

# REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES

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## ***Introduction***

On January 22nd, a Revitalization Task Force meeting was held to verify the "top ten" goals from the public workshop, and to determine the strategies that could be acted upon to accomplish each goal. Based on the meeting's discussions, the exact language of the goals presented at the public workshop was revised slightly for clarification. Nevertheless, the Task Force agreed upon the following list of preliminary strategies for additional evaluation.

### **Preliminary Strategies**

1. Goal: Create a quality pedestrian environment that encourages strolling along and crossing Old York Road
  - Develop a comprehensive streetscape improvement program (that includes landscaping, bollards, new sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, wayfinding signage, and street furniture)
  - Install pedestrian-activated signals where applicable
  - Implement a traffic-calming program
  - Implement a business façade improvement program
  - Reinstate on-street parking on Old York Road
2. Goal: Increase the parking supply in Uptown, while preserving its small town character
  - Develop shared parking program, especially at offices and churches
  - Improve pedestrian connections from parking lots to Uptown businesses
  - Increase availability of on-street parking by enforcing parking time limits
  - Increase the actual number of on-street parking spaces by re-evaluating parking restrictions
  - Install new wayfinding signage system for vehicles and pedestrians
  - Reinstate on-street parking on Old York Road
  - Construct a parking garage in Uptown
  - Improve efficiency of existing parking lots through interconnection and/or consolidation
3. Goal: Maintain and expand office and retail tax base
  - Create redevelopment concepts for underutilized lots bounded by Leedom, Greenwood, and Summit
  - Create incentives to redevelop upper-story business space as apartments
  - Expand and effectively manage parking in Uptown
  - Create incentives and design standards to rehabilitate business facades
  - Create a quality pedestrian experience in Uptown
  - Overcome the current lack of a coherent image with improved signage, inviting streetscapes, and a marketing program
  - Investigate and identify potential redevelopment sites
  - Expand and coordinate business service and support needs
  - Investigate different tax incentives for attracting businesses
  - Create marketing program to recruit complimentary businesses
  - Create marketing program for Jenkintown as a regional destination

4. Goal: Integrate school district & borough actions that influence entire community
  - Organize a Borough/School District Task Force to facilitate the exchange of information
  - Maximize the usage of community facilities by sharing the school district and borough's facilities
  - Improve pedestrian safety and traffic circulation around school property
  - Create institutional zoning for school properties
5. Goal: Protect and enhance the Jenkintown's unique architectural resources
  - Document architectural resources worthy of preservation
  - Create a home improvement loan program that aids homeowners unable to maintain their property
  - Adopt community design standards and review process for rehabilitation and infill construction
  - Strengthen and enforce property maintenance codes
  - Strictly control and limit conversion of single-family homes into apartments
6. Goal: Develop a more physical "sense of place" for Uptown on Old York Road
  - Create gateway entrances that physically define Uptown
  - Enhance and highlight Jenkintown's unique architectural buildings
  - Evaluate location and function of existing public, quasi-public, and religious buildings
  - Adopt design guidelines for the Uptown District to establish an appropriate, unified appearance throughout the district
  - Develop a year-round calendar of events and marketing plan for these events
  - Create sidewalk dining ordinance
7. Goal: Create a walking district in Uptown that weaves the west and the east sides of Old York into the strong pedestrian environment of the Town Square area
  - Improve pedestrian access on streets perpendicular to Old York
  - Assess the east side of Old York Rd for redevelopment opportunities and potential
  - Improve the existing pedestrian crosswalks along Old York
  - Create new pedestrian connections through parking lots
  - Create new pedestrian connections through mid-block retail areas
  - Develop a wayfinding signage system for pedestrians
8. Goal: Minimize speeding throughout Borough
  - Implement a coordinated traffic-calming plan for the Borough
  - Change configuration and parking limitations on oversized streets
  - Better demarcate crossing zones near schools
  - Improve streetscape and/or change configuration of Old York Road
  - Evaluate school zone designations along Walnut, Greenwood, & Highland
  - Install another traffic signal and visual traffic calming features on Old York Road
9. Goal: Develop a balanced mix of businesses in the Jenkintown community
  - Recruit complimentary retail store types (such as an expanded concentration of full service restaurants, a broader array of specialty apparel stores, additional specialty home furnishings stores, and expanded gift shops)

- Maintain and enhance Jenkintown's unique retail environments in Uptown through the streetscaping improvements, design guidelines, and store signage
  - Attract prospective businesses with coherent and consistent marketing materials
  - Expand potential for home offices
10. Goal: Expand and enhance Borough's supply of parks and recreational amenities
- Lease tennis courts and adjacent ball fields from the School District
  - Increase greenspace of Town Square by reallocating surface parking to parking garage
  - Lease property from the School District to accommodate the "Jenkintown Playground Project"
  - Consider constructing a new community center - possibly combined with a new borough hall space
  - Create opportunities for Jenkintown to use and provide linkages to Abington's and Cheltenham's nearby park resources (such as Alverthorpe Park, Thomas Williams Park, Tacony Creek, and Valley Park)

Since the timeframe for the Revitalization Master Plan is 10 years, all of the preliminary strategies cannot be implemented realistically with the limited resources and manpower of Jenkintown Borough. Therefore, it is more prudent and feasible to implement a particular strategy that meets multiple goals. In order to determine which strategies meet multiple goals, a "Goals & Strategies Matrix" was developed (see Appendix 6).

When looking at the "Goals & Strategies Matrix," it is evident that a large majority of the strategies meet the top three goals, as well as numerous other goals. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that Jenkintown should focus on strategies that meet one of the following top three goals:

- Create a quality pedestrian environment that encourages strolling along and crossing Old York Road
- Increase the parking supply in Uptown, while preserving its small town character
- Maintain and expand office and retail tax base

This focus will give Jenkintown more bang for the buck, since a strategy that meets one of the top three goals also will meet many other "top ten" goals. If a strategy cannot meet one of the top three goals, it should not be considered as a high priority for implementation, unless it can be implemented with little resources and within Jenkintown's institutionalized systems, such as borough administration, school district administration, or even civic volunteer efforts.

Based on these assumptions, all strategies that meet one of the top three goals were analyzed conceptually for implementation purposes. Since many strategies can only be implemented by considering their interrelationships, strategies were grouped into the following categories: traffic calming, parking, underutilized parcels, streetscape improvements, and Uptown management entity.

## Traffic Calming

There is wide perception among the Jenkintown community that many of the Borough's streets are unsafe for pedestrians and other users due to the high speeds of vehicular traffic. Although empirical data to prove this is limited, there is plenty of verifiable anecdotal evidence. From preliminary field observations, it appears that most of these claims are well founded and that a major priority in the revitalization plan should be a traffic-calming component to help re-establish the pedestrian quality on which the town was originally based.

The most readily available quantifiable evidence of frequent speeding violations on a Jenkintown street is a consultant study (Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.) conducted in 1998 on Walnut Street. The consultant measured speeds on Walnut Street near Willow Street for a one-hour period and concluded that the 85th percentile speeds for northbound and southbound traffic were 32 mph and 31 mph, respectively, despite the fact that the roadway is posted for 25 mph. The 85th percentile speed is the level at or below which 85% of traffic travels and 15% of traffic exceeds. Generally, for planning purposes, the 85th percentile speed should be no higher than the posted speed limit.

Through field survey and community feedback, it is clear that speeding is an issue on a wide range of Jenkintown street types—from the major arterial of Old York Road to the low-volume residential streets on the periphery of the Borough. Coupled with the frequent lack of protective "buffers" (trees, parked cars, etc.) between the sidewalks and moving traffic, the speeding vehicular traffic creates a perception that these roads are unsafe for non-motorized traffic.

"Traffic calming" could help improve the actual and perceived safety of Jenkintown's streets for its users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, AND motorists. It entails redesigning streets (or portions or streets) to physically discourage high vehicle speeds, which is more reliable and consistent than enforcement alone. Traffic calming is accomplished through: narrowing the street width or perceived street width; deflecting the vehicle path horizontally or vertically; and/or breaking up long unimpeded sight distances that tend to encourage high speeds. There are a variety of tools available for achieving these purposes, as shown in Figure 1.

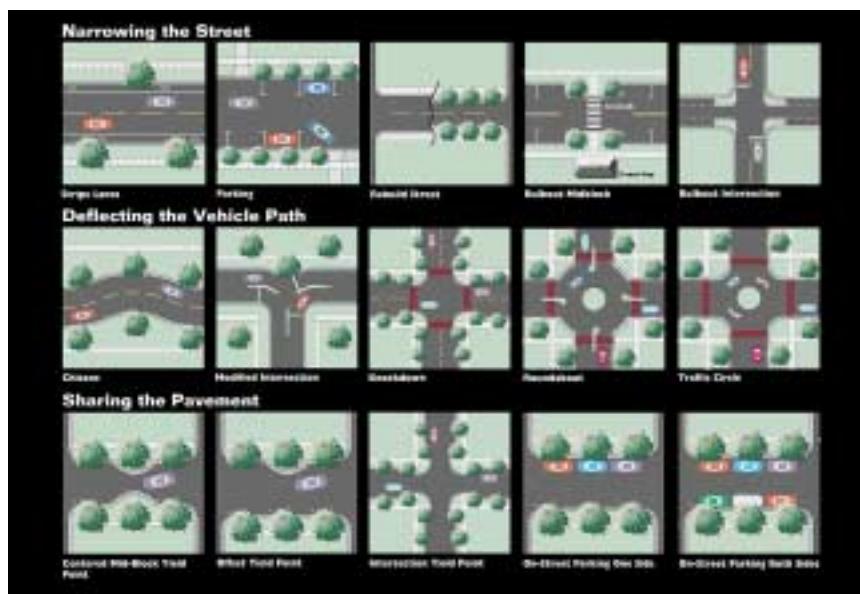


Figure 1:  
Sample Traffic Calming Tools

Traffic calming also entails the rebuilding of intersection geometrics to better account for its varied users; for example, the tightening of curb radii to protect pedestrians by decreasing the speeds of right turns. The following strategies represent opportunities to specifically address and physically mitigate speeding on a variety of streets.

## 1. Implement a Traffic Calming Program for Old York Road

The opportunities for traffic calming on Old York Road include the following:

- Installing vertical streetscape elements that narrow the perceived width of the roadway, such as trees and pedestrian-scale lampposts, and median islands where space permits;
- Installing gateway treatments at the borders of the business district to announce entry into a pedestrian zone;
- Increasing the frequency of street elements that convey an urban character different from that outside the gateways, specifically crosswalks and traffic signals;
- Tightening curb radii at intersections to control the pace at which motorists may turn onto and off of Old York Road;

Figure 2 highlights the locations where some of these actions could be taken on Old York Road. Note that the treatment shown for the intersection of Old York Road and Washington Lane employs all four of the measures described above.

These actions would not significantly affect traffic capacity and thus represent short-term opportunities. Moreover, since these actions would represent improvements to both safety AND the business climate (as highlighted in the market analysis), they should be given a very high priority in the overall revitalization plan.

## 2. Create Gateway Entrances that Physically Define Uptown

As part of a traffic-calming program, it is essential to create visual gateways that notify motorists that they are entering a place that is different from that through which they have just passed. These gateways should demarcate roadway sections that should appear distinctly different. In other words, the area of Old York Road between Jenkintown's "gateways" should have a distinctive Jenkintown streetscape that contrasts with the streetscape (or lack thereof) outside the gateways.

The combination of gateways plus distinctive streetscapes aims to achieve the objective of altering the driver mentality, in other words, to get them out of "highway-mode" for their brief interlude through Jenkintown. The construction of these gateways should be in conjunction with the streetscape program. Figure 2 provides a close-up example of how the intersection of Old York Road and Washington Lane might be reconfigured to allow the implementation of an effective gateway feature.



Jenkintown's gateway at Township Line Road and Summit Avenue

## TRAFFIC CALMING: Intersections for Improvement



**Figure 2.** Traffic Calming: Intersections for Improvement

### **3. Install Additional Traffic Signal on Old York Road where applicable**

The distance between existing signals on the northern portion of Old York Road through Jenkintown is well beyond that which is comfortable and typical of a pedestrian town center. Moreover, the pedestrian character of the town breaks down before the northern signal at Rydal Road is reached. Finally, the lack of a signal on this stretch is one of the reasons why it has become a particularly high-speed segment of roadway. As a result, a key component of the traffic-calming plan should be to introduce a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing somewhere in the northern sector of the town, somewhere in the vicinity of Vista Road.

Unfortunately, the list of standard signal warrants in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices on which PennDOT's signal warrant analysis guidelines are based does not include a warrant for "traffic calming." Moreover, a 1998 analysis of a potential signal at the intersection of Old York Road and Vista Road (Traffic Planning and Design, Inc.) concluded that none of the signal warrants were met-and hence none of the PA criteria satisfied-by traffic and pedestrian volumes at this location.

However, in the event that a reinterpretation of the data still cannot satisfy the signal warrant criteria, there are several alternate treatments that may be suitable until the signal warrant criteria is updated to include traffic calming and pedestrian-based development as viable objectives. These are:

- a. A marked crosswalk that provides a very good visual cue to motorists that a crossing zone has been reached. Potential treatments include colored concrete in tandem with an appropriate pedestrian crossing approach sign.
- b. A flashing-yellow signal that further denotes the approach and location of an uncontrolled crosswalk.
- c. Use of a crossing guard on days of high pedestrian activity (or high desired pedestrian activity). These could include weekends, potentially in conjunction with part-time on street parking in the outer lanes of Old York Road.

If successful, these actions, together with other streetscape and traffic calming treatments, could potentially attract enough pedestrians to eventually warrant the installation of a full traffic signal.

### **4. Reinstate On-Street Parking on Old York Road**

A potential later phase of the traffic-calming plan for Old York Road could include the following:

- Reduction of lanes from four to two and re-implementation of on street parking;
- Bulb-outs across the parallel parking lanes to reduce the cartway width at key locations (pedestrian crossing areas) to 22 feet.

By its very nature, this plan would reduce the overall through-capacity of the roadway and thus would face significant institutional challenges. However, the benefits of reinstating on-street parking along Old York Road would be threefold:

- It would help to further control the speeds on Old York Road;
- It would provide a solid buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic;
- It would increase the parking supply adjacent to Old York Road storefronts.

Because of the impact on traffic capacity, this is a scenario that is likely to meet stiff resistance and hence is a longer-term action eventually building upon streetscape and intersection improvements. Although PennDOT is implementing this type of a modification (from five lanes to three) in Pottstown, the traffic demands on Old York Road are significantly higher because of its role as a major suburban arterial, so it is unlikely that they are ready to take such a bold step. However, an examination of the previous downtown plan (Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, 1980) illustrates the degree to which attitudes have changed: Back then, in the pre-traffic-calm ing era, thoughts of emphasizing Old York Road for anything but regional traffic were nowhere to be found; today, there is general acceptance that there needs to be a better balance on Old York Road between the needs of automobiles and those of pedestrians. It follows that in the years to come, especially as more and more discussions about sprawl and urban reinvestment take place within Pennsylvania, it is likely that the balance will tip even more in favor of pedestrians, especially in an area so well served by regional rail.

In the interim, there is the possibility of allowing parking on Old York Road during non-peak periods only—which would consist of at least the weekends and, perhaps, weekday mid-days-reserving the outside lanes for traffic at other times. This is an appealing scenario because it would allow parking at times where its calming and "buffer" effects are most needed, i.e., when traffic is relatively light and the speeding problem the most profound. This would help support the streetscape improvements and help to make strolling through Jenkintown on the weekends more appealing, as well as offering a test case for the potential future permanent re-implementa-tion of on-street parking.

## 5. Change Configurations and Parking Limitations on Oversized Streets

Many of the residential streets within Jenkintown are too wide for their intended purpose. As a result, there is a mismatch between street width and traffic volumes, resulting in low impedance and thus high traffic speeds. Three types of "flow conditions" are highlighted in Figure 3.

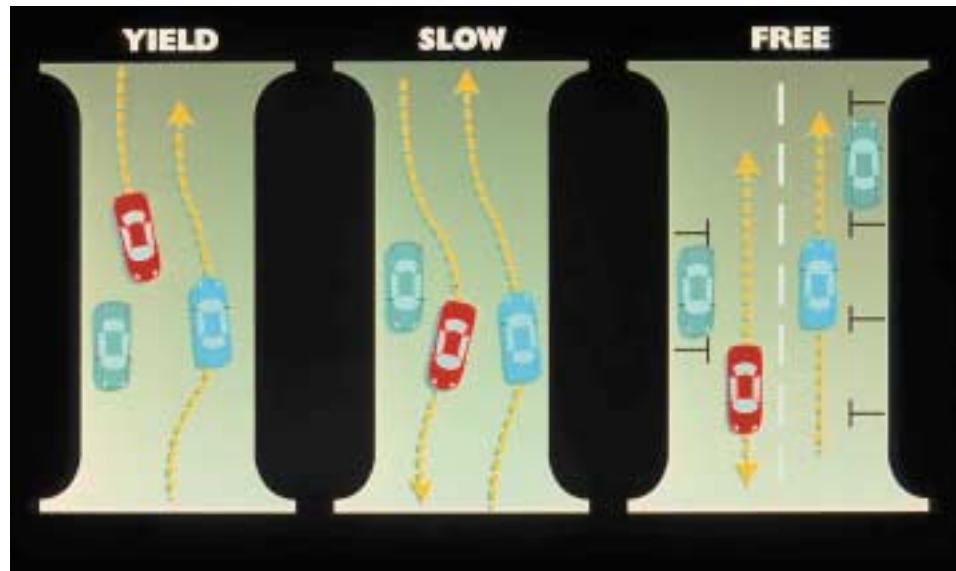


Figure 3:  
Traffic Flow Types

Many of the residential streets in Jenkintown are, in effect, "free flow" streets, meaning that two cars traveling in opposite directions can comfortably pass each other without slowing down. In residential neighborhoods, however, where traffic volumes are very low, it is generally more desirable to have "slow flow" or "yield flow" streets. In the former, motorists must slow to very low speeds to pass each other, while, in the latter, one motorist actually has to pull over and stop to let the other through.

These conditions, in large part, could be replicated by changing the parking restrictions and orientations on the over-wide streets. Allowing parking on both sides of the streets at all times, in many instances creating a yield condition, is the most likely quick-fix (though very effective) solution to speeding problems on many of these streets. The effectiveness of this solution would lie in the fact that—even though parked cars would not be continuous or even nearly so—the parked vehicles would break up long sight distances, narrow the perceived width of the roadway, and incur an occasional vehicular deflection, thus meeting all the primary objectives of a traffic calming program. Changes in parking orientation (such as from parallel parking to angled parking) may be potentially applicable to some sections of some streets or at intermittent commercial pockets.

In Jenkintown, potential candidates for this type of treatment (due to presently wide effective cross-sections) are identified in Figure 4.

Because of their low traffic volumes, the reconfiguration of elements to create a yield condition on low-volume residential streets would not impede emergency vehicle access. Moreover, because they are mostly single-family residential streets, parking would be very intermittent, allowing motorists to pull over to yield to emergency vehicles. Other streets that carry steadier traffic volumes, such as Walnut Lane, would still be wide enough to allow two free-flow lanes of traffic even after the reinstatement of parking in some locations.

The rearranging of parking limitations is a relatively simple action that is, on most streets, entirely under the Borough's control, and hence could be considered a short-range, non-construction-intensive, low-cost solution to speeding problems on some streets. The main task would involve changing the signs that currently designate the parking restrictions.

## **6. Implement a Coordinated Traffic Calming Plan for the Borough**

Speeding is a visible issue on many of the residential streets of Jenkintown. Addressing this issue is of the utmost importance, but care must be taken not to improve conditions on some streets at the expense of others. In other words, it would be inappropriate to implement a severe traffic-calming program on one street while leaving a parallel street to deal with the influx of traffic seeking a faster route. As a result, any proposed traffic calming program must be properly coordinated and balanced.

The complete traffic calming program would consist of two primary focal points—Old York Road and residential streets—each of which would have its own phasing implications based on cost, complexity, and institutional barriers:

## TRAFFIC CALMING: Local Roads with Over-wide Cross Sections



**Figure 4.** Traffic Calming: Local Roads with 2 Over-Wide Cross Sections

**Old York Road:**

Phase 1: Streetscape and Crosswalk Improvements

Phase 2: Intersection Geometrics and Gateways plus Non-Peak Parking

Phase 3: Additional Signal

Phase 4: Downsize/Permanent On-Street Parking

**Residential Streets:**

Phase 1: Modifications to Parking Restrictions and Signage

Phase 2: Streetscape, Sidewalk, and Landscaped Buffer Improvements

Phase 3: Physical Design Measures-Bulbouts, Splitter Islands, Roundabouts

In terms of specific priority locations within the residential area, one particular area of focus should be that surrounding the schools, as this is the location where physical traffic calming is most critical due to the high concentrations of children.

## **Parking**

Parking is at a premium in Uptown Jenkintown. There are several reasons why parking is presently a visible problem, ranging from less-than-optimal management to poor wayfinding to overall supply. Many sources have cited the lack of a visible, centralized, adequate parking supply as one of the primary reasons why Uptown does not attract as many shoppers and diners as it requires to be described as a vibrant district. This is clearly a problem in a suburban area such as Jenkintown, since competing establishments with a plethora of parking are in very close vehicular proximity.

The parking "problem" within Jenkintown stems from several counterproductive characteristics of the parking supply:

1. The parking supply is very difficult to find, with an insufficient and uncoordinated wayfinding program failing to adequately direct visitors to convenient lots.
2. The overall parking supply is very parochial in nature, with most businesses (as well as churches) reserving their supply for their very own. This completely undermines the concept of a "park-once" district, where patrons who visit one shop can freely elect to walk rather than drive to another shop or restaurant a few parcels away.
3. Many adjacent parking lots are disconnected, i.e., physically separated from each other by barriers or curbs. (This is usually a direct result of the parochial stance toward parking discussed in the previous point.)

The resolution of these issues is high-priority, short-term opportunities that should be pursued. The addition of new parking supply, through the construction of a parking garage somewhere within the Uptown area, is a longer-term strategy due to its high expense.

As new parking supply is added, it becomes critically important that the provision of parking does not detract from the Uptown area's potential selling points, notably the opportunity to re-create a spectacular and pleasant pedestrian-oriented retail and office district. Only by distinguishing itself in this manner will Jenkintown be able to successfully compete with strip retail areas that have plenty of parking but no character. The character and pedestrian orientation of

Jenkintown will always be its main selling point, so it is crucial to design any new parking areas (or structures) such that they fit into the Borough's pedestrian scale rather than disrupting its pedestrian quality.

Figure 5 shows the parking lot distribution of Jenkintown along with a preliminary count of off-street parking spaces by block. Although the totals-supplemented by on-street parking-seem to comprise a large amount, it must be remembered that most of the spaces shown are reserved for specific businesses and thus make no contribution to the general parking supply. The potential to transfer some of these private spaces into a public supply potentially managed by a centralized management entity (see Uptown Management Entity section) will be assessed as the parking ownership evaluation is completed, and detailed in the Implementation Plan.

The ultimate goal of the parking program--in conjunction with every other aspect of this Revitalization Plan--would be to create a "park-once" environment, in which people leave their vehicles in a single space for several hours and walk between varied destinations within the district. Because many of the trips "generated" by existing and new development would thus be made on foot, this would both reduce the traffic pressure on Uptown streets and reduce the total number of spaces needed to serve a given amount of development. The current dimensions of Uptown lend themselves very well to this concept: A circle around the main commercial district is about  $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile (a very comfortable walking distance) from edge to edge, i.e., a circle of roughly 750-foot radius centered on the intersection of Old York Road and West Avenue. For the vast majority of the population, every business and parking space within this circle is within a very comfortable walking distance of every other business and parking space within the circle, given an enhanced pleasant walking environment.

The following strategies assess opportunities to address the public parking shortage through a combination of new supply and better utilization of existing spaces. The potential actions below could be grouped into the following three general phases:

- Phase One: Manage Existing Supply; Consolidate Lots;
- Phase Two: Construct Garage; Allow Non-Peak Old York Parking
- Phase Three: Pursue and Allow Permanent Old York Parking

## **7. Reinstate On-Street Parking on Old York Road**

As discussed in the Traffic Calming section, the benefits of reinstating on-street parking along Old-York Road would be threefold:

- It would help to further control the speeds on Old York Road;
- It would provide a solid buffer between pedestrians and moving traffic;
- It would increase the parking supply adjacent to Old York Road storefronts.

In terms of parking supply, the presence of on-street parking (properly managed) on Old York Road would help revive the retail friendliness of Uptown, allowing easier access to Old York storefronts and a more pleasant walking environment. Additionally, the number of spaces that could be reclaimed would go a long way to addressing the present shortfall. Nonetheless, the resistance to doing this would be too strong to expect a quick permanent reinstatement of on-street parking.

## PARKING:

### Parking Lots and Preliminary Counts of Spaces

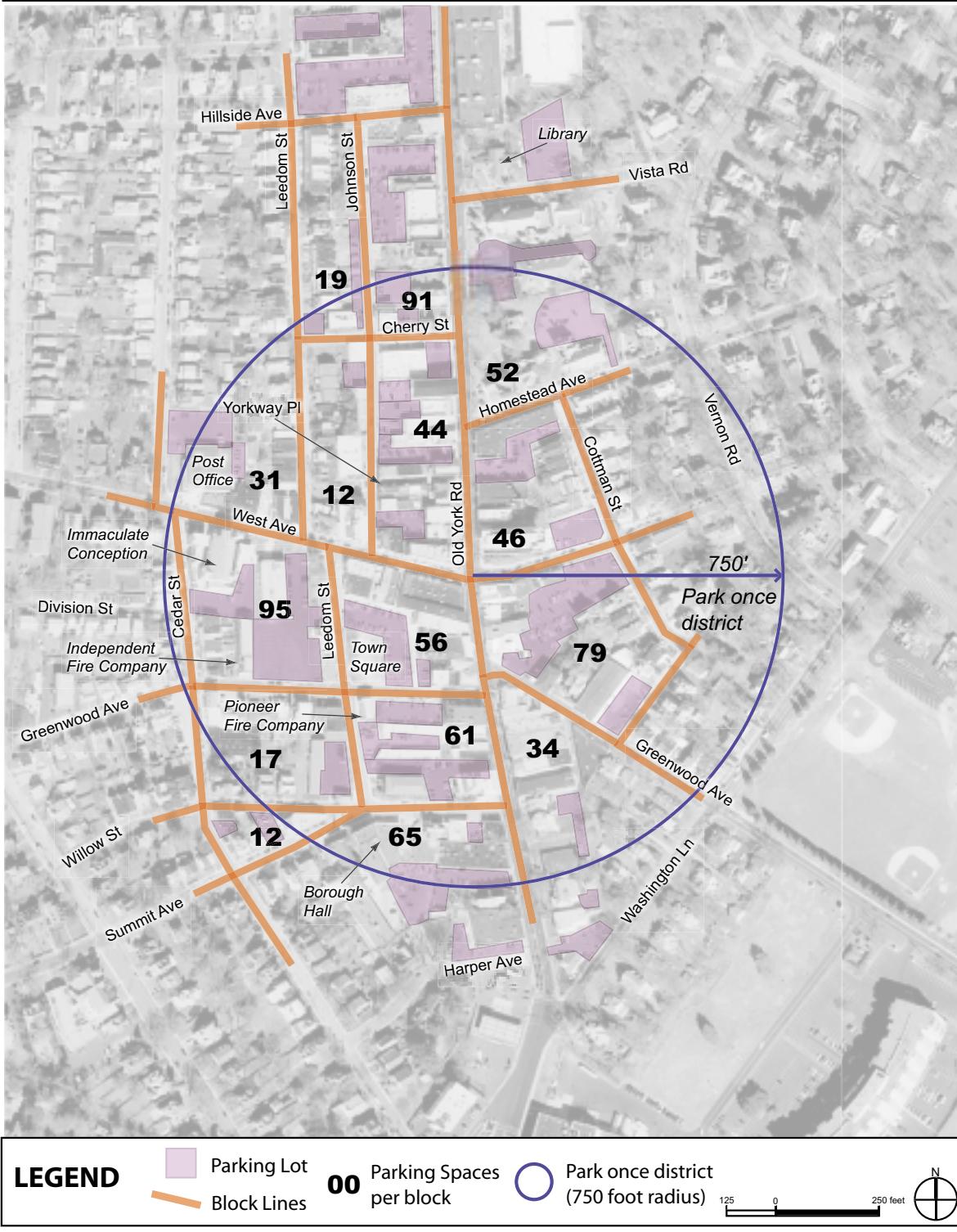


Figure 4: Parking Lots and Preliminary Counts of spaces

## 8. Construct a Parking Garage in Uptown

The construction of a parking garage in Uptown- linked to a major redevelopment parcel-would provide a centralized public parking facility that would, given an adequate wayfinding program, be easy to find and convenient to use. This would increase the parking supply by several hundred spaces and decrease the necessity of a complex management system for existing spaces (though the latter would be less costly).

The garage would likely include several components: retail parking, office parking, and employee parking. Retail users would pay as they used the garage, with possible discounts with validated tickets from local stores. Office workers and other local employees could be offered monthly passes at a reduced rate.

## 9. Develop a Shared Parking Program, Especially at Offices and Churches

Parking requirements for various uses often have very different temporal use patterns, as demonstrated in Figure 6.

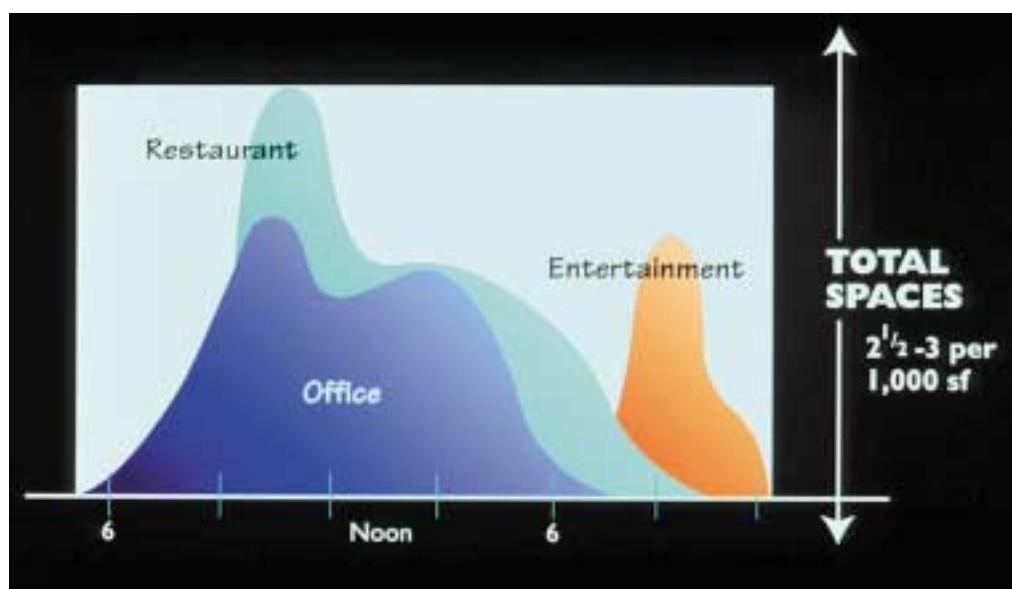


Figure 6:  
Typical Weekday  
Parking Demand

Managing parking such that lots can be used for multiple purposes that take place at different times can dramatically reduce the total number of parking spaces needed to meet daily parking demands.

In Jenkintown, offices and churches offer one example of a potential parking partnership, since their parking demands virtually never overlap. Shared lots could be used by churchgoers on weekends (and, sometimes, weekday evenings), and by office workers on weekday mornings and afternoons. Retail employees who presently use valuable on-street spaces could also be enticed to use church lots during the week, thus freeing on-street parking for actual shoppers.

There is also an opportunity in Jenkintown for sharing among retail establishments, since some shops are only open during the day and some restaurants do the bulk of their business in the evenings. As these retailing characteristics are further examined, the implications for specific shared parking opportunities will become clear.

#### **10. Increase Availability of On-Street Parking by Enforcing Time Limits**

The enforcement of time limits could help keep employees and business owners from using the on-street parking spaces intended for short-term retail shoppers and restaurant-goers. To be effective, enforcement would need to include measures to eliminate meter-feeding-i.e., by chalking tires-as well as frequently checking for expired meters.

As part of this plan, suitable alternate parking arrangements for employees and business owners would have to be provided. The possibility of using part of the library lot for this purpose is promising, with a corresponding discounted parking rate for users to make up for their longer walks.

Also, some meters within Jenkintown have two-hour time limits while others have three-hour time limits. In order to improve the ease of use and eliminate uncertainty when searching for a space, time limits should be standardized. Despite slightly reducing the turnover rate, the desired retail characteristics (park-once environment, multi-purpose shopping/dining trips, etc.) would argue for the longer three-hour time limit for all spaces.

#### **11. Improve Efficiency of Existing Parking Lots through Connections or Consolidation**

The consolidation of parking lots could help improve the ease of visiting Jenkintown as a shopper or diner, eliminating the frustrating instances of having to drive from lot to lot (along main roads and commercial streets) to find an available space. Consolidating or connecting adjacent lots would preclude the need for such aggravating indirect travel and decrease the unpleasantness of the parking-search process.

Parking lot consolidation and connection would require cooperative arrangements between the owners of adjacent parking lots to allow their spaces to be used by the other's shoppers in times of need. This is often a tricky arrangement due to the fear of an imbalance in favor of the other business, but this could be allayed by writing appropriate clauses and restrictions into the agreement.



Inefficient parking lots near West Avenue and Cottman Street

Business owners could also partner with the Borough to allow some of their spaces to be used for general Jenkintown visitors, at least at certain times of day. In these cases, it would be preferable for larger lots to be booth-controlled (i.e., a parking attendant takes payment upon exit) rather than meter-controlled, for the main reason that patrons of the adjacent businesses could have their tickets validated and thus be exempt from the parking charge. Eventually these arrangements would have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the centralized management entity, based on guidelines set forth in the Implementation Plan.

The prime benefit to business owners under this scenario is that they could shave their excess parking maintenance costs, as these would be transferred to the management entity and largely paid for by newly-generated parking revenues.

### ***Underutilized Parcels***

A vibrant and economically successful town center depends upon a mix of activities and businesses, especially pedestrian generators like bookstores, outdoor cafes, restaurants, and other retail stores that contribute significantly toward creating an active and dynamic street life. Jenkintown's commercial core, or Uptown, currently has unique mix of businesses that creates a lively pedestrian environment nearby the Town Square. However, Jenkintown has the potential to strengthen and expand this mix of businesses and activities through the redevelopment of underutilized parcels.

The economic analysis conducted for Jenkintown indicates that Uptown could readily add over 120,000 square feet of new store space within current market conditions. This expansion would represent a 50% increase from the current 237,000 square feet of occupied stores. In addition, the market demand for multi-tenant office buildings remains strong and generates rents between \$16-\$22 per square foot. Jenkins Court and Rydal Square have maintained high occupancy levels and tend to re-lease vacant space within a few months.

There is also demand for more rental housing in the Borough. The economic analysis indicates that office demand is relatively weak in second floor spaces above storefronts, and that more than 20 office to apartment conversions have occurred during the past two years. In addition, the 2000 U.S. Census indicates that the vacancy rate for rental units was 7.3% in 1990, and fell to 2.6% in 2000. If the need for rental units is not met with new apartments, the Borough may witness additional conversions of existing homes into rental units.

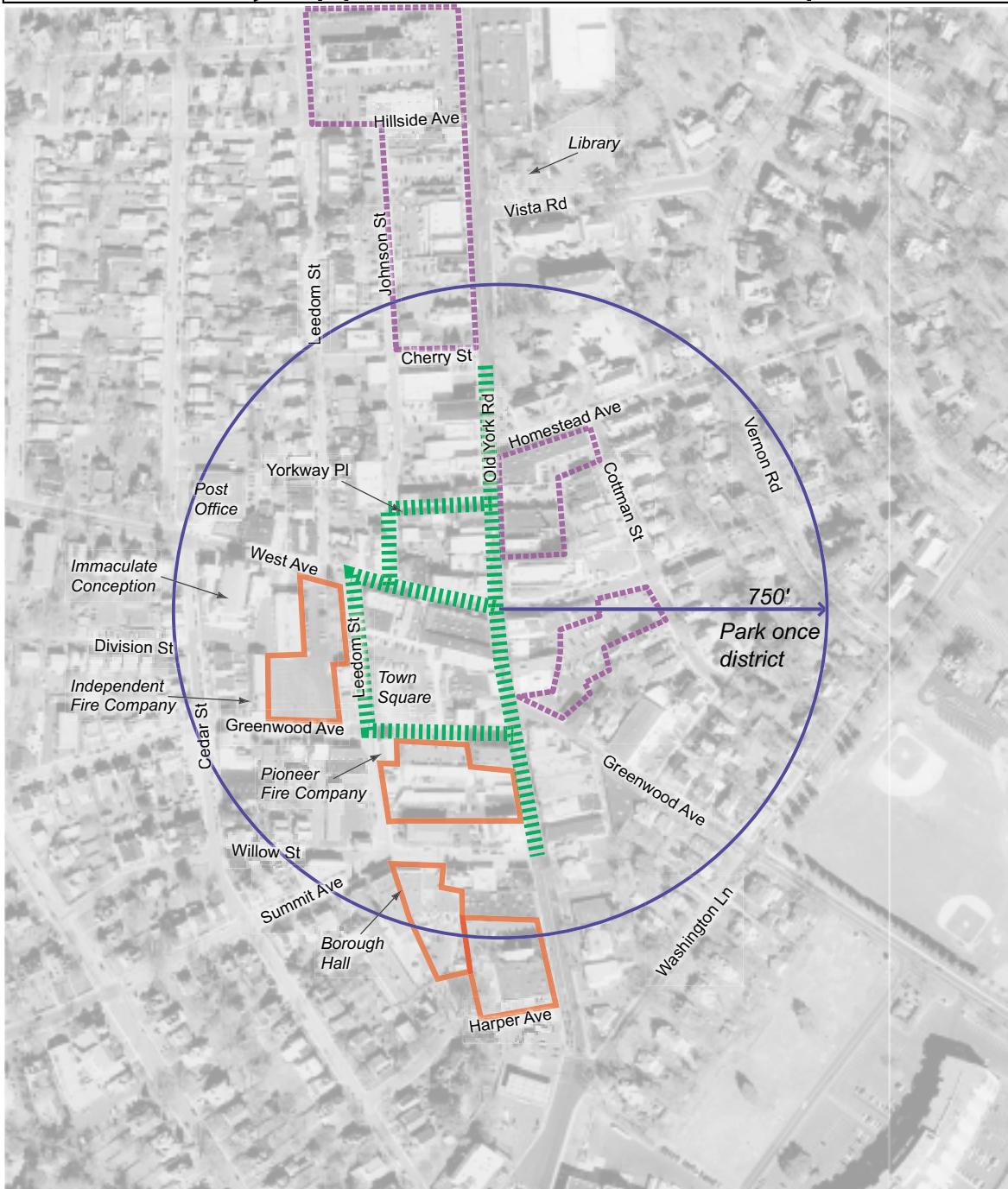
Since the Borough is largely built out, adding more retail, office space, and rental housing into Uptown can only occur through redevelopment of underutilized parcels. According to the Redevelopment Authority of Montgomery County, an area may be deemed appropriate for redevelopment if one or more of the following conditions are met: inadequate planning of the area; defective design and arrangement of the buildings thereon; faulty street and lot layout; and, economically or socially undesirable land use. Using these redevelopment criteria, a significant portion of Uptown is in need of redevelopment (see underutilized parcels map). Due to significant improvements made to the Town Square area over the last few years, the consultant team and the Revitalization Task Force believe that the following four areas should be considered primary redevelopment opportunities: parcels adjacent to Pioneer Fire Company; Borough Hall parcels; 'Gateway' parcels; and, parcels adjacent to Immaculate Conception.

## **12. Redevelop parcels adjacent to Pioneer Fire Company**

The parcels adjacent to Pioneer Fire Company are currently underutilized, because of their location near the Town Square and due to the high demand for more retail, office, and rental housing. The parcel along Greenwood is used as surface parking, and presents a gaping hole in the streetscape surrounding the Town Square. The parcel along Leedom is used for auto service businesses, not the highest and best use of property within a core commercial area. The interior parcels are used for garage storage and surface parking.

# UNDERUTILIZED PARCELS:

## Primary Opportunities for Redevelopment



### LEGEND



Primary  
Redevelopment  
Opportunities



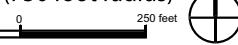
Areas Appropriate  
for Redevelopment



Central  
Uptown  
area



Park once district  
(750 foot radius)



A new mixed-use building with ground floor storefronts, with upper-floor offices or rental housing, could potentially be developed on these parcels. Any development project should incorporate a parking garage to meet the demand of all uses within the entire block. The total height of any new development should not dwarf the adjacent buildings, but should be properly integrated within the small town context of the Town Square area. Whether the Pioneer Fire Company building should become an adaptive re-use or should be demolished to create a more developable site is a question that must be addressed by the community at-large. The Pioneer building does provide small town character, and it may be possible that a new development could be constructed and integrated with the Pioneer building intact.



Surface parking lot between Pioneer and the Center Building

The redevelopment of this site would achieve a number of important objectives: (1) create a new economic development opportunity in Uptown; (2) reinforce the Town Square by filling a gap in the street wall along Greenwood - further "enclosing" the Town Square environment and enhancing the sense of place; and, (3) attract additional pedestrian activity to the Town Square, adding new customers and economic value to the business district.

### 13. **Redevelop Borough Hall parcel**

Due to its small building to floor area ratio, large surface parking, and uninspired civic design, the current Borough Hall parcel is underutilized within Uptown given the high demand for additional civic uses and for retail, office, and rental housing. One redevelopment scenario could meet the needs of the Borough by constructing a multi-purpose facility to house the borough's municipal hall, police department, a consolidated fire department, and a much-needed public meeting/community space.

Another redevelopment scenario could entail a mixed-use of ground floor retail, upper-story offices or rental housing, and a parking garage. Obviously, this scenario would require relocating Borough Hall to a new site. Only twenty years ago, Borough Hall was positioned in a prominent civic location at the corner of West and Leedom. Although the 1980 Venturi Study recommended this building for redevelopment after the new borough hall was constructed, the building was demolished and its parcel went to Immaculate Conception for surface parking and open space. One redevelopment scenario could include a multi-purpose facility at the corner of West and Leedom to house the borough's municipal hall, police department, a consolidated fire department, and a much-needed public meeting/community space. This scenario would



Street frontage of Borough Hall on Summit Avenue

involve a fee simple purchase, or a transfer of property titles. For instance, if the fire companies were consolidated into one facility, the Independent Fire Company building could be transferred to Immaculate Conception, which has expressed interest in this building.

#### 14. **Redevelop 'Gateway' parcels**

The existing parcels adjacent to the corner of Old York Road and Harper Avenue represent a significant opportunity to create gateway developments that would reinstate the "Main Street" quality streetscape of Old York Road. With pedestrian-oriented retail along Old York Road and, possibly upper-story office or residential, a prominent and architecturally significant structure or series of structures at the entrance to Jenkintown would generate pedestrian activity in an area presently unattractive to walkers and signal to motorists that they have entered a pedestrian environment.



Jenkintown's gateway area at Old York Road and Washington Lane

#### 15. **Redevelop parcels adjacent to Immaculate Conception**

Surface parking lots cover almost half of Immaculate Conception's property. These parking lots are heavily used for church services on Saturday evening and Sunday mornings, and for the parish's school children during the weekdays. At all other times, these parking lots are used on an informal basis, but do not contribute to the public parking supply. Due to the proximity of these surface parking lots to the Town Square, some of these parcels are currently underutilized and provide various options for improving the Town Square area with either new civic uses, improved parking, improved open space, or ideally, a combination of these uses. Any redevelopment scenario should provide obvious benefits to Immaculate Conception.

Since improving Uptown's parking supply is a major goal of the Revitalization Plan, a shared use policy could potentially be arranged through the Catholic Archdiocese for public use of these parking lots when they are not required for church and school activities. One redevelopment scenario could entail the improvement of the parking lot along Greenwood with a heavily landscaped parking lot, which would provide more greenspace for the parish's school children.



Immaculate Conception's parking lot/playground

## *Streetscape Improvements*

An essential element in revitalizing Uptown is creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Attractive streetscape improvements improve the overall appearance of the street and encourage pedestrians to stroll, shop and meet other people with a sense of safety. The presence of pedestrians indicates to passing motorists that this is a place to stop, visit and explore, and that they should slow down. In addition to creating an attractive place for pedestrians, by improving the streetscape Jenkintown is weaving together the Uptown area along Old York Rd and around the Town Square, which will encourage longer stays, potentially more spending and a highly desirable "park-once" pattern of behavior. These improvements will attract new businesses to redevelop and invest in the area and encourage existing business owners to invest in their properties. The recommended streetscape improvements for Jenkintown include shade trees, landscaping, additional pedestrian-oriented lighting, street furniture, attractive sidewalks, special pavement treatment in crosswalks and at intersections, and wayfinding signage. Streetscape improvements can also include sites for the installation of public art, areas for public information and even new plazas, park spaces and gathering places.



Streetscape characteristics of Leedom Street (left) and Greenwood Avenue (right) along the Town Square

These improvements meet the goals of the Vision Statement and the Task Force recommendations. Of the ten goals presented to the Task Force, this project meets several. Improving the streetscape should contribute to a quality pedestrian environment, create a stronger sense of place, and encourage redevelopment and new business prospects.

- Wayfinding Signage directs pedestrians from parking and train stations to the shopping areas. It also indicates where the community resources are located, such as the post office or library.
- Street Furniture including trash receptacles, benches, and bicycle racks, gives pedestrians a place to rest, lock their bikes, wait for the bus, dispose of trash, and 'people watch'. Street furniture should be attractive and durable and contribute to the beautification of the streetscape.
- The Pedestrian Buffer Area is located between the sidewalk and moving traffic. Usually street trees, planters or on-street parking provide an effective pedestrian buffer for pedestrians from moving traffic. Currently, the pedestrian buffer along Old York Road is largely non-existent. Adding tightly spaced trees, substantial planters or some other edge-defining physical barrier such as ornamental bollards, seat walls, etc. should make pedestrians feel more comfortable walking next to Old York Road. In lieu of or in addition to an edge-defining buffer, on-street parking provides an excellent separation between pedestrians and moving traffic.

- A Sidewalk Dining Ordinance that allows outdoor food service for cafes and restaurants - where ample sidewalk width is available - would contribute to the liveliness of the pedestrian environment.
- Gateway Entrances, such as signs, monuments and landscaping improvements, will indicate to motorists that they have entered the pedestrian-oriented Uptown area in the Borough of Jenkintown.
- Attractive Crosswalk Markings along Old York Rd and at intersections throughout the Uptown area should consist of durable brick-style pavers or dense ladder style striping. The improvements signal to motorists the presence of pedestrians and reinforce the dominance of the pedestrian in the Uptown area.

In order to implement these improvements in a cost-effective manner, areas have been prioritized in different phases. The following phases begin with the center of Uptown around the Town Square, and move outward to expand the core commercial district. The phases are indicated in figure 8 and described below.

## **16. Implement Streetscape Improvements for Central Uptown Area**

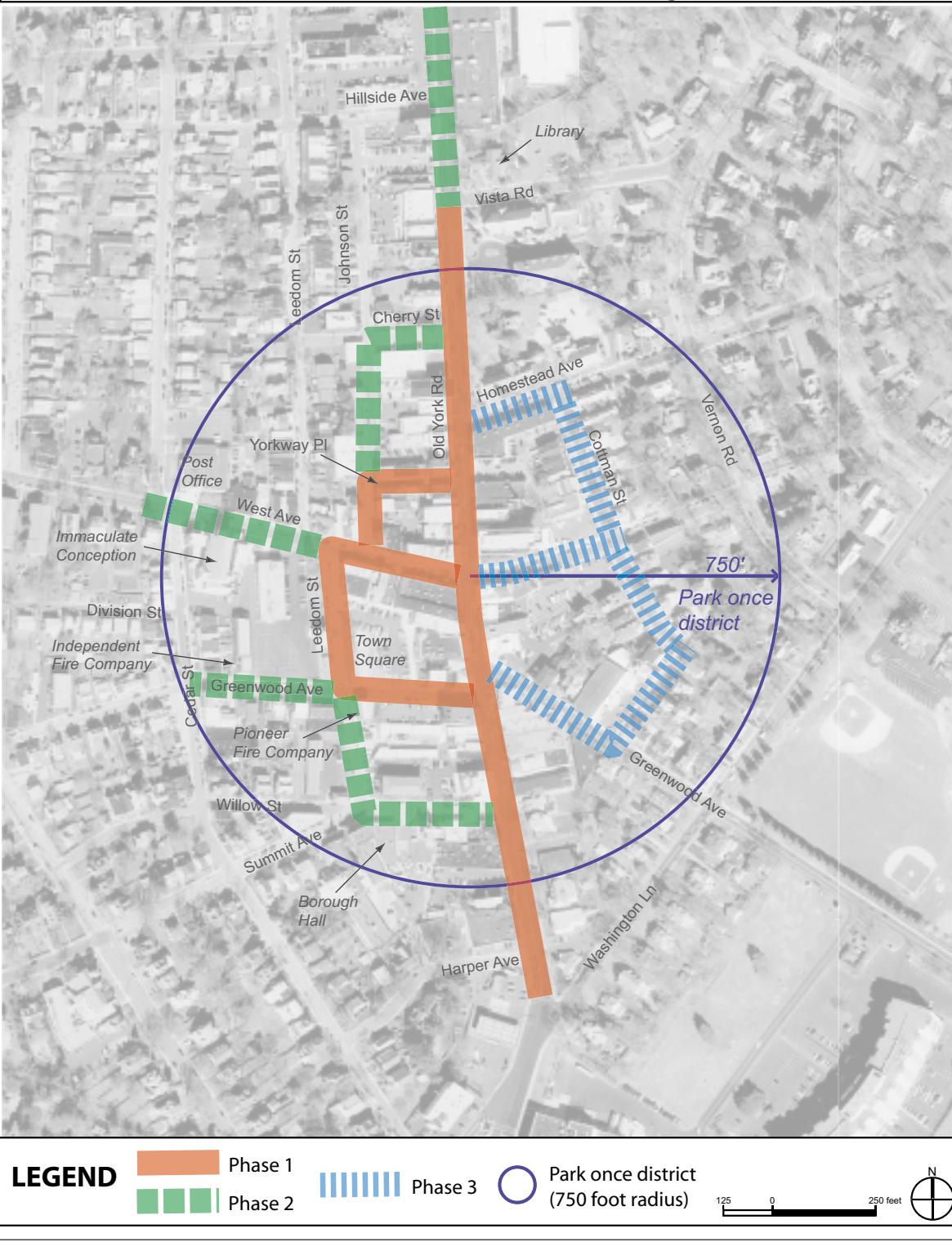
The Town Square and surrounding block is the strongest retail area of Uptown. The first phase of streetscaping improvements should build upon the Town Square amenities and radiate out from this location to encompass the whole block. Since Old York Road is essentially the "Main Street" of Uptown with many storefronts, the streetscape improvements should extend along Old York Road from Vista Road to Washington Lane. Yorkway Place is also an important area to enhance and connect to the core of Uptown along Johnson Street and Old York Road. In addition to adding wayfinding signage for pedestrians throughout the first phase area, signage should be added at the train stations to direct customers from the train to Uptown. These initial improvements should attract some redevelopment and new businesses in the shopping area of Uptown while creating a cohesive sense of place within the core of Jenkintown. In summary Phase 1 will consist of the following:

- Improve Old York Road from Vista Road to Washington Lane
- Improve Greenwood Avenue from Leedom Street to Old York Road
- Improve Leedom Street from Greenwood Avenue to West Avenue
- Improve West Avenue from Leedom Street to Old York Road
- Improve Johnson Street from West Avenue to Yorkway Place
- Improve Yorkway Place



Streetscape characteristics of West Avenue (left) and Old York Road (right)

## STREETSCAPE: Improvement Phasing



**Figure 8:** Streetscape: Improvement Phasing

## **17. Implement Streetscape Improvements for Adjacent Uptown Area**

The second phase of improvement expands the streetscape improvements to adjacent areas in Uptown. These improvements will contain the same elements as the first phase. The intent of these improvements is to grow the Uptown core area and enhance redevelopment opportunities such as the Borough Hall. Phase 2 will include:



Streetscape characteristics along Johnson Street

- Improve Summit Ave from Leedom St to Old York Rd
- Improve Leedom St from Summit Ave to West Ave
- Improve Cherry St from Johnson St to Old York Rd
- Improve Johnson St from Old Yorkway Place to Cherry St
- Improve Old York Rd from Vista Rd to Rydal Ave
- Improve Greenwood Avenue from Leedom Street to Cedar Street

## **18. Implement Streetscape Improvements Connecting East Uptown**

The third phase of improvements should work to integrate the streets on the east side of Old York Road with Uptown, and link Johnson Avenue to Hillside Avenue. Improving the pedestrian environment in these areas will revitalize the existing commercial properties and potentially create new commercial properties. Phase 3 includes:

- Improve West and Homestead Avenues from Old York Road to Cottman Avenue
- Improve Greenwood Avenue from Old York Road to Nice Avenue
- Improve Nice Avenue from Greenwood Avenue to Cottman Avenue
- Improve Cottman Avenue from Nice Avenue to Homestead Avenue

### ***Uptown Management Entity***

Many other communities have adopted main street managers, improvement districts, and downtown coordinators to manage the revitalization of their town centers. These various community development entities market the town center to new businesses, improve the appearance of the town center, manage the town center's parking resources, and respond to the concerns of the local business community. For example, when a storefront becomes vacant, the main street manager searches for the right replacement tenant; or when litter starts to degrade the pedestrian environment, an improvement district can hire street cleaning workers. A downtown management entity can propel a community's revitalization goals into reality because they have full time staff, a source of revenue, efficient management strategies, and broad-based leadership.

## **19. Create a Management Entity for Uptown**

Successful downtown management entities usually have a volunteer stakeholder board that meets monthly or quarterly with at least one full time staff person that runs the day-to-day revitalization efforts. In the case of Jenkintown, the Uptown management entity board could be based on an existing downtown group, such as the JCA, and would be responsible for hiring the first full time staff person.

Funding for the management entity could come from a collection of sources. For example, the entity could manage Uptown's parking resources. By acquiring the parking authority's lots and collecting parking meter revenue the entity would generate funds to improve the Uptown's parking system and meet other revitalization goals. Another way to raise money for Uptown improvements could be to create an improvement district tax. The tax would be based on property value or pro-rated based on proximity to parking facilities. An improvement district also has the ability to issue bonds.

## **20. Establish a marketing program for Uptown as a regional destination**

A marketing program for Uptown should include several different components to reach different markets. The management entity should ensure that Jenkintown uses a consistent and positive marketing image to attract new businesses, residents, and customers. The following actions should be the basis for the management entity's marketing work plan:

- Publish brochures to attract complimentary businesses
- Create a Jenkintown logo
- Organize and promote a year round calendar community events
- Develop media contacts and deliver promotional press releases to these contacts
- Distribute and publicize an Uptown parking map that shows parking locations with any restrictions, community attractions, and transit information
- Maintain a Borough website that promotes the business district as well as providing useful public information

### ***Design Standards***

A major beautification component of an effective downtown revitalization strategy is the restoration and rehabilitation of commercial building and shop front facades. Part of the attraction of main street communities is their historic commercial architecture - often times dating to the 19th century. Downtown business districts containing restored historic buildings and an enhanced, pedestrian streetscape offer a striking contrast to sterile strip store/shopping mall retail environments available in most suburban communities.

Unfortunately, in an effort to compete with newer shopping malls, downtown facades were often "modernized" and modified to the extent of being unrecognizable as historic structures. A major emphasis of the revitalization of Uptown Jenkintown should be the restoration and rehabilitation of commercial facades. Fortunately, the Jenkintown Community Alliance (JCA) has initiated the development of design standards for the downtown business district. The elaboration and adoption of these guidelines should be a priority for the revitalization program.

## 21. Augment draft JCA Design Standards

The draft JCA design standards provide general guidance on restoration of building exteriors, architectural elements and features such as signs, awnings and canopies. A façade study has also been completed for the 400 block of Old York Road. While this initial work is extremely useful and well done, additional information and more specific design guidance will be necessary to achieve district-wide improvements. At a minimum, the following information should be added:

- An elaboration of the various building types in the Uptown area. This is necessary so that property owners can identify the period of their structures and adopt an appropriate restoration strategy. (i.e., signature or gateway structures v. vernacular architecture).
- A more detailed discussion relating to the proportions, scale, massing, fenestration and rhythm of openings appropriate for structure in Jenkintown.
- Detailed and specific guidance for new and infill construction.
- More specific guidance on an appropriate palette of colors and exterior finishes that would be acceptable in the Uptown district.
- The very detailed sign guidelines should be revised to incorporate dimensional limitations.



JCA's model block design (courtesy of John J. DiBenedetto Associates, Inc., Architects)

## Other Strategies

### Expand potential for home offices

Home offices increase the borough's tax base and allow residents the opportunity to work at home. In the 1997, 21 million people in the United States earned a portion of their primary income at home, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. To help accommodate these valuable residents, Jenkintown should revise its zoning code to be more flexible with its home occupation provisions. The potential for home offices is hindered by the zoning restrictions of residential properties. While all the residential zoning designations allow 'home occupation' use by right, as described in section 181-4 of Jenkintown's Zoning Code, this designation does not allow clients or deliveries to frequent the property. The only residential zoning designations with a provision for professional office purposes are C and C-1. These allow for a dentist, physician, architect, engineer, or attorney and no others. By specifying these particular professions, the zoning regulations exclude other professionals.

### **Create incentives to redevelop upper-story business space as apartments**

First-floor businesses often underutilize their upper-story space. With the increasing demand for rental housing in Jenkintown, upper-story spaces have been converted to apartments. This process, as noted in the Jenkintown Master Plan Issues Report: Market Study, is currently taking place. To further encourage this trend, incentives such as grants and affordable loans should be awarded.