

PRESERVING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

CITY OF LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA



City of Lancaster
Department of Housing and Community Development

August 1992

PRESERVING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

CITY OF LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA

David B. Schneider

Executive Director
Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County

Peter Benton

John Milner Associates, Inc.

15 July 1992



Historic Preservation Trust

of Lancaster County

123 North Prince Street, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17603

Phone: (717) 291-5861

This project has been funded in part with Federal funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. The contents and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of Housing and Urban Development or the Department of the Interior. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental federally assisted programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Post Office Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127.

CONTENTS

Preserving Community Character.....	1
Section 1: Community Character.....	2
Lancaster's Historical Development	2
Downtown Lancaster.....	3
Neighborhoods	4
Lancaster's Cultural Diversity	6
Section 2: Enhancing Community Character.....	7
Downtown.....	7
Neighborhoods	8
Cultural Diversity	11
Economic Development	12
Historic Preservation as a Tool for Preserving Community Character	13
Section 3: Recommendations.....	17
Community Character Education	17
Neighborhood Focus	18
Historic Preservation as a Tool	18
Minority Involvement	19
Community Design Consensus	19
Comprehensive Plan	20

Acknowledgments

Special thanks are extended to Mayor Janice Stork for her support of this project and continued support of the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County. Michel Lefevre of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission was instrumental both in making this report possible and helping to shape its direction. We also extend our thanks to the staff of the City of Lancaster Bureau of Planning and Community Development, especially Eric Hinderliter, Paula Robinson, and Aimee Tyson.

David B. Schneider
Peter Benton

STAFF • HISTORIC PRESERVATION TRUST OF LANCASTER COUNTY

David B. Schneider Nancy Haubert Margaret L. Humphries

STAFF • JOHN MILNER ASSOCIATES, INC.

Peter C. Benton Peter Stuart Richardson Kathryn L. Bowers

STAFF • CITY OF LANCASTER

Paula Robinson Eric Hinderliter Aimee Tyson

To the many volunteers listed below who made their time available to this project, we appreciate your assistance.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mike Abel Eugene Aleci Peter Benton Alfredo R. Bustaque
Patricia Carlson Eric Hinderliter LeRoy Hopkins Paula Robinson
David Schneider David Schuyler

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TRUST OF LANCASTER COUNTY
EXECUTIVE AND PRESERVATION PLANNING COMMITTEES

John R. Ahlfeld Robert N. Case William W. Durland Christian Earl Eaby
Jim Eby Bruce Evans Donald E. LeFever Jeffrey N. LeFever
Charles K. Patterson Alan Musselman Bruce Tahsler

COMMUNITY ADVISORS

Ivan Acosta, Rev. Louis Butcher, Darlene Byrd, Carol Cooper, Dr. Irving Cotto, Joan Fleckenstein Deen, Eugene Duncan Jr., Jim Eby, Celeste Everhart, Ismael Figueroa, Ronald E. Ford, Marjorie Gerhardt, Carlos Graupera, Clyde Groff, Carol Hickey, Jane Higinbotham, Elaine Ewing Holden, Dale Kaufman, Gerald Lestz, Mark LoMonaco, Betty Hurdle, Jim Hyson, Tom Hyson, Harold Jordan, David Knapp, Dr. Iris MacRae, Edwin Miller, Nancy Neff, Sam Neff, Heidi Pawlowski, Nelson Polite, Ted Robinson, Alex Schneebacher, James Shultz, John J. Snyder, Jr., Rev. Harvey Sparkman, David B. Stull, Jack Tracy, Gail Trendler, Daniel Witmer, Bob Wolfe, Jr.

PRESERVING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

What is Community Character?

The character of a community, its distinctive identity, is defined by its physical, cultural, and social qualities. The City of Lancaster's community character has been shaped by more than 250 years of history, our people, our cultural and social diversity, and the physical environment we created in which to live and work.

Our generation is fortunate that so much of the city's rich history is still reflected today in a surprisingly intact collection of old and historic neighborhoods and buildings. As other cities and suburban areas increasingly lose this vital link with the social and cultural forces that shaped them, Lancaster's traditional community character is increasingly becoming an asset that can and should be used as a tool to promote economic and social revitalization.

Unlike a museum where history is frozen in time, Lancaster's history is a living presence within a dynamic city. Central Market and the Watt and Shand Building (now The Bon Ton),¹ for instance, are recognized historic landmarks - but their significance is also largely defined by their very vital present day market and retail activities. Many older buildings have been successfully recycled to meet new uses for this and future generations. Similarly, the character of our older neighborhoods provide a framework for daily activity.

Why is it Important?

The character of a community plays an important role in the lives of the people who live there. Among the positive qualities mentioned most often during 68 neighborhood meetings conducted by the City's Department of Housing and Community Development recently were Lancaster's architectural and historic quality, the strong sense of community and neighborhood, its street trees, Central Market, and the city's multicultural nature - all of which are elements of its community character.

The Report

This report looks at the diverse character of the City of Lancaster, identifies some of its positive and negative aspects, and looks at ways we, as a community, can begin to make improvements. Much of the report is centered on the physical character of the city, including our old and historic buildings and neighborhoods, because this is the most outwardly visible sign of conditions in the city. However, the plan is based on the idea that the physical character of the city has been and will continue to be shaped by its people.

This Report is a Beginning

This report is intended to start an ongoing dialog to establish community character as an issue for public consideration. During its preparation we talked with people representing a wide spectrum of the community. It is our goal that these discussions will continue and be expanded. Through this process, we hope to help the community more clearly understand its character and to expand cooperation among the many community groups and individuals working to make the city a better place. We encourage people to use the report as a basis for discussion.

¹Throughout this report, buildings will be referred to by their historic names. Current names will be indicated, as in this case, for prominent buildings or multiple names are commonly used.

SECTION 1: COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Lancaster City, in its entirety, is a historic city - not a museum frozen in time, but a dynamic community shaped and strengthened by a rich collective history.

During more than 250 years of history, our people, our cultural and social diversity, and the physical environment we created in which to live and work, have largely defined the character and significance of our community. Our generation is fortunate that so much of the rich diversity of the city's history is reflected today in a surprisingly intact collection of old and historic buildings and neighborhoods. As other cities and suburban areas increasingly lose this vital link with the social and cultural forces that shaped them, Lancaster's traditional community character is increasingly becoming an asset that can and should be used as a tool to promote economic and social vitality.

Lancaster's Historical Development

CREATED AS A COLONIAL CITY

The town of Lancaster was founded in the early 1730s and developed into a regional center serving the surrounding agricultural community. Located at the intersection of major roadways, Lancaster was an important settlement on the primary route of westward expansion through Pennsylvania. By the mid-1700s, Lancaster was one of the largest inland towns in America.

TRANSFORMED INTO A LATE 19TH-CENTURY INDUSTRIAL CITY

The city's physical growth in its first one hundred and thirty years was relatively modest. In the sixty years following 1880, the City of Lancaster more than tripled in size. This growth was largely a result of the city's industrial and manufacturing expansion during that period. The city which we appreciate today, and the distinctive character that the city has become known for, should be recognized and respected as a product of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century industrial America.

ITS HISTORY IS REFLECTED IN ITS BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Lancaster's historical significance is not limited to individual landmarks, but is inherent in buildings throughout the city. Buildings like Central Market, the Fulton Opera House, and the Sehner-Ellicott-von Hess House reflect the city's finest architecture and individual events of great historical significance. Yet the city's rowhouses, simple commercial buildings, warehouses, and other structures reflect the broad history of our people, their diversity, and their achievements.

LANCASTER IS A SMALL CITY

Lancaster's layout is strongly influenced by the pattern of the city's major eighteenth-century roads as well as by the contrasting grids of its nineteenth-century subdivision.

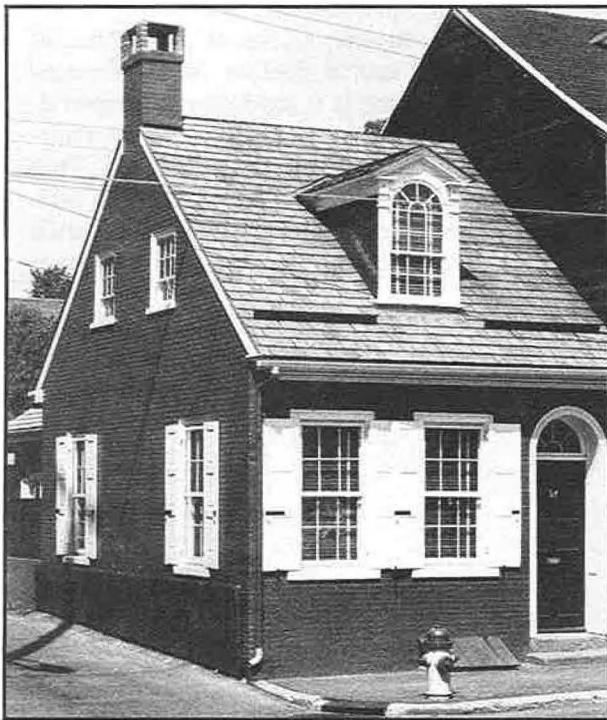
The city's central business district includes an interesting mixture of buildings from all periods of Lancaster's history. Many important landmarks, including residential, commercial, cultural, religious, and governmental structures, are located in the central business district.

Approximately sixty percent of Lancaster's land area is occupied by residential neighborhoods. The development patterns and building types which make up these neighborhoods evolved gradually over time. This evolution can be clearly traced in the character of the neighborhoods begin-

ning near the city center and moving outward toward the city's perimeter. While the evolution reflects a consistent theme in the development of porches, gardens, yards, and architectural features, there is also a great deal of variety in Lancaster's residential neighborhoods. The unique character of each neighborhood contributes to the overall character and significance of the city.

The evolution of housing during Lancaster's peak period of growth resulted in a rich and varied character in the city's residential neighborhoods. Combined with other factors, such as geographic, topographic, ethnic, and income level variations, a series of distinctive residential areas developed across the city.

The character of each of the distinctive areas of the city contributes to the overall character and significance of the city as a whole. In this sense, the entire City of Lancaster should be considered historically significant.



One Story Colonial Dwelling

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

Downtown Lancaster

A CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT THAT APPRECIATES ITS HISTORIC LANDMARKS

Many of the city's historic landmarks are located in the center of Lancaster, including commercial, cultural, religious, and governmental buildings. These landmarks are well cared for and are recognized as a source of community pride.

YET HAS NOT FULLY APPRECIATED ITS MORE ORDINARY OLD BUILDINGS

The more ordinary downtown commercial buildings, which are important to the city's heritage and character but which are not considered landmarks, have received less attention, appreciation, and commitment from the community.

Urban renewal in the late 1960s resulted in a tremendous loss of Lancaster's historic building stock in both the central business district and the city's southeast quadrant. Lancaster was not the only city to experience urban renewal in this form; the practice was prevalent throughout America's cities during that period and was based upon the premise that urban blight could be bulldozed away and a bold, fresh start could be made. It assumed that blighted areas were without value because they were in poor condition. It was an example of the truism that what is familiar is often not appreciated. Since the 1960s, the concepts upon which urban renewal is based have dramatically changed and are directed toward renovation, adaptive reuse, and a respect for the depth of character that our cities have developed over time.

However, the misconception that what is in poor condition is without value and the problem that what is familiar is not appreciated continue to plague attitudes in most American communities, including Lancaster.

A DOWNTOWN AT A CRITICAL CROSSROAD

Despite the appearance of health and vitality in central Lancaster, problems exist which the community is attempting to address. These problems include the difficulty of maintaining downtown Lancaster as a commercial center in the face of competition from suburban development, attracting new business to fill underuti-



Central Market

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

lized buildings, and successfully promoting tourism within the city. The primary method by which the community is attempting to solve these problems is through the creation of a Downtown Investment District (D.I.D.). The D.I.D. involves the establishment of an authority to develop and manage a plan for downtown economic growth.

The Final Report of the Downtown Task Force, which recommended creation of the D.I.D., clearly recognized the importance of appearance in attracting workers, shoppers, and visitors to the downtown area. The actual D.I.D. Plan, however, does not make a clear statement as to the importance of Lancaster's historic character in contributing to the unique appeal of the downtown area.

SHOULD EMBRACE COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The reluctance to establish a coordinated design policy in downtown Lancaster and to clearly embrace the concept that the city's historic buildings are an essential element of its appealing character is not new. This reluctance relates to a general conservatism, the perception that design controls are an unnecessary complication, and that they interfere with individual rights. Yet without a coordinated vision of what the central business district should look like, the ability to promote a consistent image will be difficult. Simply leaving design issues up to chance may ultimately prove unfortunate.

Neighborhoods

OUR NEIGHBORHOODS ARE IN GOOD CONDITION

The buildings throughout Lancaster's varied and distinctive residential neighborhoods are generally in very good physical condition. Unlike many cities, Lancaster has no large areas of vacant or blighted housing.

CERTAIN NEIGHBORHOODS ARE IN DECLINE

The most serious underlying problems in Lancaster's residential areas are the decrease in home ownership, a lack of commitment by certain landlords, and the increased flight of middle income families to the suburbs. All of these problems lead to a decline in neighborhood quality and character.

THIS DECLINE IS REFLECTED IN PHYSICAL CONDITION

Though the character of Lancaster's residential neighborhoods varies from area to area, the physical problems are similar. They include inappropriate renovations, a lack of proper building maintenance, and a decline in streetscape improvements. There is a tendency to irreversibly alter features that are important to the character of the building and the neighborhood. This can be seen in the removal of original porch railings and supports and their replacement with treated wood or other materials. It is also seen



Rowhouses Dating from the Mid-1800s

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

in the use of aluminum and vinyl siding to cover original detailing and, in some cases, entire brick facades. And, it can be seen in a misguided historicism in a desire to give residences the image of an eighteenth-century townhouse.

PHYSICAL PROBLEMS ARE MADE WORSE BY LOW APPRECIATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

These problems stem in part from a lack of appreciation for the character of the neighborhoods' existing buildings. This leads to a casual attitude about buildings, the streetscape, and the neighborhoods as a whole. *Lancaster's residential buildings and neighborhoods are largely taken for granted. They are too familiar and are considered "old."* There is a lack of understanding about the background, history, and significance of the buildings and the neighborhoods. A result is a lack of neighborhood structure and a lack of commitment to the common goal of maintaining community character.

The quality of the streetscape is important to neighborhoods character. Among other serious physical problems related to streetscapes are the paving of small yard or garden areas along sidewalks, the lack of street trees in many locations, trash, and the increasing incidence of graffiti.

THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS ARE A SUCCESS STORY

Within the historic districts, buildings are generally appreciated for their character and are well maintained. *The overall character of the neighborhoods benefits from the commitment of individual property owners to the common aesthetic theme. The high degree of owner participation, the strong sense of community, the stable property values, and the spillover of the historic district aesthetic into adjacent residential areas is evidence that the program is successful.*

OTHER NEIGHBORHOOD SUCCESSES

The city has implemented several important programs related to residential neighborhoods. These include a street tree planting program that has targeted some residential areas, most

importantly the southeast quadrant, and the vacant properties reinvestment program which successfully addresses the problem of individual vacant and blighted properties. Comprehensive studies of housing issues in Lancaster have been undertaken recently and are ongoing in conjunction with the county and should lead to important strategies for dealing with some of the city's most serious problems. Declining home ownership has been clearly identified as one of the major problems, and programs to address it are being formulated. Finally, the city is undertaking a revision of its comprehensive plan. It is hoped that this process will lead to both a reawakening of the appreciation of the community character of Lancaster's residential neighborhoods and to the implementation of concrete programs for revitalization.

THERE IS A NEED FOR A CITY-WIDE POLICY ON NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES

Contributing to the problems with community character in Lancaster has been the lack of a comprehensive city-wide policy related to neighborhood issues. There are no programs for residential areas comparable to the Downtown Investment District concept, nor have there been consensus-building planning efforts like the Downtown Task Force.



Scene on Chestnut Street

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

Lancaster's Cultural Diversity

Lancaster County is well known for strong cultural diversity, particularly its historic mixture of German, English, and Scotch-Irish residents. In addition to the predominant German, English and Scotch-Irish influences, Lancaster also historically had a small African-American population.

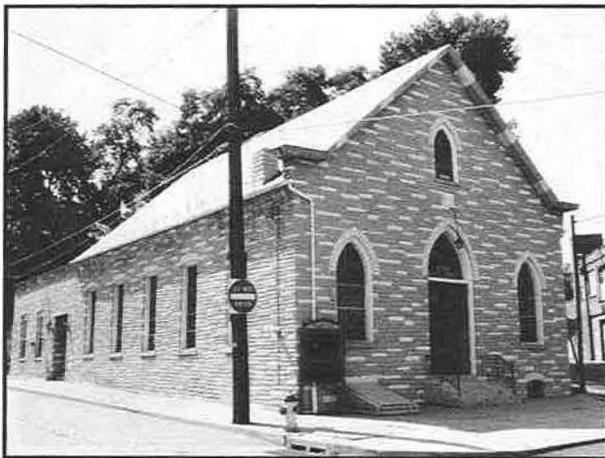
After the 1840s, large numbers of German and Irish immigrants moved to Lancaster to work in the city's new mills. Catholic Germans tended to live in Cabbage Hill, the vicinity of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in the southwest quadrant of the city. Protestant Germans tended to live in the southeast, where African-Americans also resided. Irish immigrants are noted to have lived along East King Street, between Shippen Street and the prison.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, European immigration increased in response to the city's industrial expansion. Russian Jews, Italians, Greeks, Germans, Irish, and others moved to Lancaster.

THAT DIVERSITY CONTINUES TODAY

Lancaster's African-American population increased dramatically in the years after World War II and continued to grow until the 1960s.

The newest and fastest-growing population group in the city today is Latino. Latinos began moving to the city in the 1960s and today comprise more than twenty percent of the city's pop-



Bethel A.M.E. Church

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

ulation. The Latino population is not homogeneous, being comprised of individuals of as many as twenty-two nationalities. The Latino community now dominates the southeast area of the city and comprises a significant proportion of the population in the east, north-central, central, and southwest areas.

Lancaster also has an Asian community that comprises approximately 2% of the city's population. Residents of Asian descent are not concentrated in any particular area of Lancaster, but tend to be a larger proportion of the city's population in the east and northeast.

MINORITIES LOCATED THROUGHOUT THE CITY

Minorities comprised 35% of Lancaster's population in 1990 according to census figures. 73% of individuals of minority heritage in Lancaster live in the southeast quadrant of the city. The majority of properties in the southeast are not owner-occupied. While there are few abandoned or blighted buildings, there is a lack of interest evident in the condition of the buildings in many areas. This is particularly evident in instances where generations of renters have never known ownership of a home. There is a similar lack of appreciation for, or understanding of, the original character of the buildings by many residents. But there are also numerous residences where improvements, whether in character or out of character with the buildings, have been undertaken and where pride of ownership is clearly evident.

There are two primary differences between the southeast quadrant and other residential areas of the city. One difference is the generally lower income level and the resulting problems associated with it. These problems include a lower proportion of home owners and difficulties in obtaining home improvement and mortgage loans.

The second difference is the profound impact urban renewal had on the physical and social fabric of the community. Urban renewal in the southeast in the late 1960s was a disaster for the African-American community. In 1967, a swath of city blocks was condemned and demolished through the heart of the southeast. It displaced a stable community which had sound building stock and healthy African-American and Jewish businesses. Traditional community ties and structures were fragmented.

SECTION 2: ENHANCING COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Community Character: One Piece of the Puzzle

If the Community Character of the City of Lancaster is to improve and be strengthened in coming decades, it must become an integral component of several larger social and economic processes. Chief among these are efforts to promote economic development and to provide decent, safe, affordable housing for all segments of the community, including both home owners and renters. In certain instances, primarily in neighborhoods where the majority of people are at the lowest end of the economic spectrum, community character has been subordinated to addressing more basic social needs such as safety, the reduction of crime, etc. Yet even in these areas, the improvement of buildings and streetscapes may serve a role in addressing larger issues.

Downtown

The downtown area is the core of the city's economy. The continued vitality and viability of the downtown is in the interest of every resident of the city. Fortunately, Lancaster's business district has been spared much of the decline other neighboring cities have experienced. With proper planning, and initiatives such as the Downtown Investment District (D.I.D.), the lack of growth that has been evident in recent months should prove readily reversible. For the downtown business community, fine tuning is needed, not massive repairs.

The preservation and enhancement of community character should play a important role in planning and revitalization efforts in downtown Lancaster. *The rich diversity of our history is still very evident in our city through a surprisingly intact collection of old and historic buildings and neighborhoods. As other cities and suburban areas increasingly lose this vital link with the social and cultural forces that shaped them, Lancaster's traditional community character is increasingly becoming an asset that can and should be used to promote economic vitality.*

Lancaster is a dynamic city that is shaped and strengthened by its historic character. It is not a Williamsburg - a museum frozen in time. In a very real sense, the city has an opportunity to capture the very essence of historic preservation: to save the best attributes of the past and make them a living part of our future.

Because of this rich historic character, Lancaster is becoming increasingly unique when compared to other cities. The sameness one experiences elsewhere is certainly not in evidence here. This quality can also be a primary component of other initiatives, such as the development of the tourist industry within the city.

Downtown Investment District

The creation of a Downtown Investment District (DID) for Lancaster's central business district



Downtown, Facing Central Market

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

should provide a strong vehicle for maintaining and strengthening the city center. The goals of the D.I.D. should be embraced and supported by all segments of the community. The D.I.D. and the business leaders who are involved in the D.I.D. should openly recognize the importance of Lancaster's historic character to the appeal of the downtown area.

The basic tools of historic preservation--National Register nomination, historic investment tax credits, a facade easement program, and a coordinated urban design policy--should be fully incorporated into all downtown revitalization efforts. In addition, the creation of a public-private development organization, that could achieve tangible building and business improvements within the downtown, would significantly enhance the work of the D.I.D. by insuring that physical signs of progress are present at the end of its present three-year period.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER IS AN ASSET FOR DOWNTOWN

A variety of community character based tools may prove useful in promoting downtown revitalization. Among these are initiatives like the National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Development and Heritage Tourism programs which seek to utilize heritage resources as a tool to promote economic development and tourism. The use of federal tax incentives for income-producing properties can be increased by educating development professionals about their benefits and requirements. Programs like the City of York's facade rehabilitation and easement program should be examined closely to see if they would be useful in Lancaster. In addition, the City of Lancaster should examine ways that it can provide incentives, including tax abatements, for local businesses and developers to respect and strengthen community character.

DOWNTOWN DESIGN POLICY

Finally, a comprehensive design policy could contribute to a coordinated approach to the built environment of the central business district. The policy should strongly discourage demolition of any additional existing buildings in the downtown area and should promote restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse. Detailed design guidelines should be prepared for the cen-

tral business district to aid building owners in making appropriate design and maintenance decisions and in completing new construction projects. Design and maintenance assistance programs could also be created. A design review process should be initiated. Compliance with recommendations made during the review process could be mandatory or could be voluntary and tied to desirable incentives. A comprehensive design policy could be important to the long-term goals of economic development in the downtown by clearly marketing Lancaster's unique historic character.

Neighborhoods

There has been little planning activity directed toward the neighborhoods. The city's neighborhoods are as important to the long term vitality of the city as is its downtown. Yet there has been inadequate attention paid to their unique issues and their relationship to the central business district.

Downtown is directly dependant on the vitality and viability of the city's neighborhoods. If the surrounding residential areas decline, the impact on the central business district may be devastating. On the other hand, strong neighborhoods can support and stabilize a central business district. Planning activities designed to promote the downtown have not adequately recognized this relationship.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING NEIGHBORHOODS

The physical character of a neighborhood can have a direct effect on the people who live and work there. As maintenance declines, familiar qualities are lost, as character is stripped from buildings and streetscapes deteriorate, the incentive for residents to show pride in their properties erodes.

Many of our neighborhoods are at a critical crossroads. They remain in good condition, yet signs of deterioration are present. Luckily, most are in good condition and require only catching up on deferred maintenance. By respecting the character of what remains, rather than making costly changes, our neighborhoods can be improved.



Scene in Cabbage Hill

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

HISTORIC CHARACTER AS AN ASSET

The historic aspect of many of our neighborhoods can be an asset. The sturdy quality of most old houses can rarely be duplicated given the cost of new construction. Their rich architectural detail and spacious rooms are a refreshing change from the sameness of the suburbs and bland urban developments. Often, with simple maintenance, the buildings can serve for many years to come at a fraction of the cost of substantially changing or replacing them.

Finally, there needs to be some redirection of government and private assistance programs. Rather than concentrating solely on completely renovating individual buildings, some funding from these sources should be channelled to providing streetscape improvements, small grants or home improvement loans to home owners and investors to repair (rather than replace) existing porches and to paint siding and trim (rather than covering them), and other efforts that would leverage private investment. Such activities can be initiated and should receive the full cooperation of active neighborhood groups.

HOUSING

There are a variety of housing issues that are common throughout the City of Lancaster. Most sections of the city appear to be experiencing a decline in home ownership and a rise in the number of rental properties. Yet some neighborhoods are experiencing a level of renaissance, where property owners are repairing and improving buildings and property values are rising. These areas tend to have a high percentage

of owner-occupied housing with higher quality rental properties interspersed among them. Others neighborhoods are relatively stable, with a mix of rental and owner occupied housing.

Decent, safe, affordable housing is a basic human need. Yet there are areas in Lancaster City, primarily in the southeast and to some extent in other areas, where this need is often not being adequately met. The condition of buildings is deteriorating and overcrowding and unsafe conditions are realities. In these areas, there tends to be a much higher percentage of rental property, some of which is in poor condition.

In the low income and minority communities, the lack of home ownership is an acute problem. Special programs will be necessary to reverse the trend of generations of renters. Such programs should include educational programs, informational counseling, low interest mortgages, revolving loans, technical support, and assistance in meeting down payment and closing costs.

Local banks must do more to find creative new ways to increase the flow of capital to people living in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. While many of these institutions are meeting their legal requirements to do so, their collective efforts have not adequately addressed the financial need. Lancaster's banks have shown great commitment to the city and have the talent and resources needed to strengthen their leadership role in this area.

Likewise, the scale of existing public and private housing programs must be dramatically increased in order to be effective. A public/private partnership as recommended in the report of the Enterprise Foundation could be an important vehicle for home ownership assistance programs for low income and minority residents. Families and individuals who participate in such programs should be required to comply with basic maintenance guidelines that preserve the existing building fabric of the residences they purchase.

Community-based efforts to address these issues already underway by the Spanish-American Civic Association (SACA) and Habitat for Humanity should receive much greater community support. Likewise, sources of additional funding for the City of Lancaster's Housing Rehabilitation Program should be identified.

THE NEED TO INCREASE HOME OWNERSHIP

Considerable attention is being focussed currently on the need to increase home ownership in the City of Lancaster. It should be stressed that this does not reflect a desire to substantially remove rental housing opportunities. There is a definite need and market for both rental and owner-occupied housing.

The basic concern being addressed is the increasing percentage of city properties that are rental as opposed to owner occupied. Home ownership tends to provide people with a much more direct stake in their neighborhoods than is possible through rental occupancy primarily because of the financial investment involved and increased stability (since real property tends to not be a particularly "liquid" investment).

Therefore, if the city is to improve the overall stability and commitment to its neighborhoods, the proportion of home ownership to rental property must be increased.

This will require a variety of programs that will promote home ownership throughout the city. In economically disadvantaged neighborhoods,



House Converted into Rental Units

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

such as the southeast, this will also require initiatives to improve accessibility to housing and economic development to raise economic standards to a point where widespread home ownership is possible. The city needs to develop an aggressive program in partnership with local banks, businesses, and community organizations to foster and assist home ownership in Lancaster.

THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE CONDITION OF RENTAL PROPERTIES

Certainly there will always be a need for rental housing in Lancaster. Apartments often serve as a first step toward eventual home ownership for younger families, as an important housing alternative for singles, as an affordable option for those with lower incomes or on fixed incomes, as relatively temporary housing, and to meet the needs of individuals in a variety of other situations.

The challenge in Lancaster is to minimize the number of rental properties that do not meet certain minimum safety and health standards, or that for whatever reason have begun to depreciate the value of surrounding properties. This is a complex challenge that requires initiatives like the Lancaster Vacant Property Reinvestment Board but that also must keep in mind the reality that many rental properties are the only housing that is affordable to segments of our community.

THE NEED TO PROVIDE INCENTIVES TO INVESTORS

The community needs to foster conditions that will assist the owners of rental properties in maintaining and enhancing their investments. This will require the coordinated effort of local banks, businesses, and community organizations.

Improving the maintenance and preserving the character of older buildings that are rented involve many of the same suggestions as those made for owner occupied houses. Investors are keenly aware of the cost of repairs and changing property values. For the most part, when neighborhood improvement programs are made available to investors, and communication is improved between home owners and owners of rental properties, investors improve their properties. Like home owners, investors find little incentive to improve properties where conditions in the neighborhood are declining.

The city and all groups working to improve community character need to establish an ongoing dialog with rental property owners through such organizations as the Real Estate Investors of Lancaster. Through such communication, common concerns can be more effectively met and conflicts resolved.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND HOUSING

Community character, and historic preservation, can play a role in the improvement of both owner-occupied and rental housing opportunities. Taking steps to improve streetscapes and neighborhoods can stimulate investment interest in both types of housing. In addition, utilizing the historic character of the housing can serve as a selling point in developing financing strategies for rehabilitating deteriorated housing. In terms of income-producing properties located within National Register historic districts (not necessarily local historic districts), substantial tax incentives are available for rehabilitation. For low income housing programs, linkage to historic preservation and community character may lead to additional interest in these programs from a wider segment of the overall community.

Community character issues should become part of planning by all groups working to improve the availability and quality of housing in the city. Likewise, organizations promoting community character, among them the City, the Historic Preservation Trust, and neighborhood organizations, should strive to provide resources to these efforts to help leverage their efforts. The dialog that has begun between these diverse groups must be continued and concrete cooperative actions taken.

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION

Neighborhoods need to be organized to provide a vehicle for grassroots action. Local neighborhood organizations should be the entities to plan, prioritize, and implement their own revitalization programs with active guidance and assistance from the city. Requiring responsibility for action at the neighborhood level will ensure citizen commitment and involvement and will allow for maximum flexibility. It will also be a source of community pride. The longer a neighborhood organization is active, the more experienced it should become. The types of programs the organizations undertake could vary depending upon need, interest, and available resources. The degree of participation and accomplishment will vary from neighborhood to neighborhood. The success of some neighborhoods will spur other neighborhoods to action.

The city should take the leadership and responsibility in actively promoting, recruiting, organizing, coordinating, educating, and assisting lo-

cal neighborhood and community groups. Guidelines and requirements should be established as a threshold for participation in city-sponsored programs to assure responsibility and accountability. The city should provide the tools by which neighborhood problems can be addressed and community character built.

In low income and minority areas, existing institutions such as churches and nonprofit organizations could provide the leadership necessary to assist the city in establishing local neighborhood organizations. Because the problems in low income and minority areas are deeper and more serious than in other areas, special efforts and attention will be necessary.

Cultural Diversity

One of the greatest strengths of all cities, and particularly Lancaster, is their diversity. People from all walks of life, all economic levels, all degrees of education, and many cultural influences live together in close proximity. Unlike many cities that have experienced a decline in this vital diversity due to one or more groups moving out, Lancaster still retains this important character-defining aspect.

A Need to Reduce Barriers to Minorities

Outward expressions of community acceptance of diverse cultures and races seem relatively commonplace. Yet, racial prejudice and discrimination are a reality in American cities, and Lancaster is no different.

Many people from the city's minority groups continue to experience barriers preventing them



Scene on S. Ann Street

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

from attaining jobs for which they are qualified, access to private and public services to which they are entitled, and a lack of full acceptance as equal citizens. These problems are often heightened by cultural or language differences.

Until these barriers are removed, the community's ability to address housing and economic issues relating to minorities will be limited. In a very real sense, so will be our ability to improve community character.

Community Character as a Tool

Certainly, community character cannot solve the underlying social problems that undermine cultural diversity within our community. Yet recognizing, documenting, and promoting cultural diversity as an important asset for Lancaster and one of the things that defines the city's character, can foster understanding among cultural groups.

This is primarily an educational function: to investigate and promote the diversity of cultural influences on the city's character throughout history. But it goes further in recognizing that city programs that deal with community character, specifically local planning and zoning efforts, historic districts, and efforts by community based organizations, should be inclusive of all cultural groups. This will require that these processes make necessary adjustments to remove institutional barriers.

Economic Development

Economic Development and Community Character can and should work together to improve the quality of life for all residents in the City of Lancaster. A vibrant local economy will strengthen the community's character, both physically and socially; community character is an important tool that can be used to improve economic vitality.

Several ongoing and emerging projects will assist with economic development. Among them are a proposed small business incubator, the PRIDE financing program, and other initiatives of the Southeast Community and Industrial Revitalization Program. To these are added a project by Franklin and Marshall College and initiatives of the proposed City's Economic Development Council. These programs need the full and committed support of the entire community, the City government, and local business leaders.

The City's Economic Development department has been instrumental in assisting several private development projects by coordinating access to federal and state assistance. This type of public/private partnership should be continued.

Community character should be an active component within these programs. Simply developing new businesses will not be sufficient if they are not carefully knitted into the physical and social fabric of their surroundings. Likewise, improved community character within the neighborhoods will promote investment by new businesses and the entities that finance them.

Minorities

There needs to be meaningful involvement of minority communities within planning for economic revitalization. There is a growing realization that real economic improvement cannot take place if the business community does not respond to the needs of more than a third of the city's population and the segment of the city's population that is growing at the fastest rate.

Jobs are the basic building blocks in all efforts to improve economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. The simple reality is that without access to good jobs, no amount of public or private assistance will solve the extensive problems facing economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in Lancaster. Home ownership programs and improvements in the quality of rental housing can only be successful if the pool of people that can afford to utilize them is large enough.

Raising the economic levels of such neighborhoods is the foundation for improving community character and for reducing social friction within our community.

Such economic development requires a fundamental improvement in the educational opportunities available to people in these communities and in their ability to take proper advantage of those opportunities. The School District of Lancaster and other institutions have made important steps in this direction. Yet without the increased support of the entire community, these efforts will prove inadequate.

Further, meaningful economic development within these neighborhoods requires that decent jobs are available for those already qualified to receive them. Unfortunately, this is not yet a reality in Lancaster, which in many respects retains a very segregated economy.

Historic Preservation as a Tool for Preserving Community Character

The focus of historic preservation over the years has expanded to stress the importance of context, broad patterns of development, and the cultural landscape, not just of landmarks. Popular perception of this change, particularly in Lancaster, has yet to catch up. Preservation includes planning for change and development in ways that are sympathetic to the existing character of the environment.

More Than Just Landmarks

Historic Preservation includes a variety of activities that have as a basic intent ensuring that important traditional qualities of a community are passed along to the future generations. While most often associated with historic buildings and sites, the term also includes the preservation of neighborhoods and cultural traditions.

Historic properties provide us with a sense of time and place and give us a sense of continuity. They are physical reminders of the accomplishments of our predecessors and a stabilizing influence for the community. As tangible objects of our past, they fulfill a valuable educational function. Historic properties are key elements of our attractive Lancaster environment. Perhaps more important, historic preservation has real economic value. Preservation (as opposed to meticulous *restoration*) tends to be very cost-effective and promotes energy conservation. Increasingly, tourism is being looked to as a growth industry for the City of Lancaster, and our rich architectural history is an important tourism asset.

It is a common misperception that the primary objective of historic preservation is to accurately restore every historically significant site to its original appearance. While this certainly is a laudable practice in certain situations, far more often than not *historic preservation seeks to maintain and enhance existing historic buildings through the most minimal means possible*. Most often, the less work that is required to keep a building in useful condition, the better. Pure restoration can be very expensive and can even be undesirable where later alterations, which may be significant in their own right, are removed in order to approximate some earlier appearance. Preservation and adaptive use are most often very cost effective because they seek to take best advantage of what is available, to repair rather than to replace, and to not alter things that are working well.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The goal of building and reinforcing community character is not necessarily identical to that of historic preservation. However, the philosophies underlying them are similar and compatible. The methods and tools of historic preservation can contribute significantly to the recognition and strengthening of community character. Both philosophies are based upon an understanding, respect, and sympathetic response to the physical manifestations of our heritage.

When we write about historic preservation's role in enhancing community character, we are primarily encouraging the appropriate maintenance of the things we already have.

For example, most rowhouses in Lancaster are constructed of brick and have wood window frames, wood trim, and wood porches. All of these elements are important to the appearance and character of the rowhouse. They need to be properly maintained. When a porch's posts and railing become worn and have flaking paint, it is not



Historic Preservation is More Than Buildings

Activity defines much of the character of Central Market

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

necessary to remove and replace them. It is only necessary to clean and paint them and to properly maintain them. A porch without its original posts and railings has lost an important, contributing element of its character.

Appropriate maintenance of the existing building fabric of which the neighborhood is constructed is the most common form of historic preservation. It is also the simplest and most important principal in creating and reinforcing community character.

THE DESIGNATION OF HISTORIC SITES

There are three principal methods available for designating historic sites in the City of Lancaster: the National Register of Historic Places, the Lancaster County Historic Sites Register, and local historic districts. All of these designa-

tions utilize the following general criteria for evaluation:

Buildings, structures, sites, districts, and objects must possess significance in history, architecture, and culture. Properties are evaluated based on their association with: A) significant historical events; B) significant historical persons; C) architecture; or, in the case of archaeological sites, D) prehistory.

Integrity: Sites must also retain integrity; the authenticity of a property's identity and significance evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property's historic period.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places is a federal listing administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior. By itself, designation on the Register does not restrict a property owner in any way and provides no protection from demolition or alteration, other than a formal review process for all federally, and some state, funded or licensed projects.

Tax Incentives - National Register listing carries with it two very significant financial incentives. The most commonly used incentive, available only for income-producing properties (offices, apartments, etc.), is the 20% investment tax credit for qualified rehabilitations. A second incentive, available to all types of property owners, involves conservation easements, where permanent restrictions on the demolition or major alteration of buildings are donated to a qualified non-profit organization. The federal government recognizes the value of this donation as a charitable contribution for tax purposes. These financial incentives can be important components of an overall economic investment strategy in the central business district or to provide housing.

Recognition - National Register designation will help increase public perception and awareness of the historic character and significance of Lancaster. This public perception and awareness will support the goal of increasing tourism and commercial enterprises in downtown Lancaster.

No Design Review Control - Past attempts to nominate Lancaster's central business district to the National Register were unsuccessful in part because the business community was not made fully aware of the benefits of designation. A significant problem was the confusion in pub-

WHO'S WHO IN HISTORIC PRESERVATION

There are three principal organizations having an interest in historic preservation in Lancaster. Each is independent of the other.

Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County

The Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County is a county-wide non-profit organization promoting the preservation of Lancaster's historic architecture. Funding for the operation of the Trust comes primarily from donations and memberships from individuals, families and businesses and through fundraising events. While the group works closely with local governments, it is a private organization. The Trust is primarily a resource for the community and provides a variety of programs, including preservation services and technical advice.

HARB (Historic District Review Board)

The HARB, or Historical Architectural Board of Review, is a board of seven volunteers appointed by City Council to review applications for changes to buildings *within the city's historic district*. The Board meets monthly and its meetings are open to the public.

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation (BHP), is Pennsylvania's official State Historic Preservation Office, responsible for a variety of environmental review processes required for projects involving federal, and certain state, funding or licensing affecting historic properties.

lic understanding between the creation of a National Register District and the creation of a local historic district. National Register status provides financial opportunities but places *no* restrictions upon individual rights. National Register Districts do not use Historic Architectural Review Boards (HARBS), as local historic districts do, and design standards are only applied in National Register Districts when property owners *themselves elect* to utilize the benefits of available economic incentives.



Former Stevens School

Adaptively reused as apartments.

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

We Have the Review - We Are Not Taking Advantage of the Positives - The only restrictions involving the National Register are state and federal laws that require funding and licensing agencies to consider the impacts of their programs on historic buildings. This applies to all buildings listed, *or eligible to be listed*, on the National Register. Since the most of the city of Lancaster is *eligible* for the National Register as a district, these restrictions currently apply to all federally, and many state, funded or licensed undertakings, such as community development funds, bank regulation, D.E.R. permitting, etc. The creation of additional National Register district would merely add benefits to local property owners in terms of availability for economic incentives and improved marketability.

LANCASTER COUNTY HISTORIC SITES REGISTER

The Lancaster County Historic Sites Register is a program administered by the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County. While based largely on the National Register of Historic Places, the Lancaster County Historic Sites Register has been adapted to provide increased recognition for sites of predominantly local significance.

In addition, the local register process minimizes the complexity, cost, and time involved in the National Register nomination process.

LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

In the City of Lancaster, there is a local ordinance that also allows for designation of historic districts by the city. ***It is important to note that the National Register, the Lancaster County register, and local districts are all different programs.***

Design review, through a mandatory process involving an architectural review board (the HARB), occurs in Lancaster *only* in these city designated historic districts. Projects must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The HARB reviews proposals, decides on the appropriateness of the work, and forwards its review to City Council. City Council makes the final decision on all applications. The vast majority of applications are favorably reviewed by the HARB, often after minor changes are agreed upon in the plans presented.

The city's local historic districts, which were created by city ordinance in 1967 under the authority of state enabling legislation, have been very successful in terms of promoting the stability of property values and preventing serious damage to community character within their boundaries.

Yet public perception of the historic districts, especially by those who do not live in them, has sometimes been less than favorable. Rather than seeing historic districts as a protection

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

The Standards were developed as a set of general guidelines for use in the rehabilitation of historic resources. The basic purpose of the Standards is to maintain the primary character-defining elements of a property by: recommending that distinctive features be retained and repaired rather than replaced, historic alterations be respected, and, where new additions or other alterations are required, they be made in such a way as to be reversible in the future. The Standards generally do not require the restoration of missing elements; rather, they are designed to allow for changes that are needed to adapt a building to a new function.

from inappropriate alterations to neighborhoods that lower property values in the surrounding areas, the design review within the districts is often perceived as an unnecessary layer of control.

Much of the reason for this stems from a low level of community understanding of why the districts were created, how they operate, and the benefits afforded by them. In addition: the design review criteria used by the HARB is not available in a format that is easily understandable by the community; the application procedure can be confusing to residents; the design review process has not adequately addressed the needs of the city's lower income population; and the process has not developed specific mechanisms to include minority representation and to accommodate cultural diversity and non-English speaking applicants.

The HARB has taken steps, such as publishing a newsletter, in the last two years to improve community awareness. These initiatives should be supplemented and fully supported by City Council. Additional efforts are needed to resolve the other issues described above.

This plan specifically avoids calling for increased or additional locally designated historic districts. Until such time as community misperceptions are resolved, procedural issues are improved, and the special concerns of lower income and minority communities are addressed, such a recommendation would be premature. Further, as other aspects of this report are implemented, as neighborhoods become better defined and residents more active, residents them-



Fulton Opera House

Lancaster has many historic attractions for promoting tourism.

Historic Preservation Trust Photo

selves will increasingly call for some form of design review protection. Only then will expanded districts receive the community support needed to make them successful.

Innovative Planning Techniques

Across Pennsylvania, communities are experimenting with innovative techniques for adapting building codes and planning and zoning ordinances to encourage the preservation of historic aspects of community character. In addition, these efforts are being created to reduce existing regulations that in many cases deter people from reusing older buildings. Among these are overlay zoning districts that provide incentives in the form of alternate density and use requirements, add flexibility to the development process, and encourage respect for existing design. The Historic Preservation Trust and the Lancaster Inter-Municipal Committee completed a report on such techniques in 1991. The Lancaster County Planning Commission will be studying them further through a task force on cultural resources to be convened in the fall of 1992. The Lancaster Department of Housing and Community Development should become familiar with these efforts and work cooperatively with the Historic Preservation Trust and Lancaster County Planning Commission to develop such techniques for the City of Lancaster.

Heritage Development

Heritage Development, or placing a focus on promoting historic preservation as a component of larger programs to increase the economic vitality of a community or region, is increasingly being recognized across the country. Heritage development initiatives around the country should be examined to identify strategies that might prove useful to economic development and neighborhood conservation in Lancaster.

National Trust Heritage Tourism Initiative

The National Trust for Historic Preservation created its Heritage Tourism Initiative to heighten the awareness of the importance of historic and cultural resources to the travel experience by partnering the preservation community with the tourism industry. Lancaster's historic character is its primary asset for developing a meaningful tourism industry. The National Trust program should be examined further to identify ways in which it may be applicable locally.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

Lancaster's community character is an important asset that can be used to achieve a variety of social and economic goals for the city and its people. Yet recognition of the potential benefits of improving and using the city's identity in this way is quite low. The following recommendations are directly related to increasing public awareness of the city's rich history, its cultural diversity, and its physical attributes. They are intended as first steps toward improving the quality of life for all those who live and work in City of Lancaster.

Community Character Education

It is vital that all Lancastrians realize what is truly significant about the character of our city: the diversity of our people, the strengths of our social institutions, and the character of our historic built environment. Awareness of these elements, along with an understanding of how all people within the community relate to these elements, will promote community harmony and will strengthen individual commitment to improving the physical and social condition of Lancaster.

The community needs to continue the process begun by this study to define the strengths and weakness of our community character and the role our people play in defining that character. As people become more aware of the significance and condition of their neighborhoods, they will be more likely to take meaningful action to make improvements. This specifically includes a need to document and promote minority communities within the city with an eye toward improving understanding between them and the community at large.

- 1) **Audio/Visual Presentation** - A presentation to increase community character awareness; Who should lead it: Historic Preservation Trust (HPT); How could it be paid for: Donated services with seed money from City, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), local corporations and foundations (C&F)
- 2) **Rehabilitation/Maintenance Handbook** - A handbook that provides guidelines for rehabilitating existing buildings in the city and addresses strategies for reducing rehabilitation and maintenance costs while preserving community character; Who should lead it: City, HPT; How could it be paid for: City, PHMC, C&F
- 3) **Demonstration Projects** - Aspects of community character preservation should be demonstrated through tangible projects; this can initially be accomplished through ongoing programs underway by such groups as SACA, Habitat for Humanity, the City of Lancaster's Housing Rehabilitation Program, etc. ; Who should lead it: City, HPT; How could it be paid for: through existing programs and sources to be identified
- 4) **Document Minority History** - A program to document the history of Lancaster's primary minority populations, African-Americans and Latinos; examining the historic and potential contributions of these communities to the physical character of the city and promoting the preservation of buildings and neighborhoods associated with these groups; Who should lead it: HPT, Lancaster County Historical Society (LCHS), and minority representatives; How could it be paid for: City, PHMC, C&F
- 5) **Community Character in the Schools** - Educational programs about community character and heritage are in place in many areas of the country and should be examined to identify methods to introduce heritage education into the city's elementary and secondary curriculums; Who should lead it: School District with assistance of HPT and LCHS; How could it be paid for: School District of Lancaster, PHMC, C&F
- 6) **Newspaper Series** - A series of articles describing aspects of Lancaster's history and community character; Who should lead it: to be identified

Neighborhood Focus

Downtown revitalization efforts that have occurred throughout this country over the past thirty-five years have shown us that community vitality is best preserved and strengthened at the neighborhood level. Lancaster's neighborhoods should be the focus of community revitalization activity. The community should develop effective mechanisms to promote and reinforce the special

KEY: **C&F**: local corporations and foundations; **D.I.D.**: Downtown Investment District; **ECPRC**: Exterior Commercial Property Review Committee; **HARB**: Historical Architectural Board of Review; **HPT**: Historic Preservation Trust; **LCHS**: Lancaster County Historical Society; **NTFHP**: National Trust for Historic Preservation; **PHMC**: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; **SACA**: Spanish American Civic Association

qualities and character of our neighborhoods, foster and promote active neighborhood associations, and broaden their focus to include the preservation of neighborhood character.

Strong neighborhoods require the commitment and involvement of the residents who live in them. A strong, vital, and healthy community character can only be created at the grassroots level. Government can provide a framework, but the building must occur from within the community.

- 1) **Neighborhood Task Force** - An effort similar to the Downtown Task Force is needed to continue to define neighborhood issues, to promote the significant role of neighborhoods to the overall vitality of the city, and to begin establishing a more formalized role for neighborhoods within the city planning and political processes. Who should lead it: City; How could it be paid for: City, C&F
- 2) **Neighborhood Study** - A comprehensive study is needed to document the historical development of the City's neighborhoods and to serve as a basis for developing neighborhood awareness. In addition, the study should identify existing groups, assist the Neighborhood Council and other parties in networking among them, suggest possible definition/redefinition of neighborhoods in order to foster groups where none currently exist, and make recommendations to the City on methods to formalize communication from such groups. Who should lead it: City, HPT, LCHS; How could it be paid for: City, PHMC, C&F
- 3) **Incentive Programs** - A series of incentive programs, such as property tax abatements for community character enhancement, formal involvement of neighborhood associations within city government, etc., should be developed. Who should lead it: City, Neighborhood Task Force; How could it be paid for: City

Historic Preservation as a Tool

The role of historic preservation in Lancaster has been limited in recent years and, for many, the term has come to mean design control and costly restoration of landmark buildings. Yet there are many successful examples of the adaptive re-use of old and historic buildings and the strengthening of neighborhoods by focusing on their physical character. They indicate that a broader and more flexible interpretation of historic preservation can be used as an important tool for meeting primary community goals involving economic development, housing, and the preservation of our community's character.

- 1) **Building Survey** - The existing Historic Sites Survey maintained by the Historic Preservation Trust should be updated and expanded. The existing survey documents only a fraction of the total building stock within the city. Who should lead it: City; HPT; How could it be paid for: City, Community Development funding, PHMC
- 2) **Preservation Education Project (PEP II)** - The Historic Preservation Trust completed its first Preservation Education Project (PEP) in 1981. The Preservation Education Project II (PEP II) would be a program to inform property owners, developers, investors, etc. about the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the use of federal tax incentives, and their responsibilities for, and strategies for responding to, compliance with state and federal review requirements (Section 106, etc.). The material would be applicable to both publicly assisted and private providers of both owner-occupied and rental properties and a variety of economic development programs and activities. Who should lead it: HPT with assistance from the Lancaster Chamber; How could it be paid for: Community Development funding, PHMC, City, C&F
- 3) **Tourism Development Utilizing Community Character** - The Historic Preservation Trust should sponsor a workshop in cooperation with the Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, the D.I.D. Authority, the Pennsylvania Dutch Visitors Bureau and other interested parties, to discuss strategies for utilizing community character to promote tourism in the City of Lancaster. Specifically, materials from the Heritage Development and Heritage Tourism initiatives of the National Trust for Historic Preservation should be examined and discussed for their applicability to local needs. Who should lead it: HPT with assistance from D.I.D. (as this relates to the D.I.D. area) and Lancaster Chamber; How could it be paid for: National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTFHP), C&F
- 4) **National Register District for Downtown** - The National Register district proposed for downtown several years ago should be reconsidered. National Register listing would add no additional design review or other regulatory restrictions on property owners. It would allow them to utilize federal tax incentives for rehabilitating their buildings. Who should lead it: Lancaster Chamber and HPT, with input from D.I.D. (as this relates to the D.I.D. area); How could it be paid for: HPT, PHMC, donations

KEY: **C&F**: local corporations and foundations; **D.I.D.**: Downtown Investment District; **ECPRC**: Exterior Commercial Property Review Committee; **HARB**: Historical Architectural Board of Review; **HPT**: Historic Preservation Trust; **LCHS**: Lancaster County Historical Society; **NTFHP**: National Trust for Historic Preservation; **PHMC**: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; **SACA**: Spanish American Civic Association

Minority Involvement

Ethnic, cultural, social, and religious diversity has historically been, and should remain, a primary character-defining element of our community. However, the role of present day minority communities within this tradition is not well understood by the community as a whole. Documenting and promoting the historic contributions of longstanding minority communities, such as African-Americans, and the the emerging role of our newer minority communities, notably people of Latino and Asian origin, will promote community pride within those minorities and will foster greater understanding among all people in the city.

A program to document the history of Lancaster's primary minority populations, African-Americans and Latinos, should be actively pursued. It is essential that the history and cultural traditions of these communities be recognized and respected. Further, the historic and potential contributions of these communities to the physical character of the city should be examined.

- 1) **Respect for Cultural Diversity Through Community Character Related Programs** - Lancaster's cultural diversity is one of its strongest assets and helps to define much of the community's character. Specific mechanisms must be developed to incorporate cultural diversity within existing community character-related programs. Who should lead it: City with assistance from HPT; How could it be paid for: Community Development funding, PHMC, City, C&F, NTFHP
Design review guidelines for historic districts and the ECPRC should respect cultural diversity, provide improved access for minority communities, and provide additional flexibility to accommodate financial hardship. Design review requirements modified to accommodate creative methods to reduce the rehabilitation and maintenance costs of old and historic buildings based on the proposed Rehabilitation/Maintenance Handbook.
Technical assistance programs should be developed to aid applicants from minority communities in working with the HARB, ECPRC, and all other city permitting and review processes involving building construction or remodeling. This should include the development of multi-lingual brochures and design guideline publications; the identification of staff or volunteer liaison persons between the boards and minority applicants; and the development of methods to assist non-English speaking individuals in their presentations.
Minority Representation. The ECPRC has taken steps to include minority representation in its membership; these efforts should be continued. Minority representation on the HARB should be developed.

Community Design Consensus

If we are to preserve this community's special character, the people of Lancaster must begin to develop a consensus as to what we want the city to look like in the future, how we want to see our traditional buildings maintained, and what we collectively want to see in terms of new construction. This need not be a mandated set of standards; rather it should serve as benchmark to promote a common acceptance of what Lancastrians like about their community and how this should be reflected in design. For those areas of the city where design review control is present, such a process will help to address more adequately the specific needs of individual neighborhoods and accommodate cultural diversity.

- 1) **Community Design Consensus Process** - A written downtown design consensus should be developed to help shape growth and development within the city. The consensus should be a broad statement of general design principles that reflects the diversity of both the central business district and the neighborhoods and that addresses new construction, infill construction, and the rehabilitation of existing structures. The consensus should serve as basis for the development of more detailed guidelines. The consensus should be developed through a process that involves all aspects of the community. Who should lead it: City, HPT, D.I.D. (as this relates to the D.I.D. area), Lancaster Chamber; How could it be paid for: Community Development funding, PHMC, City, C&F
- 2) **Rehabilitation/Maintenance Handbook (Minimum Maintenance Guidelines)** - A brief, concise (i.e. 2-3 pages) set of simple building and maintenance guidelines, based upon the

KEY: C&F: local corporations and foundations; D.I.D.: Downtown Investment District; ECPRC: Exterior Commercial Property Review Committee; HARB: Historical Architectural Board of Review; HPT: Historic Preservation Trust; LCHS: Lancaster County Historical Society; NTFHP: National Trust for Historic Preservation; PHMC: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; SACA: Spanish American Civic Association

Maintenance/Rehabilitation Handbook designed to promote the preservation of community character should be developed. The guidelines should be a widely distributed and easily understood document and should become a guideline promoted by the City and other groups. Who should lead it: City, HPT; How could it be paid for: Community Development funding, PHMC, City, C&F, NTFHP

- 3) **Detailed Neighborhood Conservation Guidelines** - Using the Maintenance/Rehabilitation Handbook and the Community Design Consensus Process as a background, these guidelines would explore design issues and recommendations for the city as a whole as well as for characteristic areas of the city (central business district, like neighborhoods, etc.). The guidelines would illustrate principals for maintenance, restoration, additions, and new construction using specific examples. The guidelines would also deal with streetscapes, alleyways, and other public spaces. Separate chapters, or specific publications, would review issues related to different areas of the city. The guidelines would provide information to property owners, but would also establish a basis for long-term City policy and infrastructure improvements. Who should lead it: City, HPT; How could it be paid for: Community Development funding, PHMC, City, C&F, NTFHP

HARB/ECPRC New design review guidelines and publications should be developed for the HARB and ECPRC based upon the Detailed Neighborhood Conservation Guidelines.

Comprehensive Plan

The preservation of Community Character should be an integral component of Lancaster City's new Comprehensive Plan.

A comprehensive plan serves as a blueprint for managing growth, development and change within a community. The plan serves as the basis for creating and revising planning and zoning processes. The City of Lancaster is in the process of developing a new comprehensive plan. It is essential that a detailed assessment of community character be a component of this plan and that community character be a consistent theme throughout the document. If we do not clearly spell out what it is we as a community want to preserve, strengthen, or change about our community's character in coming years through this document, we will have missed an important opportunity.

- 1) **Community Character Vision** - As part of the comprehensive planning process, the city should work to develop an overall vision as to what the community character of Lancaster should be in the future. This statement should serve as a basis for the comprehensive plan itself. Who should lead it: City; How could it be paid for: through comprehensive planning process
- 2) **Community Character Coordination with Other Studies** - The City should ensure that the preservation and enhancement of Community character becomes an integral component of all current and proposed planning efforts. Who should lead it: City; How could it be paid for: Through the studies themselves

Partnership for Affordable Housing/Enterprise Foundation. Community character should be integrated into the housing study currently being conducted for the city.

- 3) **Develop Historic Preservation Expertise Within City Planning Staff** - The City should seek to ensure that at least one member of the planning staff have professional training in historic preservation. This could be accommodated as new staff is added or replaced within the staff or by providing an existing staff member with external training opportunities (such as the certificate program in historic preservation offered by Harrisburg Area Community College). In addition, a training seminar should be developed with the cooperation of the Historic Preservation Trust to provide an introduction to historic preservation to the city planning staff and appropriate review board members. Who should lead it: City; How could it be paid for: City
- 4) **Coordination of Community Character Preservation and City Codes and Planning and Zoning Documents** - Revisions and additions should be made to existing city codes and planning and zoning mechanisms to promote the preservation of community character through the rehabilitation of existing buildings. Who should lead it: City, HPT; How could it be paid for: City, PHMC

KEY: **C&F:** local corporations and foundations; **D.I.D.:** Downtown Investment District; **ECPRC:** Exterior Commercial Property Review Committee; **HARB:** Historical Architectural Board of Review; **HPT:** Historic Preservation Trust; **LCHS:** Lancaster County Historical Society; **NTFHP:** National Trust for Historic Preservation; **PHMC:** Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; **SACA:** Spanish American Civic Association

"No heritage could be finer than for a city to undertake, as Lancaster is now doing, the preparation of a Master Plan. This plan should have as one of its purposes the preservation of as much as possible that is memorable from earlier days, and the carrying forward of new developments adapted to modern needs, but with the same high standards and ideals that prevailed in earlier days. This is the spirit of Lancaster."

A Comprehensive City Plan, Lancaster City, John Nolen, City Planner, 1929



Historic Preservation Trust
of Lancaster County

123 North Prince Street, Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17603
Phone: (717) 291-5861

In Association With

John Milner Associates Inc.

309 N. Matlack Street, West Chester, Pennsylvania 19380
Phone: (215) 436-9000

