

The following is an expansion of the community development objectives . . . of this chapter. It is hereby declared to be the intent of the LC—Limited Commercial District—to establish reasonable standards that permit and control limited commercial and office uses in the township. Furthermore, it is the intent of this part to:

1. Encourage commercial and office uses that do not attract large volumes of traffic and continuous customer turnover.
2. Limit and discourage development of strip-type, highway-oriented commercial uses that create traffic hazards and congestion because they require numerous individual curb cuts and generate higher traffic volumes.
3. Permit uses that promote conversion of existing buildings in a manner that maintains the visual character and architectural scale of existing development within the district.
4. Minimize visual and functional conflicts between residential and nonresidential uses within and abutting the district.
5. Encourage consolidation of curb cuts for vehicular access and promote more efficient and economical parking facilities.
6. Encourage uses that minimize noise and congestion.

Section 901. Permitted Uses.

The following are the permitted uses in the Limited Commercial District:

1. Retail specialty shops including, but not limited to, the sale of gifts, antiques, flowers, books, jewelry, wearing apparel, tobacco and related supplies, or craft shops making articles exclusively for sale at retail on the premises.
2. Personal service shops including, but not limited to, tailor, barber, beauty salon, shoe repair, dressmaking, or similar service uses.
3. Business offices including, but not limited to, security and commodity brokerage, real estate sales, travel agency, employment counselling, insurance sales, advertising, mailing and stenographic services, and other services of a similar nature.
4. Studios for dance, art, music, photography, radio, or television.
5. Professional offices for lawyers, engineers, architects, landscape architects, urban planners, accountants, economic consultants, doctors, dentists, chiropractors, or other practitioners of the healing arts for humans, or other professionals similar to those listed above.
6. Single-family, two-family, and multifamily residences.
7. Mixed-use structures containing dwelling units and other permitted uses.
8. Buildings or structures owned or operated by the

township or by an organization authorized by the township.

9. Telephone, telegraph, or other public utility office.
10. Any use of a nature similar to the above when approved by the Zoning Hearing Board as a special exception, subject to the criteria of Section 903 of this chapter. [See below.]
11. Accessory buildings or uses as defined herein.

Section 902. Special Exception

The following uses may be permitted by the Zoning Hearing Board as special exceptions in accordance with the standards in Section 903. . . .

1. Television and appliance repair service.
2. Confectionery or bakery for production of articles to be sold at retail only on the premises.
3. Funeral home.
4. Nursery schools or day care centers.
5. Club, lodge, or other fraternal organizations.
6. Uses permitted by Section 901 or 902, when located on a lot less than the minimum required 60-foot lot width, but greater than 50 feet in width.
7. Conversion of single-family houses to multifamily use, provided there are no more than five dwelling units in any one building.

Section 903. Standards and Criteria for Special Exceptions and Conditional Uses

The Zoning Hearing Board may authorize a use as a special exception or the Supervisors may approve a use as a conditional use if it conforms with the following standards and criteria:

1. The proposed use will not attract large volumes of vehicular traffic nor require more than one curb cut for vehicular access.
2. The proposed use is of a similar architectural scale to existing development in the district or will use an existing building for its purposes.
3. Minimum visual and functional conflict will be created between the proposed use and nearby uses.
4. The proposed use will share an access driveway and/or parking with another abutting use, or is designed to permit such sharing when and if it becomes feasible.
5. Anticipated noise and congestion created by the use will be comparable to the levels created by the uses permitted in Section 901. . . .
6. The use shall not require servicing or deliveries of materials, stocks, or supplies by trucks having more than two axles.
7. Authorization of a special exception for use of a lot between 50 and 60 feet in width shall be granted only to uses which will be located in an existing building, and which otherwise comply with the requirements of this district.

Section 904. Dimensional Standards

1. *Minimum Lot Area and Widths.* A minimum lot area of 7,500 square feet shall be provided for each and every building used in accordance with Sections 901 and 902,

* This sample ordinance, while not perfect, is a good, fairly representative one. See Appendix A for a table that compares the features of many of the ordinances surveyed for this report.

except for accessory uses. In addition, a minimum lot area of 3,000 square feet per dwelling unit must be provided for each dwelling unit more than one on any lot. Minimum lot width shall be 60 feet at the building setback line, except when the Zoning Hearing Board authorizes the use of a lot between 50 and 60 feet in width as a special exception, in accordance with Section 903.7.

2. *Percent of Coverage.* Not more than 80 percent of any lot area may be covered by buildings and/or impervious paving materials, and not more than 40 percent of any lot area may be occupied by buildings. A minimum of 20 percent of each lot shall be landscaped.
3. *Front Yard.*
 - A. The minimum required front yard shall be not less than the smaller of the front yards of the two buildings immediately adjacent (on either side) of the proposed use, or 10 feet from the ultimate right-of-way of the street, whichever is greater.
 - B. For corner lots, a front yard shall be required on each street, equal to the front yard of the adjacent building on each street frontage, or 25 feet, whichever is greater, to ensure adequate visibility at intersections.
4. *Side Yards.* For every building used, two side yards are required that shall not be less than 20 feet in aggregate width, nor less than eight feet in minimum width.
5. *Rear Yard.* There shall be a rear yard on each lot that shall be not less than 20 feet in depth.
6. *Maximum Building Dimension.* In no instance shall the greatest dimension of a building exceed 100 feet, measured parallel to exterior building walls.
7. *Minimum Distance Between Buildings.* The minimum distance between any two buildings, or portions thereof, shall be 16 feet.
8. *Accessory Use Setback.* No accessory use shall be permitted within the front yard. Setback from side or rear property lines shall be a minimum of five feet.

Section 905. Parking Capacity Regulations

1. *Minimum Number of Spaces.* The minimum number of off-street parking spaces required shall be the sum-total number determined by application of the following standards:
 - A. Two spaces per residential dwelling unit.
 - B. Three spaces per person performing a personal service (barber, tailor, etc.).
 - C. Seven spaces per patient-oriented professional (doctor, dentist, etc.).
 - D. One space per every two employees, not including persons covered by B and C above.
 - E. One space per 200 square feet of floor space devoted to active nonresidential uses not included in B and C above. Inactive use areas such as storage space or nonused basement areas need not be included.
 - F. In no case shall less than three off-street parking spaces be provided for each individual nonresidential use. The number of uses in a building shall equal the number of leasable units in the building, including owner-occupied units.
2. *Parking Held in Reserve.* If the number of spaces required by Section 905.1.A through E (above) is substantially larger than the number anticipated by the applicant, the reserve parking concept may be used to avoid unnecessary paving, in accordance with the following criteria:

- A. The total number of spaces that must be paved initially may be reduced up to 50 percent by the Township Supervisors, upon recommendation of the Township Planning Agency and Engineer.
- B. Suitable area must be available and reserved for construction of the balance of the total number of spaces otherwise required by Section 905.1 (above) if and when they are deemed necessary by the Township Supervisors upon recommendation of the Township Planning Agency and Engineer. In addition, a reevaluation of parking capacity shall be required upon a change in status (use, building additions, ownership, number of employees). Following reevaluation, the supervisors may require installation of additional parking spaces, upon recommendation of the Township Planning Agency and Engineer.
- C. A financial guaranty must be provided by the applicant to cover the cost of installation of the reserved parking spaces for a period of one year following installation of the initially constructed parking spaces. The type and dollar value of the guaranty must be approved by the Township Supervisors upon recommendation of the Township Solicitor and Engineer.
- D. To qualify for use of the reserve parking concept, the applicant shall provide evidence supporting reduced parking needs to the Township Planning Agency and Engineer for their review and recommendation.

Section 906. Parking and Vehicular Access Design Standards

1. All parking spaces shall be:
 - A. Located behind the building setback line or 25 feet from the ultimate right-of-way of streets, whichever is greater.
 - B. Set back a minimum of 10 feet from the edge of paving of alleys.
 - C. Set back a minimum of eight feet from all buildings.
 - D. Set back a minimum of 25 feet from the boundary line of a more restrictive zoning district.
 - E. Set back a minimum of five feet from property lines, except that parking shared by the uses located on two or more adjacent lots may extend to and over the boundary lines of the lots it serves.
2. The following setbacks from intersections shall apply for all access driveways where feasible, measured between centerlines:
 - A. Semicontrolled access roads: 75 feet.
 - B. Other roads: 50 feet.
3. Common parking areas and/or accessways shall be permitted and encouraged provided that:
 - A. Access easements and maintenance agreements or other suitable legal mechanisms shall be provided where necessary.
 - B. Liability safeguards for all property owners and lessees served by the common parking areas and/or accessways shall be guaranteed to the satisfaction of the Township Solicitor.
4. All required parking shall be paved in accordance with the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

5. No parking is permitted within the front yard.

Section 907. Standards for Conversions

Any proposal that constitutes a conversion under the provisions of this chapter shall comply with all the regulations contained herein, as if it were a proposal for new development. Exceptions to this requirement may be made by the Township Supervisors only for major existing conditions that cannot reasonably be expected to be brought into compliance, including but not limited to existing buildings.

Section 908. Sewer and Water Facilities

All new development and conversions shall be served by public sewer facilities; public water service shall be provided where it is available.

Section 909. Other Development Regulations

1. *Utilities.* All utility lines (electrical, telephone, etc.) shall be placed underground, whenever feasible. . . .
3. *Lighting Facilities.* Shall not produce unreasonable glare or hazardous interference on abutting properties or highways.
4. *Landscape Planting.* Shade trees and other plant materials satisfactory to the Board of Supervisors shall be provided along the street frontage occupied by developments in the Limited Commercial District, in other

nonpaved areas of the site, and within traffic-barrier islands installed in the parking lot. Emphasis shall be placed on the use of shade trees. No shrubs shall be used that will interfere with drivers' sight distances at driveway intersections.

5. *Trash and Refuse Area.* Trash and refuse shall either be stored inside the building or within an opaque screened area, which shall be at least six feet high.

Section 910. Buffer Requirements

Along a side or rear property line, the owner shall place and maintain a planting area 25 feet in width containing hedge, evergreens, and shrubbery, or suitable vegetation of sufficient planted density to produce a total visual screening consistent with the topography, the existing vegetation, and the use of the adjacent land. Wherever possible, the owner shall make every effort to retain existing natural screening, such as vegetation and topography.

1. All evergreen vegetation to be installed shall not be less than five feet in height at the time of planting and shall be of such species that expected height at maturity shall not be less than 15 feet.
2. All deciduous material to be installed shall not be less than eight feet in height and two-inch caliper.
3. All plant material shall be guaranteed for two years. All plant material that dies within that time shall be replaced by the applicant.

Appendix C. Excerpts from the Hereford Community Plan, Village of Hereford, Baltimore County, Maryland

Hereford dates to the middle 1700s and was a thriving community by 1797. The entire town predates the concept of setbacks. The inns and houses were located along the "turnpike" purposefully close to traffic. The structures were located on small lots (one lot deep) with the fronts facing existing roads. The buildings were small, of a residential scale, and presented a rural, Main Street appearance.

Recent construction of commercial buildings has begun a process of altering the historic coherence of the town's site design. The new construction has been of buildings that are of greater than 10,000 square feet and have involved the combination of two or more lots. The buildings have been located to the rear of the site or in the middle, rather than close to the road. Although these changes have been at a key location, the corner of York Road and Mt. Carmel Road, the remainder of the older portions of Hereford have not yet been changed.

On July 5, 1989, the Baltimore County Council adopted amendments to the Baltimore County Zoning Regulations establishing new regulations for the Commercial Rural (CR) District. These regulations include restrictions on bulk, setbacks, landscaping, parking, signage and architecture. The regulations limit development by right to a size of 8,800 square feet, a floor area ratio of 0.20, and a height of 30 feet. The front setback is to be not less than 15 feet from the street right-of-way and not more than the average of the setbacks of adjacent buildings. Parking is to be located in a manner appropriate and consistent with adjoining development and must be within the CR District.

The CR District regulations are important in providing a scale of commercial buildings appropriate to rural areas.

These take into consideration additional site design constraints, such as those for on-site septic disposal and wells. They also provide for the protection of important aesthetic and historic features.

The CR District zoning regulations require that proposed buildings can exceed the bulk standards (8,800 square feet and 0.20 FAR) "only when the proposed development is in compliance with site design guidelines and performance standards that are part of a duly adopted Master Plan for the district." These guidelines will be used in the review of proposed building projects that seek to exceed the bulk standards in order to ensure that the proposed structure will be compatible with the desired architectural and site design character.

ACTIONS

Guidelines are provided that are unique to Hereford's site design. These should be used for the review of proposals that exceed the bulk standards of commercial projects in Hereford. They are advisory only for new structures that meet the bulk standards as provided for in [the county's zoning ordinance].

- A) *Present a residential atmosphere.* To accomplish this, new buildings should be compatible in size, scale, and mass with existing buildings, excluding the two newer commercial buildings in the vicinity of York and Mt. Carmel Roads.
- B) *Rhythms of building spacing should be maintained.* There is an existing pattern of paired buildings followed by a space before the next set of paired buildings. This pattern should continue, taking into account the constraints of well, septic, and

stormwater management locations.

- C) *Structure of two stories or less.* Building height is restricted by the CR District to 30 feet at the top of roof, and this statement reinforces that protection.
- D) *Front of buildings facing the street.* The buildings in Hereford are characterized by their linear appearance. The front of nearly every building faces the street. Although this may not be achievable on every site due to other constraints, architectural treatments can achieve the same effect. Parking should be located at the rear and side of buildings.
- E) *Porches are to be linear in appearance.* Porches are a consistent feature on the older buildings in Hereford. They should be considered for new construction.
- F) *Roofs are to be cross gable with a moderate pitch roof compatible with surroundings.*
- G) *Windows are to be symmetrical and proportional to wall space.*
- H) *Window type and materials are to be compatible with the front facade and the historic and architectural character of the buildings.* Exterior storm windows and doors should be visually unobtrusive. Aluminum should be painted in an appropriate manner.
- I) *Stylistic trim using cornices, scroll work, and the like is encouraged.*
- J) *Exterior materials are to be natural in appearance.* Preference is to be given to wood, wood siding, stone, brick, and stucco. Second choice should include vinyl or aluminum siding that simulates wood siding.
- K) *Color should be compatible with the atmosphere of the village.* Colors should be compatible with the village atmosphere and/or typical of the period from which the architectural style was developed.
- L) *Mechanical systems should be installed in places where they will be visually unobtrusive.* Audio/video antennas and mechanical equipment are examples of these systems.
- M) *Dumpsters* should be located at the rear or side of the site and must be screened.
- N) *Small litter receptacles, benches, and other street furniture should be of materials and design compatible with the architecture of rural center* (e.g., wooden or wrought iron benches).

Suggested Guidelines for Architectural Restoration

Architectural Elements

1. *Windows and Doors.* Existing windows and doors, including the window sash, glass, lintels, frames, molding, shutters, and steps, should be retained and repaired whenever possible. If a new window or door must be used, it should be of a material compatible with the front

facade. Changing the size or arrangement of window panes, muntins, and rails where they contribute to the historic and architectural character of the building is discouraged. Inappropriate window or door features on significant facades are discouraged.

2. *Storm Windows.* Exterior storm windows and doors may be installed if they are visually unobtrusive, do not cause damage to existing frames, and can be removed in the future. Storm windows should match the trim color. Mill-finished aluminum can be painted to match.
3. *Porches and Steps.* Porches and steps that are appropriate to the building and the site should be retained. The original material and architectural features of porches and steps should be retained whenever possible.
4. *Roofs.* The original roof shape should be preserved. All architectural features that give the roof its essential character should be preserved or replaced in a compatible manner.
5. *Architectural Metals.* Architectural metals should be cleaned when necessary with an appropriate method that does not abrade the surface.
6. *Masonry Surface and Repointing.* Original masonry should be retained whenever possible, without applying any surface treatment, including paint. When repointing of mortar joints is absolutely necessary, old mortar should be duplicated in composition, color, texture, method of application, and joint profile. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible.
7. *Walls, Fences, and Railings.* Removal or replacement with inappropriate material or design is discouraged where these are historically or architecturally important elements of the design and character of the structure and district.

Wood Frame Buildings

Architectural features, such as cornices, brackets, window and door molding and details, clapboard, weatherboard, shingles, and other wood siding, are essential and parts of the character and appearance of frame buildings. They should be retained and preserved whenever possible. Frame buildings should not be resurfaced with new materials that are inappropriate for the building or that will cause deterioration of the original structure.

Structural Systems

Existing foundations should not be disturbed with new excavations that could undermine the structural integrity of the building.

Mechanical Systems

Exterior cables (e.g., electrical, telephone, and cable TV) should be installed in places where they will be visually unobtrusive. Audio/video antenna and mechanical equipment (e.g., air conditioning and solar panels) should be placed in as inconspicuous a location as possible.