



**A Strategic Plan For
Uptown Washington Road
Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania**

U P B E A T O N

U P S T R E E T

A FUTURE FOR WASHINGTON ROAD



PREPARED FOR THE

Municipality of Mt. Lebanon

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July 1995

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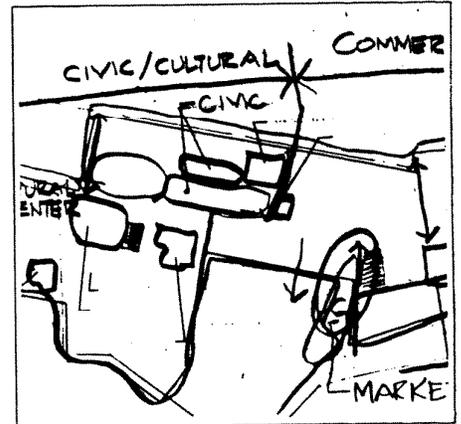
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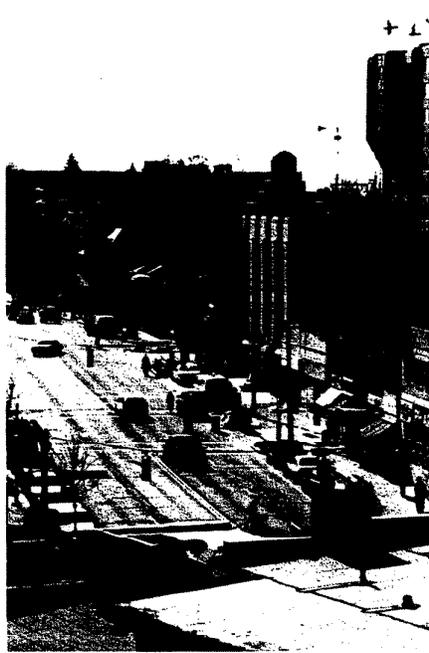
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Why plan for Uptown now? Two factors compel action at this moment. First, Mt. Lebanon's commercial core, Uptown, has been fading for several decades. Along with other main streets around the country, it struggles against a trend toward malls, shopping centers, and super-stores. Without intervention, Washington Road will continue its slow decline.

Second, with its commercial uptown, Mt. Lebanon is poised to take advantage of still another national trend—a resurgent appreciation for the cozy complexities of small and mid-size towns. Mt. Lebanon—blessed as it is with the virtues of both suburb and town—perfectly fits the new fashion. It is a town-like suburb, and one which has developed a rich mix of commercial and cultural life over time, against a backdrop of genteel neighborhoods with gracious house lots. In this respect, it is light years ahead of new communities being designed and built now to emulate places such as Mt. Lebanon, but which have no life beyond what their designers and builders can give them as they go into the ground. Mt. Lebanon is now in a position to attract the new residents and businesses it needs to revitalize itself.

Mt. Lebanon, which began in 1912 as a community of gracious suburban properties with the small, ordinary commercial offerings required by residents, now actually depends on the success of its commercial district. Deterioration of its downtown would spread to nearby neighborhoods and beyond, ultimately affecting the property values of those original homes and causing the once-tranquil setting to evaporate. Paradoxically, Mt. Lebanon can shrink or grow, but it cannot remain the same.



Growth will not mean infringement on the beautiful streets and homes that anchor Mt. Lebanon's reputation and quality of living, but it will mean attending to an area that is both a shopping district—easily taken for granted—and the center of town. Mt. Lebanon's desirability as a community stems partly from its having a town center, and this center cannot be neglected or abandoned. A town center provides not only commercial conveniences but also the shared civic facilities and sym-

bols of a community—the setting for the community's cultural life. The character of a community is immediately apparent in its town center—or the lack of one.

This report unfolds a Strategic Plan for reinvigorating Uptown Mt. Lebanon, and helping this venerable but flagging commercial district to realize its potential as a community asset. The plan highlights six key locations where thoughtful development will 1) introduce appropriate and attainable uses, 2) increase value and stimulate reinvest-

ment around them, and 3) enrich the image of Mt. Lebanon's main street. The report concludes with an assessment of the markets for retail, office, and residential development in Mt. Lebanon, and an estimate of the cost of developing the six key locations uptown.

A Development Council will be critical to propel the plan through political and economic channels, ensuring its implementation, and the Commissioners should appoint such a council readily to launch such a plan.

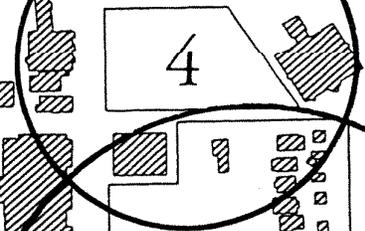
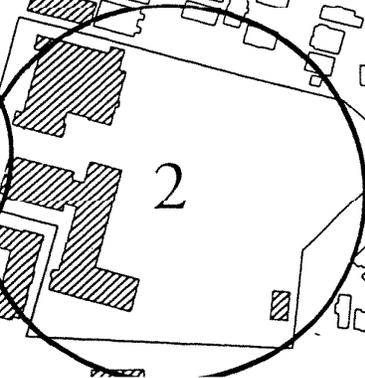
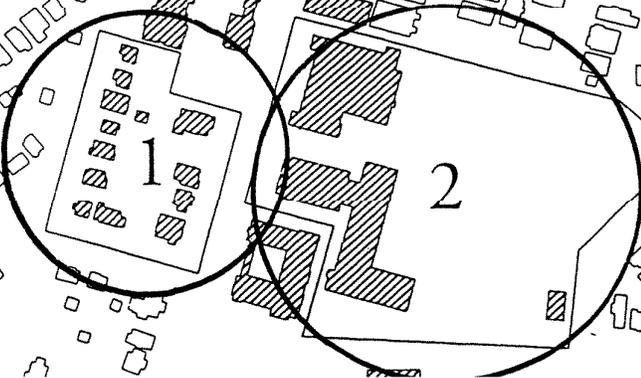
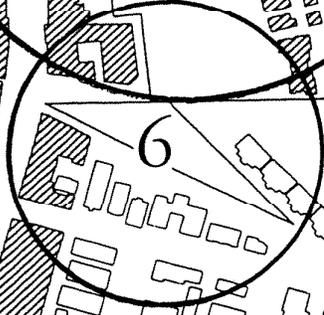
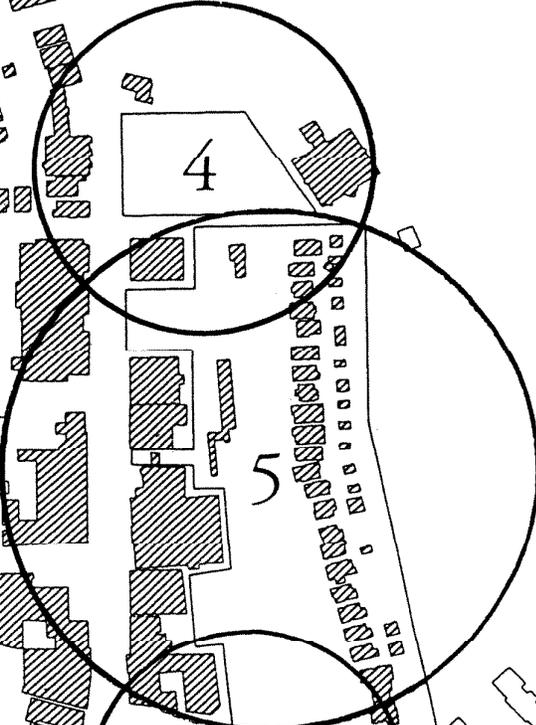
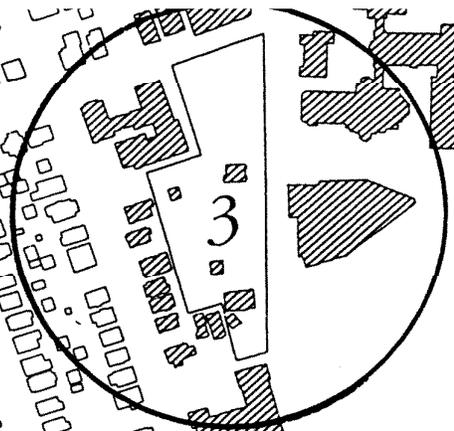
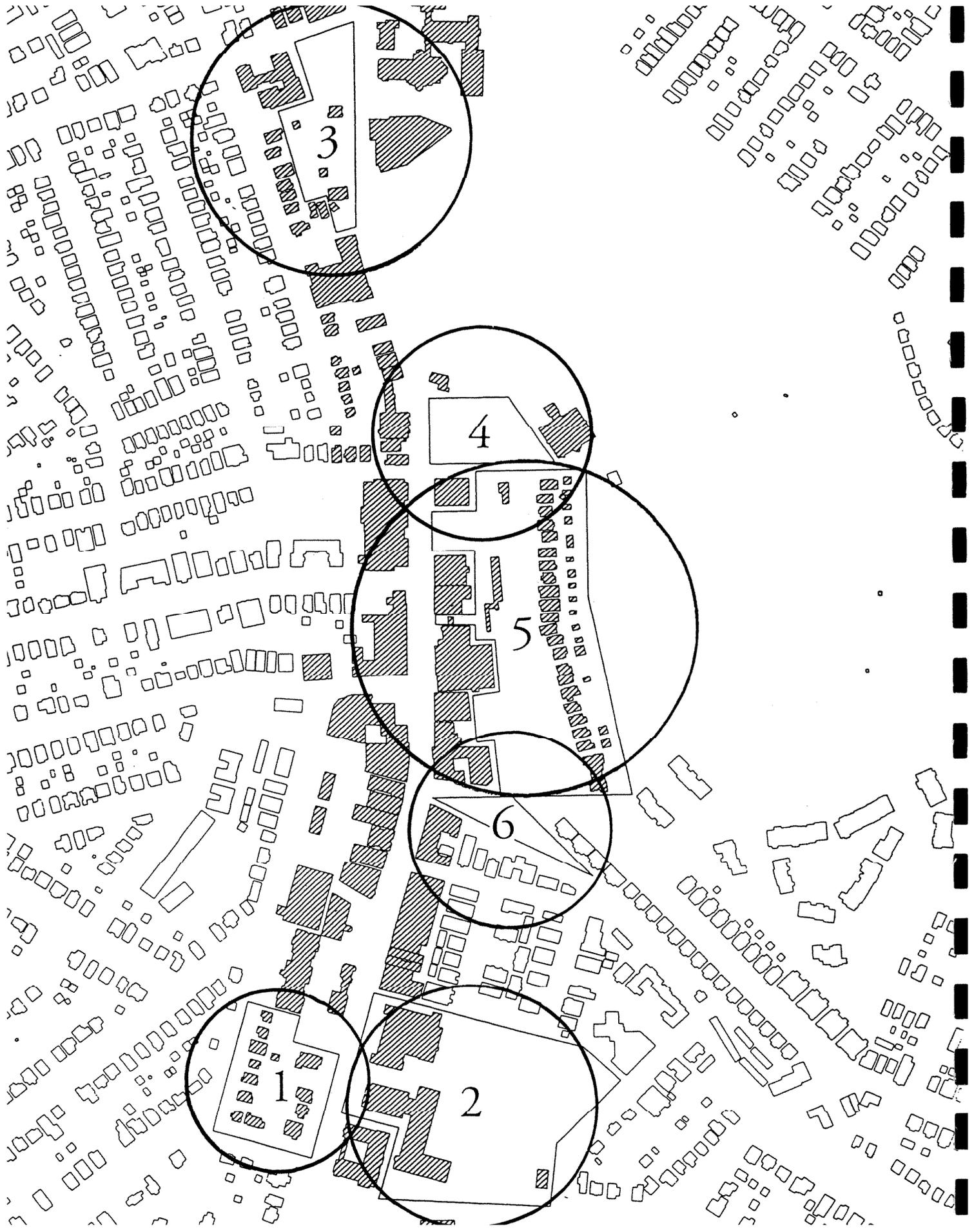
Mt. Lebanon's Centennial is fast approaching. It is the aim of this study to provide the Municipality with a vision of Uptown Mt. Lebanon with which to inaugurate its next century.

THE CONTEXT FOR A STRATEGIC PLAN

I How much change? How much does Washington Road need to change in order to remain an asset to the community? Would minor improvements and beautification efforts reinvigorate Mt. Lebanon's most important commercial street? Probably for a very short while. In the long run, minimal or cosmetic efforts would not prevent a slow deterioration.

The national and regional settings in which Mt. Lebanon finds itself have been transformed beyond recognition since the time of Mt. Lebanon's founding. Mt. Lebanon's commercial district must transform also in order to maintain its stature as a focus of community activity and, in turn, to maintain Mt. Lebanon's stature as a vibrant suburb with the best qualities of a town.

With its vital urban and tranquil suburban attributes, Mt. Lebanon is poised to take advantage of a national trend—a longing for the town-like suburb. Washington Road—Uptown Mt. Lebanon, or as it used to be called, *Upstreet*—is the key to Mt. Lebanon's success over the coming decades.



Mt. Lebanon: Suburb and Town



A CLOSE-IN SUBURB WITH CITY-COUNTRY FEEL. Mt. Lebanon's rare conjunction of the best of two worlds is no idle boast. Remarkable already for its schools, recreational facilities and neighborhoods, known for its "can do" spirit, Mt. Lebanon embodies American ideals that other communities strive for—whether they call themselves suburbs or towns:

Gracious living in single- and multi-family homes, on winding, shaded streets in sylvan surroundings.

Proximity to downtown Pittsburgh and city attractions, but a refuge as well from the city's problems.

A Main Street of its own, an important center of community life.

The traditional belief that small-town life was a better way to live, more honest—more *American*—than life in the big city has persisted through this nation's history. The idea has even endured this century's suburban boom. Today, while the majority of Americans live in suburbs, many have grown dissatisfied with drab, single-function bedroom communities the suburban boom too often spawned. The American belief in a town ideal is enjoying an unmistakable resurgence. Mt. Lebanon is singularly well positioned to take advantage of this trend.



I.A.1



■ Two paradigmatic views: (I.A.1) Uptown has been the Municipality's commercial and symbolic center since 1912. (I.A.2) Shaded, well-maintained lawns and streets of homes have always been the image of Mt. Lebanon's neighborhoods.

I.A.2

Sub • urb (süb' ūrb') *n.* A usu. residential area near a city.

Town (toun) *n.* 1. A population center larger than a village and smaller than a city. 2. *Informal.* A city. 3. The commercial district of an area.

—*American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition, 1992*

A recent Newsweek cover story described this trend and listed the attributes of the town-suburb. Many of the features the article described, such as mass transit, trees at curbsides, landmarks and boundaries, a mix of housing types, and above all a town center, are those Mt. Lebanon has always had. The article's list encapsulates the current wisdom on designing more town-like, vibrant communities, recommendations favored now by many planners, architects and homebuyers alike.

This study does not propose to diminish Mt. Lebanon's suburban charm. The town-like heart of the community, however, is the part that puts Mt. Lebanon light years ahead of newer suburbs. Recognizing and enhancing character already there will allow Mt. Lebanon to retain its competitive edge as it once did on the strength of its residential areas.

A subtle shift in perception is required. The citizens of Mt. Lebanon must not think of—or fear—Uptown as a “central business district.” The demise of America's downtowns generally parallels the rise in popularity of the term “central business district.” We have long used this term to describe our downtowns without realizing what a self-fulfilling prophecy this has wrought. Why would anyone want to live, shop, dine, relax, meet a friend, attend a concert, see a movie, go to school, take a walk with a sweetheart, or simply hang out in a place called a central business district? Instead of pining for the return of business interests to Uptown we should turn our attention to overcoming the absence of other interests. The future of Uptown lies in its ceasing to be perceived as just a business district. When Uptown again offers a diversity of uses, institutions and people, then businesses will also choose to locate or stay there.

■ On this and on the following seven pages are images of Uptown and Mt. Lebanon which distinguish the community from those around it and from more recent suburbs.

To achieve this, some general principles that have guided this study are worth outlining: aggregate things; beware of homogeneity; believe in mixing uses; mix dwellings; use beauty as a criterion of planning; elaborate details; build landmarks and position them well; make



I.A.3 St. Bernard's tower, from Kenmont Avenue



I.A.4 Washington Road, looking south

as a criterion of planning; elaborate details; build landmarks and position them well; make redundant rather than hierarchical streets; emphasize the design of the street section; provide less, not more, parking; make places worthy of walking; reuse places; yield to privatization with reluctance; ban the term "open space;" establish edges and define boundaries; reinstate Arbor Day; zone stringently, but modify the zoning ordinance frequently, and, lastly, do not over-plan.

Mt. Lebanon grew out to its municipal borders some years ago, but now has the opportunity to grow back towards its center. Offering an antidote to suburban sprawl, without giving up the best of suburbia, Mt. Lebanon is in a position to reintroduce within its borders the pleasures of proximity, the pleasures of propinquity, the pleasures of urbanity. By recognizing its dual nature—and its two distinct realms—Mt. Lebanon may come very close to realizing the dream that has driven American suburbanization, most eloquently stated in the nineteenth century by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said, "I wish for rural strength and religion, and city facility and polish."

"...We're at a watershed point. We're either going to become an urban community, or remain a suburban community, an island."

—Harrison "Had" Thomas,
Mt. Lebanon native,
in *Mt. Lebanon Magazine*,
January/February 1988



I.A.5 Roselawn Avenue in Central Square



I.A.6 The Cyclops Building

B

The Community in Focus

“Time present and time past are both present in the future...”

—T.S. Eliot

LEGALLY CREATED IN 1912, Mt. Lebanon’s initial population of 1,705 grew to a 1990 census of 33,362. A haven from Pittsburgh’s once-dirty air, the new community was founded at the end of the streetcar line. Mt. Lebanon matured into one of Pittsburgh’s most desirable places to live, as the Liberty Tunnels to downtown opened, and commuters increased their dependence on automobiles to get there. Mt. Lebanon’s last substantial subdivisions were completed in the 1980s.

Seventy-one per cent of Mt. Lebanon’s residences are owner-occupied homes, about twelve per cent above the national average. Fifty per cent of them have been lived-in by their owners for eleven years—and twenty-five per cent of them for more than twenty years, both substantially above the national average. Mt. Lebanon prides itself on its appeal to those who demand the best in housing, schools, municipal services, commuting, convenience, leisure and cultural activities. These assets provide residential stability. Mt. Lebanon’s family-oriented outlook has met change and development through the generations in an experienced, reflective way.

■ Many housing options are offered within a five-minute walk of Washington Road. The neighborhood offers the opportunity to live on hills and ridges, looking out over a wooded landscape where rooftops are part of the charm of the view.

Mt. Lebanon’s school system and recreational facilities are among the community’s greatest attractions, and one of the best reasons to stay and raise a family. Property values in Mt. Lebanon remain high, in large part due to the schools. The school system consistently ranks among the top public and private schools in the nation and



I.B.1 Washington Road, looking south



I.B.2 Washington Road, looking south from Towne Faire

is based on neighborhood elementary schools. In fact Mt. Lebanon neighborhoods are often known by the names of their schools. *Redbook* magazine called Mt. Lebanon High School "the best high school in Pennsylvania." College extension and continuing education programs make intensive use of Mt. Lebanon's school buildings. The Mt. Lebanon Public Library, with 100,000 catalogued items, is well-used and undergoing expansion.

In addition to the School District's extensive physical education facilities, the recreation center in the main park has swimming pools, ice rinks, and climate-controlled tennis courts. In all there are forty-two tennis courts among the community's parks and school grounds. Runners are always in evidence, on the high school's all-weather track or on the miles of quiet streets. The Municipality maintains over 300 acres of parks—nearly nine acres for every 1,000 citizens. In addition there is a nine-hole municipal golf course, as well as several private golf clubs nearby.

The Municipality and the School District cooperate in providing year-round recreation, education and cultural opportunities, publicized in the award-winning *Mt. Lebanon Magazine*, delivered free to all residents ten times a year.

Mt. Lebanon is no longer the suburb of young families it was for many years. The school-age population now fluctuates from decade to decade. Sixteen per cent of Mt. Lebanon's population is over sixty-five years of age, reflecting the so-called "graying" of America's suburbs. Many people prefer to remain in Mt. Lebanon when they retire. Seniors are living longer, but less mobility can mean isolation for many older people living in suburbia.

"We moved to the Pittsburgh area from Maryland, and the area is very affordable. Mt. Lebanon is family-oriented, and it offers a lot. We're very happy here—it's just a great place to raise a family."

—quoted in "Fifty Fabulous Places to Raise Your Family"



I.B.3 Washington Road, looking north in the 1970s



I.B.4 Widening Washington Road in 1950

“Customers have been trained not to come to Washington Road.”

—from the July 1994 public workshops

Uptown—a Suburban Downtown

Mt. Lebanon’s “downtown” further distinguishes the community from other South Hills suburbs. As Mt. Lebanon grew, Uptown also grew as the community’s commercial center. At the end of the trolley line, the six- and seven-hundred blocks of Washington Road were also the terminus of more-or-less continuous commercial uses on Route 19—another of Washington Road’s names—from the Liberty Tunnels through Dormont to Mt. Lebanon. This early “strip”—denser and with fewer parking lots than its recent counterparts in farther-flung suburbs—served well the daily needs of the community. A map from the early 1960s, just before the opening of South Hills Village and subsequent shopping centers, shows Washington Road from Castle Shannon Boulevard to Dormont lined with grocery stores, drug stores, butchers, apparel and shoe stores, auto dealerships, restaurants, seamstresses and music teachers. Looking at the area now, the disappearance of many of the northerly retail uses shown on the 1960s map has reinforced a sense of the blocks south of the cemetery as a place with boundaries, as Mt. Lebanon’s commercial district, and not simply an extension from Dormont.

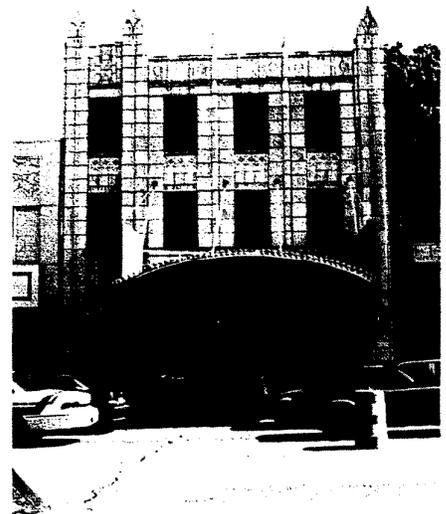
American shopping habits and merchandising techniques are much different than they were when Washington Road dominated commerce in Mt. Lebanon. Not only can citizens now shop at the Galleria and at other stores around Gilkeson Road, at Castle Shannon Boulevard and on Cochran Road, but the family car means easy access to shopping anywhere in the metropolitan area. Washington Road was clearly losing ground by the 1960s, barely competing with the new shopping centers going up everywhere. Studies of Washington Road have been going on since 1961, when despite a steady increase in Mt. Lebanon’s population, retail sales on the road had steadily declined for seven years. Of course, this was not peculiar to Mt. Lebanon, but was a national trend. Proud of its schools,



I.B.5 Roller’s clock tower



I.B.6 The Medical Arts Building



I.B.7 The Nettle Creek Building

parks, shaded lawns and beautiful homes, Mt. Lebanon began to feel uneasy about the road, and about the decline of what, to visitors, was the center of the community. Doubt also grew as to whether the health of the road was even important to the welfare of the community.

Planning Uptown Mt. Lebanon

There has been a steady and innovative tradition of strategic planning for Uptown. The first study, "Central Core Study for Mt. Lebanon Township," published in 1962, predicted that without intervention, Uptown would become a neighborhood convenience center drawing on an ever-smaller primary area, especially if Horne's department store were to leave. Rather boldly, the study recommended greatly increased residential density. Retail sales potential would be strengthened, it said, by the large number of high income families within walking distance of the Central Core. Obsolescent buildings in the core area would provide sites for the increased residential density use. The stretch of Washington Road recommended for redevelopment in the 1961 study included the six- and seven-hundred block Washington Road frontages.

The EBASCO study of 1963 cited the commercial areas in general and "pockets of deteriorating homes adjoining the commercial areas" as two problem areas that were disadvantageous to the Mt. Lebanon Central Business District. EBASCO had faith in the ability of the CBD to reverse itself, but stressed that revitalization would take four to seven years, and that private interests, merchants' associations or the municipality could not accomplish it alone; major property owners and tenants must have "the collective desire and initiative" for improvement.

As a result of the 1960s studies, the Core Area was rezoned to permit high-rise development: residential buildings were constructed on Upper Washington Road, and mid- and

"The capacity of the Central Core Area to survive depends upon the ability of Mt. Lebanon to strengthen its trade advantages and minimize or eliminate its disadvantages. Doing so will require careful evaluation of the future potential of the Central Core Area and the determination of the extent of the area's major problems, in order to determine the steps necessary if the potential is to be realized."

— "Central Core Study
for Mt. Lebanon Township"
1962



I.B.8 Houses on Kenmont Avenue, one block from Washington Road



I.B.9 Uptown hillsides

high-rise office buildings went up on the commercial blocks down the hill. The first of Washington Road's streetscape improvements was implemented, paid for entirely by the Municipality.

The 1970 Comprehensive Plan by Kendrie & Shephard noted stagnation in local retail sales, and verified the predictions of the earlier studies. The plan mandated building setbacks as the remedy for Uptown's problems, crediting a thirty-eight foot setback with an increase in the Cyclops Building's (I.A.6) value. Furthermore, in response to the perceived problems local customers (and merchants) complained of in not finding enough parking spaces, the plan called for commitments by major developers to provide additional off-street parking spaces, consistent with the true parking demands of new commercial uses. The report noted, however, that at the time an apparent parking reserve existed.

An updated Core Area Study, *Continuing Planning Report F*, explicitly sought to preserve and strengthen the central core as a means of improving the tax base and maintaining steady municipal growth. This study noted a continued retail sales decline but an increase in personal services in Mt. Lebanon, reflecting the national economy. Also indicated in the report was a demand for parking structures, multi-family residential developments and offices. Noting the success of the six high-rises built since 1962 in improving the tax base, the updated study recommended a similar building program for the next ten years. Re-thinking was recommended for the previously proposed Redevelopment Zoning District, where the report considered increasing floor area ratios to ten-to-one and fifteen-to-one. The area along Washington Road between Lebanon Avenue and the Municipal Building was again recommended for higher density residential uses.

The Municipality's new zoning ordinance of 1972 adopted the setback and parking recommendations of the previous reports. The Redevelopment Code was enacted in 1977,



I.B.10 Pendale Towers and Lebanon House



I.B.11 Single-family houses and apartment buildings in the Uptown roofscape

and in 1980 a public-private partnership resulted in Washington Square (I.B.12), a 142-unit, ten-story residential/office condominium. The ten-year initiative to densify Uptown was bold, progressive and sound in its planning. It added variety to the mixture of housing types in the community, providing approximately 2,750 units of housing within a five-minute walk of Washington Road. Clearly beneficial on several fronts, the planning of the 1960s and 70s probably *did* forestall further decline on Washington Road.

Washington Road—Main Street and More

Say “Washington Road” in Mt. Lebanon and most likely people will picture the two blocks of storefronts between Mellon School and the cemetery. Dormont probably thinks of a few of its commercial blocks in the same way, before the road is renamed West Liberty Avenue and continues through the tunnels to downtown Pittsburgh. South of Mt. Lebanon, the road takes on a different identity in each settlement on its way to Washington, Pennsylvania.

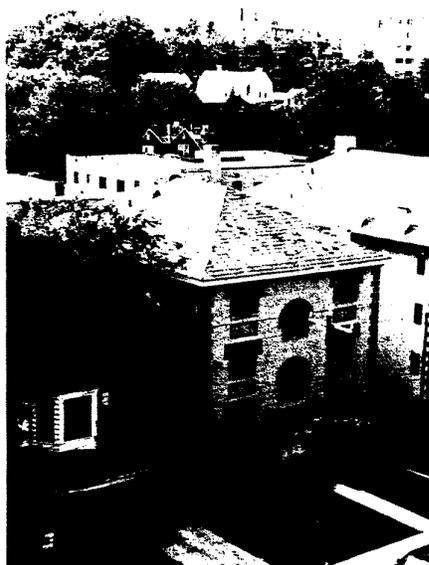
The road is a much more complex thoroughfare than it would be if it were only Mt. Lebanon’s Main Street. As State Route 19 the road is part of the regional transportation system, sending commuters into Pittsburgh and working with other roads to disperse drivers and goods throughout the suburbs. Subject to the rules and regulations—and the vision—of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the road must play other, larger roles than the one it plays in the quality of Mt. Lebanon’s life. Indeed, traffic experts claim that for Washington Road to work well in its regional context, everything on either side of the street should be razed and the right-of-way widened, something we hope Mt. Lebanonites will never allow.

“There is not a village in America, however badly planned at first, or ill-built afterwards, that may not be redeemed, in great measure, by the aid of shade trees in the streets, and a little shrubbery in the front yards, and it is never too late or too early to project improvements of this kind.”

—Andrew Jackson Downing (1841)



I.B.12 Washington Square on Florida Avenue



I.B.13 Florida Avenue apartment buildings



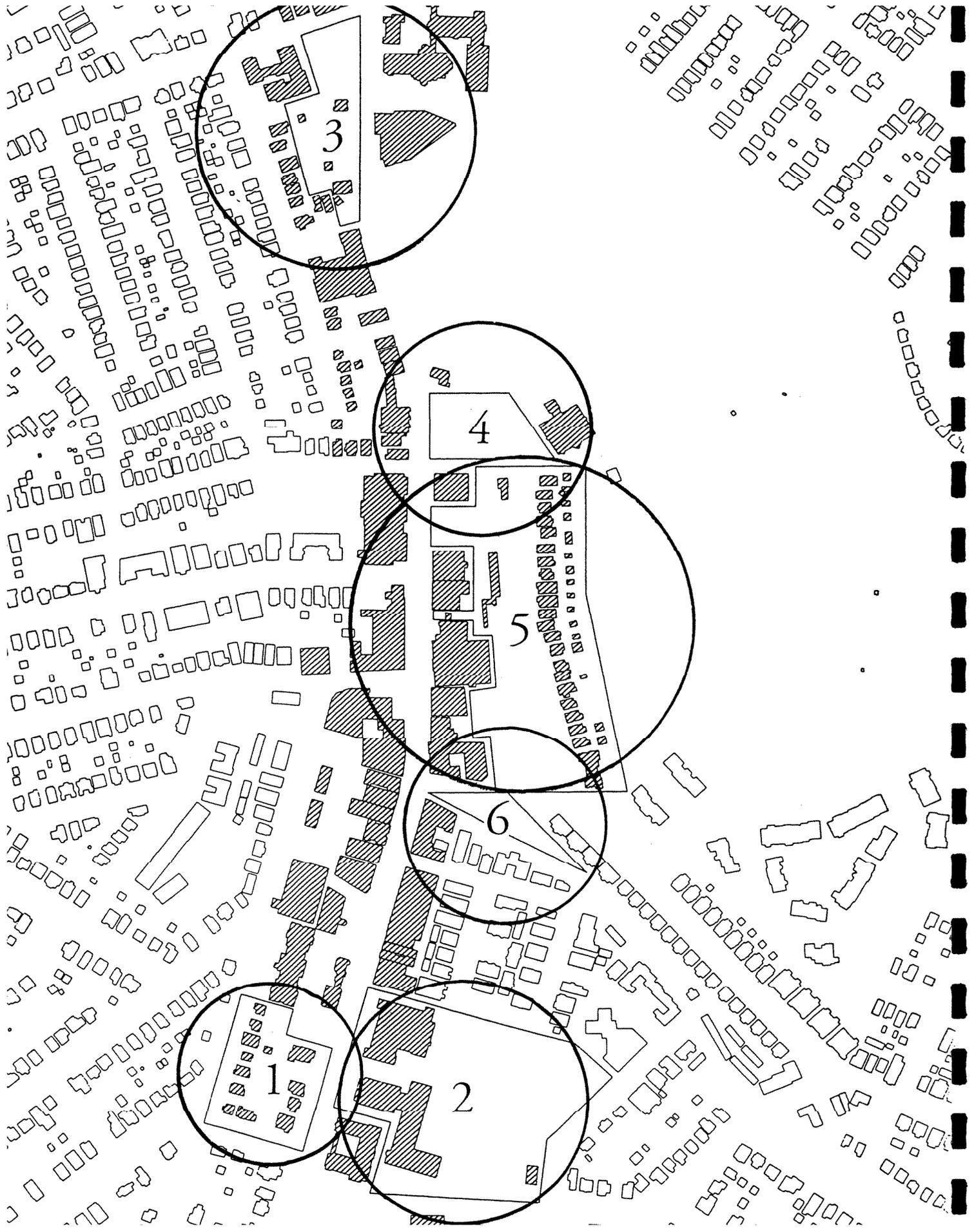
I.B.14 A Mt. Lebanon neighborhood street

WE BELIEVE THERE IS NO CHOICE FOR WASHINGTON ROAD

It can and must be both a regional artery and the symbolic center of town. Main Streets remain the traditional heart of American small-town life. Washington Road can be the active heart of Mt. Lebanon, and as a special place in a long road, can usher people through a place they'll remember and wish to visit.

II This Strategic Plan is guided by nine planning principles. These are based on common sense, as well as the evidence provided by successful communities across time. But they also emphasize qualities and opportunities unique to Mt. Lebanon and to this stretch of Washington Road. The principles should govern the development of the key locations described in Part III and influence all planning and preservation in Uptown.

- 1 How Much Change?**
Mt. Lebanon's center has always improved through adaptation.
- 2 Make Streets for People (and Automobiles)**
Accommodating both is essential.
- 3 Define Boundaries and Establish Anchors**
People like to know where they are.
- 4 Create a Sense of Breadth**
Direct views—and growth—to the east and west.
- 5 Establish Key Locations as Catalysts for Growth**
Target sites for their positive impact on surrounding properties.
- 6 Take Advantage of Setting and Terrain**
Mt. Lebanon's landscape is essential to Uptown's image.
- 7 Strengthen the Armature Between Landmarks**
Washington Road is a place.
- 8 Pay Attention to Detail**
More than anything else, details make a place memorable.
- 9 Implement the Plan Through Community Entrepreneurship**
Everyone in Mt. Lebanon should be an advocate for the plan.



How Much Change?

1

As stated in “The Context for a Strategic Plan,” a fundamental choice for Mt. Lebanon lies between *maintaining* the status-quo on Washington Road and *recasting* the district’s image—evolving a new character for Uptown, and a new role for it both in the Municipality as well as in the region.

“In every age ‘the good old days’ were a myth. No one ever thought they were good at the time. For every age has consisted of crises that seemed intolerable to the people who lived through them.”

Brooks Atkinson, “February 8,”
Once Around the Sun (1951)

Everyone wants Washington Road to be more attractive, if only because it embarrasses people as a symbol of Mt. Lebanon. Many remember “Upstreet” or “the avenue” of the early days, and would like those times back again. But the good old days were probably far from perfect: a 1960 study showed that Horne’s did eighty-five per cent of the retail business in the area until the department store moved to South Hills Village—hardly a boom for small business. And the road probably never was “the way it was” for very long. Always part of a regional network of markets and transportation, Uptown has had to adapt to development trends in an area much larger than Mt. Lebanon. Washington Road was widened, and high-rise apartment buildings were built. Who knew in 1912, when Mt. Lebanon was incorporated, that the trolley would vanish? Who in 1970 thought Mt. Lebanon would ever be on a brand-new transit route?

In the context of ongoing change, maintaining a desirable community means guiding change, not avoiding it. To keep its traditional place at the center of the community, Uptown must continue to look beyond the municipal borders. No longer the primary shopping address of a growing suburb, Uptown Washington Road must again reassess its opportunities for serving Mt. Lebanon and the region.

11.1.1 Rollier’s provides an excellent example of sensitive innovation: large, modern retail space suits the way that home improvement is merchandised today, while the facade at the street line and windows at the second floor maintain the character of Washington Road.



2

Make Streets for People (and Automobiles)



II.2.1

“The rich street life is no frill. It is an expression of the most ancient function of a city—a place for people to come together, all kinds of people, face-to-face, and there is far more of this congress here than in the bland shopping centers being touted as the new downtown.

—William H. Whyte
in *New York* magazine, July 1974

ARTERIES, COLLECTOR AND LOCAL STREETS. The classifications from Mt. Lebanon’s *Comprehensive Plan* for the community’s 100 miles of surface streets imply they are mere carriers of vehicles. Only Washington Road and Bower Hill Road’s *artery* category hints at their larger meaning: they carry the town’s life blood.

The metaphor is apt. Of course streets are a town’s circulatory system, but streets do more than carry traffic. Streets are places themselves, through which traffic—vehicular *and* pedestrian—passes. The citizens of Mt. Lebanon know Washington Road as a place as well as a route. Calling the commercial core by the name of its street is no different from knowing Fifth Avenue as a shopping area, or Madison Avenue as the center of advertising. In large measure, streets constitute a district’s character.

Like some streets, shopping malls are lined with stores, but shopping malls are essentially buildings, confining their interior “streets” within a selling machine. But *real* streets do more than sell: real streets are continuous, real streets *go somewhere*. Significantly, the anchor analogy used often in this strategic report refers not to the end of something, as Kaufmann’s and Lazarus end the mall, but rather to something that ends one thing while it begins another. While the street continues, an anchor on a street marks a change in character, and a place in the town.

Always named as favorite places to be in Pittsburgh—and for some people representing models of what Washington Road could be—Southside and Shadyside *are* their streets, traffic and all. We go to Shadyside on a fine Saturday afternoon even though the sidewalks are far too narrow for weekend crowds. On Carson Street especially, compression, containment and even congestion—of people as well as cars—are part of the reason we go there. We like the heightened sense of what is around us, and the constant, pleasant possibility of surprise. Congestion is not categorically bad.

Washington Road Can Be a Great Street, Too

Great streets are not found only in big cities. In his book *Great Streets*, Allan B. Jacobs lists the essential characteristics of good streets, designable qualities on which our memories of places depend:

PLACES FOR PEOPLE TO WALK

Walking with leisure offers sociability. It takes more than curbs to create a sense of safety or tranquillity. Trees, even parked cars, can contribute to it. Smaller streets can mix people

and cars, when the driver is forced to acknowledge the presence (and pace) of the pedestrian.

PHYSICAL COMFORT

The best streets shelter you from the wind, offering warmth or sunlight when it's cool, shade and coolness when it's hot, while not letting us forget we're outside.

DEFINITION

Boundaries communicate clearly where the edges of the street are. Boundaries make the place and keep our eyes on the street. Boundaries occur above and in front of us, and always under our feet.

QUALITIES THAT ENGAGE THE EYES

In constant motion themselves, our eyes seek out movement. A great street is a visual field full of things to both catch and rest the eyes. Washington Road doesn't have to look like Hong Kong, however. People move, and so do trees. Light plays on, through and around them. As the day goes by buildings change, too: lighter, darker, shaded or highlighted, always changing with the light.

TRANSPARENCY

One has a sense of what is behind whatever it is that defines the streets. Windows present us with a view. An overhanging tree can invite us to imagine what's behind a wall, too.

COMPLEMENTARITY

The buildings get along with each other, and big jumps or drops are rare. Great streets are not generally characterized by standout, architectural wonders.

MAINTENANCE

Shopkeepers know the importance of this. Maintenance begins with the choice of materials, and continues to reveal the care taken with them.

When we add to Jacobs' list some other qualities of street *life*—from the chance encounter, or the expectation of seeing someone you know, to relying on a long-established merchant, to the change of seasons—and one senses the essential social role that streets play. No great street is quite like any other. Constancy *and* change are nurtured by a true local character found on that street alone. Washington Road already has many of the characteristics of a great street; the others will be relatively easy to acquire over time.

“Above all, do not lose your desire to walk.”

—Soren Kierkegaard

down town

OFTEN WALK

I often go to the park for a walk

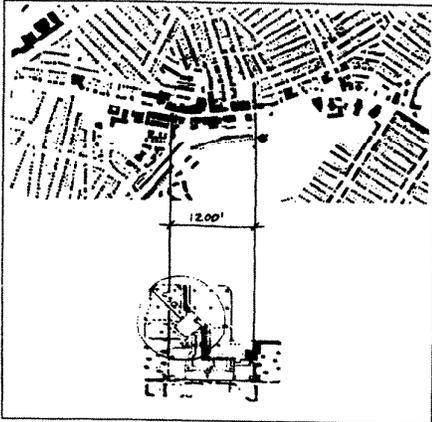
—Japanese shopping bag



11.2.2 Beverly Road is a popular neighborhood shopping area in Mt. Lebanon. The street here shares many of Washington Road's physical characteristics, but is enhanced with simple but appreciated pedestrian-friendly amenities.

3

Define Boundaries and Establish Anchors

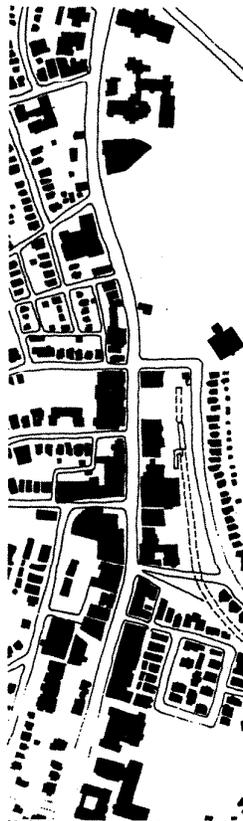


11.3.1 The length of the Uptown commercial core compared to the plan of a typical shopping mall.

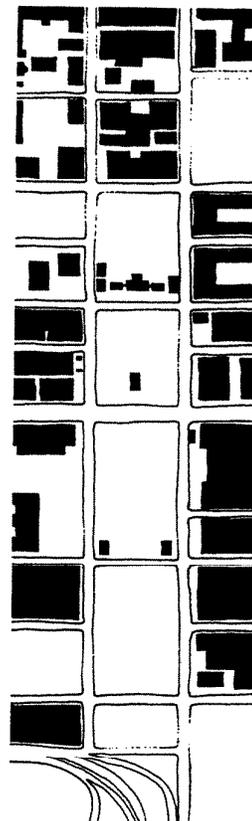
Landscapes as well as buildings mark the beginnings of special districts within towns. In Mt. Lebanon such landmarks signal a change in character and the establishment of a place—Uptown—along this particular stretch of Washington Road.

Institutions—schools, churches and government buildings—are the signature of a community. Clusters of prominent institutions (11.3.5) already mark the gateways to Uptown Mt. Lebanon. Well north of the municipality's southern boundary at Gilkeson Road, Washington Road enters Uptown at Castle Shannon Boulevard, where the Mellon and Washington Schools and Southminster Presbyterian Church mark the threshold of the commercial core. The road's entrance from the north is clearly signaled on the skyline at Church Place, where the towers of three churches are familiar landmarks.

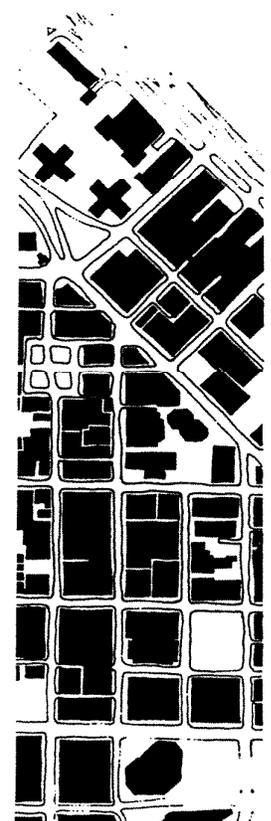
Between the gateways, Uptown Mt. Lebanon is a surprisingly large area of urban land, its length roughly equivalent to that of Independence Mall in downtown Philadelphia (11.3.3), or to the walk from Gateway Center to Steel Plaza in Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle (11.3.4).



11.3.2 Uptown Mt. Lebanon



11.3.3 Independence Mall

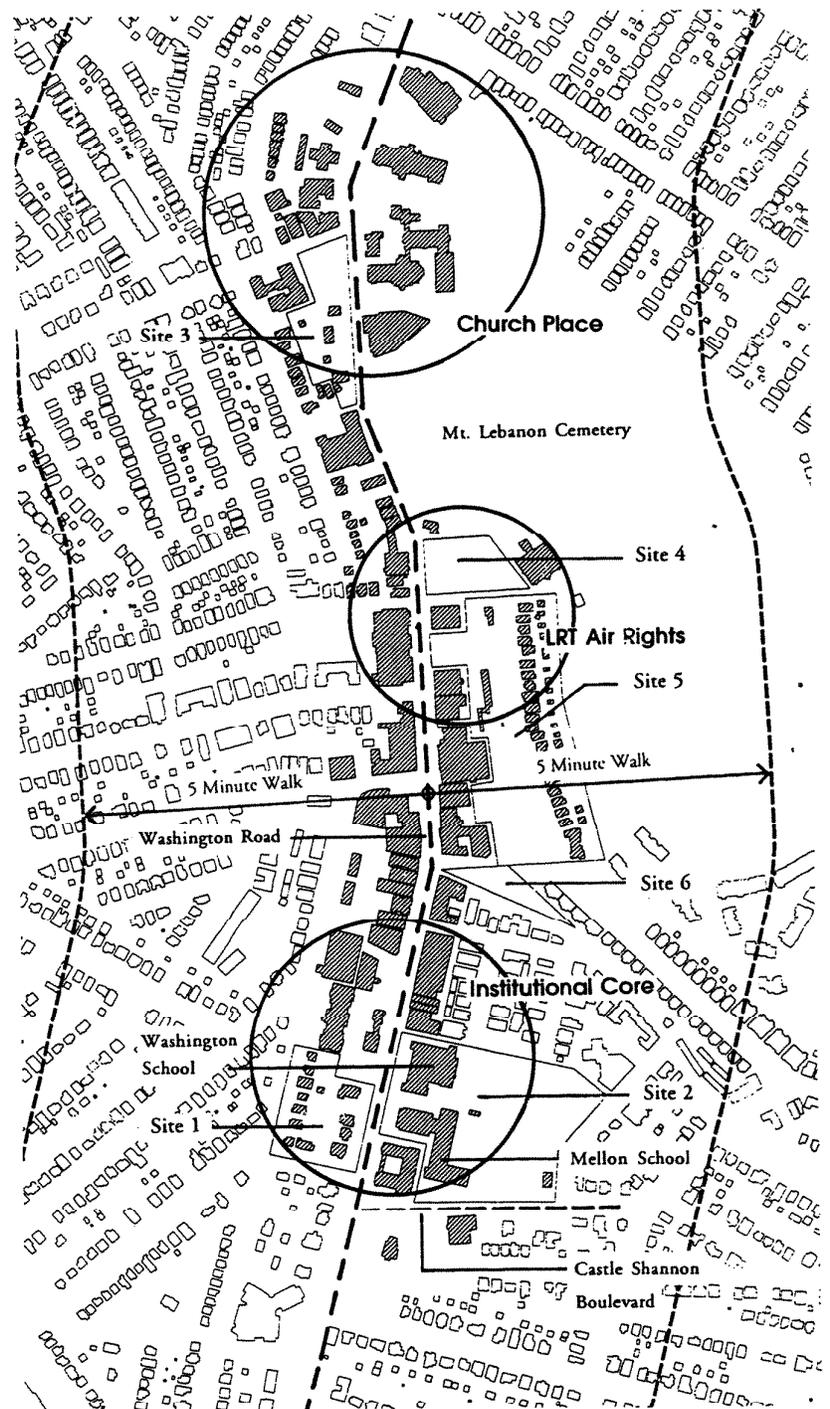


11.3.4 Golden Triangle

As shown in figure 11.3.5, Mt. Lebanon Cemetery lies midway between the anchoring landmarks at Uptown's gateways. The corner of the cemetery at Shady Drive is a landmark itself, shared by two distinct districts within Uptown. The cemetery hill is literally pivotal, marking the place where the road turns and rises to the north, or turns and dips as it enters the retail core from the other direction. This place in the road clearly divides Uptown into a commercial core south of the cemetery, and a district of high-rise residences to the north, a neighborhood that we call Upper Washington Road. The tower of St. Bernard's dominates and terminates the axial view through the commercial area. The Upper Washington Road high-rises across from Mt. Lebanon Cemetery are a unique instance along Washington Road, for being the first residential neighborhood on the road as it heads south from central Pittsburgh.

New thinking at the entrances to Uptown can enhance Washington Road's attraction for merchants and business. Little more than a five-minute walk lies between each of the three major Uptown landmarks—the churches, the Shady Drive corner, and Southminster—not much more than the length of a shopping mall (11.3.1). Strategically located, regionally-oriented anchors—retail or otherwise—will generate pedestrian activity on the blocks between these anchors, in the way that big stores activate the concourse of smaller establishments in a mall.

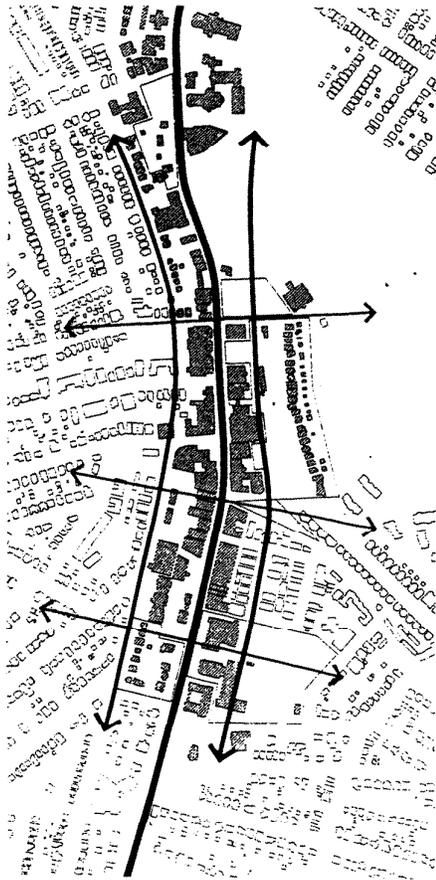
Planning and development should reinforce the boundaries of the Uptown commercial core, containing and nurturing an active core of commercial and institutional uses. Commercial creep must be discouraged north and south of the core, particularly at low densities. Future expansion of commercial uses in the district should be between the anchors, where new buildings and new uses can widen the Uptown core's east-west dimensions and activate other streets with lively, "downtown" uses.



11.3.5 Uptown anchors and districts

4

Create a Sense of Breadth



II.4.1 Florida Avenue and Parse Way parallel Washington Road on the east and west. With better pedestrian connections to Washington Road, these streets can offer alternative shopping and entertainment places in a commercial district now only one street wide.

A SENSE OF BREADTH can overcome the problems presented by a commercial core only one street wide. Shady Drive crosses Washington Road at Uptown's only cross-intersection. Every other street in the core—Lebanon Avenue, Central Square, Alfred Street, Cedar Boulevard, Academy Avenue—meets Washington Road at a T-intersection. As a result, the Washington Road building wall seldom opens to remind you that you're on a high ridge. Full intersections open the cross-views and lend rhythm to streets. Their rarity in Uptown confuses perception of the place.

Washington Road is much more than a downtown shopping street. As State Route 19, Washington Road is the only through north-south route for several miles, and the absence of nearby parallel roads for shopping, walking or commuting means that Washington Road serves multiple purposes in Mt. Lebanon.

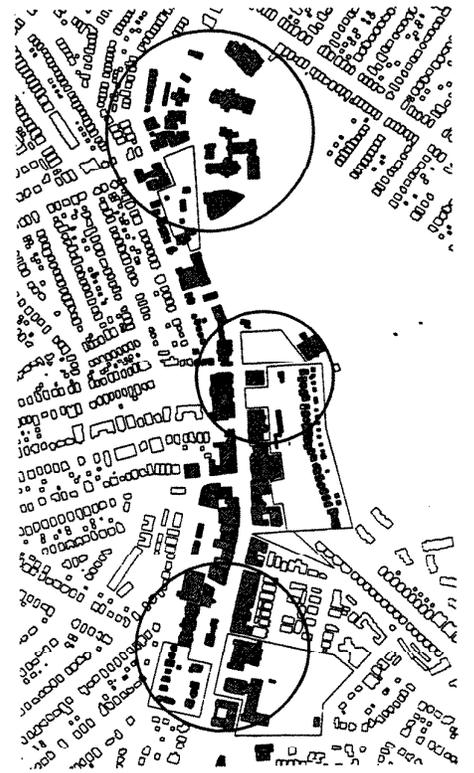
T-intersections can be visually extended. Views from T-intersections across the LRT site (with its air rights for commercial development) to the cemetery hillside, coinciding with new landscaped pedestrian routes, will increase the apparent breadth of the core area. The view can be extended from the intersection of Academy Avenue, opening a new window to the east. While the North Garage sits at the top of Cedar Boulevard, blocking the chance of a view to the east from that intersection, a view from Washington Road east to the hillside of the cemetery is desirable along the side of the garage, as part of a link to the LRT Station. This report's recommendations for development of the air rights and adjoining properties on Washington Road are based on an understanding of the LRT block as several distinct parcels. These parcels could become new city blocks with view and pedestrian corridors between them.

Openings to the west (II.6.3) should be made as well, especially views and pedestrian routes to Florida Avenue all along the length of the block between Lebanon Avenue and Cedar Boulevard.



Establish Key Locations as Catalysts for Growth

PART THREE of this report presents guidelines and the opportunities for development at six important Uptown sites. The six are identified as key because of their strategic placement Uptown, and for their potential for stimulating improvement on adjacent properties. In addition, the Key Locations are chosen because 1) they promise to reinforce each other to revive the business climate and image of Washington Road, and 2) they present opportunities for putting all of the planning principles in place. Note that the six key locations correspond to or lie near the Uptown anchors (II.5.1), circled in the diagram to the right and described in Planning Principle #3.



II.5.1 Uptown's three principle anchors: Church Place on the north; the intersection of Washington Road and Castle Shannon Boulevard to the south, and the corner of Mt. Lebanon Cemetery at Washington Road and Shady Drive.

“...a noble diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing asserting itself with ever growing insistency.”

—Daniel H. Burnham
(1908)

6

Take Advantage of Setting and Terrain

HILLY TERRAIN is always an opportunity for making memorable places. Many cities—parts of Pittsburgh as well as San Francisco and Boston—take advantage of their hills. Visitors and residents alike have the pleasure of occupying high ground, views are opened from vantage points that are always different, and architects' responses to the opportunities presented by topography can result in a distinguished image.



II.6.1

"I like a good view and I enjoy sitting with my back to it."

—Edith Wharton

When asked why they like living and working in Uptown, many people say they like the view from the high-rise buildings. Lower-rise buildings can enjoy wide views as well. Geology and history located Washington Road on a ridge. Land falls away east and west. Some Washington Road businesses have used this advantage, turning the backs of their buildings into places to enjoy the view. This should be encouraged in new construction as well as in renovation. Low- and mid-rise buildings can be shaped to the land on either side of Washington Road, opening views over rooftops and terraces below. The view to the three churches at the top of the hill is already a memorable image of Mt. Lebanon. Looking up the hill from the east or west, the profile of the length of the Uptown Mt. Lebanon ridge would be another singular image among the South Hills.



II.6.2 Taking advantage of terrain in San Francisco



II.6.3 Washington Road at Florence Street

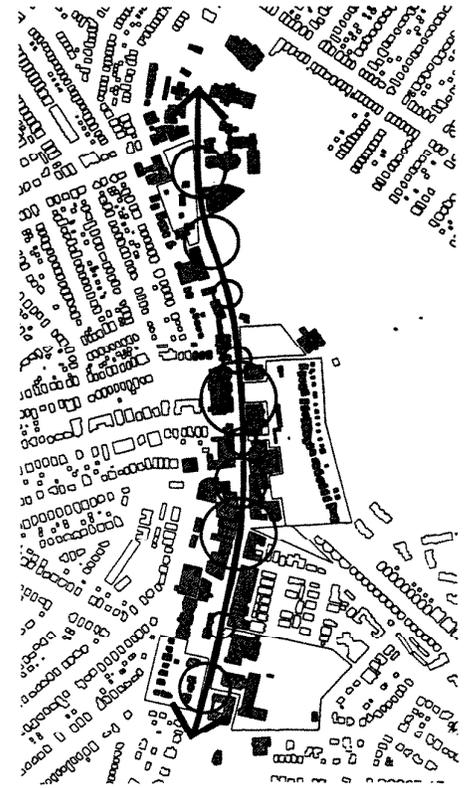
7

Strengthen the Urban Armature Between Landmarks

THE KEY LOCATIONS to be described in Part III have been identified for the potential impact that their development will have on the properties around them. They are thus part of a larger network or armature which constitutes the entirety of Uptown Washington Road.

As the recommendations for development at the key sites are implemented, the Uptown Washington Road corridor will, in time, take on a new character. It will be determined by planning and development at the key locations, which may or may not involve a large construction project. It will be very strongly shaped by the response on smaller properties, particularly those in the two-block commercial core. The implementation of the recommendations for even two or three of the Key Locations will spur reinvestment in existing properties, causing some to be renewed or upgraded. Others will be enlarged or rebuilt.

More lively storefronts must be encouraged and include not only outdoor dining but stores and restaurants that open their entire front to the sidewalk in fine weather. Shadyside has stores on two levels of older buildings, and the upper floors of Washington Road can be repopulated with offices and stores as well. Zoning and building code reform, along with development incentives should encourage the rehabilitation of the upper floors of commercial buildings as residences, and allow new buildings to have offices and apartments above retail space at street level.



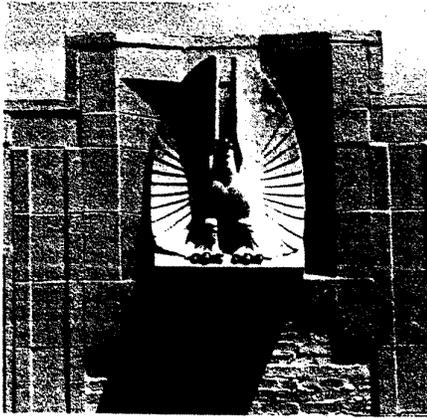
II.7.1 Washington Road is the urban armature linking all of the key locations and the Uptown anchors.

“By the diversity of its time structures, the city in part escapes the tyranny of a single present, and the monotony of a future that consists in repeating only a single beat heard in the past.”

—Lewis Mumford; *The Culture of Cities*



Street Improvements: Don't Spare the Details



11.8.1

FOR A MORE CHARMING, graceful and memorable Washington Road, attention should be lavished on small spaces, such as the old trolley loop and the Municipal Building apron, and increase tree planting everywhere. Give pedestrians more user-friendly amenities: shade, shelter from the rain, and places to sit—movable chairs as well as fixed benches, which, by the way, should always have backs. Everywhere in the shopping blocks variety is to be encouraged, and serendipity sought.

In thinking of what Uptown should look like, start with what's already there. While "themes" may dazzle a onetime visitor, they wear out quickly in an everyday environment. Seldom is there money to take an area to the theme-park level of refinement required to convince people of its authenticity. Nor does every theme suit every potential tenant and every use. Particularly in a district of mixed uses—schools, churches, offices, residences and municipal government—a theme meant to attract shoppers can work against the seriousness of community institutions, or simply annoy people who are there every day, particularly to do things other than shop.

"I don't like nostalgia unless it's mine."

—Lou Reed

We think of Uptown as Mt. Lebanon's town room, not an inappropriate metaphor when we consider that benches, lamp posts, mailboxes and the rest of the things we are used to seeing on our sidewalks are called "street furniture." Even more than a theme or a predetermined "look," the sum of the details on a street fix the place in a visitor's memory.

Signs, graphics, lighting, color, facade materials and sidewalks should be subject to review. Contrast, however, can also be complementary. Uptown design review should ensure that design and detail at all scales are evaluated for their contribution to the feeling of the whole environment. Too often, well-intentioned but over-restrictive design regulations result in stiffness, when a sense of spontaneity would be far more enjoyable. Design review committees should not be design police. It is safe to say that a little relaxation, a rule bent here and there—a well-understood framework of guidelines rather than a rule book—is in order if the environment is to be a relaxing place. Maintenance is essential, but no less importantly, the passage of time must be revealed and even celebrated. Given time, the accumulation of details will add up to an ambience found only on Washington Road, an ambience that reinforces a sense of place and becomes a theme itself.

Uptown's history of commercial architecture can be rediscovered and showcased. The smaller, un-modernized shops and windows of Washington Road have already attracted antique dealers, decorators and home accessories stores. New development should be en-

couraged to match the scale of the older shopfronts, to add canopies and marquees to new Washington Road elevations, and to restore them where they've been removed. Vary building elevations at sloping side streets, where rooflines, doorways, signs and trees should step down the street.

The details of seemingly disparate concerns can be coordinated. Everyone likes street trees, for instance, but a tree obscuring a sign or window understandably concerns a merchant. Trees should be selected for their initial shape and their mature growth, for their seasonal color, and their pruning and maintenance requirements. Tree selection must be coordinated with a design strategy for shop signs. Trees and signage must not merely coexist, but should combine to form a memorable image.

Signs are an essential part of town character, and good signs are remembered. Few things are as deadly as utterly uniform signage. Why must the pizza place have the same sign as the copy center? Sign guidelines rather than do-or-die controls can allow for the liveliness and novelty that shopping districts thrive on. Design review should assure not only that guidelines are followed, but that overall character is enriched, and that the occasional wonderful non-conforming idea is considered for what it adds to the mix.

The sum of the details will be memorable at the largest scale as well. Since Mt. Lebanon's earliest days, two vistas unique to this part of Washington Road have greeted visitors. From the north, the road drops and curves at the cemetery, opening a view of the commercial district clearly bounded by trees at either end. From the south, the road is in the foreground of the view to St. Bernard's tower. Within this opening in the South Hills foliage, Uptown Washington Road should stick in the mind as a compact, lively cluster of things to do and see. Keeping in mind Uptown's overall impression will make these gateway views even more striking. An attractive ensemble of building shapes, color, lighting and trees can fix the first image of the road in the mind. Furthermore, a sense of these few blocks of Washington Road as a different place may make some of the thousands who drive through daily think about pausing or returning, instead of just commuting.



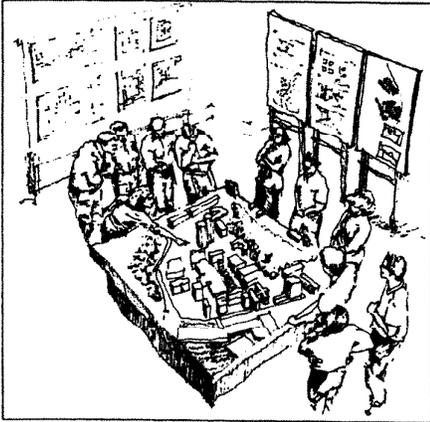
11.8.2 Established businesses and old shopfronts—the less consciously “restored” the better—maintain local character and make one place different from another while offering the same national retailers.



11.8.3 Our eyes want to rove, and are delighted by signs, windowboxes, flags and people. The “blade” type signs here add texture to the street and allow smaller stores and offices to make their presence known on the sidewalk.

9

Implement the Plan Through Community Entrepreneurship



THE STRATEGIC PLAN is a starting point, but without diligent pursuit of its principles it will remain *only* a first step. Realizing the potential explored in the Plan will require the concentrated effort of many in the community. A sense of stewardship for the plan and for Uptown—the entire community having a stake in the place they want it to become—is vital to the Strategic Plan's success.

The full commitment of the Mt. Lebanon Commission is essential. With the Commission's mandate, a Development Council, described in Part IV, should take responsibility for ongoing advocacy of the Strategic Plan, making implementation the Council's top priority.

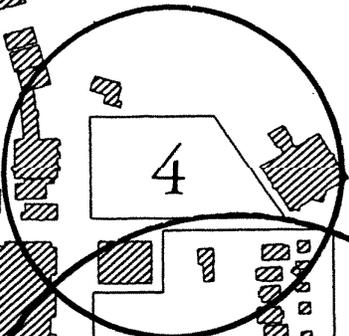
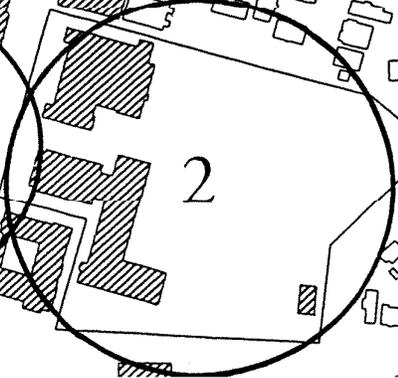
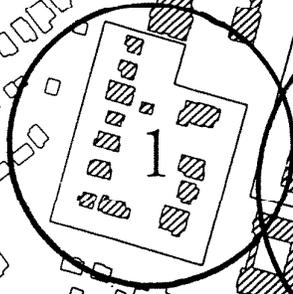
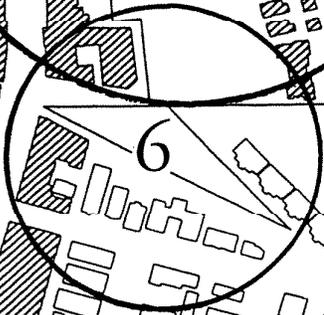
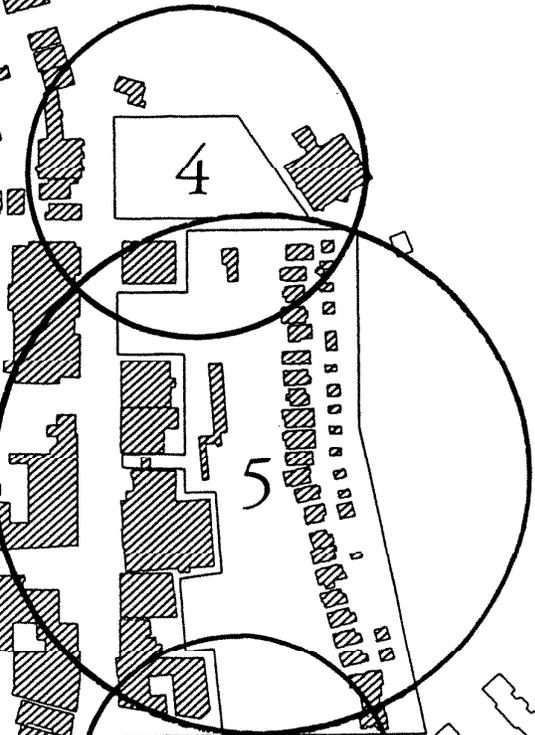
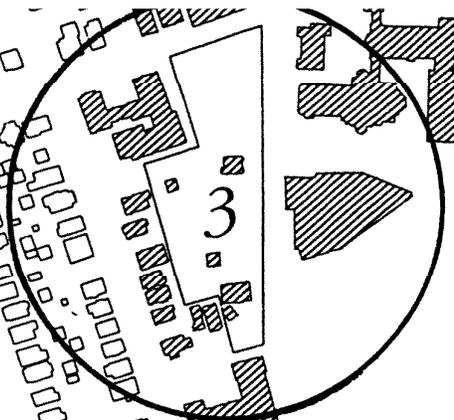
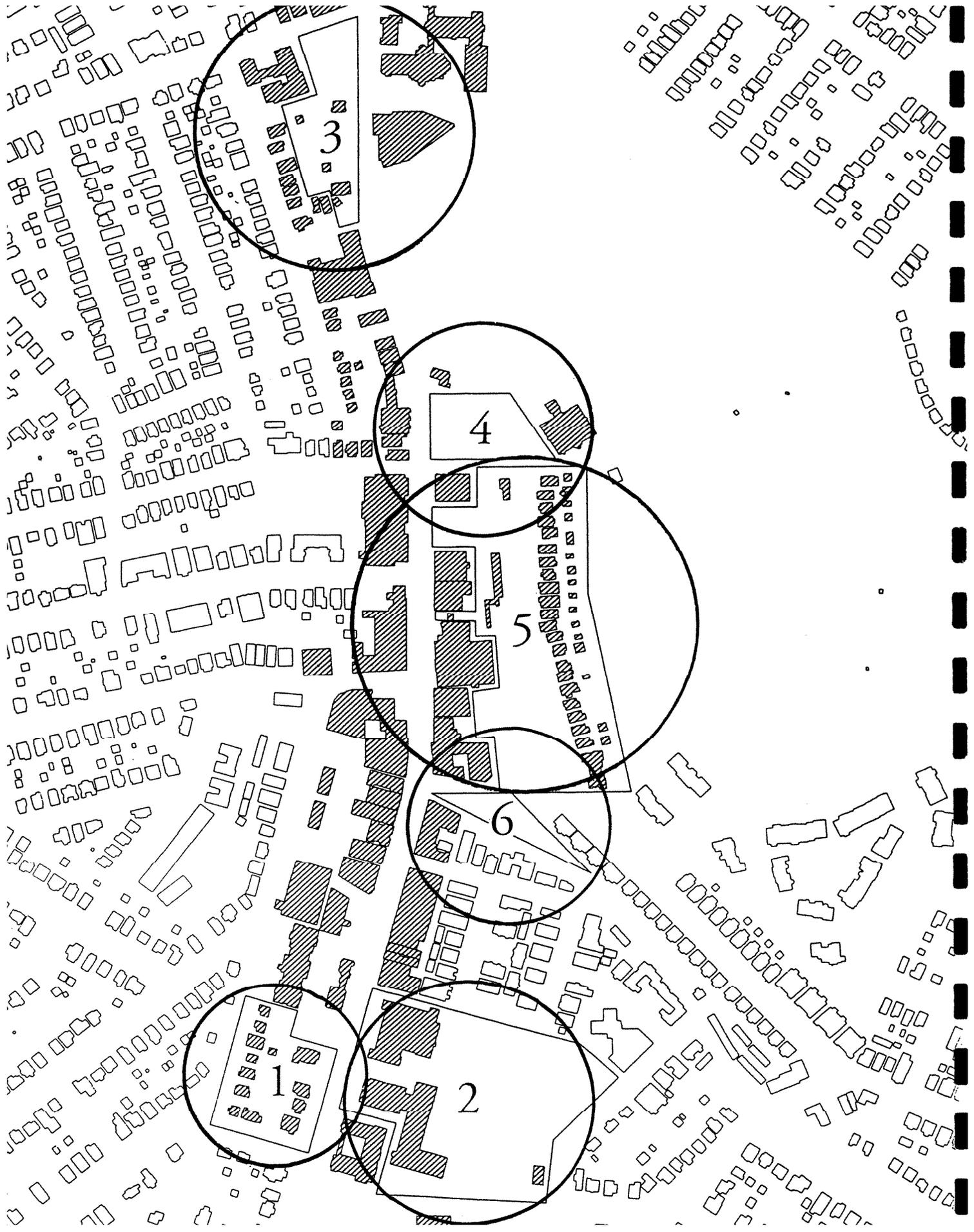
"Cities change or they stagnate. But *how* they change—how the rights of property are made to balance with the less tangible public interest—is one mark of civilization."

—Bill Moyers, TV commentator

S I X K E Y L O C A T I O N S

III Six key locations have been identified where development is not only appropriate, but also likely to increase value and stimulate investment in properties around them.

- 1 A Site for the Public Safety Building**
Washington Road at Lebanon Avenue
- 2 Strengthening the Anchor at the South**
Washington Road at Castle Shannon Boulevard
- 3 The Upper Washington Road Neighborhood**
Washington Road at Bower Hill Road
- 4 A New Hub at an Uptown Intersection**
Washington Road at Shady Drive East
- 5 Developing the LRT Air Rights**
The 600 Block of Washington Road
- 6 A New Town Common at the Clearview Loop**
Washington Road at Alfred Street



A Site for the Public Safety Building

Washington Road at Lebanon Avenue

1

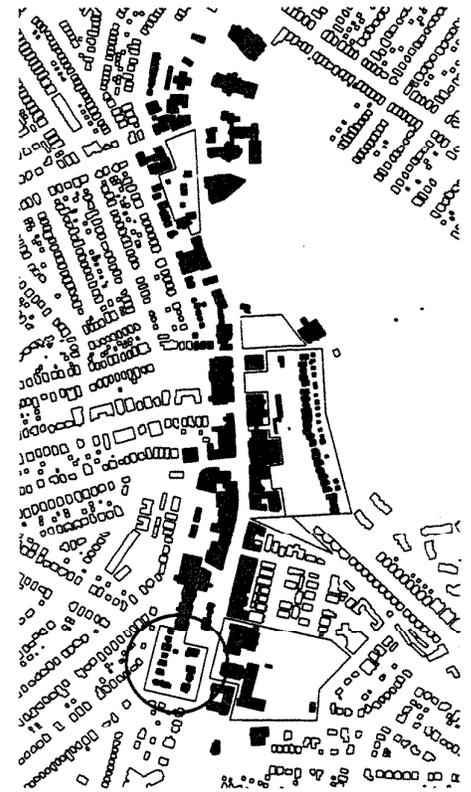
Area	94,275 SF (2.16 ACRES)
Current Zoning	R-4A Multi-family
Ownership	Mt. Lebanon Parking Authority Various private owners
Current Use	Offices, one residence on Washington Road, residences on Florida Boulevard
Recommended Use	Public Safety Building, with adjacent commercial and residential development

At the southern threshold of Mt. Lebanon's commercial core, Washington Road's intersection with Lebanon Avenue presents an opportunity to anchor Uptown with the new Public Safety Building.

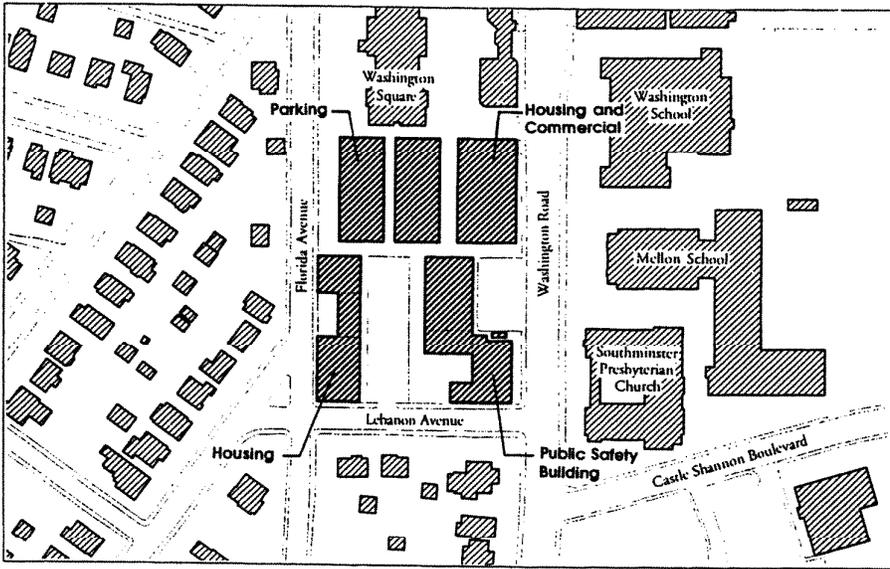
The Site

Approaching Uptown from the south, Washington Road changes character at the Lebanon Avenue intersection. A "South Hills landscape," where single-family homes and broad front lawns predominate, gives way to a "downtown" of retail, commercial and institutional uses. This change should be maintained and accentuated. The difference in character is marked by traffic lights at the intersection, by less dense foliage and sunnier sidewalks, and a narrowing of building setbacks. Most significantly, the trio of institutions on the east side of the street: Southminster Presbyterian Church, A.W. Mellon Junior High School and Washington Elementary School announce a new scale and intensity. These substantial buildings look across the street to four existing houses on the west side. Two are owned by the Mt. Lebanon Parking Authority: one occupied by Parking Authority offices, the other at the corner by the Mt. Lebanon Treasurer and Tax Office. The remaining two houses are privately owned, with part of one used as a dentist's office. These houses are typical of the mid-century builders' houses in the neighborhood and of others built along Washington Road prior to the development of high-rise housing in the 1970s.

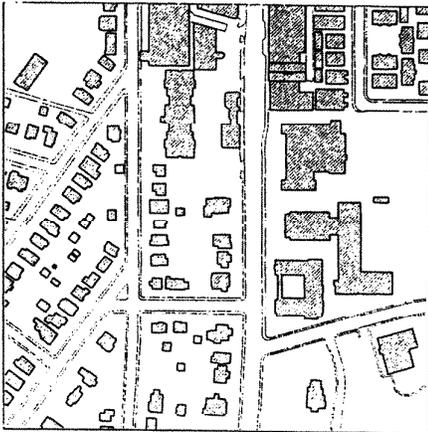
The site for the Public Safety Building drops about forty feet from the Washington Road ridge to Florida Avenue, which forms the edge of a neighborhood of smaller pre-war houses and apartment buildings. Florida and Lebanon Avenues are both important connections from Uptown to Cochran Avenue and Mt. Lebanon High School, and meet at



III.1.1 Key Location #1



III.1.2 Proposed site development



III.1.3 Existing site plan

The Opportunity

One redevelopment option for this site would extend Uptown retail/commercial uses south to Lebanon Avenue, anchoring the district with a substantial building on the scale of Rollier's at Shady Drive.

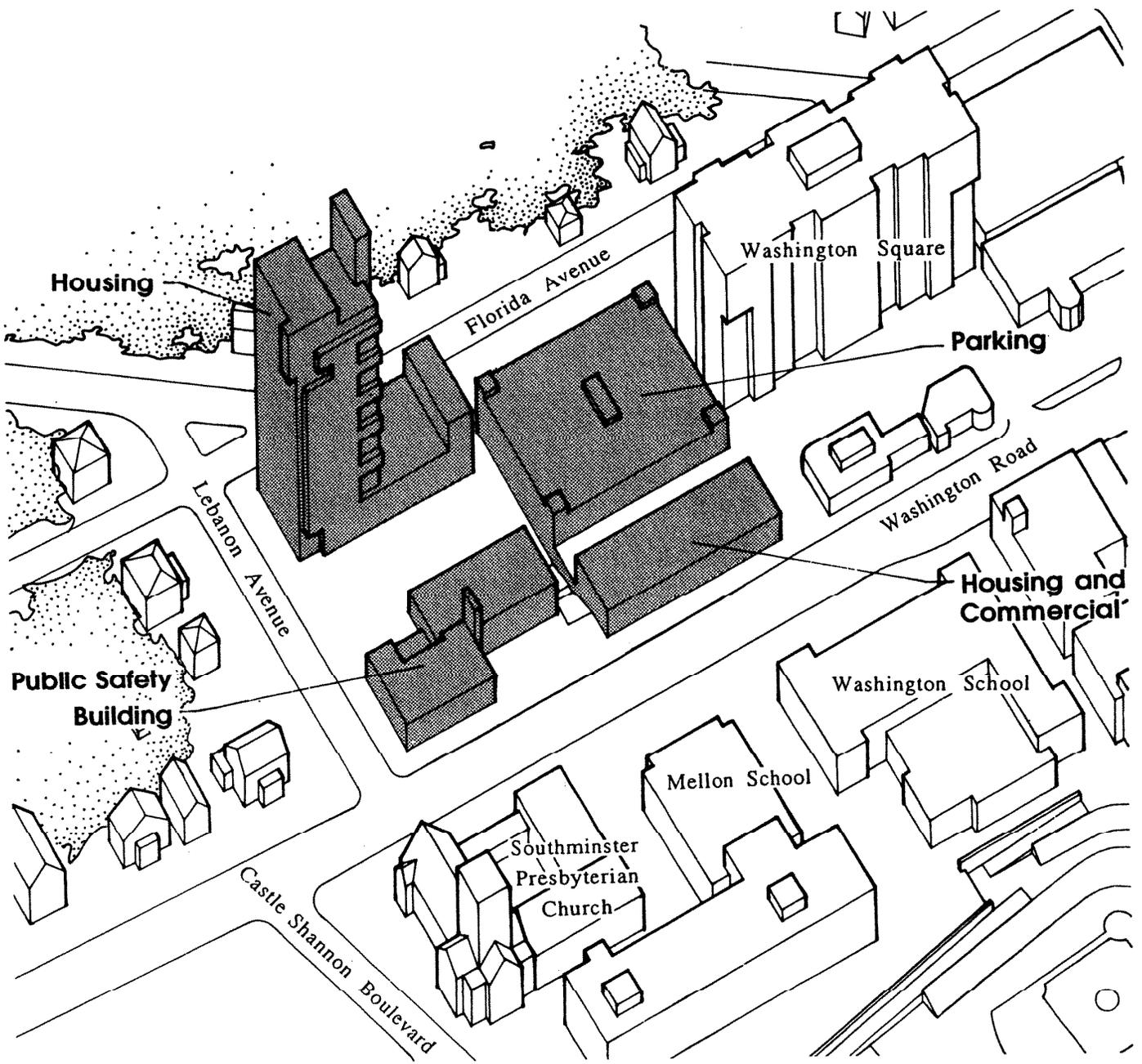
A better alternative (III.1.2) is to strengthen this southern gateway to Uptown with a new building to complement the presence of the civic institutions across the street. A Public Safety Building, at the corner of Lebanon Avenue and Washington Road, along with retail and office space on Washington Road and multifamily housing on Florida Avenue, would establish a properly active, mixed-use anchor.

an odd-shaped junction at the southwest corner of the block.

The forty-foot drop adds three stories to the back of Washington Square, a jump in scale on Florida Avenue no less abrupt for the building's setback. Next door, the South Municipal Parking Garage brings all of its parking levels out to the Florida Avenue street line, presenting a fifty-foot wall and a garage exit at the sidewalk. The backs of these buildings, the drop from Washington Road and the absence of uses other than residential on the street combine to isolate Florida Avenue from the rest of the Uptown district.

III.1.4 Looking north into the commercial core from Washington Road's intersection with Castle Shannon Boulevard, right, and with Lebanon Avenue, left, the proposed site for the Public Safety Building.

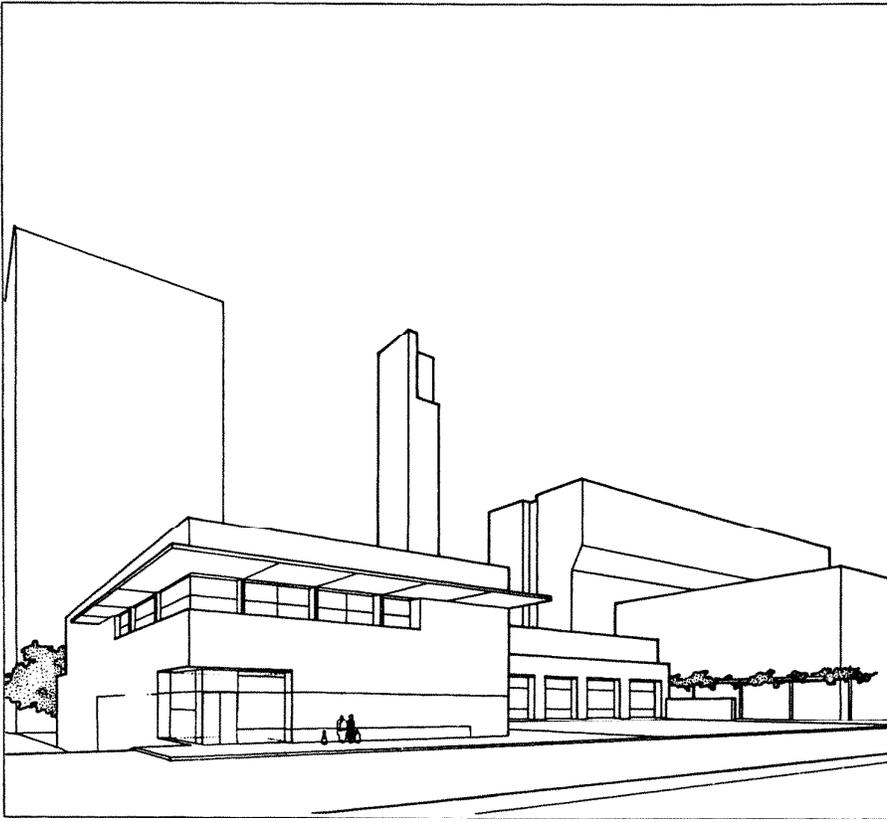




The Public Safety Building

Housed in the Municipal Building since it was built in 1928, Mt. Lebanon's Fire and Police Departments long ago outgrew their physical facilities. Several studies have been made of potential locations for a new building where the departments could be combined. Criteria for the new facility's location, based principally on fire fighting requirements, include geography and topography, fire hazards, response time and land availability. Not surprisingly, given that Washington Road occupies a ridge higher than most of the town's streets, locations which would allow equipment to pull directly onto Washington Road without going uphill are very desirable.

III.1.5 Proposed development around the Public Safety Building at the corner of Washington Road and Lebanon Avenue



III.1.6 The Public Safety Building at the corner of Washington Road and Lebanon Avenue. The equipment parking apron for the Fire Department is recessed between the Public Safety Building and a new mixed housing and commercial building, adjacent to Washington Square on the right. Additional housing is on Florida Avenue, behind the Public Safety Building.

ognizable symbol of small-town America, a fire station can provide an institutional anchor, while remaining a relatively small building. The site is also near the existing Municipal Building, maintaining a visual and working proximity.

The 1990 report to the Commissioners on a new Public Safety Building called for a minimum lot size of 47,000 square feet, which would accommodate a combined Fire and Police facility of 13,500 square feet on a single floor, plus parking and the fire equipment apron. While that area is about half the size of the total area considered here, further economies of land area can be realized by taking advantage of the slope from Washington Road to Florida Avenue (III.1.8), which allows placing the Police Department on a level below the Fire Department in a shared building. Fire equipment can drive directly from the parking apron onto Washington Road. Main entrances to the Police and Fire Departments should be at the corner; parking shared by the departments can be reached from Lebanon Avenue at the middle of the block. Police would gain a mid-block access directly into the station, a great improvement over the present facility when transferring prisoners.

A new building for the Police and Fire Departments will free a great deal of area in the Municipal Building for other purposes. Municipal offices in need of more room can expand, and others can be consolidated. Given the history, architecture and civic character of the building, principal municipal offices and ceremonial spaces should remain in the Art Deco landmark. An Uptown showpiece, the Municipal Building is the proper headquarters for Uptown promotion and other community offices and organizations.

The central location of the current fire facility, although cramped and outdated, has a very favorable response time which should be retained in a new building. The highest-rated sites for a new stand-alone building were located in Uptown, along Washington Road between Cochran Road and Cedar Boulevard. Although not specifically studied as a Public Safety Building site, the Lebanon Avenue corner shares many of the assets of the nearby sites that were considered, and satisfies all of the criteria of the 1990 report. The Mellon School property, for example, directly across the street, received one of the highest ratings of the sites studied.

A Public Safety Building at this location would have all the advantages of the Mellon School site (without the need to demolish the school) while offering a particularly attractive image. A traditional and highly-rec-

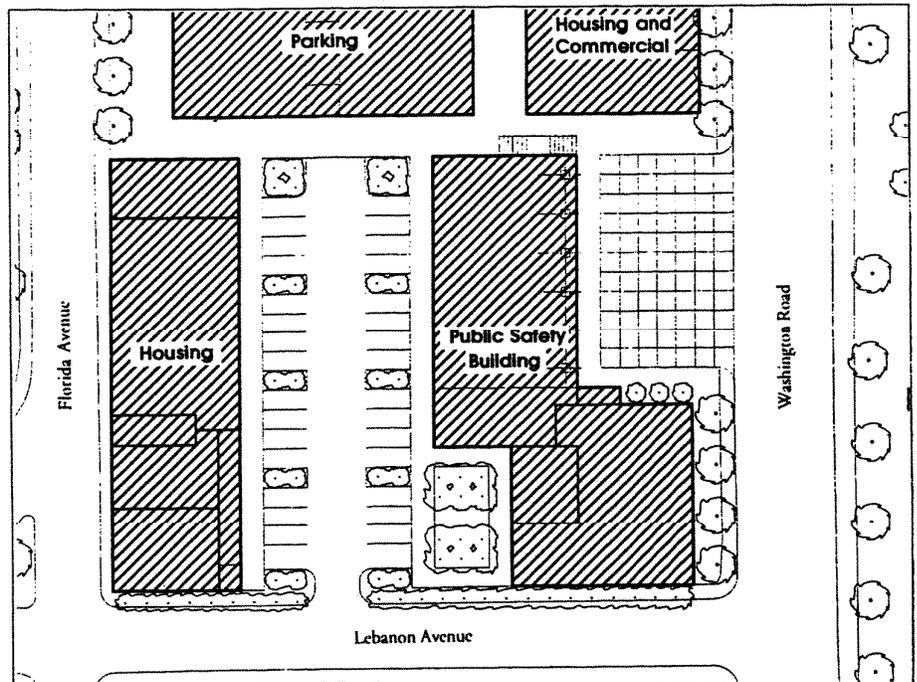
Once vacated, the equipment bays at Washington Road present a special opportunity to take advantage of a big space and street frontage rarely built since the Municipal Building's era. Prime space for retail use, the room could be extended to the sidewalk with new bay windows at the garage door openings. Alternatively, the setback would be a fine people-watching spot, if an outdoor cafe were to open on the first floor of the old building. Commercial uses are not uncommon on the street-level floors of government buildings in the centers of towns. In Mt. Lebanon the Municipal Building's architecture is sufficiently distinguished to allow its public purpose to predominate while accommodating other functions. With its principal civic purpose preserved, the Municipal Building can be a model of the mix of uses encouraged along the length of Washington Road.

Site Development

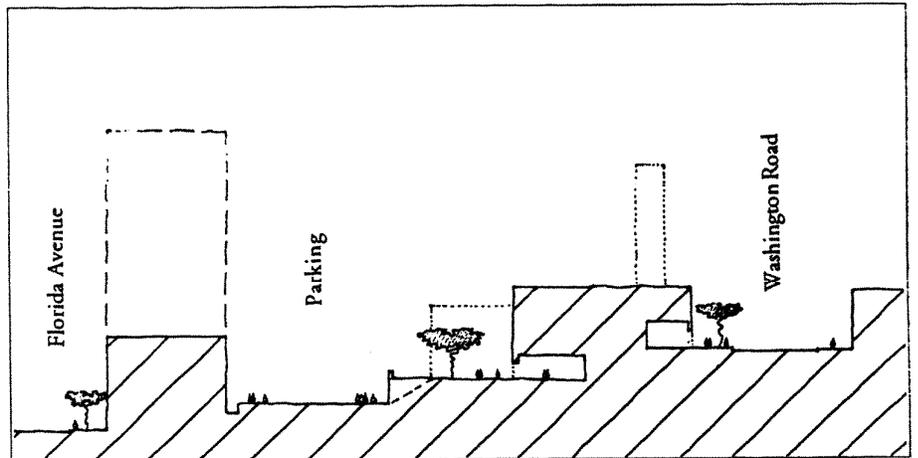
Since a Public Safety Building requires a site footprint of only about 36,000 square feet, the remainder of properties at the site should be developed for residential and commercial uses. Indeed the entire parcel at this location can be divided into four planning subparcels (III.1.9):

Parcel 1 at the Washington Road corner is most suitable for the Public Safety Building. With the Fire Department's hose-drying tower as an emblem on this corner, the Public Safety Building will anchor the intersection and complement the church and tower across the street.

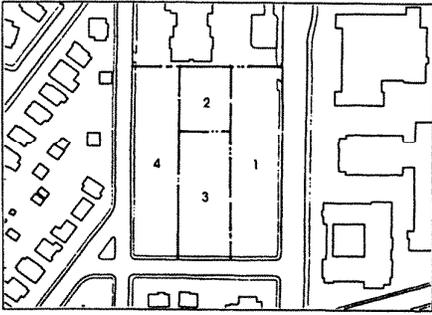
Development on Parcel 2 should bring two- or three-story buildings out to the Washington Road street line, including a building between the Public Safety Building and the Washington Square setback, with retail on the first floor and offices or residences on the upper floors. On Parcel 3, as well as at the north end of Parcel 1, buildings stepping down the slope to Florida Avenue, with western views over roofs or terraces, should join development on Parcel 4 at the Florida Avenue street line. Pedestrian pathways from Washington Road to Florida Avenue should run between the Public Safety Building and the hous-



III.1.7 Site plan. Parking is between the Washington Road and Florida Avenue buildings



III.1.8 Site section. The slope to Florida Avenue allows the Police Department to be entered a full level below the Fire Department's equipment bays on Washington Road.



III.1.9 Development sub parcels on the Public Safety Building site.



III.1.10 Southminster Presbyterian Church on Washington Road at the top of Lebanon Avenue.

ing and commercial development to the north of it, and along the side of Washington Square. Parcel 3 is set aside as parking for the Public Safety Building, and development on Parcel 4 might extend east over the parking area. Of the recommended buildings at this location, the Public Safety Building is likely to be built first; the north end of Parcel 1 could provide interim parking for the Public Safety Building until land for the other parcels is assembled and development is completed.

The north end of Parcel 1, along with Parcels 2 and 4, presents an opportunity for residential uses at varying densities. To make the transition from the residential neighborhood to the mixed uses of Washington Road, even a high-rise would be appropriate at the corner of Lebanon and Florida Avenues. Moreover, a tall residential building will make the bulk of Washington Square less of an anomaly by giving it a neighbor. The two buildings would further anchor this end of Uptown, completing Washington Road's spine of denser multifamily housing. If pursued, a taller building on this corner should be designed to the slimmest profile, avoiding the sheer bulkiness of Washington Square and the South Garage.

Today, farther up the block, the narrow flight of stairs at the Municipal Building gives pedestrians the only mid-block access from Florida Avenue up to Washington Road. This modest route—little more than a short cut from the lower levels of the garage—is nearly invisible at its lower end. Pedestrians must otherwise depend on the sidewalks at Lebanon Avenue and at Cedar Boulevard—a quarter-mile apart—to get up or down the hill. The distance between the accesses is a substantial barrier that makes streets only 300 feet from each other seem miles apart.

All of the property around the Public Safety Building site, whether developed incrementally or all at once, should be designed to draw pedestrians from Florida Avenue through the block and up to Washington Road. Walks, steps, ramps and drives within the block should ease the climb. Entrances to residences and offices should be located along the inner-block routes to enliven the middle of the block. In addition, new retail and commercial buildings should allow and encourage pedestrians to make the level change within the buildings themselves. Municipal planning should require any redevelopment between Lebanon Avenue and Cedar Boulevard to make pedestrian connections between the higher and lower streets.

Given the Fire and Police Departments' criteria, a Public Safety Building would be well-located at this corner, or at the corner of the cemetery, Key Location #4. Should the Public Safety Building be built at Location #4, the length of the street-level Washington Road frontage at Location #1 should be leasable retail space, suitable to national merchandisers, to provide a retail anchor to complement the institutions across the street. The recommendations for housing on the other subparcels of this site remain valid whether or not the Public Safety Building is built at his location.

Strengthening Uptown's Southern Gateway

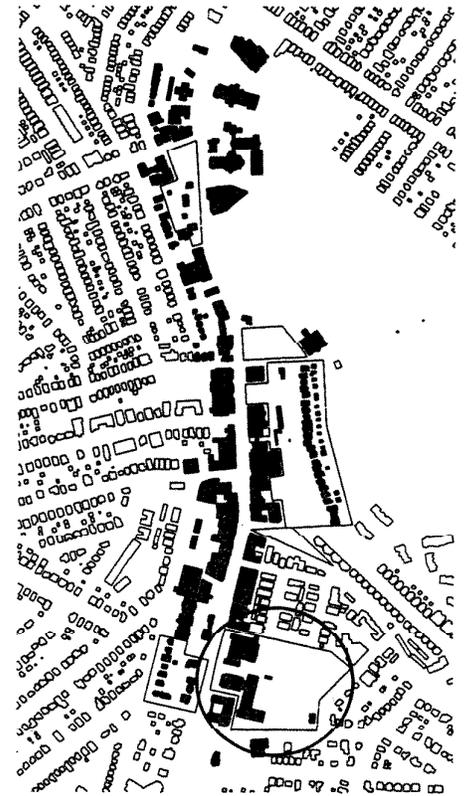
Washington Road at Castle Shannon Boulevard

2

Area	343,150 sf including playing fields at 171,275 sf (7.90 acres/3.93 acres)
Current Zoning	R-2 One family, 6500 sf minimum lot
Ownership	Mt. Lebanon School District
Current Use	A.W. Mellon Junior High School Washington Elementary School Playgrounds, parking and athletic fields
Recommended Use	Re-use of the Mellon School as the School District recommends. If this proves unfeasible or changes in the future, a new residential district is recommended.

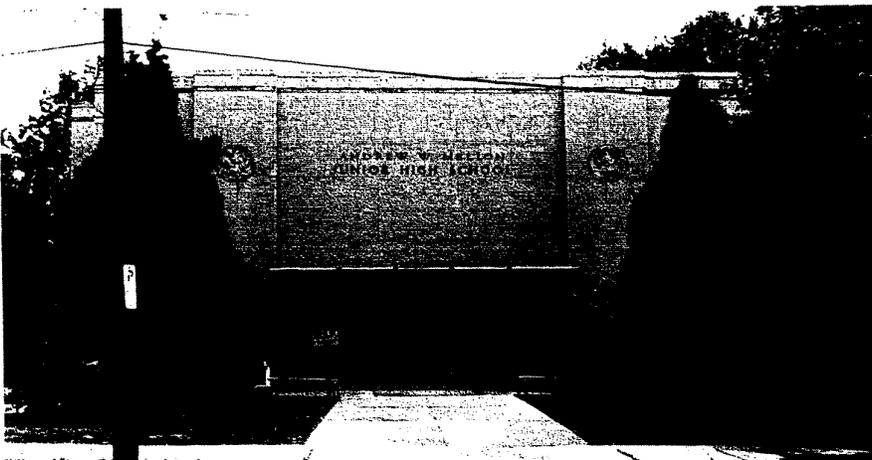
The cluster of institutions at the corner of Castle Shannon Boulevard (across Washington Road from the site recommended for the Public Safety Building) have played an anchoring role in Uptown Mt. Lebanon for a long time. Southminster Presbyterian Church begins a row of monumental civic buildings significant in the community's history and daily life. This study has examined this site, the largest of the key locations, with regard to two quite different futures—

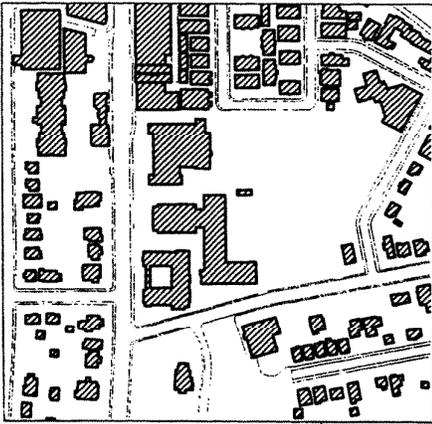
- The **renovation** of the Mellon School for use as a middle school;
- The **re-use** of the Mellon and Washington School properties and the playing fields for non-educational purposes.



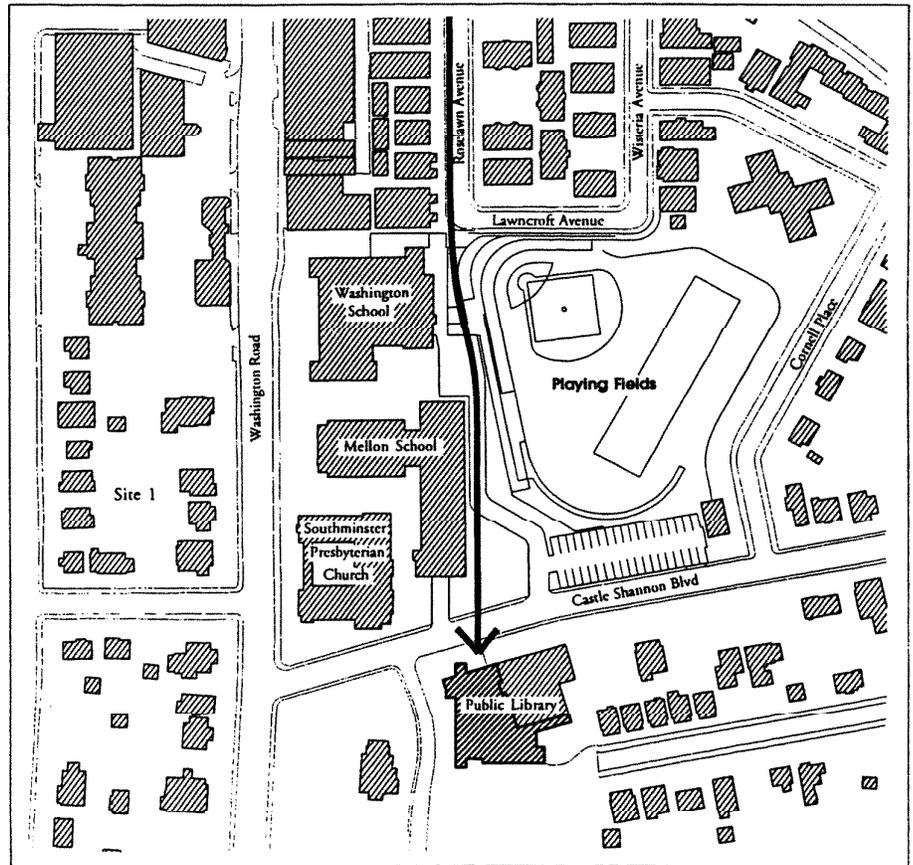
III.2.1 Key Location #2

III.2.2 The Mellon School auditorium on Washington Road





III.2.3 Existing site plan



III.2.4 Proposed site development

The Site

Southminster Presbyterian's immediate neighbors to the north are the Andrew W. Mellon Junior High School and the Washington Elementary School. Washington School, the oldest of the Mt. Lebanon School District's buildings, is an historic component of the district's system of neighborhood elementary schools. Next to the school, the three-story—soon to be five-story—Landmark Building at 729 Washington Road, with its big marble fin, marks the southern extent of the commercial core on the east side of the road.

The Mellon School is currently unused. Built in 1938, the four-story school building angles around Southminster Presbyterian at the corner. The principal entrance and a forty-space parking lot face the Public Library across Castle Shannon Boulevard. A gymnasium and auditorium building, with a Washington Road entrance, was added to the Mellon School in 1964.

On the east the two schools open to a four-acre playing field, bounded by Cornell Place and Central Square. A paved drive, running into Roselawn Avenue in Central Square but closed to through traffic, runs between the school buildings and the field. The Washington School playground, also paved, abuts the playing field and Central Square. The field, which includes a baseball diamond, football field and running track,

is not normally used by Washington Elementary, but is used by many others in the community. The fields would benefit from some extensive renovation.

The site drops nearly fifty feet to Cornell Place, adding a full story to the school buildings where they face the playing field. The field is the largest level open space in Uptown Mt. Lebanon.

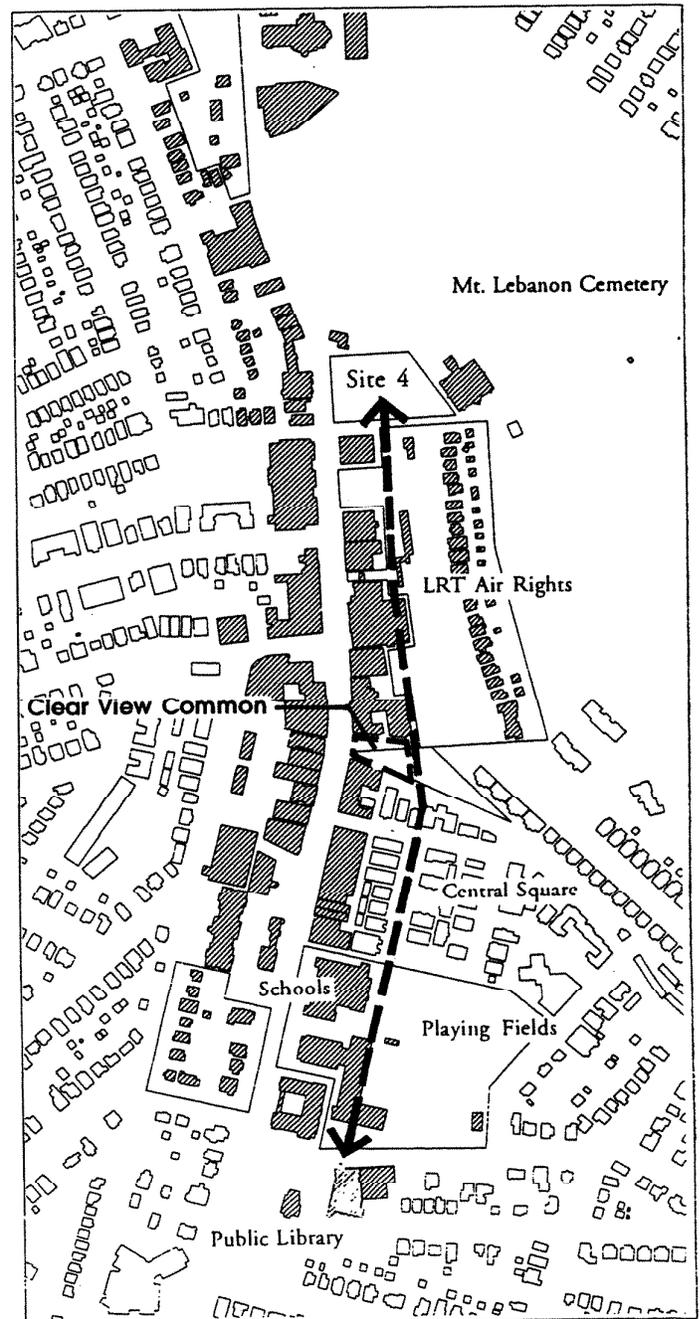
The Reuse of Mellon School

Mellon School has been vacant since 1986, when a declining student population in Mt. Lebanon prompted the School District to move the junior high school to the high school building on Cochran Road. Until recently the school building was for sale, and under consideration for a variety of uses involving demolition as well as renovation. Mellon School was taken off the market in 1994.

Recently, in response to changing dynamics in the student population, a study of the School District's facilities needs was undertaken. While many options were considered, including demolition of the vacant school building, the Spring 1995 report to the Board of Directors recommended a multi-million dollar renovation of Mellon School. Along with Jefferson School, Mellon would be utilized to house middle school students in grades six through eight. Central school offices would remain at the high school. The playing field would again be part of Mellon School's middle school athletic program.

Refurbished and reopened, Mellon School will only add to the mix of uses and people along Washington Road, but its site can play an even larger role in the life of Uptown. A redesign of the site in support of the school's reuse should also enhance connections between the existing (and expanding) Public Library on Castle Shannon Boulevard to other Uptown sites, including the Central Square neighborhood, the recommended town square at Clearview, and the LRT Station (III.2.5). A pedestrian's new alternative to Washington Road would remain open only to foot and bicycle traffic, as it is now. Rehabilitation of Mellon School should include redesign of the east faces of the building with entrances from the new route.

Given the proximity of the LRT Station, the school is particularly attractive as a location for adult and community education programs. Mellon's auditorium, with its Washington Road address, can accommodate more than just daily school functions. A detailed assessment of the facility is outside the scope of this study, but at 1000 seats the Mellon audi-



III.2.5 Running the length of the Uptown commercial core, a new pedestrian route parallel to Washington Road links many sites between the cemetery and the Public Library.

torium is Uptown's largest meeting space, and should be a place for evening and weekend meetings and cultural events. Consideration should be given to expanding the lobby of the auditorium toward Washington Road, to give it a more assertive and attractive presence on the street. Parking is conveniently located across the street at the South Garage. Although exterior stairs exist on either side of the auditorium, these should be improved and lighted as connections from Washington Road to the pedestrian street at the other side of the building.

Across the pedestrian route from the schools, the playing fields are already important to recreation leagues and school teams, as well as to everyday play throughout the year, and their larger community role should be encouraged and expanded. Where the baseball diamond nestles into the corner at Roselawn and Lawncroft Avenues, low permanent bleachers (II.2.4) should be erected behind home plate, as part of a new gate from Central Square to the Uptown playing fields.

An Alternative Future for the Mellon School Site

During the initial phases of this study the educational reuse of the Mellon School was more in doubt, and its future was much debated in the community (see Appendix B). In response, use of the school property and the playing fields for a variety of uses was studied.

The often-heard desire for a grocery store Uptown, as well as interest in Uptown by a supermarket chain, led to a consideration of the Mellon site cleared for several scales and configurations of retail uses (III.2.8-10). A full-service supermarket of thirty to fifty-thousand square feet, with its required parking, would take much of the site. Smaller neighborhood-oriented retail uses would allow the Washington School, with its relatively compact playground needs, to remain on the site.

An even more ambitious development scenario (III.2.7) considered the entire eight-acre

III.2.6 Roselawn Avenue in Central Square

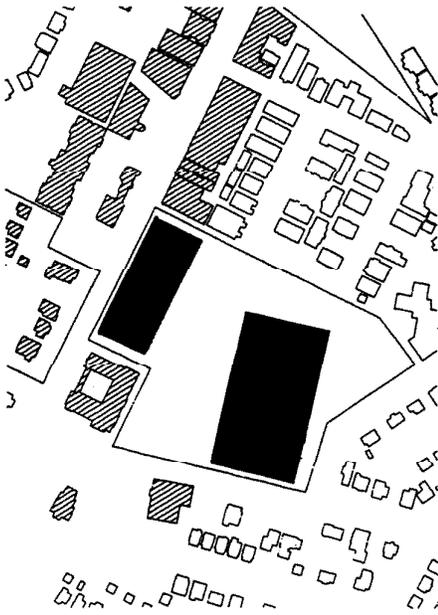




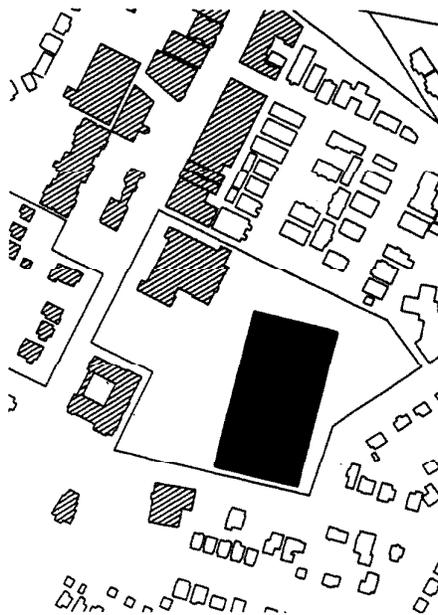
site as a new residential neighborhood for Uptown. As the largest “undeveloped” tract of land within the Washington Road study area, indeed in modern Mt. Lebanon, the Mellon School and its adjacent acreage offer the last opportunity in the town to create a substantial new residential subdivision. The eight acres could be the site of a new “downtown” neighborhood, offering a range of housing types not usually associated with Mt. Lebanon: townhouses, smaller-lot homes and garden apartments within walking distance of Uptown. Near the LRT Station, shopping, dining and entertainment on Washington Road, the new neighborhood would bring more people closer to such facilities, as well as attract people in search of such a location to live. Business and the ambience of Washington Road would increase and make this part of Mt. Lebanon a very desirable place to live.

III.2.7 In the event that the Mellon School is not reused, a new neighborhood in Uptown is proposed, on the site of the Mellon School property and the playing fields.

Between 100 and 250 units of housing would be added and knitted into the Uptown neighborhoods, encouraging the rehabilitation of Central Square. A low-traffic, pedestrian-friendly route from the LRT Station to the expanded library would form a spine through the new neighborhood. Commercial and denser residential development would continue and reinforce the Washington Road frontage. Along with the proposed Public Safety Building across Washington Road, the new library and Southminster Church, a new neighborhood here would fundamentally alter the southern end of Uptown. With such a new neighborhood to the south and expanded residential development along Upper Washington Road, the commercial core of Uptown would be suitably bracketed, strengthened and enlivened.



III.2.8 Supermarket-sized commercial development, with surface parking, on the site of the Mellon and Washington Schools and the playing fields. A new retail/commercial building faces Washington Road between Southminster Church and the Landmark Building.



III.2.9 A supermarket with surface parking on the Mellon School property and playing fields. Washington School is retained.



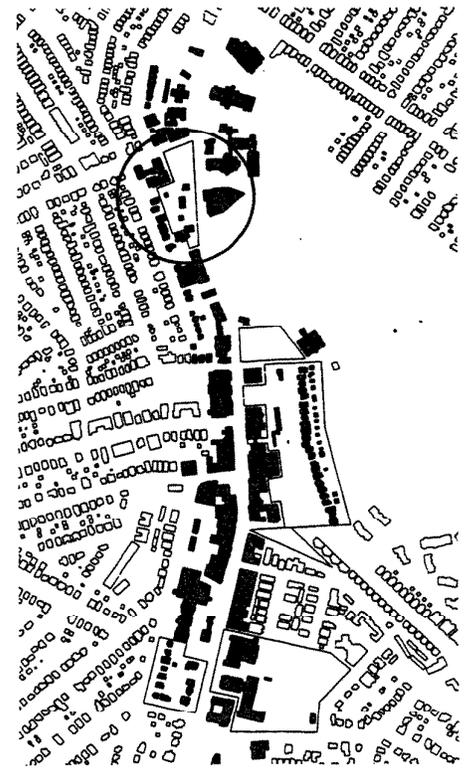
III.2.10 New residential development on the Mellon School property and playing fields. Part of the Washington School building is retained.

3

Identifying the Upper Washington Road District

Washington Road at Bower Hill Road

Area	77,000 sf (1.77 acres)
Current Zoning	R-7 High density, high-rise multi-family Limited commercial
Ownership	Verland Foundation Mt. Lebanon Parking Authority Various private owners
Current Use	Offices on Washington Road; Verland property vacant at Bower Hill Road; Avon Court apartments and private residences on Kenmont Avenue
Recommended Use	Multi-family residential, with grade-level service retail

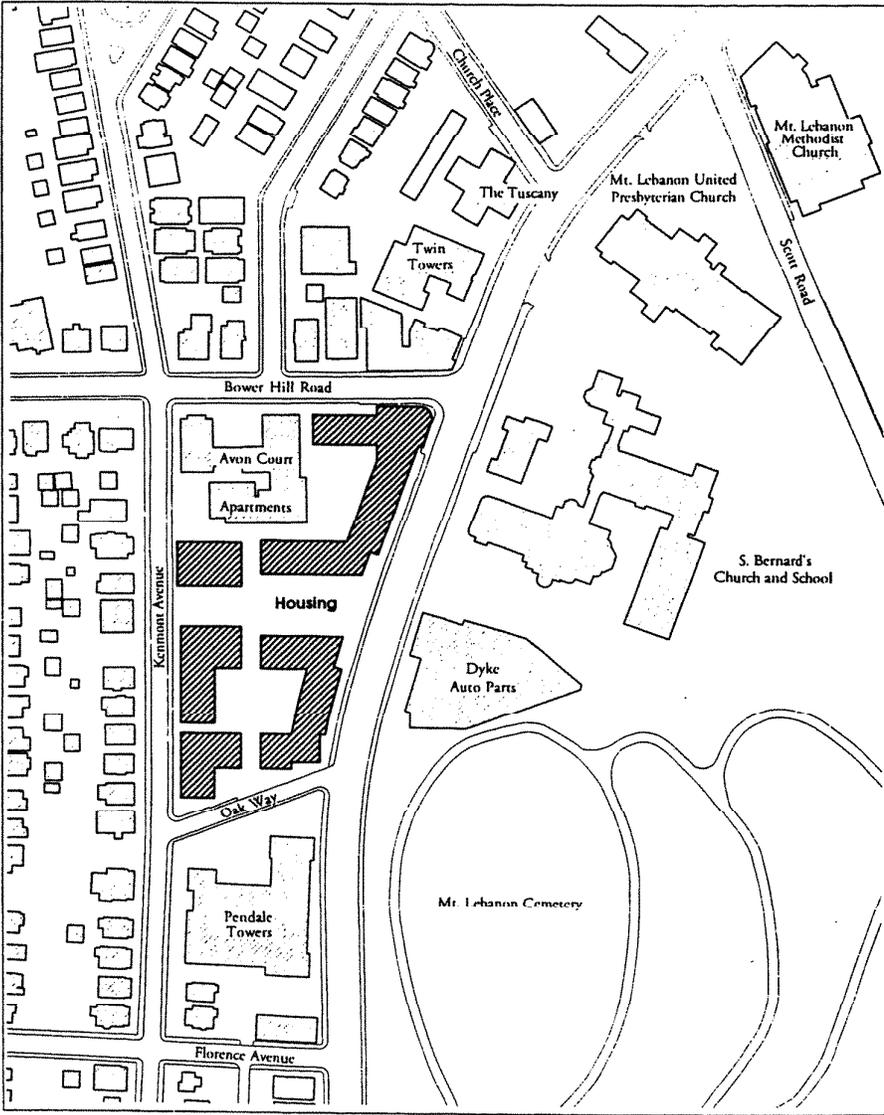


III.3.1 Key Location #3

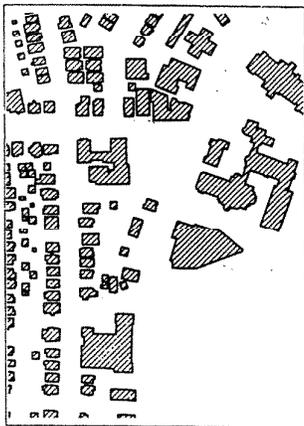
The corner of Washington Road and Bower Hill Road lies outside the Up-town retail core, in a district which includes high-rise residential buildings, Mt. Lebanon Cemetery and the three churches at Church Place. This is an important cluster of buildings at Mt. Lebanon's northern gateway. While the tract under study includes properties available for immediate development, all properties on the block, whether or not developed to the full extent allowed by current zoning should be considered in rethinking this stretch of Washington Road.



III.3.2 St. Bernard's Roman Catholic Church, foreground, Mt. Lebanon United Presbyterian Church and Mt. Lebanon Methodist Church, beyond, on Washington Road at Church Place.



III.3.3 Proposed site development



III.3.4 Existing site plan

The Site

Facing St. Bernard's Roman Catholic Church at the highest point in Mt. Lebanon, the 26,350 square foot property owned by the Verland Foundation at the Bower Hill Road corner is currently vacant. Bower Hill Road, one of Mt. Lebanon's collector streets, drops about thirty feet to the west. The Avon Court, a ten-story apartment building built in the 1950s, stands at the southeast corner of Bower Hill Road and Kenmont Avenue. At the western edge of the block, Kenmont Avenue is lined on both sides by single-family houses typical of the Uptown neighborhoods west of Washington Road. Kenmont Avenue drops about thirty-five feet before it intersects with Oak Way at the south edge of the block. Oak Way is a steep thirty-five foot drop from Washington Road, and its two houses look south to the Pendale Towers apartment building. Eight stories at Washington Road, and several stories higher at Kenmont Avenue, Pendale Towers was built in the 1960s, following planning and rezoning of this part of Washington Road for high-rise residential development.

The block's existing buildings on Washington Road are set relatively far back from the

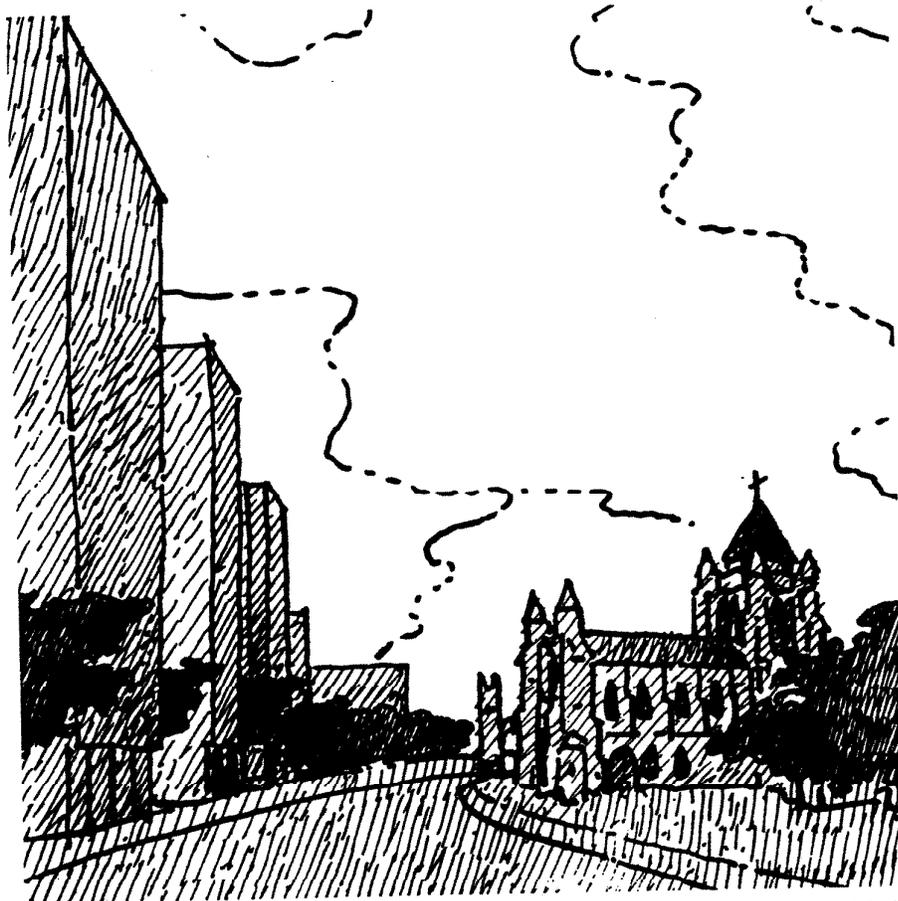
street. Other than the private residence at the corner of Oak Way, the buildings are owned by the Mt. Lebanon Parking Authority. The one- and two-story buildings look across Washington Road to Dyke Auto Parts and Mt. Lebanon Cemetery.

The stretch of high-rises on Washington Road on either side of the Verland/Avon Courtblock create a unique character and mark the road's northern limit as a residential street. Not unlike the way that much longer lines of buildings overlook Central Park in New York, these buildings face the open landscape of the cemetery. With strong anchors at Church Place and at the Shady Drive intersection, two very different but more-or-less consistent sides of Washington Road differentiate and characterize Upper Washington Road as one of Mt. Lebanon's two distinct Uptown districts. New development at the Bower Hill corner should reinforce the scale and character of this district, filling in a gap in the continuity and maintaining the strong building edge at the west side of the street.

Church Place

The Washington Road/Bower Hill corner is at the edge of a major perceptual gateway to the town. Although the actual Dormont/Mt. Lebanon boundary lies to the north at McFarland Road, the topography and the three churches create a stronger sense of a threshold. Landmarks for miles around, the three churches at the crest of the hill have long been prominent on Mt. Lebanon's skyline. With the decline of commercial uses between Dormont and Shady Drive, the group of churches has become an even more distinct presence at the northern entrance to the town. A plan for this area should consider the Bower Hill corner not only as a continuation of taller residential buildings on Upper Washington Road, but as a part of the town's northern threshold as well.

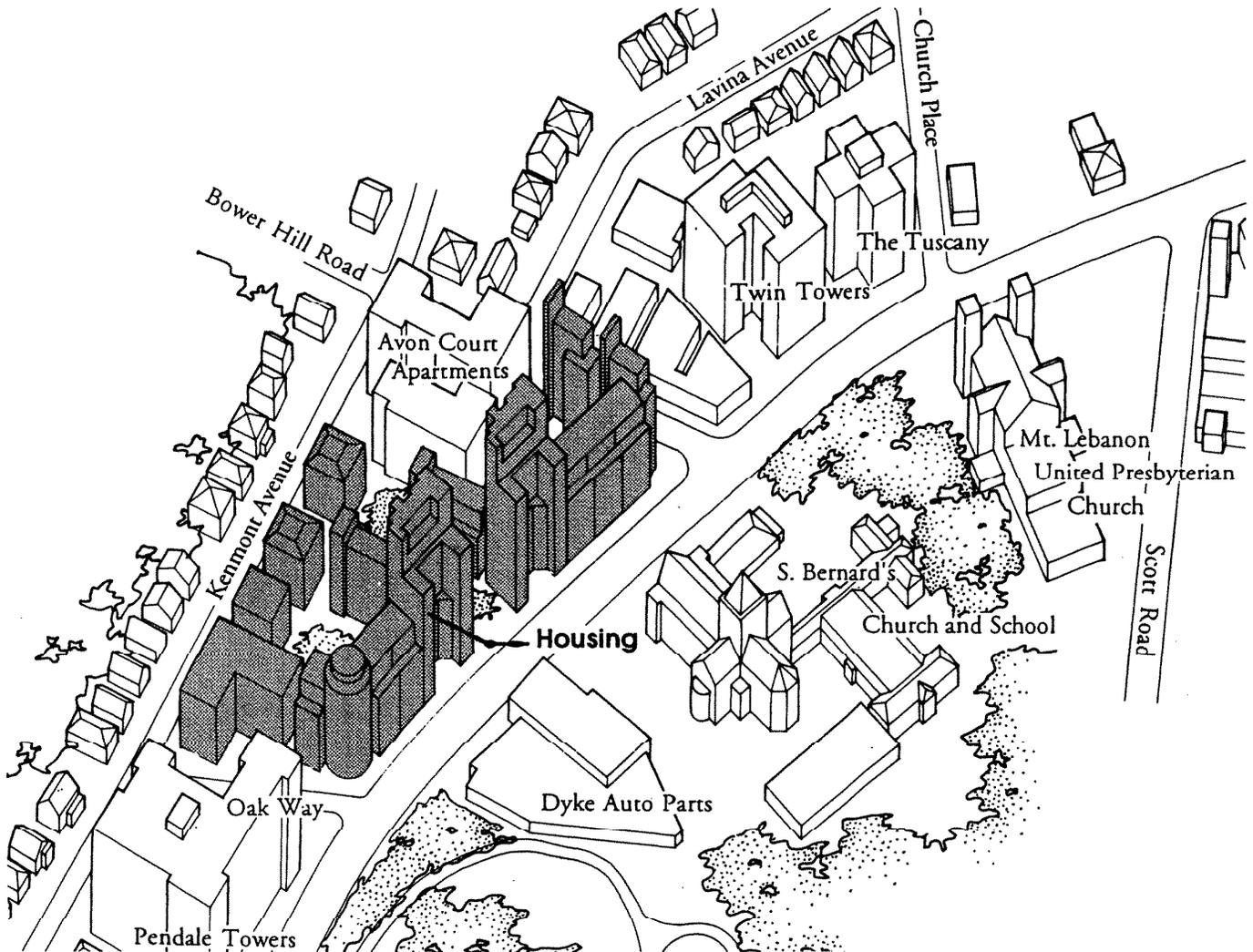
Although contributing to the local economy, the auto parts store on the east side of Washington Road, next to St. Bernard's Church, has long been recognized as an inappropriate use on this highly visible site. In the long term this facility should be relocated and the site converted into an open space amenity and scenic overlook for the immediate neighborhood. To preserve and enhance the view of St. Bernard's from the south, redevelopment of this site for another building use is not recommended. If built on, any new construction there should be no higher than the current building, and should be set back from the street by at least fifty feet.



III.3.5 New multi-family buildings on Washington Road face St. Bernard's Church and the cemetery landscape.



III.3.6 Dyke Auto Parts, on Washington Road between St. Bernard's Church and Mt. Lebanon Cemetery.



III.3.7 Development at Washington and Bower Hill Roads. New multi-family buildings face St. Bernard's Church and Mt. Lebanon Cemetery, continuing the line of tall buildings along Washington Road, while new multi-family buildings on Kenmont Avenue make the transition to the scale of the residential neighborhood to the west.

The Opportunity

The corner of Bower Hill Road is currently zoned and suited for multi-family, mid- to high-rise residential development. Many smaller apartments and other rental properties lie in the neighborhood to the west. An older multi-story apartment building, the Avon Court, abuts the west side of the Verland property. As planned in the 1960s and 70s, more high-rise housing went up on Washington Road on either side of the Bower Hill site: Lebanon House and Pendale Towers were built to the south, joining the earlier Tuscany apartment building on the north. Twin Towers, a subsidized high-rise apartment building for the elderly, was built in the late 1970s.

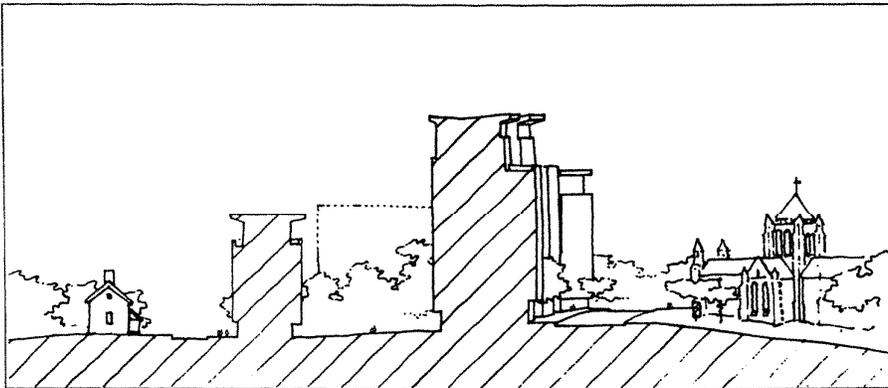
At this location, new buildings should be no higher than the Pendale Towers and no less than five stories high. The overbearing bulk of the western aspect of Pendale Towers should be avoided. New buildings should step down to the west, their massing not unlike the profile of the Avon Court. A maximum height of fifty feet at Kenmont Avenue will help meet and maintain the smaller scale and finer grain of the neighborhood to the west.

Large areas of surface parking should be avoided here. Structured parking should be included whenever feasible. Walls of parking levels should not confront Kenmont Avenue, as they do at Florida Avenue behind the South Garage.

Substantial enough to be a distinct neighborhood itself within the larger Upper Washington Road district, the Verland/Avon Court block should be planned and designed as a whole, whether redeveloped parcel-by-parcel or at once. Property lines on the block should be opportunities for buildings to enhance each other when they meet. There should be at least one mid-block pedestrian route from Kenmont Avenue to Washington Road—especially to the remarkable view of St. Bernard's shown on page 10. Parking structures and arrangements can be shared. The Avon Court, which if brought up to date will require additional on-site parking, should be knit into new development.

Neighborhood-scale retail services should be encouraged on the ground floors of new buildings facing Washington Road. Because of parking limitations as well as to encourage concentration of retail in the commercial core nearby, commercial uses drawing on a larger market should be discouraged on Upper Washington Road.

Elderly residents own or rent much of the housing along Upper Washington Road and in the western neighborhood. While increasing the availability of in-town living and services for older citizens, Upper Washington Road need not become a seniors' ghetto. A variety of housing options to attract a range of ages, including families with children, should be encouraged. A lively commercial core nearby will be attractive to older and younger people alike, and with a fuller mix of people the ambience of Upper Washington Road will flourish as well.



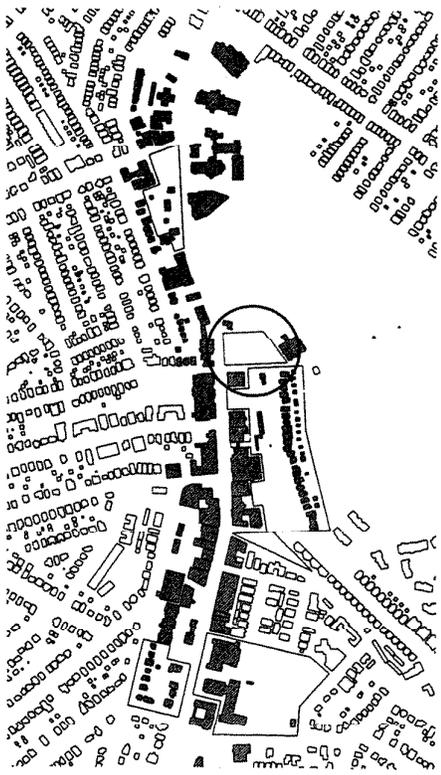
III.3.8 Site section. Washington Road and St. Bernard's Church are on the right, the Kenmont Avenue neighborhood on the left.

4

S I X K E Y L O C A T I O N S

A New Commercial Hub at an Uptown Intersection

Washington Road at Shady Drive East



III.4.1 Key Location #4

Area	31,325 SF (.72 ACRES)
Current Zoning	R-2 One family, 6500 sf minimum lot
Ownership	Mt. Lebanon Cemetery
Current Use	Vacant
Recommended Use	Retail, offices

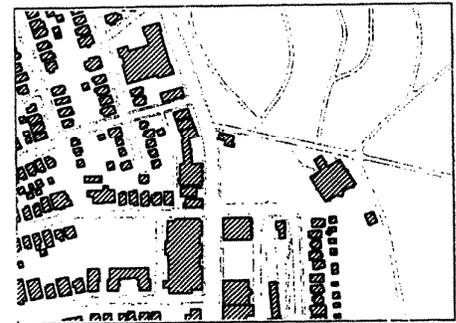
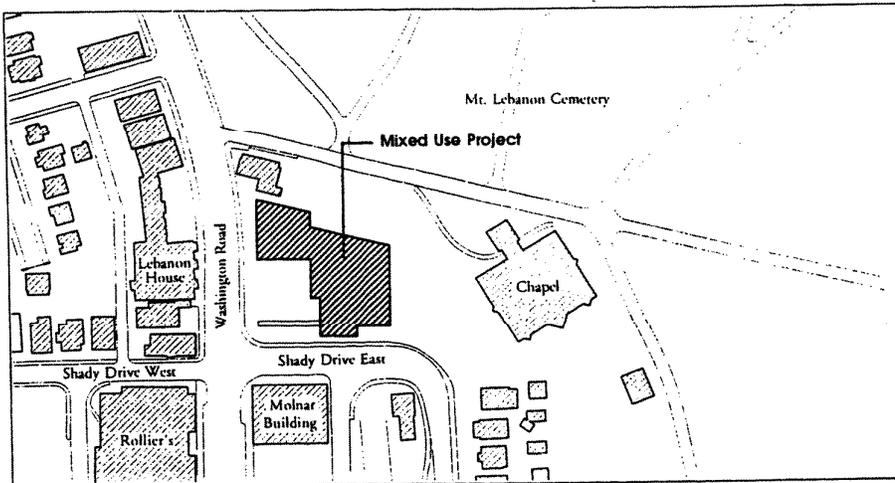
At the only full intersection along the length of the retail core, the corner of the cemetery at Shady Drive East lies at a midpoint between two distinct parts of Uptown; the commercial core to the south and the residential buildings of Upper Washington Road to the north.

Mt. Lebanon Cemetery has for a long time marked the difference between the districts, and following the decline in retail and commercial uses north of the intersection since the 1960s, development of the Shady Drive corner presents an opportunity to clarify and emphasize two distinct urban characters on Washington Road. The site should be conceived as an urban hub, marking the center of Uptown Mt. Lebanon.

The Site

The smallest of the Key Locations, this site is nonetheless one of the most prominent places in the Study Area. At the northern end of a nearly-unbroken line of commercial buildings on the east side of the street, the intersection is part of the foreground of the view up the road to the cemetery hillside and St. Bernard's tower. Along with the mausoleum building, the corner also ends the view up Shady Drive from Alfred Street and the LRT Station, as well as the view up Parse Way, intended to become a pedestrian-oriented street east of Washington Road.

Part of Mt. Lebanon Cemetery, this vacant corner of the Shady Drive intersection faces the nine-story Lebanon House and smaller commercial buildings across Washington Road, as well as the four-story Molnar Building across Shady Drive. The site is diagonally across from the Rollier's building at the southwest corner of the intersection. Washington Road begins to curve and rise at Shady Drive, where the Mt. Lebanon Cemetery gate house (1902) is a landmark (III.4.5). The new building housing the cemetery's chapel and mausoleum is an imposing presence at the east side of the site.



III.4.2 Existing site plan

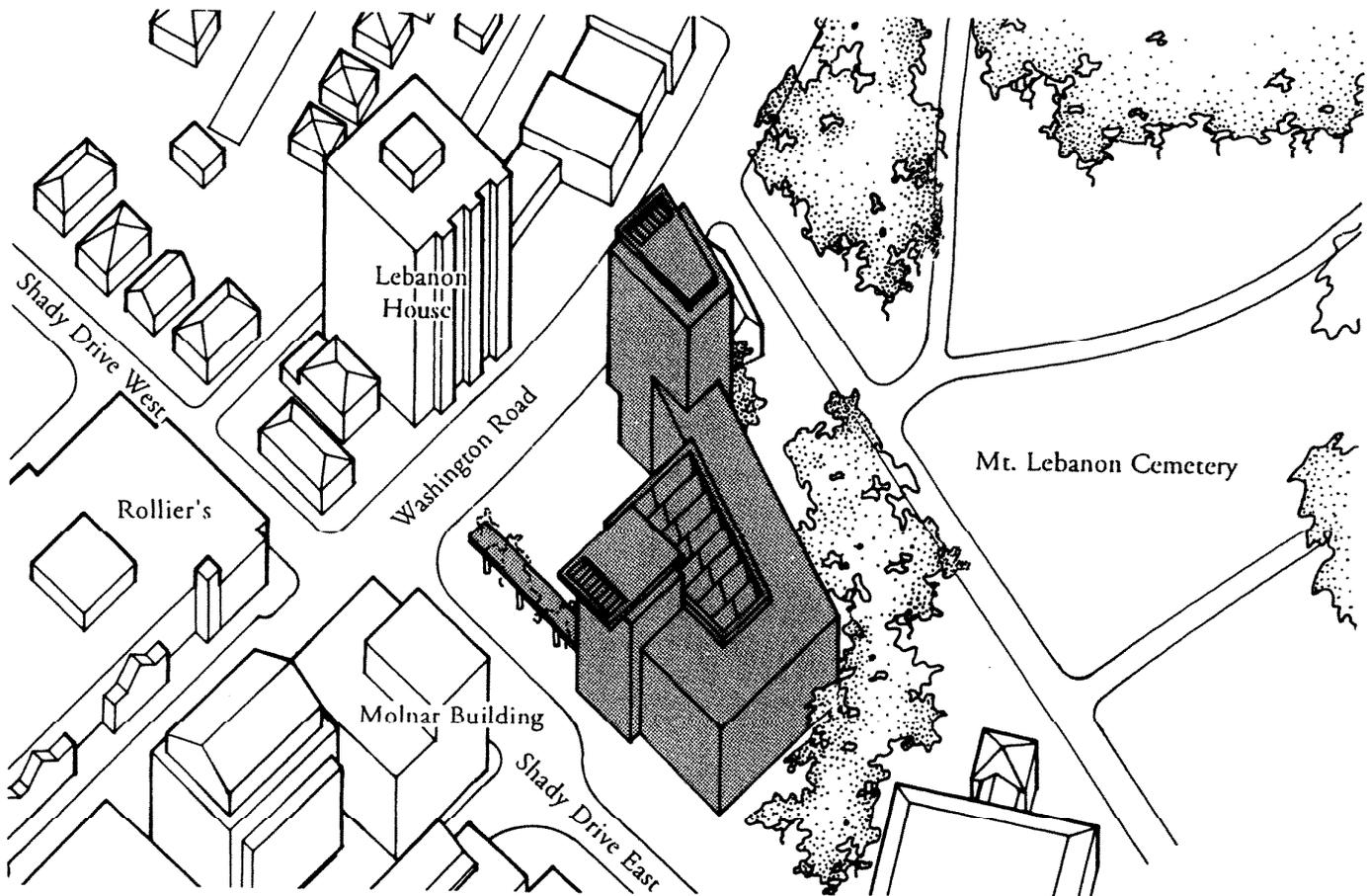
III.4.3 Proposed site development

The Opportunity

Given the character of the existing buildings and uses at the Shady Drive intersection, commercial/retail development is appropriate. A single building with retail space on the first floor and office floors above should be built to the street line at the corners. A potential "destination" retail location, the first two levels should be large enough and configured to be attractive to a national retailer. The three-quarter acre site could accommodate a two-level store of thirty- to forty thousand square feet. Parking within the building can be entered at a lower level from Shady Drive East; additional parking is already available at the North Garage and could be built as part of development at the LRT air rights (Location #5).

The massing and profile of a building on this corner should be comparable to that of the Molnar building across Shady Drive. To preserve the view north to the cemetery, the new building should rise no higher than six stories. The prominence of the site calls for a building that has several "fronts:" the intersection of Washington Road and Shady Drive will be shaped by the building's character at those street lines, while along Shady Drive the building will face new development on the LRT site. At the northern end of Parse Way, the cemetery corner building should be considered part of the composition of the larger development across Shady Drive.

No less important is the impact of development on the cemetery, especially the view to the site from the cemetery. Development on this corner should not turn its back on Mt. Lebanon Cemetery. The new building will be part of the backdrop of the cemetery, as well as to the commercial core, as one enters Uptown from the north. The character of the northern and eastern facades of a new building should maintain the dignity of the cemetery and chapel settings.



III.4.4 New retail/office building on the corner of Washington Road and Shady Drive East.

The cemetery site received a high rating among the locations studied in 1990 for a new Public Safety Building. Though suitable for a Public Safety Building, this site is more appropriate for a commercial use when examined in terms of an overall strategy for Uptown. A retail/commercial development here would make a particularly good northern anchor for the commercial core.

The LRT tracks are underground at this location, but close to the surface in a "cut and fill" tunnel. The presence of the tunnel may require some foundation premiums, but that need not deter planning for the recommended development on this prominent and sadly vacant corner of Uptown.



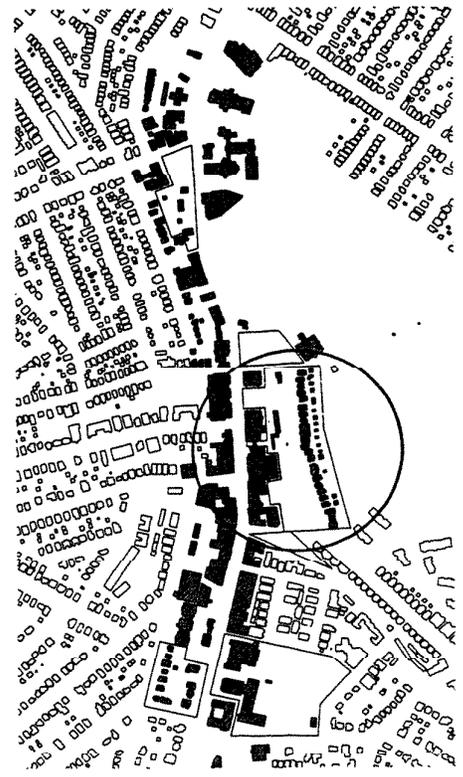
III.4.5 The entrance to Mt. Lebanon Cemetery on Washington Road.

Developing the LRT Air Rights

The 600 Block of Washington Road



Area	184,400 SF air rights (4.23 ACRES)
Current Zoning	C-1 Central Commercial District R-4 Multi-family
Ownership	Port Authority of Pittsburgh; Mt. Lebanon Parking Authority; Private owners on Washington Road.
Current Use	LRT tracks, station and parking; office and retail uses; surface and structured parking on Washington Road.
Recommended Use	Mixed residential, office and retail; institutional uses are also desirable.



III.5.1 Key Location #5

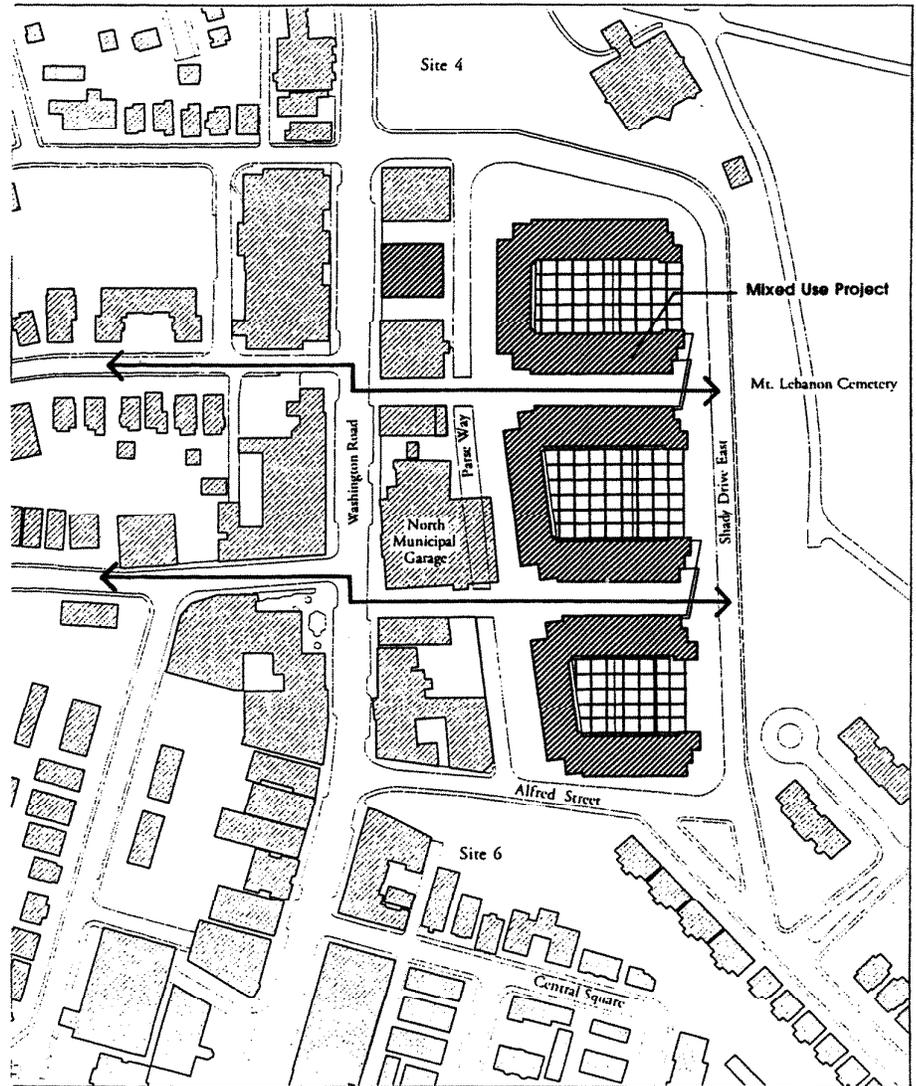
The air rights over the Port Authority Transit station and tracks have been acquired by the Mt. Lebanon Parking Authority. Along with properties in the 600 block of Washington Road, the air rights present an opportunity for development on a large scale and are likely be an important catalyst for evolving the character of Uptown. While being able to influence Uptown's future by virtue of its size, the character of development on the site should be strongly influenced by what is around it.



III.5.2 Shady Drive East and the LRT Station parking area, from the North Municipal Parking Garage



III.5.3 Existing site plan



III.5.4 Proposed site development

The Site

Bounded on the north by the cemetery site and on the south by the Clearview Loop (Location #6), the air rights site is the largest and most complex of the development opportunities in Uptown. The parcel includes existing buildings of varying ages and conditions in the 600 block of Washington Road. Also along this row are the North Municipal Parking Garage and a surface parking lot, owned and operated by the Parking Authority. East of Parse Way the LRT right-of-way and station occupy about half of the parcel under consideration, which stretches from the backs of the Washington Road buildings to Shady Drive, from Alfred Street north to the cemetery.

Hinging at the Clearview Loop, Washington Road angles north at Alfred Street and climbs slowly, rising about twenty feet to the Shady Drive corner along the block's 950 feet of length. Parse Way, a service road which bisects the site at the back of the Washington Road buildings, lies fifteen to twenty feet lower than Washington Road, allowing the North Garage to have a lower level of parking entered separately from Washington Road. Parse

Way passes beneath the upper levels of the garage as they extend overhead to the east. From Parse Way, the site section continues to drop until Shady Drive is twenty-five feet lower at the cemetery and forty feet lower at Alfred Street. The LRT Station, about thirty feet below the Washington Road sidewalk, is reached from Washington Road via stairs and elevators in the North Garage down to the Parse Way bus shelter, and from there by stairs and an elevator down to the station platform. A row of single-family houses and a few small apartment buildings face the air rights site across Shady Drive East and back up to the cemetery. Similar houses lined the west side of Shady Drive before construction of the LRT. A small parking lot and a drop-off area serving LRT riders occupies the southeast corner of the site.

Recent Planning: The Towne Centre Project

The air rights were the subject of a major development proposed in 1988. Towne Centre arranged a mix of residential, office and retail uses with structured parking around the LRT Station. The Towne Centre developers understood the site's potential. Were it not for the national economic downturn, the project would have gone forward and, without doubt, would have had a positive impact on the Washington Road corridor.



III.5.5 The Towne Centre project (1988) on Washington Road

Guidelines for Large-scale Development on the Air Rights Site

The risk of large singular developments (such as Towne Center) is their disengagement from their surroundings. Development of the air rights should avoid letting residents go from their units to their jobs in downtown Pittsburgh or elsewhere without contact with Mt. Lebanon. Seldom needing to leave Towne Centre, residents could be living anywhere. While it is hard to argue against in winter, total climate-control enclosure on the block is far less beneficial to the rest of the town. Safe, dry and convenient routes to transit can still be had on real streets, where the chances of window-shopping, running into a neighbor, or having dinner remain, and are the best reasons for living in town.

The air rights site is large enough to warrant its own open spaces, but these should not face Washington Road. Small public and private spaces are more appropriately located in the interior of the air rights block, within buildings and along the new pedestrian streets.

Site development should avoid an unbroken wall of high-rises and multi-story garages to face the single-family lots on Shady Drive. With such a jarring difference in scale on its west side, Shady Drive would no doubt earn its name, thrown into long afternoon shadows of the high-rises. Whether or not they remain residential, the Shady Drive properties should not face the back of the air rights development. Air rights design sensitive to sunlight needs and small scale will only make the properties across the street more attractive for subsequent development.

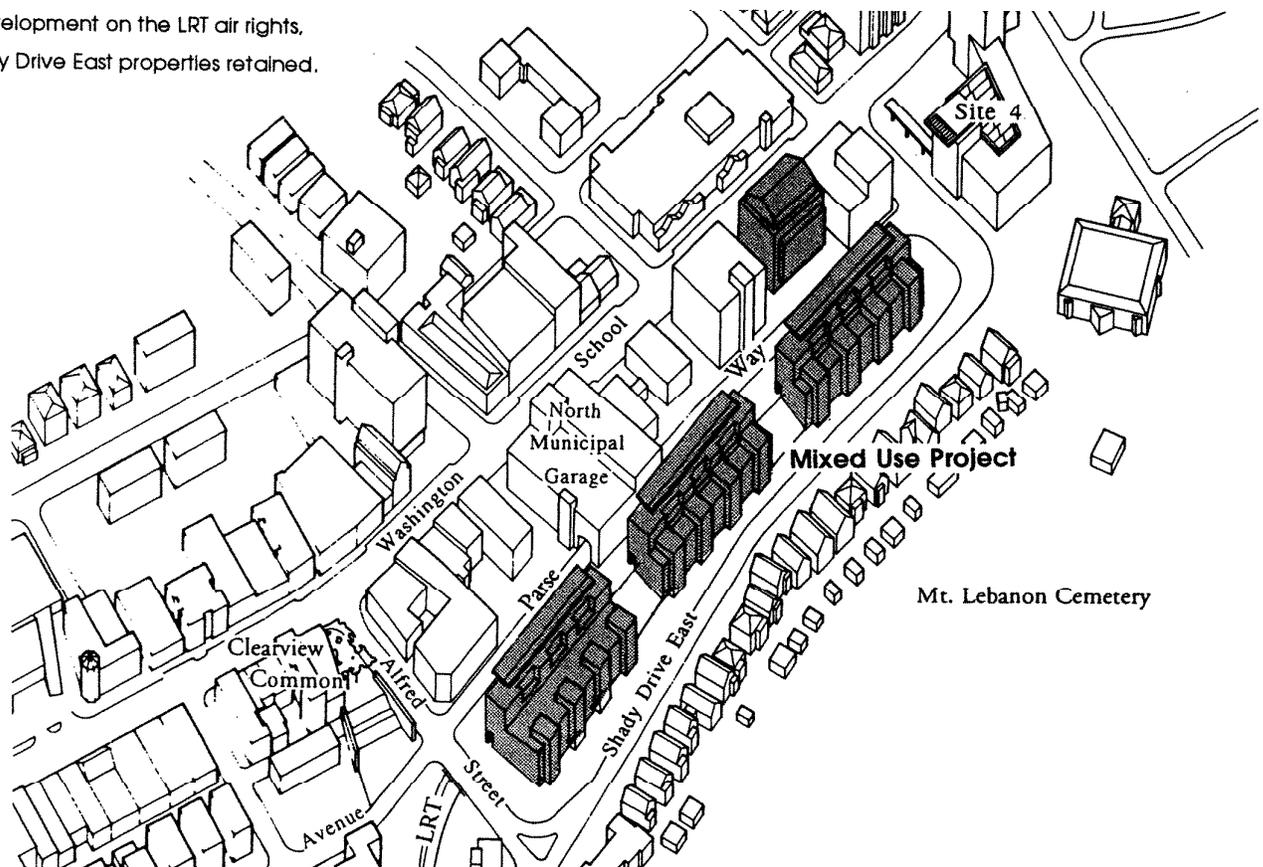
The Air Rights Opportunity

The size of the air rights tract will virtually create a new part of town. Care must be taken

to ensure that it is indeed *part* of the town. In planning and design for the air rights, one must consider all of the properties in the 600 block as part of the development, by bringing new buildings to the street line, and by matching the scale of neighboring buildings. Evaluation of each building in the block is outside the scope of this study, but after selective demolition, new infill between remaining buildings, will avoid overwhelming the block with monolithic new construction. Washington Road sidewalk entrances to new buildings will be crucial to knitting the air rights development into the town. Gaps between buildings and open spaces will be more appropriate at other parts of the site, and the new development will be facing the new town square at Clearview (Key Location #6). Continuous building fronts on Washington Road, with few gaps at the lower floors, will maintain the enclosure of Uptown's town room.

The building fronts on Washington Road should be opened only to make new perpendicular pedestrian streets. New east-west pathways should join Washington Road and Shady Drive down the hill, while opening views across the LRT block to the cemetery and hillside beyond. These new pathways, at or near the T-intersections at Academy Avenue and Cedar Boulevard, are not intended—or needed—for automobile traffic. They should pass the entrances to offices, retail, restaurants and residences on their way to Parse Way and the LRT Station, and on down to Shady Drive. Buildings on the new pedestrian streets should also present a continuous facade; paved setbacks of no more than ten feet

III.5.6 Development on the LRT air rights,
with Shady Drive East properties retained.



should be allowed for outdoor dining or display.

New buildings in the 600 block should be at least three stories and no more than seventy-five feet high. Within the block, building height should be limited to 125 feet. Buildings at Shady Drive should be no taller than fifty feet.

Structured parking serving the new development and commuters should be located in the middle of each of the blocks formed by the new pedestrian streets—avoiding a monolithic parking garage stretching the length of the air rights site. Since parking structures have a deadening effect on streets, the site plan should avoid facing parking levels onto the new pedestrian streets or onto Shady Drive. Lined with residential or commercial uses, the streets will have a livelier as well as safer feeling.

Parse Way as a Brand-new Street

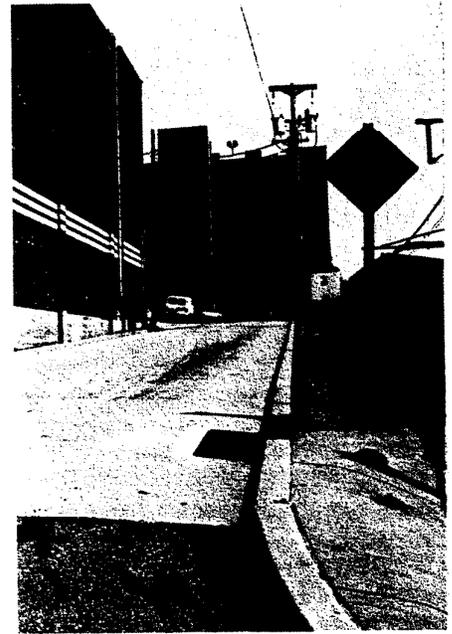
The LRT Station is one of Mt. Lebanon's greatest assets. Tracks and topography, however, conspire to drop riders on a siding, as it were, behind and below Washington Road. New development should increase the presence of the LRT Station on Parse Way, enlivening it with use, making it a real street rather than only an alley.

Parse Way bisects the LRT block, running north-south between Alfred Street and Shady Drive East. Other than carrying the PAI bus, Parse Way is an alley for serving the backs of buildings facing Washington Road. It provides a few parking spaces, and access to the lower level of the North Parking Garage, whose upper levels span across the alley. While needed to continue its service role, Parse Way has potential for further knitting the air rights site into the town, as a map of Uptown shows. Properly designed, Parse Way can service new buildings, while becoming an attractive pedestrian alternative parallel to Washington Road. Washington Road buildings should open to Parse Way as well, where they can offer interior level changes for pedestrians.

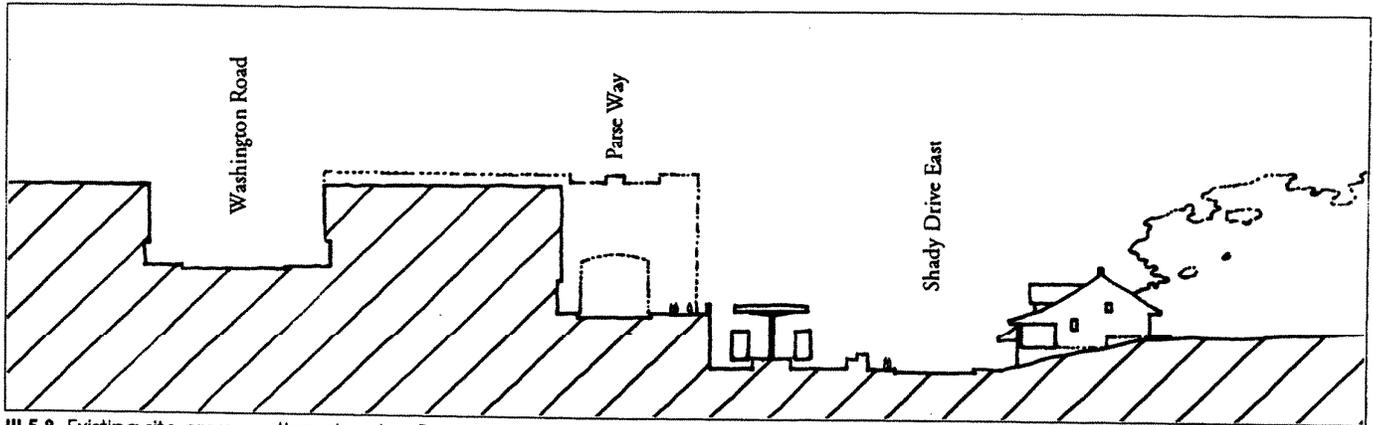
A new Parse Way can better link the cemetery site (Location #4) and the old trolley loop and proposed town square (Location #6) with Central Square and the Mellon School area. No matter what role the school site plays in Uptown's future, Parse Way, along with existing Central Square streets, such as Roselawn Avenue, have potential roles as service and pedestrian-oriented alternatives to Washington Road. Different, parallel streets and ways can ease the burden of a singular Main Street that must, in the absence of alternative routes, do everything. Parallel routes lend variety, and provide room to grow. As they pass through and beyond the LRT air-rights development, Parse Way and other routes can weave through Uptown in a new way.

The Potential Relocation of Shady Drive East

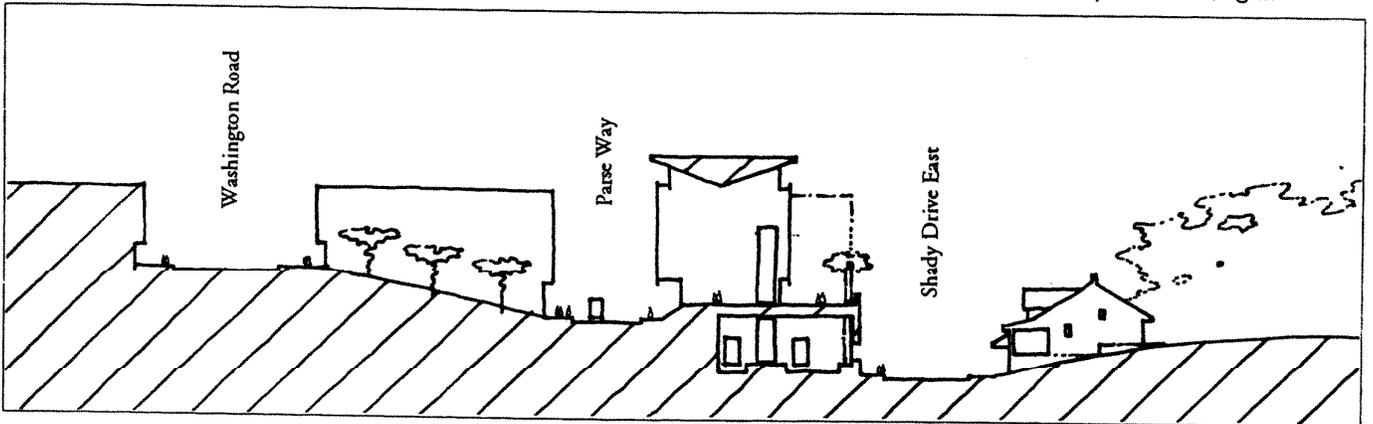
Following or preceding development of the air rights site, the Shady Drive East properties may be assembled for redevelopment. The resulting parcel would be narrow and awkwardly shaped, caught between the cemetery and the back of the project across the street,



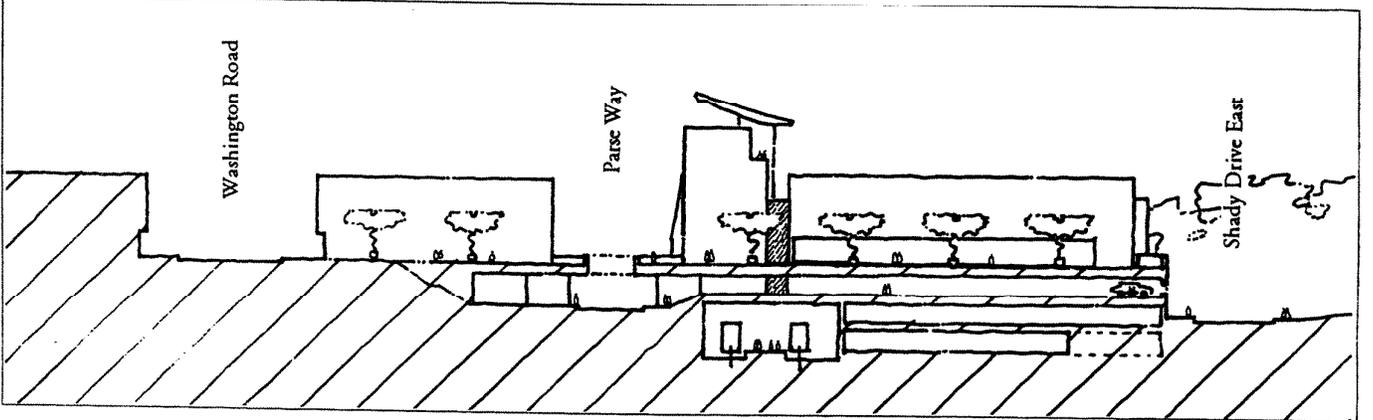
III.5.7 Parse Way, looking north. The North Municipal Parking Garage decks span the street, where there is access to the LRT Station to the right and below. The Denis Theater is on the right.



III.5.8 Existing site cross-section, showing Parse Way at mid-level between Washington Road, left, and Shady Drive East, right.



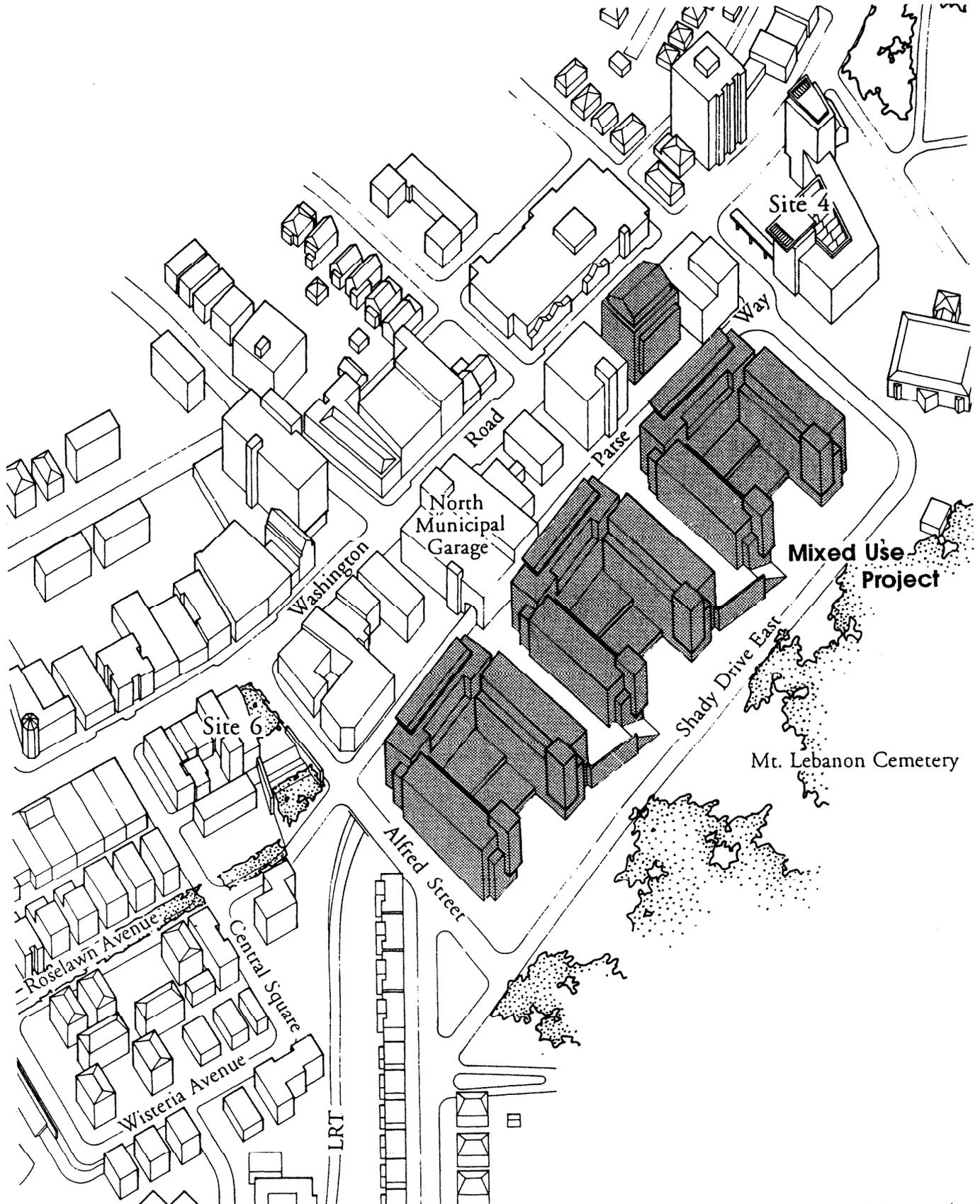
III.5.9 Site cross-section, with Shady Drive East properties retained.



III.5.10 Site cross-section, showing Shady Drive East relocated to edge the cemetery.

■ Both proposed site cross sections (III.5.9, III.5.10) show Parse Way as a new, primarily pedestrian street and the LRT Station partially covered by new construction.

unless Shady Drive East is relocated eastward. Long-term planning should include consideration of relocating Shady Drive to the edge of the cemetery property, enlarging the LRT block by incorporating the residential properties. Such a realignment of Shady Drive would avoid some of the problems presented by its present location vis-a-vis the air-rights, principally the potentially overwhelming scale of new development adversely affecting the small houses across the street. The new Shady Drive, rather than the backs of houses, would become the edge between Uptown Mt. Lebanon and the cemetery.



III.5.11 Air rights development extended to include the Shady Drive properties. Shady Drive is relocated to the edge of the cemetery.



Clearview Common

A New Town Square at Washington Road and Alfred Street



III.6.1 Key Location #6

III.6.2 Looking east across the Clearview Loop, where Alfred Street meets Washington Road.

Area	31,325 SF (.72 ACRES)
Current Zoning	C-1 Central Commercial District R-4 Multi-family
Ownership	Mt. Lebanon Parking Authority
Current Use	Parking
Recommended Use	Town square

Clearview is a natural place for a new town square—an outdoor living room for Uptown, and the only one of the key locations on which the appropriate urban design response is not to add buildings.

Many people have expressed a desire for additional public or green space along Washington Road. Additional seating and trees are also frequently mentioned. The recent streetscape improvements were an important step in befriending the pedestrian on Washington Road. Planning legislation, however, too often promotes “open space” without really establishing design criteria or determining appropriate location. Many plazas and setbacks, admirable in their intention, confuse an understanding of the larger place they are a part of, when their placement, character and development are left to the private market. The commercial blocks of Uptown Washington Road should be understood by driver and



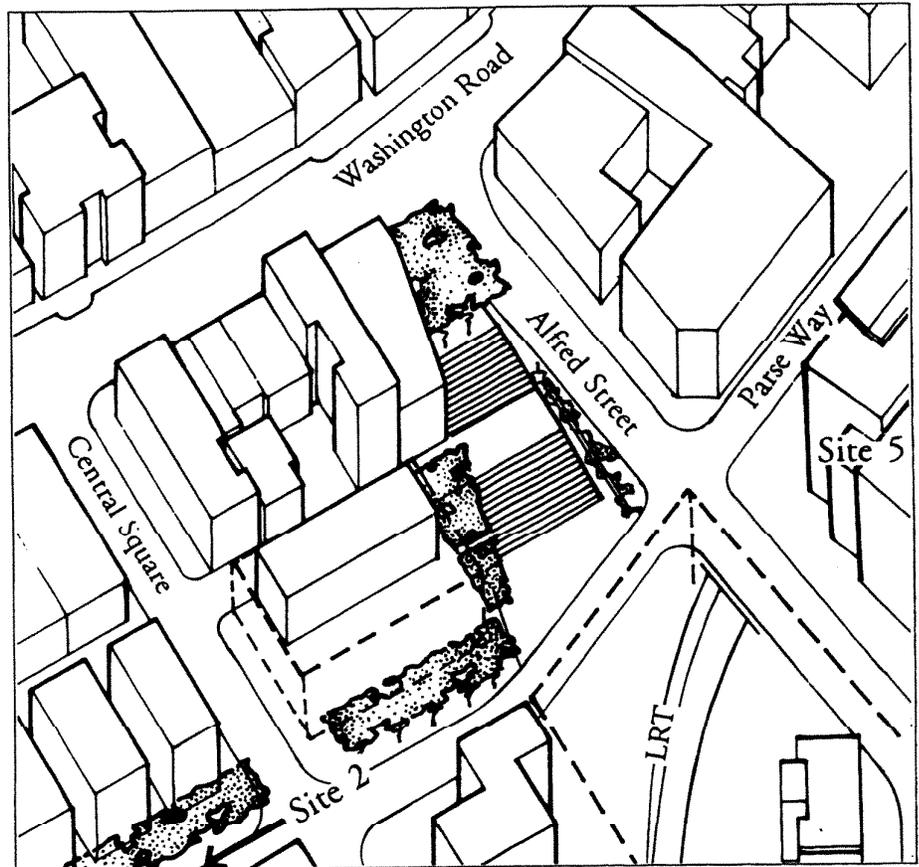
pedestrian alike as a positive change in the character of the road from sylvan suburban artery to a dense and lively Main Street, defined by generally continuous building facades on either side. Deep setbacks and erratically placed open spaces, like too many parking lots, deny that definition, robbing the street of its personality.

A lot of open space is not always a good thing in a shopping setting where frontage is essential. Especially on Washington Road, merchants need to be near the street, hanging their signs and displaying their goods to attract drivers as well as pedestrians. The thinking behind Washington Road's new streetscape no doubt concerned a new image for the street but also understood the sidewalk as a kind of "open space" itself. Uptown sidewalks would benefit from a little pedestrian congestion—not only benches and trees, but tables and chairs for outdoor eating, sidewalk sale tables, antiques, flowers and hardware spilling from stores out onto the street.

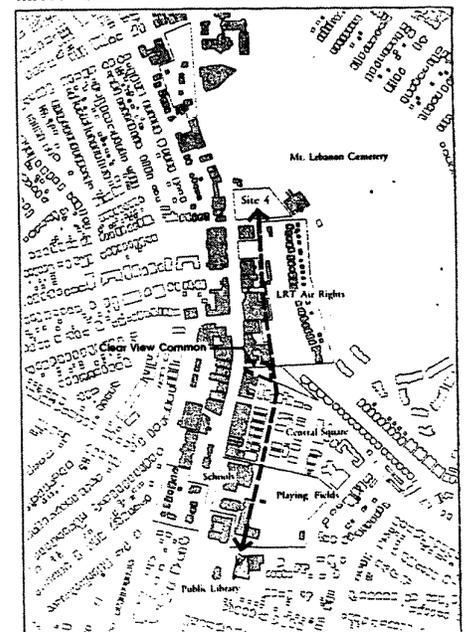
A New Town Square: Clearview Common

As a town-making device, open space is best used—becomes most *public*—when it's shared by different constituencies. Claimed by all of the abutters, belonging in a sense to everyone, strategically-located open space can lend a strong presence to a place. History and topography, moreover, coincide to make really memorable spaces in towns, natural settings for something to happen. The old trolley loop at Clearview, where Washington Road dips and turns a little, is such a place.

Clearview's triangular shape offers an opening rather than a gap at the hinge in the road. Here should be located the biggest window in the walls of the town room, literally a "clear view" to the east, and from the other direction, a visual (and actual) access into the center of town. Bounded by the small shops in older buildings and faced by new development on the LRT site, landscaped terraces in the square should step down to Shady Drive, offering shoppers and pedestrians a respite, a place to sit, and Uptown workers a sunny spot to bring a brown-bag lunch. For citizens as well as commuters passing through, Clearview Common can become a symbol, marking that place in the road as the heart of Mt. Lebanon. The site for Uptown promotions, the place to set up the judging stand at a parade, Clearview Common can on other special occasions be the venue of concerts, fairs, eclipse viewing and outdoor meetings.



III.6.3 Clearview Common



III.6.4 Clearview Common is at the midpoint of the pedestrian route from the Public Library to Key Location #4 at the Shady Drive corner.

The last 38/42 streetcar from downtown Pittsburgh ran to the Clearview Loop on April 14, 1984. Significant geographically as well as in Mt. Lebanon's history, Clearview Common can commemorate the importance of the trolley era in the community's founding and growth. Edged by the light rail tracks, and a short walk from the LRT Station, Clearview can also showcase Mt. Lebanon's place on the revived commuter rail system.

An Important Town Link to Central Square, the schools and the Library

At the southern edge of Clearview is Central Square, a unique Mt. Lebanon neighborhood. It is attractive to anyone wanting to live in the midst of the kind of place Uptown might become. At its northern side, Clearview Common will face the major redevelopment at the LRT Station, and the small shops around the Denis Theatre. Clearview Common will become one of a series of places on the way from the Public Library to the recommended development at the corner of Shady Drive, a route which also serves the LRT Station, the Mellon and Washington Road Schools, Central Square and the Uptown playing fields. While this path exists to some extent already, the Strategic Plan allows it to be rediscovered and strengthened. It will complement Washington Road as an alternative for pedestrians and slower traffic. Clearview Common lies at the midpoint of the new route.

At the south side of Clearview are two of Uptown's best building facades (I.B.6, I.B.7), the old Medical Arts Building at 701 Washington, with its eagle, and the Nettle Creek building next door, with its marquee. As a gathering and orientation point along Uptown Washington Road, the Clearview site increases the prominence of buildings facing it on the west side of Washington Road. The Towne Faire building, formerly the Walker Pontiac dealership, should at some point be renovated or rebuilt. A more prominent, even taller building here would give the Clearview Common a stronger sense of enclosure. Next door the Stevenson Williams Company's marquee on the old Home Land Building is the kind of old-fashioned downtown feature many contemporary advocates of downtown revitalization love to see restored.

"To sit in the shade on a fine day and look upon verdure is the most perfect refreshment."

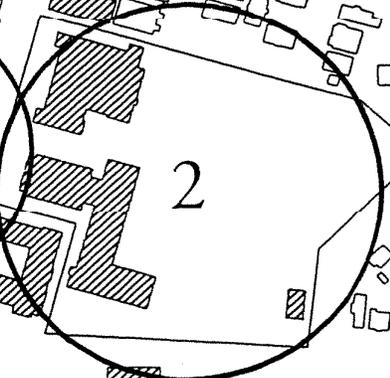
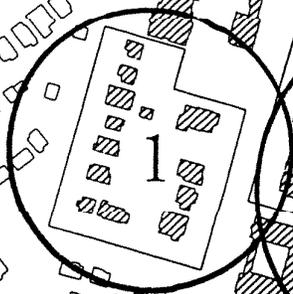
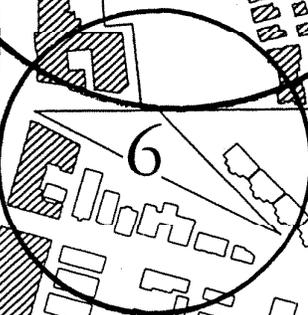
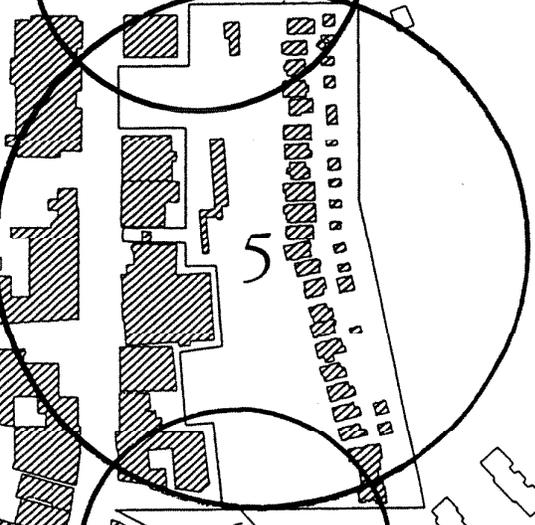
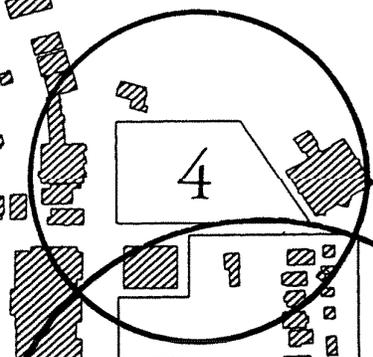
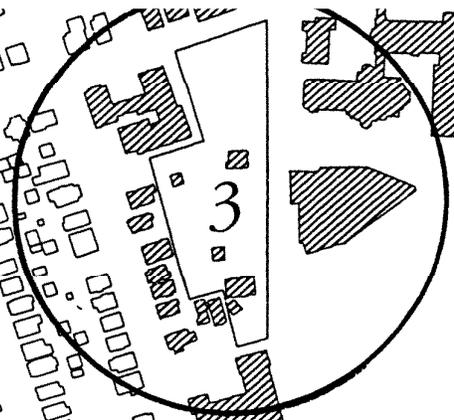
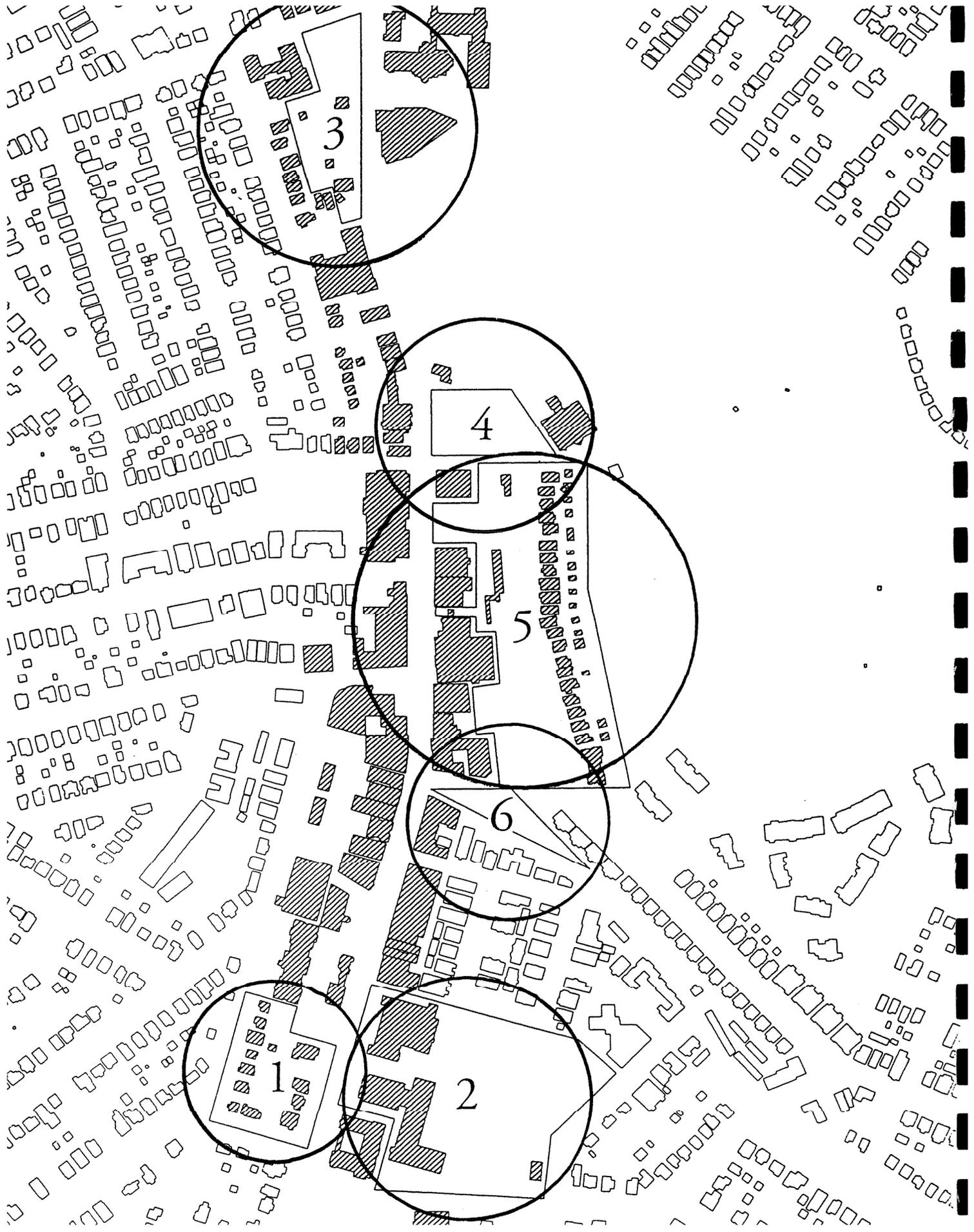
—Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814)

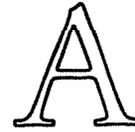
"Where do you go on a fine day? Where can you be out in public without being at a cash register?"

—a member of the Washington Road clergy

IV The Strategic Plan provides Mt. Lebanon with a starting point, a vision for Uptown Washington Road: its appearance, uses, physical structure, amenities, character and meaning for the larger community. A guide for further action rather than a fixed blueprint, the Strategic Plan provides a base for specific initiatives, as well as criteria for evaluating development proposals.

Without diligent pursuit of its principles, the Strategic Plan will remain only a first step. Realizing the potential explored in the Plan will require the concentrated effort of many in the community. Invaluable to the ongoing Strategic Planning effort will be the formation of a Development Council, officially mandated with the Strategic Plan's implementation, and with aggressive pursuit of the means to realize the vision for Uptown outlined in the plan.





Steps Toward Implementation

A DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL—a group of citizens empowered to formulate and pursue a redevelopment agenda on behalf of the Mt. Lebanon Commission—is essential for the long-term well-being of Washington Road. We strongly encourage the Municipality to form such a group to evolve the strategic plan and coordinate its implementation. The Development Council will serve as the Strategic Plan's leading advocate, charged not only with its aggressive pursuit, but with insuring that innovation and the maintenance of Uptown proceed with the vision of the plan in mind.

The commitment of the Mt. Lebanon Commission to the Strategic Plan is of paramount importance to the Plan's implementation and success. All final decisions on development recommendations of the Development Council would of course remain the responsibility of the Commission.

THE MANDATE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

- Formulation of short and long-term agendas for development in Uptown;
- Solicitation of interest in Uptown development and investment, and formulation of Requests for Qualifications and Proposals;
- Serving as a clearinghouse for developers' inquiries, as well as for development proposals that may appear;
- Identification of sources of capital and investment, from private as well as from state and federal funds;
- Serving as an "independent agent" or advisory board to the Mt. Lebanon Commission and to the Planning Board, to recommend action for capital improvement projects;
- Formulation of strategies for advancing Mt. Lebanon's competitiveness within the region;
- Solicitation of expert opinion from within and outside the community regarding planning and development trends, and economic forecasts;
- Production of a marketing plan for Uptown as a place to do business and a place to live, as well as a place to shop.

"Success comes before work only in the dictionary."

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Developed in cooperation with the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, the following organization and responsibilities of the council are recommended:

—Anonymous

1. Five volunteer members appointed by the Commission, in addition to the President of the Mt. Lebanon Commission serving as an ex-officio member. Appointments should be based on a candidate's proven competence in one or more of a range of interests vital to

the future of the Uptown neighborhood, including:

- Citizens with backgrounds in real-estate, development, finance, marketing, design, or similar expertise;
- Representatives of public bodies with Uptown interests;
- Representatives of Washington Road business groups;
- "Citizens-at-Large," as well as pro tem members as appropriate. Obviously, a committee of five will benefit from members' expertise in more than one of the listed areas.

2. A permanently appointed Director, supported by a permanent staff in the offices of the Development Council, whose responsibilities include:

- Identifying and evaluating development opportunities consistent with the vision and goals of the Strategic Plan, including consultation with design, development and marketing professionals;
- Advising the Board of the Development Council on investment decisions;
- Obtaining sources of financing;
- Coordination, including coordination with Municipal staff, and obtaining Government approvals.

3. The implementation of the Strategic Plan is the direct responsibility of the Commission. It must satisfy the policies of the Commission, and must be enacted without harm to the present governing structure, including municipal staff. For example, each component of the Plan will be subject to all the policies and all the ordinances of the Municipality, satisfying the financial, planning, zoning, traffic, building and other regulations, and assuring that control of the result remains with the Municipality.

4. The work of the Development Council cannot be allowed to drain or interfere with the ordinary and necessary functions of current municipal services.

5. Implementation should be a public/private effort, not requiring the use of large municipal resources of money and time. The financial components of the Strategic Plan must attract private investment, with no or minimum Municipal investment other than what is usual for infrastructure required by the development. Positive social (as well as financial) benefits should result through the implementation of the Strategic Plan, i.e. increased real estate values, better quality of life for the entire Municipality, a better retail area, more vitality in the Municipality, a better sense of neighborhood, more mixed use development, etc.

6. One of the first tasks of the Development Council should be the preparation of specific marketing and development plans for each of the six locations. These would include pro formas of capital and operating costs, as well as projected financial and social results.

Development incentives will play a key role in the Strategic Plan's implementation. Tax abatement legislation has been in effect in Mt. Lebanon for ten years. Originally

passed to encourage development such as Towne Centre at the LRT air rights, tax abatement has benefited recent projects such as Rollier's and the Molnar Building. Other incentives are possible, and should be considered by the Development Council. For instance, tax incentive financing (TIF) has been a major source of redevelopment funds for communities comparable to Mt. Lebanon, such as Highland Park, Illinois, where there was no financial outlay on the part of the municipality. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enacted TIF legislation in 1990. Three municipalities have taken advantage of the law: Meadville, York, and the City of Pittsburgh, where much of the Pittsburgh Higher Technology Center is the result of tax incentive financing.

Lastly, while improvements at each of the Key Locations could proceed either concurrently or move ahead independently of the others, we recommend particular emphasis over the next year at Key Location #1, where a new Public Safety Building would not only satisfy a pressing community need, but get the Strategic Plan rolling at a prominent site. Land for subsequent development of sub parcels 2, 3 and 4 should be land-banked, by a means to be determined by the Development Council. There is interest at this time in development at the corner of Washington and Bower Hill Roads; that site can be the first instance of coordinating private development with the guidelines of the Strategic Plan. With the Mellon School recommended for reopening, renovation plans for the building can proceed and include the goals of the Plan: a more attractive face for the auditorium on Washington Road, and the improvement of the east faces of both schools as part of the new pedestrian street from the library to the LRT.

B

T A K I N G A C T I O N

Economic Overview

Market projections are generally limited by present circumstances. Markets, on the other hand, are dynamic and fluid, expanding (or shrinking) in response to various social and economic factors, cultural trends, emerging needs and technologies, the state of the nation's economy, and aggressive local pursuit of specific economic initiatives.

Mt. Lebanon is poised to alter its market potential by exploiting the national interest in mature suburbs with town-like amenities. The community already enjoys many of the assets of both town and suburb, and therefore should be able to capitalize on this advantage. To do so, the Municipality must aggressively promote its own attributes, aiming at attracting residents (which it always has), along with shoppers and new business. As shopping assumes a more important recreational role, especially as a form of family entertainment and leisure activity, Mt. Lebanon is in a position to partially recast the image of Uptown as an entertainment destination. Furthermore, with the advent of "decentralized" or "home-offices" which do not depend on downtown proximity or interstate highways, Mt. Lebanon is in a position to capitalize on the growing American market for executive office suites and similar work facilities.

"I might be tempted to spend more time on Washington Road if they had stores where you can browse, like Walnut Street, for a variety of things—besides the major purchase or the quick pick-up items."

—from *Mt. Lebanon Magazine*,
January/February 1988

Unique shopping districts, both urban and suburban locations, are increasingly popular destinations as alternatives to the drab and ubiquitous shopping malls. Sewickley is an example of a suburban retail cluster with an image of its own, which draws on a regional market in much the way that streets of shops and restaurants, such as Shadyside's, have long done in older, desirable parts of cities. Building new retail space Uptown will attract more established merchandisers, such as the Pendleton Shop, who lend stability and draw on a wide market. Upgrading existing storefront space will not only improve Washington Road's image, but will also continue Uptown's attraction for both the smaller, individual retailers that give the place its character, and the personal service providers Mt. Lebanon needs. Being able to attract a national retailer-or-two (such as, say, a Barnes & Noble Bookstore) would greatly benefit users and the other local retailers. Developers, property owners, retailers and the Municipality overall will profit from the success of an Uptown revitalization. Success will depend in great measure on rethinking tax abatement Uptown, and on the development incentives pursued by the Development Council. More importantly, the people of Mt. Lebanon will gain a lively, interesting and attractive center for their community, and a renewed pride in Uptown.

When someone says "Uptown" (or someday "Upstreet" again?), what image is evoked? Mt. Lebanon already evokes a strong and intriguing image: a suburb of shady brick streets and prosperous people, and a small town with a Main Street

of its own. Riding the ridge, looking out over Mt. Lebanon's rolling green landscape, Washington Road can be everything Main Street evokes—variety, places to shop, places to eat, above all places to encounter people. Just as most urban environments are identified with their principal streets, so can Washington Road be an image of Mt. Lebanon that sticks in the mind.

Diligent pursuit of the Strategic Plan will substantially alter the present market circumstances. The recommendations of this report are indeed strategic: economic as well as physical intervention at some key locations are intended to benefit adjacent business, as well as stimulate local investment. *Success breeds success.* Making Uptown Washington Road more attractive and livable will, indeed, lead to an increase in its share of the regional economic market.

"I wish the area would communicate itself to me."

—from *Mt. Lebanon Magazine*,
January/February 1988

The Markets

A Changing Role as a Retail Center

Already in competition with too many nearby large suburban centers, Washington Road will not be the prime retail shopping node for Mt. Lebanon citizens in the future. The old commercial core has evolved into a convenience retail center, and is currently only marginally successful in that role. A trend in urban retail centers across the country, however, and one of the growth areas in the retail market, combines convenience and/or specialty retail with leisure- and entertainment-oriented shopping. Indeed, one of the lessons of the malls has been that people shop as a form of entertainment and are therefore attracted to distinctive environments in which to shop. As the ubiquity of malls makes them less distinctive, people rediscover the pleasures of shopping in an environment such as Shadyside's. Mt. Lebanon should pursue Uptown's potential to become an entertainment-convenience retail center.

These are home-grown signs of health in Uptown after years of barely holding its own. Significantly, each of these instances represents a role in the regional market for the properties on Washington Road.

The 200,000 square feet of leasable space in the 500-700 blocks of Washington Road are almost entirely occupied, and although the tenant turnover rate is high, the current strength of the Washington Road retail market points to the potential for further improvement in the commercial core's image and business climate:

Rollier's attractive new building is a significant investment and a clear statement of a major retailer's confidence in Washington Road. The new home center anchors the commercial core, strategically located at the road's intersection with Shady Drive, an Uptown hub in the making. Furthermore, with ample parking behind the building, Rollier's holds the Washington Road street line in the way recommended for Uptown development.

Beyond providing for today's parking needs, the North Municipal Parking Garage is another show of faith in Uptown, as well as a forecast of the road's future. Well-designed and well-situated, the new garage is the kind of public improvement that stimulates interest in the Uptown shopping corridor, as evidenced by the speed with which the garage's ground floor retail space was leased.

"We need a casual restaurant where kids could get a hamburger and meet their friends—maybe a place with booths and a dance floor."

—Mt. Lebanon High School senior,
in *Mt. Lebanon Magazine*,
January/February 1988

Washington Road needs more restaurants and specialty food shops, more apparel stores, and more national retailers, as well as the specialty shops that characterize popular, upscale neighborhood retail strips.

Another Uptown business with a regional draw, the **Denis Theatre** has reopened, the kind of amenity every real town needs. The new garage is in the same block, and the LRT Station is just down the hill. Theatre patrons should mean more evening business on Washington Road, as evidenced by the recently-opened Uptown Café, which caters in part to moviegoers.

Restaurant patronage on Washington Road should increase with the Denis Theatre reopening. Uptown has not only fewer quality restaurants and specialty food outlets than most urban retail strips, but fewer coffee shops, bakeries and carry-outs as well. Places to eat invite people to linger, and the more restaurants there are the more invitations to return.

Vacancies are filling up, and the opening of the **Pendleton Shop**, at another anchor site, indicate that more retailers have faith in Uptown Washington Road locations.

Washington Road's primary competitors—as well as the source of some of its past problems—are the Galleria, a specialty retail shopping mall that opened in the former Kaufmann's in Summer 1990, and the 1.2 million square foot South Hills Village Mall, which was Allegheny County's first center of its kind when it opened in 1965. Nearby is the 350,000 square foot Village Square Mall, which provides off-price and discount retailing. Occupancy and sales performances have been consistently high at these centers. Despite strong competition from the malls, however, regional economic forecasts predict that market support should continue for additional retail space along Washington Road, particularly in an improved and more distinctive physical setting.

Clearly, few existing Uptown stores are large enough to carry the wide mix of merchandise offered by their competitors in the larger suburban centers. Uptown's answer to competition, however, does not lie in imitating the malls, which (even if it were desirable) would be impossible on Washington Road. Many urban and inner-suburban shopping districts thrive without big anchors and even bigger parking lots—think of Shadyside and Southside. Building on strengths already in place, in the physical environment as well as in local retailing patterns, Washington Road should aim to become known for specialty merchandise shopping in a town setting.

The cluster of interior design studios on Washington Road is a good place to begin thinking about an image for Washington Road. A unique attraction in Mt. Lebanon, the presence of these stores draws patrons from across the South Hills region, and beyond as well. Moreover, competition seems to stimulate the decorating business: interior designers, home furnishings, antiques and home accessory stores always seem to do well when there are others like them nearby. "Decorators Row" is a familiar destination in many cities. Washington Road's smaller storefronts are ideal for these shops, and such tenants should be actively sought. Nor would Washington Road have to project an overly-upscale image—Rollier's will continue to serve the "do-it-yourselfer".

Chronic problems persist in the Uptown retail mix, however. The absence of national chain retailers (with the notable exception of the Pendleton Shop) works against drawing customers from a larger area. Apparel, shoe, and specialty merchandise stores are particularly needed. The retail strip includes seven apparel stores, but they occupy less than 4% of the corridor's total retail space, a clear indication that Uptown is underserved with clothing merchandisers.

Although occupancy on the road may be high, sales levels in many of the Uptown stores are modest when compared with the expectations of national chain stores, and with viable stores at typical suburban centers. Interviews and observations indicate that few of Washington Road's merchants are generating industry-standard levels of sales per square foot. For this to change, the retailing mix must expand and cater to a wider population.

Uptown vacancies fill quickly. Thirty-three new stores have opened in the last two years—replacing thirty-three that closed—but their sales have yet to stabilize. The high turnover is usually an indication of a market trying to find its niche rather than a sign of weakness. There are frequent tenant turnovers at many successful malls. Furthermore, the considerable number of marginal and undercapitalized retailers, some of whom have not upgraded their storefronts in years, has a negative effect on the district's image. This first impression, along with the absence of many quality stores, prevents the better stores from achieving higher sales levels, and discourages the replacement of marginal stores with more viable retailers. Parking garages are busier on weekdays than on weekends, an indication that the current draws on Washington Road are medical and office uses, rather than retailers.

Uptown's commercial core needs an infusion of retail destinations and the shoppers' amenities that accompany them. Most importantly, Washington Road needs new space to house these stores. The increase in retail sales that Washington Road needs must be largely accommodated in new space. Few of Uptown's buildings offer floorplates of sufficient size to attract substantial retail outlets. The new ground floor space at the North Garage, though small, is an example of the kind of lease space the road needs more of: attractive, up-to-date and competitive. A demand for larger, contiguous space exists, and it is the presence of the national retailers who need such space that will help stabilize the mix and turnover of merchants.

In addition to high quality fashion stores, entertainment uses are needed on Washington Road to attract business from larger, less personal retail centers. Among new facilities could be two or more restaurants of 6,000 square feet each, and three or four new fashion stores of 2,000 square feet each. Rounding out the mix would be specialty food stores, such as a wine and cheese shop, ice cream/yogurt shop, coffee shop, fish market, as well as the decorating and home improvement merchandisers already established Uptown. Other retail uses that would be complementary include arts and crafts, hobby stores and other craft stores.

A Healthy Office Market and a Need for More Space

The Washington Road Study Area encompasses just over 280,000 square feet of office space, an office market modest in size but remarkably healthy. The current office vacancy rate is 2.2 per cent—remarkable indeed when compared to Pittsburgh's rate of sixteen per cent, or even to that of the Parkway West corridor, the metropolitan area's premier suburban office location, at six per cent. Allegheny County's South/West sub market, which includes Mt. Lebanon, has an overall vacancy rate of fourteen per cent.

The Study Area, as well as the region as a whole, has realized significant net absorption of office space over the past two years. Significantly, the absorption of net occupied space in the Washington Road Corridor has equaled approximately thirty-five per cent of the South/West sub market area's absorption over that time. Over the past three years the absorption rate in Mt. Lebanon for office space has been approximately 20,000 square feet per year. During that time the Molnar Building opened at 20,000 square feet, and was fully-occupied within one year.

The current demand for office space in Mt. Lebanon of 20,000 square feet per year would allow for at least two new office buildings of 30,000 to 50,000 square feet over the next few years.

In mid-1995 the combined vacant office area in Uptown equals 6,100 square feet. The largest contiguous vacant area is approximately 1,500 square feet. Interest has been shown on the part of several companies in developing new space. The current demand for office space in Mt. Lebanon of 20,000 square feet per year would allow for at least two new office buildings of 30,000 to 50,000 square feet over the next few years. Past trends in absorption of office space indicate that buildings in this size range would represent the most marketable new office developments for the Washington Road corridor.

Uptown Washington Road should not compete with the office developments of the Parkway West corridor, where very large buildings and building sites, as well as proximity to the airport, attract national and large regional businesses. The Mt. Lebanon market for offices for medical, law and other professionals—tenants at whom the Parkway West developments are generally not aimed — has been steady and strong. Mt. Lebanon itself has absorbed over a third of the office space absorbed in the South/West sub market, and the extremely low vacancy rate clearly indicates a demand for more. Professional offices also tend to cluster. Health care providers in particular are attractive tenants for Washington Road, not only because their clientele is steady, but also because people don't go to just one doctor. Moreover, changes in health care provision have led to decentralization and down-sizing of many services, making relatively compact medical facilities like diagnostic centers potential Washington Road destinations. Squirrel Hill has a good example of a significant health-care building in the midst of an upscale, popular shopping district.

The ability to work away from centralized offices is also generating new opportunities for professional office suites. This growing market offers people the benefits of a workplace near one's home without the isolation that the over-trumpeted "home office" produces. Uptown would make an excellent location for a concentration of such office suites.

The Opportunity for New Residents

The mix of uses on a revitalized Washington Road should include new residential development. Adding to Uptown's population is compelling, not only as a response to a market demand, but as a benefit to the community:

- New residents mean new business for established as well as new merchants.
- The traditional attraction of Mt. Lebanon for families can be maintained and strengthened by providing different types of housing to address varied housing needs.
- The Uptown commercial and institutional core has traditionally been surrounded by a residential district, and has included multifamily buildings since the 1920s.
- Planning studies since the 1960s have pointed to the desirability of making Uptown a true twenty-four hour neighborhood. The goal is no less attractive and important today.

Moreover, there are indications that a significant market for new housing in Mt. Lebanon, and particularly in Uptown, exists. Factors supporting that forecast include:

- The Municipality realized an absolute increase of households (occupied housing units) of 735, in spite of the population decline of the 1980s. This was coupled with a net increase of 800 new housing units.
- Approximately seventy-four per cent of all households in Mt. Lebanon are home owners. The percentage of home owners has gradually increased over the last twenty years.
- The Mt. Lebanon School District reports an increase since 1990 in school-age population, and further growth is expected. Among other measures, consultants to the School District have recommended reopening the Mellon School in response to present and upcoming needs.
- Trends indicate that Mt. Lebanon could realize a net household growth over the next five years. This would generate a demand for 160 to 380 new housing units, and a possible annual average increase of fifty or more new units.

Population in the Allegheny County metropolitan region declined during the 1980s, and the decline continued into the 1990s, although indications are that the rate of decline through the last half of the decade will be less than half of the rate of the 1980s. Significantly, decline in the population of Pittsburgh itself accounted for much of the regional loss. Population declined in Mt. Lebanon as well over this period, according to census data. Current patterns and trends in the Municipality's housing market are reason, however, for a cautious optimism.

The For-Rent Market

Low rates of vacancy are generally a sign of demand for new apartments. Apartment vacancies

"The Central Core Area should be a pleasant place both in the daytime and at night."

— "Central Core Study
for Mt. Lebanon Township"
1962

Trends indicate that there is a significant market for new housing in Mt. Lebanon.

High rates of occupancy indicate sufficient market strength to support new apartment development in the Municipality.

in metropolitan Allegheny County have been low for some time, with a six-year average vacancy rate of 3.3 per cent in 1994. All recently-built apartment buildings in the region have successfully leased. The level of regional demand for new rental apartment development indicates not only a growth demand — managers report that half their tenants represent in-migration to the region — but a transfer demand as well from residents of mature complexes.

Current vacancy rates in the Municipality are low, which according to managers is typical. A high occupancy rate is unusual in mature properties, however, indicating a pent-up demand due to a lack of recent apartment construction. Even though these properties do not generate the rents of newer properties in the region, their high rates of occupancy indicate sufficient market strength to support new apartment development in the Municipality.

No new apartment buildings have been built in Mt. Lebanon in recent years. The newest major multifamily developments were the Washington Square condominiums and the Bower Hill Three apartments, both built in 1982. Mt. Lebanon's better rental properties are more than thirteen years old, and the characteristics of Mt. Lebanon's rental units reflect their age: the large number of two- and three-bedroom units are not typical of more recent apartment developments oriented to one- and two-person households.

In addition, many of the better Pittsburgh apartment complexes are adaptive re-use projects. These complexes generally command a higher rental rate compared with the suburban complexes, even though the suburban properties are newer. Significantly, the highest rents in the City are being paid at Shadyside Commons, an adaptive re-use project. There are adaptive re-use opportunities in Uptown Mt. Lebanon, notably at Central Square and around Church Place. A quality location makes Shadyside Commons desirable, and high rents have not hurt the occupancy rate — only three apartments are now vacant.

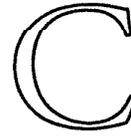
The For-Sale Market

For a metropolitan area of 1.5 to 2.0 million people, the level of townhouse development in Allegheny County has been quite modest. Due to the limited amount of land suited for development, the metropolitan townhouse market extends into Butler, Washington and Westmoreland Counties. The majority of Allegheny County's townhouse developments are near the airport and along the Parkway West Corridor, where there is available land. Mt. Lebanon, however, is in a better location for townhouse development than outlying areas, and better success and higher unit prices can be expected.

Given the quality environment of the Mt. Lebanon area, and the limited supply of townhouses in Allegheny County, indications are that market support exists for townhouse development on a suitable site in the Municipality. Most of the new townhouses being sold in Allegheny County are priced from \$85,000 to \$130,000, for modest-sized homes of 1,200 to 1,800 square feet. Project feasibility in Mt. Lebanon would be best if units were priced in the \$150,000 to \$180,000 range.

Mt. Lebanon is in a better location for townhouse development than outlying areas, and better success and higher unit prices can be expected.

Development Costs

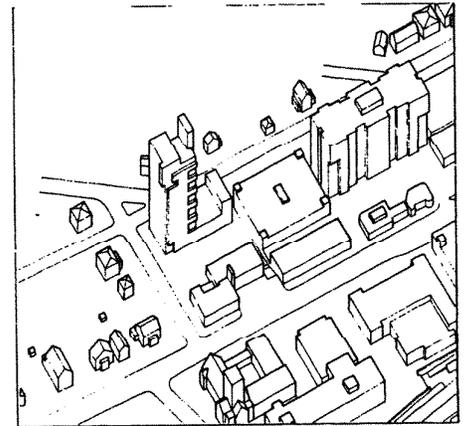


The following is an estimate of projected costs, in 1995 dollars, for realizing the recommended developments at the six Key Locations cited in this report. The estimates for construction and development costs are preliminary and conservative—development costs will vary greatly depending on the disposition of land ownership, financing arrangements, subsidies (if any), and on other factors unique to each site, including the detailed program pursued at each location. The cost of the recommended developments is in the neighborhood of \$140 million.

1 Washington Road at Lebanon Avenue

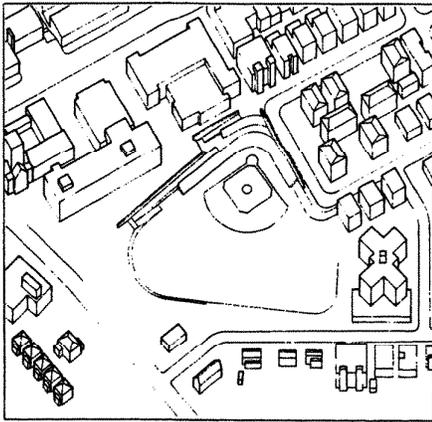
Most of sub parcel 1 is owned by the Parking Authority, specifically the Parking Authority and Treasurer's Offices on the corner of Washington Road and Lebanon Avenue. Construction of the Public Safety Building can proceed independently of development of the rest of the site.

Alternatively, development of a mixed use project encompassing all of the sub parcels, including the Public Safety Building, housing and commercial space, might be undertaken by the Municipality in a public/private partnership. The additional land-taking and site preparation costs might be offset by increasing the development density on the site. Indeed, if at the time of pursuing the Public Safety Building the Municipality would commit to assembling and preparing the larger parcel a private development partner might be induced to participate in the larger mixed-use development.



IV.C.1 Key Location #1

Site Area	Recommended Development	Building Area	Construction Cost	Development Cost @ 40% of Construction Cost	Project Cost Construction + Development Costs
Sub Parcel 1					
100,000 sf	Public Safety Building	32,500 sf	\$3,607,500 @ \$111.00/sf	\$1,443,000	\$5,051,000
Sub Parcels 2,3 and 4					
59,000 sf	Commercial Residential	177,000 sf @ FAR 3	\$15,576,000 @ \$88.00/sf	\$6,231,000	\$21,806,000
Total Project Cost, Key Location 1					\$26,858,000



IV.C.2 Key Location #2

2 Washington Road at Castle Shannon Boulevard

Recommendations here focus on the upgrading of the School District's athletic fields to benefit the larger community, and on a pedestrian route from the Library to the LRT Station. The Mellon School would have to undergo a major renovation in preparation for its reopening as a middle school. This would make an ideal opportunity to realize the full potential of both the Mellon and Washington Schools and their site. Funding for the new pedestrian street and the improvement of the athletic fields must be included in the overall scope of work. Although the property is owned by the School District, we strongly urge that the Municipality and the School District, as well as Southminster Church, cooperate in bringing about this significant part of the Strategic Plan. Opening the schools to the new pedestrian street and a better connection for the fields to the town will benefit both the Municipality and the School District, as will a stronger street presence for the Mellon auditorium on Washington Road.

Should the plan to reuse Mellon as a school not go forward, the alternative recommendation for a new residential subdivision would involve infrastructure comparable to that of a new subdivision, and the equity participation of a major private development entity.

Site Area	Recommended Development	Building Area	Construction Cost @ \$35.00/sf	Development Cost @ 40% of Construction Cost	Project Cost Construction + Development Costs
343,150 sf	Town Park	79,100 sf	\$2,269,000	\$1,108,000	\$3,877,800



IV.C.3 Key Location #3

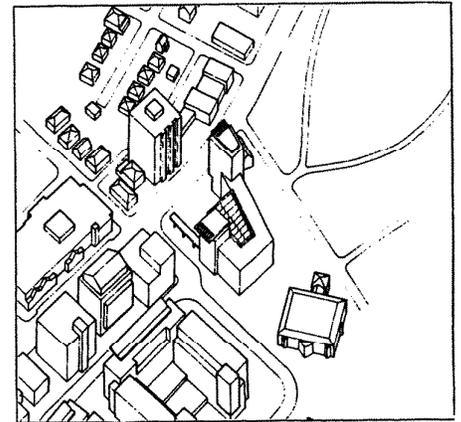
3 Washington Road at Bower Hill Road

Multi-family residential development at this location should be privately financed. The vacant corner property is owned by the Verland Foundation, which has expressed a strong interest in development similar to this study's recommendations. Furthermore, property between the Verland corner and the privately-held property at Oak Way is owned by the Mt. Lebanon Parking Authority. The Foundation also owns the lot connecting the Verland property to Kenmont Avenue, immediately adjacent to the Avon Park apartment building. The rest of the Kenmont Avenue properties are privately-owned, and zoned to permit high-rise residential buildings. Development scenarios here could include public/private partnership to develop the publicly-owned land as well. Renovation of the aging Avon Park building might be included in development plans for the adjoining vacant corner. No new streets would be needed at this location, although the increased residential density that the properties are already zoned for could involve additional utilities.

Site Area	Recommended Development	Building Area @ FAR 3	Construction Cost @ \$71.25/sf	Development Cost @ 40% of Construction Cost	Project Cost Construction + Development Costs
77,000 sf	Multi-family residential	231,000 sf	\$16,458,750	\$6,583,500	\$23,042,250

4 Washington Road and Shady Drive East

The corner property is owned by Mt. Lebanon Cemetery, whose cooperation would, of course, be needed. The recommended development should involve no substantial public funds. Barring unforeseen subsurface conditions related to the LRT alignment, this is one of the most desirable and easily developed sites. Infrastructure would be limited to utilities, as no new streets would be required.

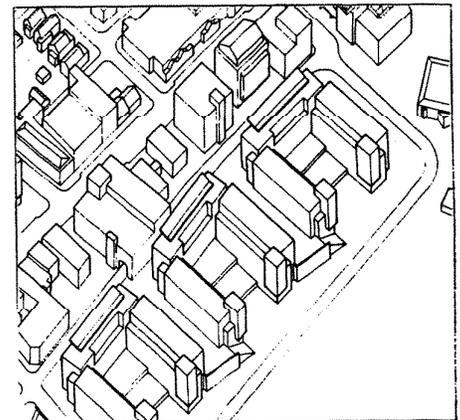


IV.C.4 Key Location #4

Site Area	Recommended Development	Building Area @ FAR 3	Construction Cost @ \$88.60/sf	Development Cost @ 40% of Construction Cost	Project Cost Construction + Development Costs
31,325 sf	Retail Offices	93,975 sf	\$8,326,185	\$3,330,474	\$11,656,659

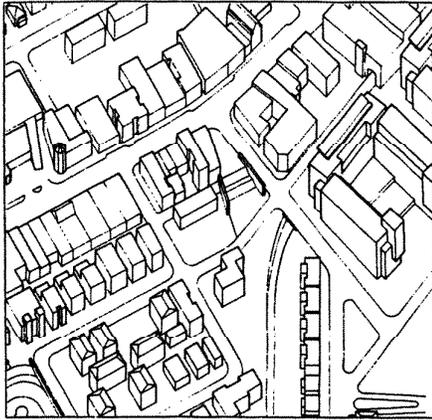
5 The 600 Block of Washington Road: the LRT Air Rights

Here also the entire development might proceed with private financing, as in the Towne Centre project. Development should, nonetheless, be in the form of a partnership with the Municipality, since a new part of town would result, and because this study's recommendations for the site are very specific in their goals. Infrastructure for this site will be complex and extensive, and costs should be at least comparable to those estimated for the Towne Centre project. Development costs will be higher if the Shady Drive East properties are included in a larger development.



IV.C.5 Key Location #5

Site Area	Recommended Development	Building Area @ FAR 3	Construction Cost @ \$88.60/sf	Development Cost @ 40% of Construction Cost	Project Cost Construction + Development Costs
184,400 sf (Air rights only, not including Shady Drive properties)	Mixed Use: Residential Retail Offices Institutional	553,200 sf	\$49,013,520	\$19,605,408	\$68,618,928



IV.C.6 Key Location #6

6 Washington Road at Alfred Street

Admittedly a new town square at the Clearview loop is not a good candidate for private development. We urge the Municipality to develop Clearview *as a community amenity*, one that is important to achieving a new connection between the Library and the LRT Station, a revival of Central Square, and a graceful Uptown. Other development scenarios for a town square at Clearview include collaborating on making the square with developers of the LRT site—Clearview, after all, should be one of that project's front doors, and addressing a town square at the south will help mitigate the potential massiveness of the air rights project. The square might also be brought about through a public-private partnership, as part of an opportunity to develop a mid-rise commercial building on the Shady Drive side of the parcel.

Site Area	Recommended Development	Building Area	Construction Cost @ \$40.00/sf	Development Cost @ 40% of Construction Cost	Project Cost Construction + Development Costs
31,325 sf	Town Common	31,325 sf	\$1,253,000	\$502,000	\$1,753,000

Adjusting Existing Regulations

D

MT. LEBANON HAS ALREADY ENACTED legislation essential to the implementation of the Strategic Plan: the Planned Mixed Use Development. PMXD legislation already encourages mixed-use allowing any use authorized in the C-1 District, including offices, shops, theaters and municipal uses. The PMXD Regulations encompass the length of Washington Road between Uptown's north and south anchors, including each of the Key Locations.

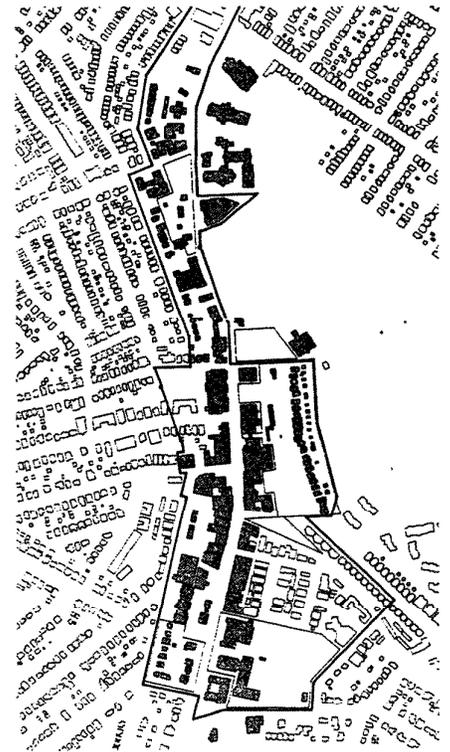
The specific goals of the PMXD Regulations are entirely consistent with the vision for Uptown described in this report. They are "designed to strengthen the social and economic stability of the areas within the PMXD Map by improving the working, shopping and living environment." The PMXD Regulations set out to:

- Promote more efficient use and development of these areas and thus conserve and enhance the value of buildings and land.
- Provide a maximum choice in the types of environment and occupancy tenure.
- Encourage the functional and physical integration of the various uses within a project area.
- Encourage private development activity in conjunction with public mass transit facilities.
- Reduce automobile transportation demand by locating housing near commercial and mass transit facilities.
- Facilitate pedestrian circulation and access to transportation, shopping, recreation, natural features and other amenities.
- Encourage a balance between nature and development by preserving views, creating visual corridors and providing convenient access to vistas, open spaces and recreation areas.
- Provide an incentive for development in a manner consistent with the foregoing objectives.

Some requirements of the Mt. Lebanon Zoning Ordinance, including some stipulations of the PMXD legislation, may need revision or amendments to allow full implementation of the goals of the Strategic Plan, including:

MINIMUM SITE AREA

The minimum site area for a Planned Mixed Use Development is one acre or ten consecutively abutting lots, whichever is lesser. At the corner of the cemetery at Shady Drive (Key Location #4) and at the Clearview Loop (Key Location #6), site areas are less than one acre and do not include abutting lots. Development at these locations should be consistent with



IV.D.1 The PMXD District

the goals of the PMXD legislation despite their relatively small areas. Similarly, at Key Location #4, should development of the entire area not proceed at the same, planning for development of the sub parcels should be regarded as part of a larger Planned Mixed Use Development. Rezoning may be necessary at the smaller locations.

OPEN SPACE

A Planned Mixed Use Development requires a minimum forty per cent open space; some of the required open space can be on levels other than the street level. At several points in this report, we present the case for limiting the number of plazas and setbacks on Washington Road, and for carefully determining their location. With the exception of the site for the Town Square at the Clearview Loop, all of the Key Locations should hug the street line at a minimum of two or three stories. Open space as an amenity should be placed within the property, on upper building levels, or at property lines away from Washington Road.

BUILDING HEIGHT

Maximum building height allowed for a PMXD is 100 feet, with an increase allowed in exchange for certain amenities. Again, the amenities-in-exchange listed in Mt. Lebanon's Zoning Ordinance, particularly protection of principal views through building sites, reduced building volume over eighty feet, pedestrian connections between buildings, and observation decks, are consistent with the goals of the Strategic Study. We must reiterate, however, that a "street level pedestrian plaza or other Open Space" should not be located along Washington Road, and that the street's building line of storefronts should be maintained unbroken along the length of the commercial core. However, we do recommend a setback fifteen feet from the Washington Road property line above the fourth story for new development which faces Washington Road.

THE USE OF SIDEWALKS

New buildings on Washington Road should be built out to the sidewalk without setbacks at the ground stories. Enlivened with sidewalk cafés and greenhouse-like extensions, existing setbacks can add variety to the streetscape while maintaining frontage at the sidewalk. In front of the Cyclops Building, the plaza presents an opportunity for a restaurant on the first floor of that building to have an outdoor dining area, adding life to the corner of Washington Road and Cedar Boulevard throughout the day and into the evening.

The arcade on Washington Road along the front of Rollier's helps make the transition between sidewalk level and the store's main selling floor, but it also makes a significant contribution to the streetscape, offering pedestrians shade, shelter and a wider sidewalk, while giving the street frontage a feeling of continuity. Cities often offer development bonuses or variances in exchange for arcades. Unless they extend to the curb line, arcades should be designed as an extension of the sidewalk, giving pedestrians a choice of walking in the sun or in the shade. In addition, the piers or columns of an arcade should not be of a size or spacing that prevents pedestrians or motorists from viewing the window displays from the curb line.

SIGNS AND BANNERS

Mt. Lebanon's sign regulations are comprehensive and well-written, and allow a creative mind plenty of originality while staying within the guidelines. We do, however, encourage the Municipality to allow the kind of small "blade" sign shown on page 31. This type of sign is not only more easily read from down the street, but groupings of them add texture and color above the sidewalk. Indeed on many older shopping streets the shops are not large enough to display any other kind of sign and still get the message across.

The new light standards on Washington Road have been designed to carry banners, but current municipal regulations are too restrictive in prohibiting the use of the banners to advertise any products or services. We suggest that special permits allow the light-standard banners to carry logos, such as Mt. Lebanon's handsome fan-shaped symbol, as well as seasonal graphics and slogans promoting Uptown and the community.

PARKING

PMXD parking regulations require one space per dwelling unit in multi-family dwellings. Requirements for commercial uses follow those for commercial districts: the requirements, which vary with individual uses, are found in Section 704.4 of the Mt. Lebanon Zoning Ordinance. Commercial uses may provide parking in "readily available" public or private parking garages, provided that the garage spaces are covered by a minimum twenty-year lease. In a development with several uses, the number of parking spaces may, with the recommendation of the Planning Board and the approval of the Commission, be reduced if analysis by professional consultants concludes that the contemplated uses will not necessitate the total cumulative spaces required by the Zoning Ordinance.

The Municipality should continue to liberally apply such analysis as implementation of the Strategic Plan proceeds. Off-site parking and shared spaces among complementary uses will help keep the demand for parking within reasonable limits. The availability of parking spaces is often a psychological matter, and one of establishing acceptable convenience. The space twenty feet closer to your destination is always preferable. However providing that space further increases expectations about finding a space even closer. Such spiralling expectations, rather than actual numbers of parking spaces, is behind many parking "shortages" in American cities.

Getting people in the habit of combining trips, as they will when Washington Road becomes more of a place to stroll and linger, dine and window shop, in addition to carry out single errands should also help fill up the public garages which are generally empty on evenings and weekends. Thus increasing the number of establishments catering to evening and weekend uses need not add parking demand. As an incentive to develop uses and encourage smaller, one-of-a-kind shops, the Municipality should substantially reduce its parking requirements. We recommend that for any new retail, dining or entertainment uses smaller than 2,500 square feet and within 400 feet of one of the public garages (the acceptable walking-range in a shopping mall) no parking be provided.

"Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark. You know what you are doing, but nobody else does."

—Stewart Henderson Britt,
New York Herald Tribune, Oct. 30, 1956



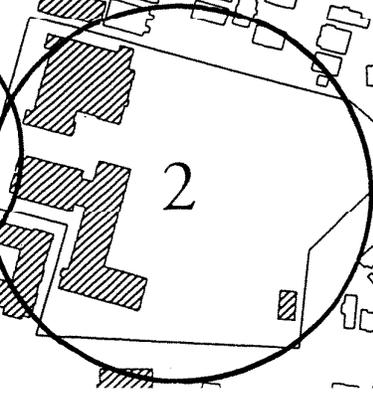
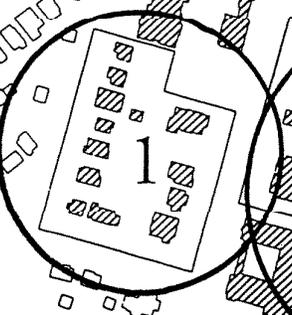
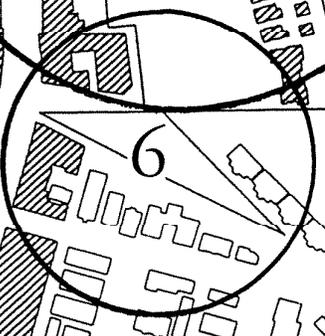
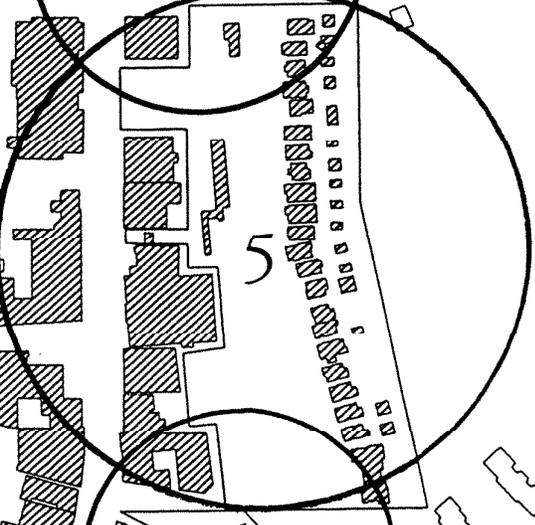
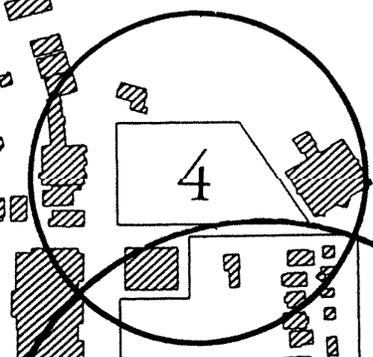
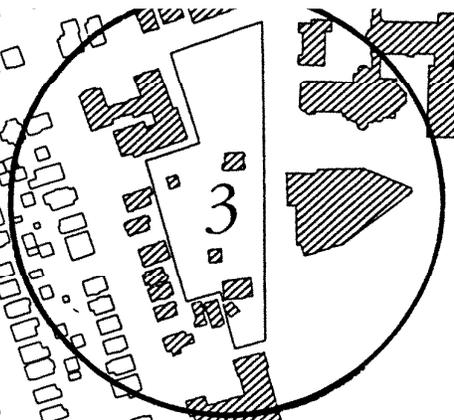
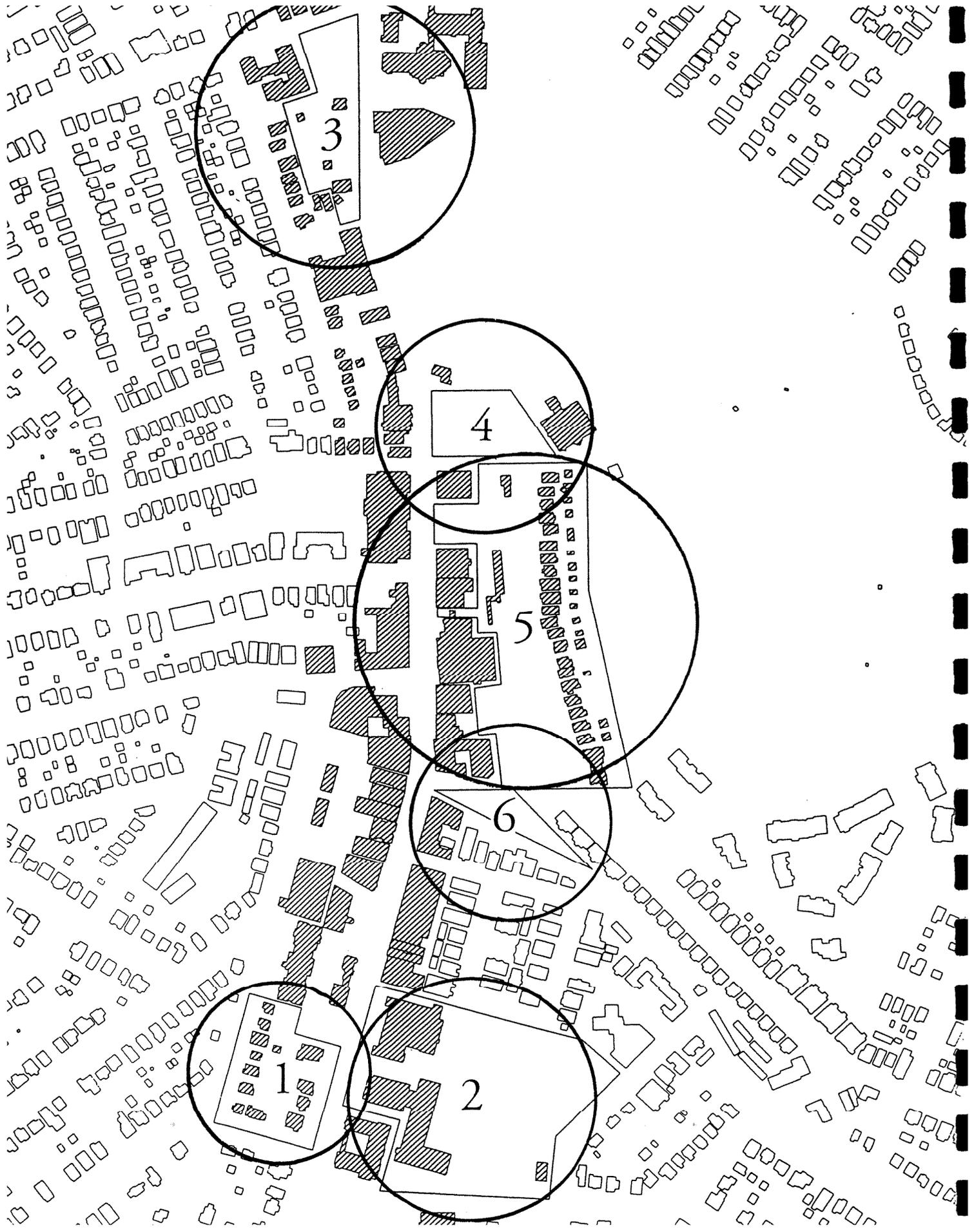
A P P E N D I X

A Parking

B The Public Workshops

References and Reading

Acknowledgments



PARKING



As in most revitalization studies, parking emerged early as an issue in the Washington Road Study, finding its way into nearly every discussion. Parking issues raised by new retail and office development have had to be considered along with Uptown's historic parking debate, and with problems real as well as perceived. This study has found that the number of parking spaces existing in the shopping corridor is sufficient to serve current patronage, and is not itself a major deterrent to increased patronage. However, to increase retail space and activities and to cater to a broader market, additional parking will have to be provided eventually. In addition, to improve people's perception of parking availability, various adjustments of meter and garage rates and schedules should be undertaken.

The Washington Road Study Area presently includes a total of 759 parking spaces, on- and off-street. Some of this parking is on side streets, which some retail patrons find inconvenient.

The commercial core encompasses about 200,000 square feet of ground floor retail space and another 230,000 square feet of upper-floor office space. At a generous suburban shopping center standard of four spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail and office space, the Uptown parking need would be 1,700 spaces. At three spaces per 1,000 square feet 1,300 spaces would be required. Clearly, Washington Road is underserved by the parking standards of suburban malls. However, Washington Road "works" because of the considerable turnover of metered spaces and because there are no large retail users requiring long-term parking.

Three constituencies are chiefly concerned with Uptown Parking issues:

- The Municipality of Mt. Lebanon, including the Parking Authority;
- Office workers and visitors;
- Retailers and their patrons.

It remains the policy of the Municipality that parking revenues pay for parking facilities, including:

- 1) the new and mature parking garages along Washington Road;
- 2) on- and off-street parking facilities, and
- 3) annual operating expenses.

Construction of the 276-space North Parking Garage, which opened in March 1994, and renovation of the South Garage require an annual debt payment of \$744,000. In addition, the opening of the North Municipal Garage brought changes in revenue sources and patterns, as well as in parking habits. While the goal of full operating support through parking revenues is a good one, there are few situations nationally where this is achieved. Some of the burden of parking costs is typically borne by the Municipality and retailers.

Parking has not had a negative affect on Uptown office space. Both the older South Ga-

rage and the North Garage, however, work better for offices than for retail uses. Much of the garages' use comes from office workers and visitors, and parking usage drops considerably when the office buildings are closed.

Parking remains a great concern for Uptown's retailers. Many Washington Road merchants have expressed dissatisfaction with current Uptown parking programs in terms of how parking costs and availability serve their patrons. A Strategic Plan for Washington Road cannot succeed with the cooperation and advocacy of the Uptown merchants. Thus a "user-friendly" parking program is in the mutual interest of both Uptown merchants and Municipal officials. Changes to the existing parking program can increase merchant participation in the validation program, increase garage use—while reducing the aggravation of parking tickets—and shift long-term parking use to the garage and shorter term use to the meters on the street. Based on past experience with retail strips like Washington Road, the following adjustments are recommended for implementation:

- 1) Elimination of free Saturday meter parking will help prevent store workers taking on-street spaces that patrons should be using;
- 2) Increased use of validation stickers;
- 3) All-day Saturday garage parking for a one dollar flat rate;
- 4) First half or full hour parking in the garages for free, a marketing tool which will also free up meters;
- 5) Free or reduced evening transient parking, a benefit to restaurant patrons and moviegoers.

Should any of the above result in parking revenue losses, parking revenue increases could be realized through small increases in parking permit fees and a \$0.25 half-hour rate on all parking meters, as well as a one hour maximum parking time at meters.

“Even old-timers who complain about parking tickets and indoor garages will admit on-street parking was never a breeze in Mt. Lebanon.”

—Susan Fleming Stroyd,
“Fantasy, Facts, Prospects: The View From
the Road,” *Mt. Lebanon Magazine*

THE PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

B

On July 12 and 13, 1994, a conference entitled “En Route to the Future” met at Mt. Lebanon High School. Following the Strategic Planning team’s initial information gathering and familiarization with the community, these public workshop sessions were the community’s first steps in making a strategic plan for Washington Road.

All residents were invited to participate in the workshops, which were well attended. Presenters and facilitators represented a wide range of interests, professions and community involvement, addressing topics of varying scales, from Mt. Lebanon in its metropolitan context, to individual building issues that the community has talked about for years. Possibilities for Washington Road revitalization included not only the visionary—parks and hotels on air rights—but the immediately practicable—newsletters and promotions—as well.

“I’ve lived in Mt. Lebanon for eight years and I’ve never been to Uptown.”

—from the July 1994 public workshops

At a forum-wide session Alex Krieger presented the potentials and the pitfalls of “downtown revitalization,” and introduced the idea that Mt. Lebanon, founded as a suburb, has developed into a town and should be planned accordingly. The first day’s workshops were presented in a summary session with the consultants, presenters and facilitators the following evening at the high school theater. Highlights of each workshop discussion are presented below:

Workshop One Regional & Countywide Planning and Development

Stable and prosperous, Mt. Lebanon is nonetheless a community in competition for new residents. Young families in particular would be attracted to the area’s housing stock, school system, recreation and other amenities. Away from a major highway, Mt. Lebanon is unlikely to become a major commercial center. Most residents are satisfied with that, preferring Mt. Lebanon’s suburban, residential character, and its special sense of boundaries and community.

Unlike other South Hills communities Mt. Lebanon is distinguished by a “downtown.” In many residents’ minds, however, Uptown Mt. Lebanon is unattractive and out-of-date, a failure as a distinctive community symbol.

Washington Road is not only the domain of Mt. Lebanon. As Route 19 it links many communities, carrying regional traffic through Uptown. Church Place and Rollier’s at the north, Mellon School at the south are thought of as gateways to Uptown. Washington Road’s visual and spatial characters are not much different, however, between Mt. Leba-

non and Dormont, even though Mt. Lebanon residents mark the municipal line at the karate school.

Uptown Mt. Lebanon offers potential for more residential development, especially for the increasing number of older residents. While Washington Road in Mt. Lebanon should be a neighborhood retail center for more residents in the immediate Uptown area, it will be able to do that only if it serves a wider market as well, including LRT commuters and office workers, and consumers from the South Hills region drawn to a specialty retail niche.

Workshop Two

Cultural, Educational and Recreational Uses on Washington Road

Much discussion in Workshop Two concerned general and detailed matters such as: storefront aesthetics, retail mix, restaurants, parking and meter maids. Along with talk of concerts, parades, garage sales and ambience, these concerns demonstrate an awareness, however, for the kind of place Washington Road can be. A walk along a lively street, even if it's only to watch other people, is an important and disappearing form of recreation.

Cultural development cannot be exclusively a municipal government concern; private enterprise should be encouraged to risk and nurture various kinds of arts endeavors, particularly small-scale performing arts and music. In the current funding climate, private money, volunteer efforts, shared purposes and pooled resources are crucial to maintaining community-based cultural endeavors.

"Washington Road is an embarrassment as a community symbol."

"People in Mt. Lebanon aren't very welcoming to people who don't live here."

"It's not cozy."

—from the July 1994 public workshops

Existing Mt. Lebanon-based cultural activities may be getting along well in churches and in other found spaces, and perhaps do not need permanent accommodations on Washington Road. Nor may a "cultural center" for Mt. Lebanon, on the model of such centers popular a decade or two ago, be feasible for Mt. Lebanon, or even appropriate, given Mt. Lebanon's place in the regional cultural scene. The community should consider, however, developing or making available facilities to attract regional arts groups, temporarily as well as permanently.

Workshop Three

Senior Citizens' Interests

Mt. Lebanon's senior population is an essential resource to the community, not only in the depth of experience and opinion, but also as a market to be considered in revitalizing Washington Road.

Many older residents would like to live out their retirement in Mt. Lebanon, but single-family homes can become unmanageable and expensive for them. The Washington Road

district already offers seniors a housing alternative, and is an opportunity for further residential development in Mt. Lebanon. More and varied retail, however, is necessary to serve all Uptown residents, particularly older people, who must now leave the area for groceries and other basic purchases; public transit for these people is not always timely or appropriate.

Workshop Four

“Stitching Up the Urban Fabric”

Revitalizing Streets, Developing Vacant Parcels, and Missed Opportunities

The importance of landmarks in understanding Uptown Mt. Lebanon was a common thread in Workshop Four discussions. Mt. Lebanon Cemetery is recognized not only as an open space, but also as an important landmark, a wooded hill visually terminating Washington Road where it turns at the north end of the shopping district. Looking north from the business district, the tower of St. Bernard’s Church rises above the cemetery’s trees, marking the visual boundary of the Municipality beyond. Approaching from the other direction, the cemetery marks the beginning of the district with a line of trees and a turn.

“One of Mt. Lebanon’s great attractions is that it is *contained*.”

—from the July 1994 public workshops

While not as dramatic as the northern landmarks, Southminster Presbyterian’s tower sits at the southern edge of the district, part of a group of buildings, including the Mellon School and even the library, that make another kind of gateway, a recognizable district within the business district itself.

Central Square, although visible from Washington Road at only one point, is recognized as a landmark district, characterized by tree-lined, brick streets, courtyard buildings and a strong sense of enclosure.

The workshop suggested that revitalization and development in the Study Area might be divided into three zones (see the diagram from Workshop #4 on page 3 of this report). Although characterized by a condition or activity, these “zones” are not exclusive in their uses, and in fact are mutually dependent and complementary. These districts already exist, to differing extents, along Washington Road.

Workshop Five

“New Businesses: The Right Mix in the Right Place”

The future of retail on Washington Road

Mt. Lebanon’s community pride, so apparent in its residential districts and in its schools, is not reflected in the Uptown business district. For some, shopping malls seem to offer a more attractive atmosphere and a better mix of shops and amenities, but Mt. Lebanon cannot and should not compete with the malls.

“No place is open after 7 o’clock, which is a nice time of the evening to walk.”

—from the July 1994 public workshops

While the aggregate character and the open-ended nature of the shopping district make comparison to a shopping mall inappropriate, Uptown’s parking is nonetheless judged by a shopping mall standard. Even though there may be empty spaces on the street and in the garages, parking for Washington Road is perceived as insufficient and inconvenient. Merchants and shoppers regard municipal parking policies as too restrictive and bad for business. It is in the mutual interest of government and retailers alike to promote appropriate and equitable parking policies.

Uptown merchants should also work together to promote the district as a shopping destination. Everyone would benefit from uniform evening hours.

Some Washington Road retail can be supported by residential and office developments around it. To stay and prosper, however, Washington Road merchants must appeal to more shoppers than there are in the Mt. Lebanon market alone. Some of Uptown’s retailers already draw most of their business from outside the community, and the Washington Road retail district must position itself in a regional market. Mt. Lebanon might fill a regional market niche, in antiques, decorating, home improvement, etc.

In regarding the Study Area retail district, it is important to remember that Uptown’s problems may not stem from an absence of shops alone as much as it may from an absence of everything else: a park, a playground, a focus: a sense of a special place.

Workshop Six

“Health Facility Needs: Is the Road Good for your Health?”

Changes in health care provision and delivery offer Mt. Lebanon opportunities for development of facilities serving an emerging regional market.

While Mt. Lebanon may be a promising location for new health care facilities, consideration of locations for such development should not be limited to Washington Road; indeed factors such as availability, the age of existing buildings, parking, traffic, etc., may well mean that Washington Road is not an appropriate location for a large-scale, integrated health-care undertaking. With its LRT Station and its existing buildings, however, Washington Road offers locations for smaller-scale health care-related businesses, and for residential development.

Workshop Seven

The Location of a New Public Safety Building: Where and When

A new and modern headquarters has been demonstrated to be crucial to the public safety missions of Mt. Lebanon’s police and fire departments. For purposes of a Strategic Plan, moreover, a new public safety facility is an important civic building. Located within the Study Area, a new Public Safety Building is a potential landmark, joining the Municipal

Building, the Mellon School and other buildings in symbolizing Mt. Lebanon.

Depending on location, other municipal departments, community uses and even space for private enterprises might be included in the program for a new Public Safety Building. Once vacated by the departments, the Municipal Building will remain an important building on Washington Road, and its new uses must be considered in the light of other uses and activities in the district.

Workshop Eight

Residential Uses on Washington Road

Washington Road offers opportunities for residential development, particularly for the older residents who already are a significant presence in Uptown, as well as for younger people who are attracted to Mt. Lebanon's moderate housing costs, schools and recreation. The LRT Station will increasingly attract commuters, and new commercial and other development in the Washington Road area could complement new residential projects.

Dense, low- to mid-rise buildings are an alternative to the high-rises that have been built in recent years along Washington Road. Smaller-scale residential development, centered on courtyards, could be located on Uptown's side streets, retaining retail and other commercial frontage on Washington Road.

More residential development along Washington Road will make the need for basic retail in the area more acute. While a critical mass of residents to support a supermarket will probably not develop, commercial and retail uses are likely to follow as Uptown becomes more established as a desirable residential district. Any strategic planning for the Study Area should include residential, retail and office uses, planned to complement one another's presence.

Workshop Nine

Mellon School: Can a White Elephant Be Saved?

The Mellon School is an asset to the municipality, to the School District and to the community. The building should be retained, and the property kept under the authority of the School District. Subject to verification by the School District, the highest priority for the Mellon School should be for school uses, serving for now as reserve space ready when the District requires it. Should the School District find that the Mellon School is expendable, the building should remain in place, and the property put to use serving other community interests.

"Take Mount Lebanon, an exceptional suburb with a do-or-die spirit."

—from
"Fifty Fabulous Places to Raise Your Family"

Workshop Ten

LRT Air Rights Development

Air rights over the LRT tracks offer an opportunity for larger development in Uptown Mt. Lebanon that is compatible with present mixed uses around the station block, and the scale and character of the districts which adjoin it.

The investigations recognized that the area around the LRT Station could be a coherent multi-family neighborhood new to Mt. Lebanon: Central Square has maintained its identity Uptown since early in Mt. Lebanon's history. East of the block, Shady Drive East is already a street of multi-family buildings. Farther up Washington Road newer high-rise housing forms another, if looser, neighborhood. Such a new LRT district could also include development to strengthen Washington Road's attraction as a shopping destination, and as an office location.

Furthermore, the LRT block cannot be considered in isolation from the rest of the district. The ideas from Workshop Ten reinforced the importance of Mt. Lebanon Cemetery as Uptown's green landmark, and the desirability of another different kind of green space at the trolley turn. Workshop Four proposed a new pedestrian link east of Washington Road from the Public Library to the LRT Station. Workshop Ten's thinking about the LRT block is a natural development of that idea.

"The town is new every day."

—Ancient proverb

Mt. Lebanon, *The Community Magazine* is a tremendous resource and have long been—and remain—a great aid in getting to know the community. Articles by Senior Editor Susan Fleming Stroyd in particular, on history, planning and development offer many insights:

- “So What’s Left to Plan?” September 1993.
- “Study Model Yields Mind-expanding Views,” September 1991.
- “Q&A: Washington Road Dilemma,” July/August 1991.
- “On the Road, Again,” (with Virginia Phillips, Debra Martin Koma and Dan Joseph) July/August 1991.
- “Plan Changes with Changing Community,” May 1988.
- “Uptown: Be Part of the Vision,” January/February 1988.
- “Signs of the Times,” September 1986.
- “What This Town Really Needs in 1985,” January/February 1985.
- “Changing Beverly Road Eyes Options,” December 1984.
- “Task Force Update: Revitalization More Than a Pipe Dream,” November 1984.
- “Main Street Fights Back,” April 1984.
- “Fantasy, Facts, Prospects: The View From Washington Road,” (not dated).

Interesting articles in Mt. Lebanon magazine by other authors include:

- Jacqueline Bies, “A Really Big Deal,” June 1987.
- Merle Jantz, “From Maintenance to Makeovers,” July/August 1992.
- Virginia Phillips, “Parking Authority’s Move to Washington Road Signifies Higher Profile Operating Style,” March 1987.
- “Towne Centre on the Move,” June 1988.
- Laurel Nixholm Tessmer, “Master Plan To Promote Consensus on Washington Road’s Future,” July/August 1992.

In the Spring of 1991 the fifth-year architecture studio on urban design at Carnegie Mellon University, under the direction of David Lewis, turned Uptown Mt. Lebanon into their “urban laboratory. The studio work, presented to the Municipality in a document entitled “Proposal for Revitalization of Uptown Mt. Lebanon,” contains useful analysis and urban design investigations.

The history of Mt. Lebanon's commercial core and the renewed interest in Washington Road parallels the rise, decline and reemergence of the centers of America's cities in this century. The following recent literature examines suburbs, towns and downtowns, and offers perspectives for thinking about the future of American communities such as Mt. Lebanon.

Bacow, Adele Fleet, **Designing the City**

Island Press 1995

"A Guide for Advocates and Public Officials," in cooperating to bring about a better public environment. Includes pragmatic and detailed cases.

Barnett, Jonathan, **The Fractured Metropolis**

Harper Collins, 1995

New realities and opportunities for improving the new city, restoring the old city and reshaping the region.

Bishop, Kirk R., **Designing Urban Corridors,**

Planning Advisory Service Report Number 418, 1989

How to use corridor-specific plans to create a sense of order and place in an increasingly cluttered landscape. Includes sample corridor development standards from three communities of various sizes.

Calthorpe, Peter, **The Next American Metropolis**

Princeton University Press, 1993

Guidelines for planning within the environmental, economic and social limits to metropolitan growth in America.

Goldsteen, Joel B. and Cecil D. Elliott, **Designing America: Creating Urban Identity,**

Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1994

How to discover the sense of place that defines your locality and apply principles of design in a way that promotes and enhances community identity, values and fiscal vitality.

Grantz, Roberta Brandes, **The Living City: How America's Cities Are Being Revitalized by Thinking Small in a Big Way**

The Preservation Press, 1994

"Urban husbandry"—the management and preservation of the built environment through the joint efforts of government, planners and citizens. Case histories of communities that have successfully reversed urban decay.

Hiss, Tony, **The Experience of Place**

Vintage Books, 1990

How our experience of places affects us for good and ill, and how we can design changes that enhance our lives rather than harm them.

Jacobs, Allan B., **Great Streets**

MIT Press, 1993

Plans, cross sections, dimensions, details, patterns and urban contexts that make streets around the world memorable.

Jacobs, Jane, **The Death and Life of Great American Cities**

Vintage Books, 1961 (still in print)

Diversity, mixed uses and increased public contact can make cities safer, more livable and more attractive. A primary text in the rediscovery and renewal of American cities.

- Jarvis, Frederick D., **Site Planning and Community Design for Great Neighborhoods**, Home Builder Press, 1993
The qualities of "great neighborhoods" and how site evaluation and planning can achieve them.
- Katz, Peter, **The New Urbanism: Toward an Architecture of Community** McGraw-Hill, 1994
Speculations for humanizing communities and neighborhoods of the twenty-first century: economically diverse housing; easy access to work, play and school; and efficient transportation.
- Krieger, Alex, editor, **Towns and Town-making Principles** Rizzoli, 1991
An essential guide to planning the new town developments of the "new urbanism."
- Langdon, Philip, **A Better Place to Live: Reshaping the American Suburb** University of Massachusetts Press, 1994
A study of recent movements within the design profession to reshape and revitalize American suburbs.
- Moorish, William and Catherine Brown, **Planning to Stay** Design Center for American Urban Landscape Milkweed Editions, 1994
A neighborhood design workbook, with an emphasis on neighbors' participation in determining and maintaining their neighborhood's character.
- Moudon, Anne Vernez, **Public Streets for Public Use** Columbia University Press, 1987, 1991
Strategies for transforming streets into diversified types of public places. Streets need not be traffic channels alone; rather they must be stimulating, attractive and recreational.
- Whyte, William H., **City: Rediscovering the Center** Doubleday, 1988
The dynamics of city street life. Cities can reassert their ancient function as places where people come together, face-to-face.
- "Bye-bye American Dream," *Newsweek*, May 12, 1995.

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