



# Elizabethtown Borough Master Plan

April 20, 2004

DERCK & EDSON



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## INTRODUCTION

The Site Master Plan for the Borough of Elizabethtown establishes a vision for the enhancement and expansion of the Central Business District of the Borough. Through this plan, the downtown will strengthen its position as the business core of the greater community while helping to preserve valued farmland within the region. This plan is the next step following a report prepared for the EEDC by Robert E. Gleeson, PhD entitled "Exploiting Opportunities to Strengthen Elizabethtown's Central Business District."

### PURPOSE

Today, many towns look at what could have been, rather than challenging themselves to look at what can be. The Elizabethtown Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) is challenging this mindset and taking a leap forward to set the vision for Elizabethtown by outlining what can be. Realizing the value of the current strengths in the Central Business District (CBD), the EEDC plans to build from those strengths and enhance the already successful downtown.

The Elizabethtown community is growing at a rate greater than anywhere else in Lancaster County and they want to capitalize on that growth to the benefit of the overall community. Providing more growth opportunity within the CBD may make the difference in saving another local farm from development while strengthening the business stock of the CBD. Maintaining the surrounding farmland will also help to strengthen the existing small town ambience and rural agricultural charm of the Elizabethtown Community.

Specifically this Master Plan reviews the geographical area bound by West High Street, South Market Street, and the area

between the Train Station and the intersection of College Avenue and East Market Street. This Site Master Plan illustrates areas for redevelopment, expansion and enhancement, and identifies key development locations for retail, office, and residential development.

The Site Master Plan was based on the following goals:

- Train Station - Tie the train station development into the CBD. The station and the surrounding area provides key development opportunities for the Borough.
- Masonic Village - Tie current plans for a small specialty retail area into the CBD.
- Office Space
  - Provide space for 30,000- 60,000sf of new office space in the area of West High Street.
  - Provide other areas of opportunity, as appropriate, for future expansion.
- Retail Space
  - Provide for additional retail space along West High and East Market streets that target the Twin Income No Children (TINC) demographic group.
- Parking
  - Maximize existing parking facilities
  - Provide opportunities for additional future parking
- Housing
  - Integrate additional housing into the CBD of various types including high end housing, upscale senior housing, as well as low to moderate housing that concentrates on home ownership.
- Pedestrian Connections
  - Utilize existing features to strengthen pedestrian corridor links to the downtown and within the CBD.
- Transportation
  - Be mindful of possible future shuttle or trolley system for downtown.

## BACKGROUND

From its simple beginnings as a settlement in 1732, Elizabethtown Borough has seen many changes over the centuries. First serving as a trading post between Native Americans and pioneers from Ireland, to a mill town in the recent past, Elizabethtown has survived the many changes in our culture and society.

Today, Elizabethtown has become a bedroom community for the adjacent Harrisburg and Lancaster metropolitan areas. As a result, the EEDC has recognized this and plans to build upon the opportunities afforded to a bedroom community. Specifically, the EEDC plans to target the Twin Income, No Children (TINC) demographic group within the CBD while recognizing the fact that Elizabethtown also has a substantial older population as a result of Masonic Village and several 'empty nester' apartment buildings.

It is understood that the community will continue to grow and continue as a bedroom community for the near future. This plan will provide opportunities to capitalize on the anticipated growth while enhancing the overall sense of community.

## ASSESSMENT

Enhancing the sense of community is an underlying goal that will be realized if the desired components are woven together in a successful manner. What makes a 'Community' is difficult to define and is being debated world wide. A successful community is not any one thing, but a combination of many: its

people, culture, heritage, architecture, geography, topography, economics, physical appearance, town center etc. One thing is for sure – people want to belong to a community. Even in our high tech world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where people can work from home or car, people still desire a sense of belonging – and now more than ever. People like to gather in settings that attract other people. The ability to see and be seen satisfies a basic human need. A Town Center facilitates this need. It provides a mix of uses – residential, business and entertainment, which strengthens the sense of community in a way that enhances all the components. Centers serve as the heart, while the connecting streets serve as the arms that wrap the community together. The connections to the overall community enhance the integrity of the development of a true community experience. A successful community is infused with civic pride and lofty dreams, and it is the civic pride and lofty dreams that differentiates one community from the next.

Applying these underlying thoughts to Elizabethtown results in the following broad plan objectives:

- Strengthen the Business Base of the CBD – Provide more business opportunity
- Strengthen the Town Square.
- Strengthen existing street corridors
- Provide improved civic space for special events and daily functions.
- Enhance the small town ambience while maintaining the rural character of Lancaster County.
- Improve connections to major employers
  - Masonic Homes
  - Elizabethtown College
  - Master Foods
  - Elizabethtown Area School District



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To develop these plan objectives, the following background information has been compiled.

## Regional Issues

- Located in scenic Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Elizabethtown Borough is in close proximity to several urban centers and yet has not really identified itself with any of them. It is closer to Harrisburg than Lancaster but is more of an island floating in between than a moon to either one.
- Lancaster County has been one of the fastest growing counties in the state and Elizabethtown has been the fastest growing community in the county. As noted in the Gleeson Study, this steady and consistent growth in itself creates a very positive environment for attracting investment in housing and retail activities.

## Business Base

- Elizabethtown has several large employers that surround or are in close proximity to the CBD, but has a limited employment base within the CBD itself.
- There are numerous midsize employers throughout the CBD
- Opportunity is limited for start up businesses to grow and remain in the CBD due to current building stock, parking opportunities, and zoning regulations.

## Street Corridors

- There are no major employers along either High or Market Streets. As a result, the architecture is very residential in scale and appearance and consists of many small spaces. Generally, large users and buildings help provide critical mass to the streetscape as well as the overall structure.

## Transportation Corridors

- PA Route 283 provides easy access for this bedroom community from two interchange exits.

- The soon to be renovated train station will provide easy access by rail from Philadelphia and Harrisburg.
- Travel into the CBD from the Northeast and southeast is convenient with numerous routes to choose from. However, travel from the Northwest and southwest are limited and congested.

## Pedestrian Corridors

- Numerous opportunities exist, utilizing existing alleys, streets, and green spaces to provide stronger links to the CBD and within the CBD.

## Community Spaces

- The main square lacks the strong physical presence important to most downtowns. The current buildings are low with no strong architectural character. The current surrounding uses are not major draws to the square or CBD. As a result, the CBD and the square serve more as a corridor than an anchor of the downtown.

# CONCEPT PLAN

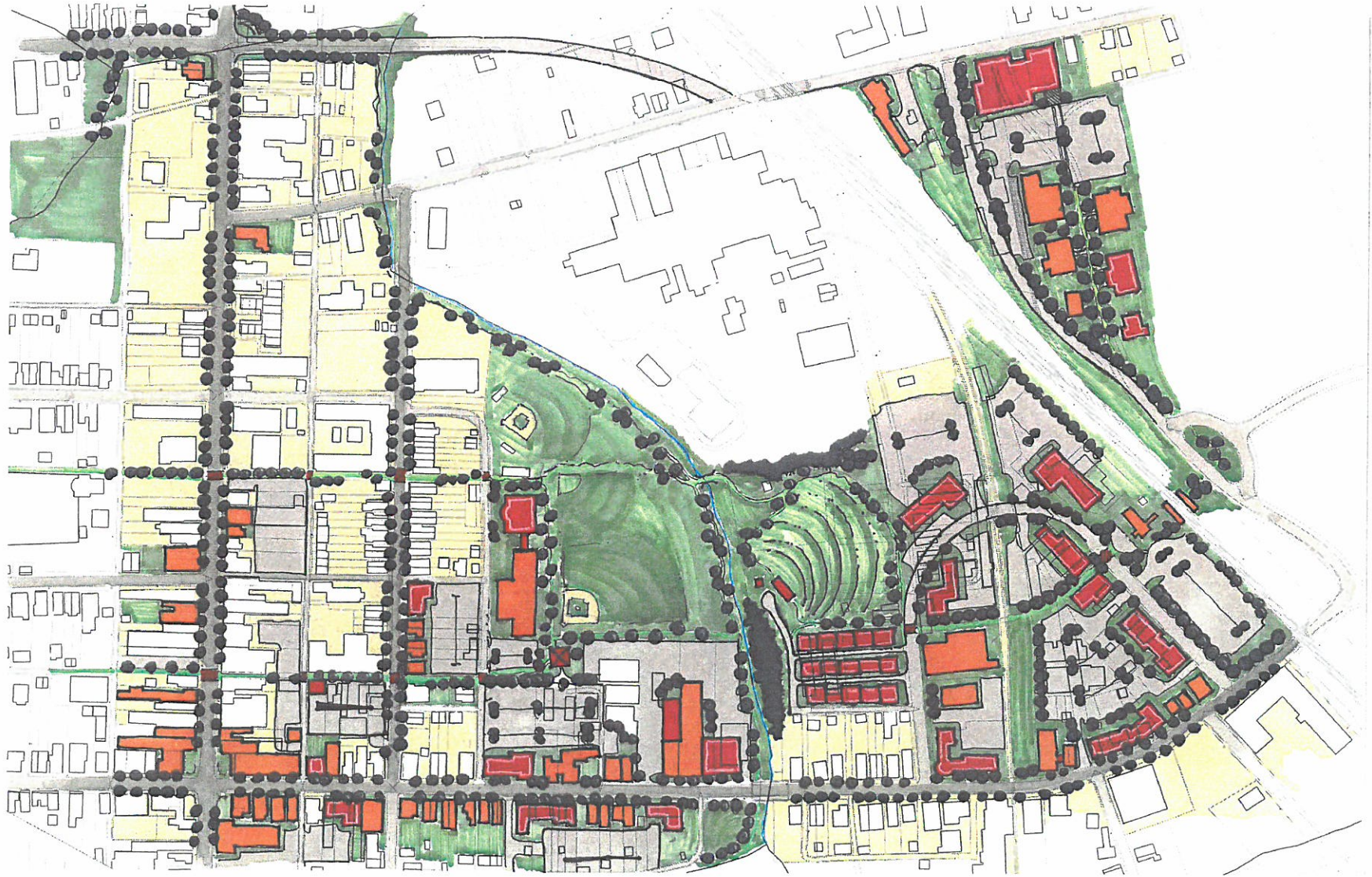




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## SITE PLAN





# TRANSFORMATIONS



The 'before and after' studies depict how some of the potential development strategies outlined in the master plan might appear when implemented.

## Office Space

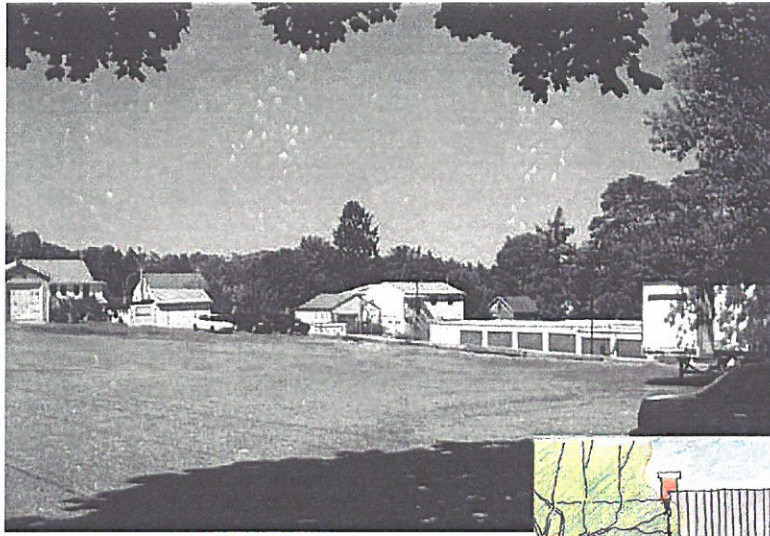
One key element of the plan identified in the Market Study, is to develop an additional 30-60,000sf of office space. This location depicted, takes an existing open gravel parking lot and transforms it into 23,000sf of flexible office space along with the supporting parking in the rear. The sketch, as shown, blends the new facility into the surrounding streetscape by use of a two story building with the façade along the street broken down into smaller components.





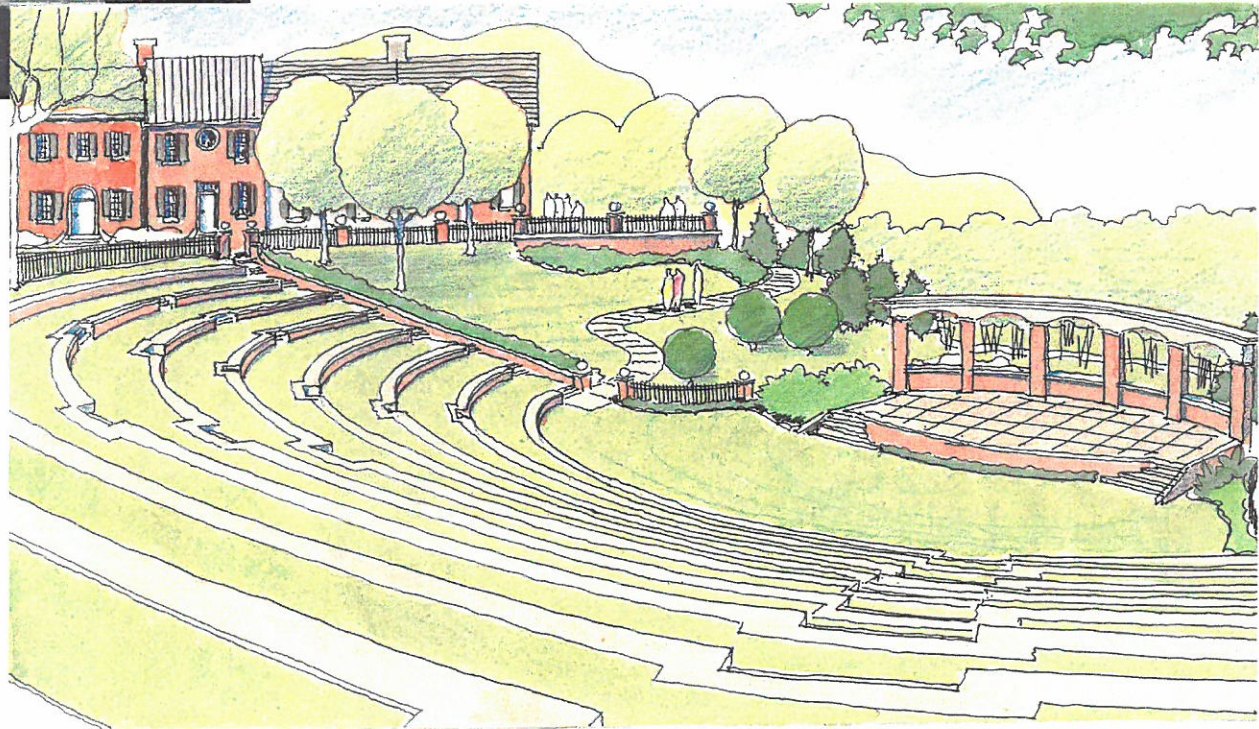
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## Public Open Space

*Providing outdoor public space in the heart of the community serves many purposes. The location shown provides an important link from the train station development area to the downtown and existing open space facilities. A prominent civic space will bring community events to the core of the Central Business District, where logical symbiosis exists between consumers and merchants.*







## Pedestrian Links

*To truly experience a downtown, a consumer must be able to safely and effectively move throughout that downtown on foot where they may interact with the materials and architecture of the place. By transforming some of the existing alleys into pedestrian corridors, Elizabethtown Borough will link their commercial base with their consumer base. The pedestrian connections will also serve as connections to nearby institutions like Masonic Village, Elizabethtown College and the Middle/High School.*





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## Retail Opportunity

*Providing space to grow is critical to any business. This sketch depicts the hardware/building supply company assuming a more prominent position along the street and more importantly within the community. Greater physical presence to the street in a two-story structure with increased glass exposure and some architectural detailing, engages the consumer, and can transform this modest storefront into an architectural and retail anchor on West High Street.*







## The Inn

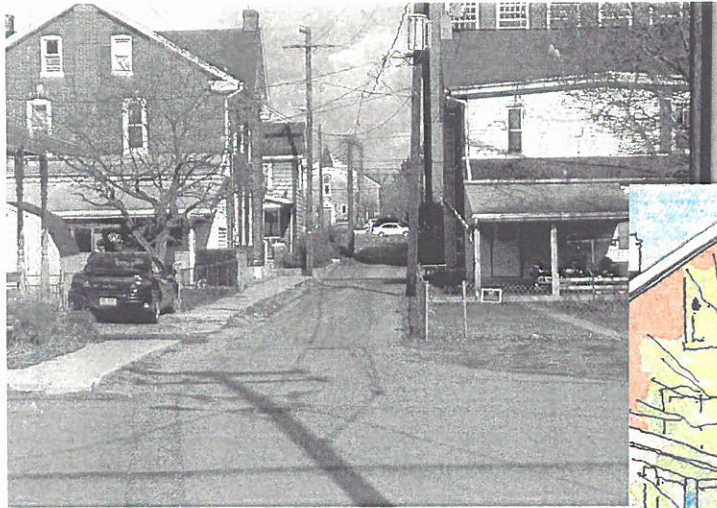
*The ideal location to consider for an Inn within the community would be within the current Town Square. The activity created with visitors, employees and auxiliary uses, like a restaurant, coffee shop, and retail shops, could turn this existing uninviting space into a dynamic gathering spot. The addition of a third floor adds needed scale to the square by serving as a stronger anchor. Adding more glass allows the activity of the space to become transparent to the outside when passing by. Architectural detailing and lighting will add depth and vibrancy 24/7 to the downtown.*





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## Connectivity

*To further connect all aspects of the downtown, pedestrian linkages will exist within the strengthened residential core along Poplar Street. Providing dedicated pedestrian links will begin to define a hierarchy of pedestrian and vehicular circulation throughout the Central Business District.*







## Town Square

*Building on the strength of a new Inn and the existing coffee shop, the remaining corners of the square can be revitalized in similar fashion by adding glass to the façade along with architectural detailing. Where possible, third floors could be added to increase the sense of scale of the square. Utilizing the existing paved spaces for outdoor gathering areas that interact with the building spaces will enhance the sense of activity and energy, and lead to the entire square functioning more cohesively as one large node.*





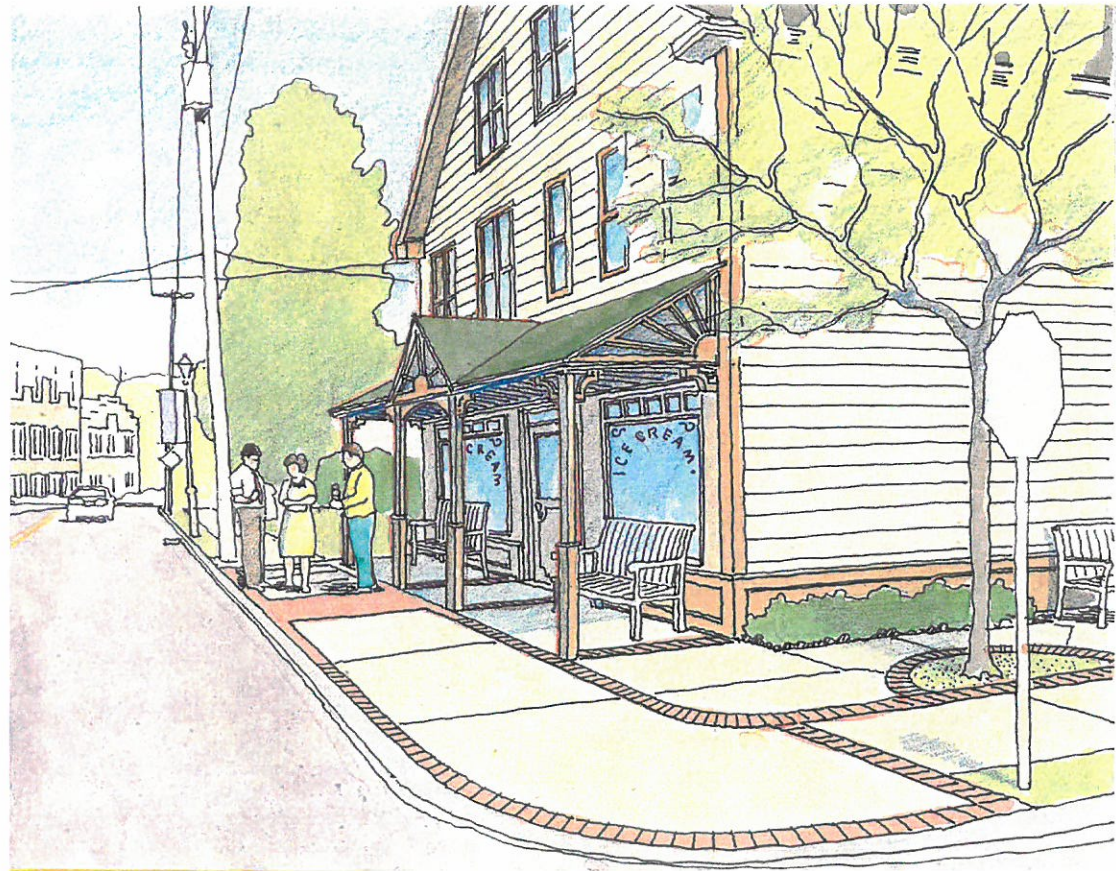
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## Commercial Opportunity

*Taking what is and looking at what could be, is the power of these transformation sketches. Taking an existing façade like this one on West High Street and overlaying some simple exterior changes starts to set the tone of the opportunities that exist in the CBD.*





## PROJECT MENU

### **Project Summaries**

The following pages contain more detailed explanations of the various master plan projects. Rather than a prioritized list of phases, these project summaries comprise a menu of projects that can be done as funding and interest allow. A tentative listing of priority items, which will contain elements from many different projects, is included after the Project Menu.



## STREETSCAPE STANDARDS

Many factors contribute to the legibility of a place. Kevin Lynch, a highly regarded planning theorist classified these factors as 'paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks.' He emphasized that people often create a "mental map" of the downtown based on combinations of these elements. We have discussed the addition of nodes and landmarks in Elizabethtown, however, it is important to prescribe methods to ensure strength in the paths, the physical route one takes; edges, the barriers that define and identify the path; and districts, the areas that are held together by a unified character. Without these connections, i.e. the streetscape, there is no way for people to move throughout the nodes and landmarks. For Elizabethtown, prescribed methods, translates to streetscape standards that address the issues of longevity, functionality, continuity, and aesthetics.

Enhanced streetscapes will assist with attracting new businesses, visitors, and residents to the richness of your downtown landscape. With careful implementation, streetscape standards will help to advance this revitalization process while creating safer public spaces and generating a greater sense of community pride. The proposed streetscape recommendations are responsive to Elizabethtown's existing landscape components.

For the purpose of this report, the term 'streetscape' refers to exterior public spaces located *between* street curbs and building facades. Inclusion of pedestrian crosswalks and traffic calming measures located within street cart ways are two exceptions to this definition, however. Basic streetscape components included within these streetscape standards are as follows:

- Paving
  - Sidewalks
  - Curbs
  - Accessible Sidewalk Ramps
  - Traffic Calming Measures
  - Crosswalks
- Plantings
  - Tree Species, Sizes, and Planting Details
  - Vegetative Buffers
  - Container Plantings
- Street Furnishings
  - Benches
  - Litter and Ash Receptacles
  - Movable Tables and Chairs
  - Bollards
  - Bicycle Bollards
  - Sign Poles
  - Fences
  - Banners
  - Planting Containers
- Lighting

These streetscape standards do not address objects typically mounted to building facades such as signs, canopies, awnings, wall-mounted lighting, railings, and other architectural features, however, these elements are crucial to the development of significant edges. As many of the transformation sketches show, the addition of awnings and larger windows can make tremendous steps towards actively engaging the pedestrian user. Planned and strategically placed way finding signage and façade lighting will help further guide the vehicular user through downtown as well.

While greater visual continuity will be achieved through use of similar specified streetscape components throughout the Borough, replication of *identical* paving patterns, street tree

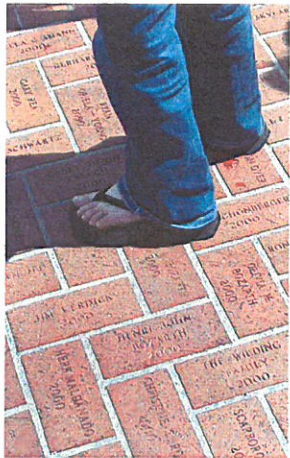


species, site furnishings and lighting are not intended for *all* areas of the Borough.

Designated areas for streetscape variation within Elizabethtown would include distinctly residential corridors, commercial corridors and the train station corridor. These diverse streetscapes consist of an assemblage of (1) paving, (2) plantings, (3) street furnishings (e.g. litter receptacles, parking meters, benches), and (4) lighting. The following four sections of these Streetscape Design Guidelines address each of these four typical components.

## Paving

Brick has dominated Elizabethtown's landscape for centuries. Utilized in construction of many factories, homes, and civic buildings and in some of our cherished outdoor spaces such as



the Town Square, brick is the material most identified with Elizabethtown's rich mill town heritage. Its naturally warm, terra-cotta coloration produces paved surfaces which are in harmony with most adjacent structures. Furthermore, an individual brick's standard size (4" x 8") lends a human-scaled, textural element to expansive areas of paving. Flexibility to create a variety of pleasing paving patterns is yet another benefit of this material.

## Plantings

More than any other streetscape component, plantings enliven our public spaces, define an identifiable pedestrian scale, and herald the changing seasons with natural vibrancy. Spring and summer flowers are typically followed with brilliant autumn foliage and ornamental winter fruit, bark, and seed pods. In addition to this seasonal succession of landscape interest, plantings may be used to screen undesirable views, reduce detrimental effects of wind and noise, provide comfortable shade, lower energy consumption and reduce carbon dioxide levels through the photosynthesis process.

## Street Furnishings

The landscape of Elizabethtown and surrounding communities maintains visible connections to the nearby iron industries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Proposed site furnishings including benches, litter receptacles, bollards, bike racks, parking meters, fences and sign poles (excluding existing vehicular way-finding signs) shall be black, powder-coated metal to replicate the appearance of the existing stock of surviving ironwork in and around Elizabethtown.