Traditional Neighborhood Commercial District Design Guidelines

April 9, 2007

Solebury Township, Pennsylvania

Purpose of Guidelines

The design guidelines presented in this document are intended to encourage future development, redevelopment, or building additions within the Traditional Neighborhood Commercial (TNC) District to be consistent with the historical architectural integrity of the community. Conventional big box, and strip commercial-style development is strongly discouraged. These design guidelines identify basic design principles that will enhance the appearance of the TNC district. The principles can serve as a basis for existing and new businesses to begin thinking creatively about the appearance of their properties. Implementation of the design guidelines should produce a cohesive, aesthetically pleasing development theme that will provide an attractive business environment that exemplifies the traditional historical character of the community for both customers and residents.

Design Guidelines Goals

- Provide guidance for existing and new development to reflect the traditional historic character of the township.
- Build awareness of the community's historical, natural, and physical environment.
- Encourage design creativity to enhance the district's appearance.
- Provide an impetus for attracting and retaining businesses within the district.

Historical Overview

In 2002, Solebury Township celebrated its 300th anniversary. It is no coincidence that the township contains a wealth of historic villages, resources, and landscapes. This is evident by Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission's (PMHC) National Register Listed, Eligible, and National Historic Landmark (NHL) properties in Solebury. PMHC has identified seven National Register Listed properties, two NHL properties,[1] and seven National Register Eligible sites. Additionally, the portion of the Delaware Canal State Park that runs from Easton to Bristol (through Solebury Township) is a Registered National Historic Landmark and its towpath is a National Recreation Trail. Solebury's numerous historical villages, homes, barns, and landscapes all contribute to its unique identity and sense of place.

Guidelines for Existing Buildings

Property owners are encouraged to retain and repair original architectural features such as cornices, lintels, windows, and doors on existing historical structures. If these features cannot be repaired, they should be replaced with reproductions of the originals. If this is not feasible, they should be replaced with features that are similar in size and scale to the original. The façade is the most important part of the building to conserve in its original form.

[1] In Solebury Township, PMHC's National Register Listed sites are: Carversville Historic District, Cuttalossa Historic District, Phillips Mill Historic District, Lumberville Historic District, Center Bridge Historic District, Upper Aquetong Valley Historic District, Van Sant Covered Bridge, Atkinson Road Bridge, Carversville Road Bridge, and Paxon, Isaiah, Farm. National Historic Landmarks consists of the Honey Hollow Watershed and the Historic Resources of Washington's Crossing of the Delaware.

Guidelines for New Buildings

New buildings in the Traditional Neighborhood Commercial (TNC) district shall be compatible with the traditional architectural styles present along the Route 202 Corridor and throughout the township. New structures should be consistent with the scale and composition of existing historical structures in the township. Prior to submitting plan applications, developers should evaluate and implement the following seven design principles and features: (1) local architectural styles, (2) architectural elements, (3) building scale and facades, (4) base, body, and cap, (5) proportion of walls to openings, (6) roof styles, and (7) building materials. These features are discussed in more detail below.

Local Architectural Styles

Solebury has a diverse stock of historical architectural styles including Federal (or Adam), Georgian, Greek Revival, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Italianate, and Gothic Revival. There are other styles of architecture in the township, but these are from the 20th Century. Various structures within its historic villages and outlying areas provide examples of this progression of architectural styles. This design manual does not advocate more recent architectural styles since the intended purpose of the TNC district is to replicate older traditional styles of architecture between 1700 and 1900 present in the township.

A building characteristic that is not uncommon in Solebury, as well as through the region, is a blending or morphing of individual architectural styles within a given structure. This phenomenon is clearly evident in the village of Carversville, which contains three primary architectural periods but also contains structures exhibiting a mixture of architectural styles and elements. The first period extends from 1730 to 1812, with Georgian-based vernacular fieldstone construction. The second period consists of 1812 to 1860. It continues a modest Georgian form with a Federal interpretation in the small-scale frame houses, and Greek Revival and Italianate styles in the larger stone edifices. The third and most prolific period extends from 1860 to roughly 1895. Buildings consist of a few larger frame houses based upon Georgian form but with Italianate and Victorian embellishments. When conducted thoughtfully and creatively, this meshing of architectural styles and elements can result in aesthetically pleasing construction that maintains the architectural integrity of the community.

Recommendations for Construction

- All proposed development in the TNC district is encouraged to provide the bulk, scale, and character of building and uses that are compatible with the rural and historic context of the community.
- New construction or renovations are encouraged to emulate the architectural styles found in Solebury Township. The architectural features should be consistent with local styles of architecture (discussed on the following page). For examples see *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Virginia and Lee McAlester (1984). A copy is available at the township building.
- For each building, renovation, or addition applicants are strongly encouraged to present photographs of all structures on lots adjacent to the subject site, photographic examples of architectural styles similar to the proposed buildings, AND architectural drawings detailing the architectural elements such as doors, windows, eaves, porches, trim, gables, dormers, cornices, and molding to the board of supervisors prior to developing detailed architectural elevations and site plans.

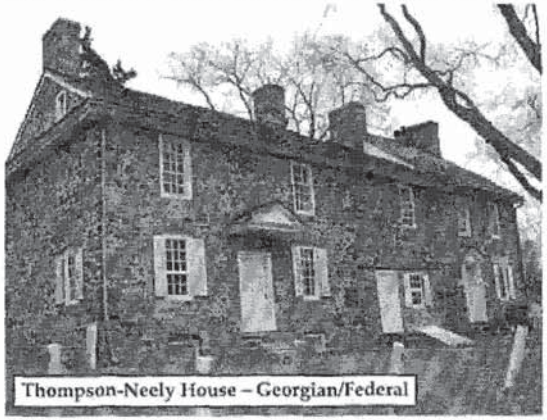
Local Architectural Styles

Georgian (1700-1800)
Federal (1790-1830)
Greek Revival (1820-1860)
Second Empire (1860-1890)
Queen Anne (1880-1900)
Italianate (1850-1890)
Gothic Revival (1830-1860)
Eclectic Mix


Carversville Inn – Italianate


Solebury Friends Meetinghouse – Federal


Black Bass Inn – Federal


Thompson-Neely House – Georgian/Federal


Carversville Residence – Second Empire


Solebury Post Office – Gothic Revival

Architectural Styles – Illustrated

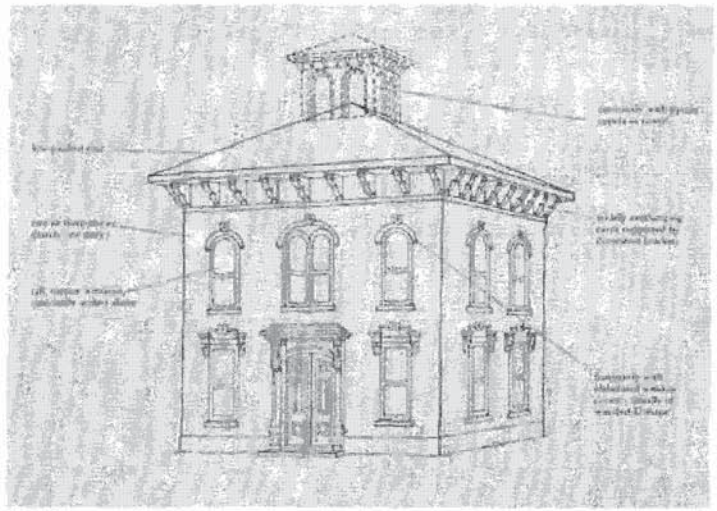
The following illustrations from the publication, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Virginia and Lee McAlester (1984) highlight the primary features of predominant architectural styles in Solebury. Developers are encouraged to use this reference when planning and designing their projects.

Georgian

Federal (or Adam)

Greek Revival

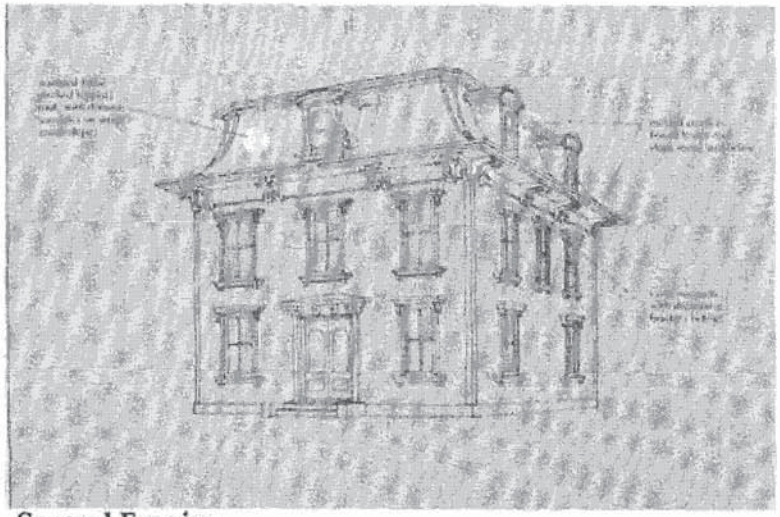
Architectural Styles – Illustrated (cont'd)



Italianate

Gothic Revival

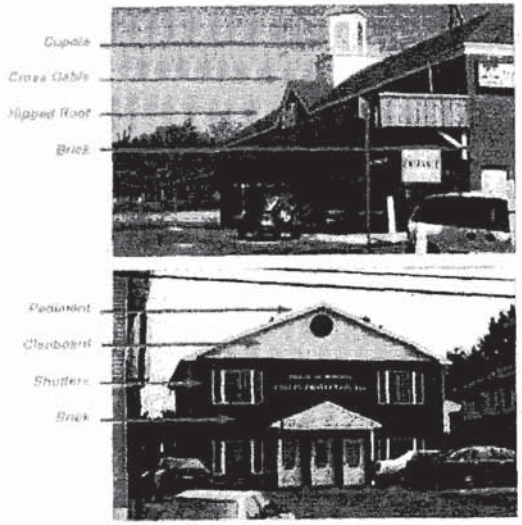
Queen Anne



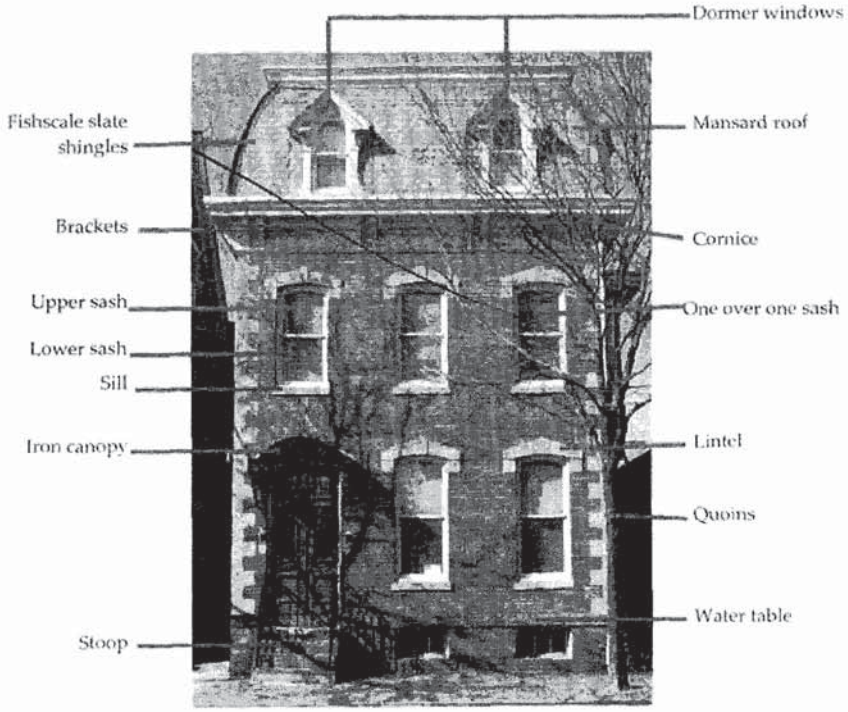
Second Empire

Architectural Elements

Collectively, the local architectural styles provide a palette of architectural elements that can be used as a basis for new construction or redevelopment projects. These architectural elements can be used creatively while retaining the overall architectural integrity. Building design and construction should strive to achieve aesthetic appeal and creativity. A common mistake when trying to recreate traditional style is a forced or contrived appearance. This may be the result of building design that contains improper proportions, form, scale, or materials. Achieving historical integrity is even more challenging for certain types of nonresidential uses that typically consist of larger footprints and continuous building façade, but there are techniques that can, for instance, soften or break up building mass that are discussed on the next page.



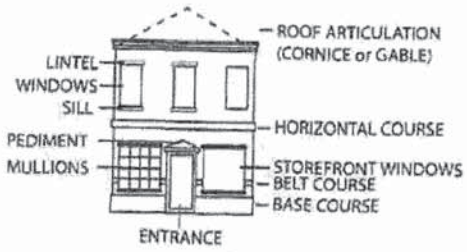
Developers often intend to design buildings to look historically accurate with varying degrees of success as shown above.



Building Scale and Façades

Creating pedestrian and human scale buildings is achieved by breaking up their mass. Buildings should not consist of long, monotonous, uninterrupted wall or roof planes. Changes in scale and massing should be accomplished through graduated increments such as a wall offset, roof line variation, or shift in the height of a wall or cap line. There are various means to accomplish this effect, including horizontal and vertical articulation, modulation, and minimizing blank facades.

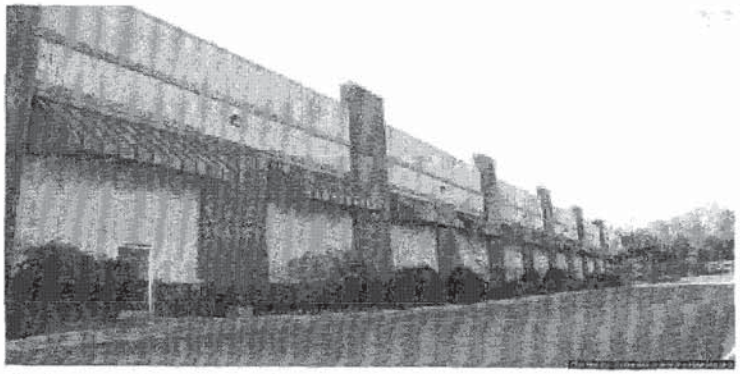
Horizontal Articulation
Horizontal courses can divide the stories of a building and can also be added at the base and roofline of a building. Horizontal elements such as pent eaves, pediments, and sills and lintels above and below the windows and doors are encouraged because they will contribute to the overall style of the building. Similarly, roof line offsets, cross gables, and dormers may help vary the massing of a building and relieve the effect of a single, long roof.



Vertical Articulation
In buildings that are longer than about 20 feet, vertical architectural details such as pilasters and changes in plane should be added to break up the continuous façade. Adding vertical elements is sometimes referred to as "adding rhythm to a building". As cars or pedestrians move past the building there are defined storefronts and aesthetically pleasing architectural details.

Modulation
The massing of any façade should generally not exceed 50 feet maximum (horizontal dimension). Store front should be broken down even further. Massing variations (or building recesses and projections) every 30 feet or less is preferred.

Blank Facades
Some buildings have long facades without windows or entryways due to floor plan constraints. Every effort should be made to minimize blank facades. Using vertical and horizontal articulation as well as modulation can help. If the blank façade is longer than 20 feet, false windows and paneling should be incorporated to decorate the façade. Landscaping can also be used in combination with these architectural elements to minimize the impacts of a blank façade.



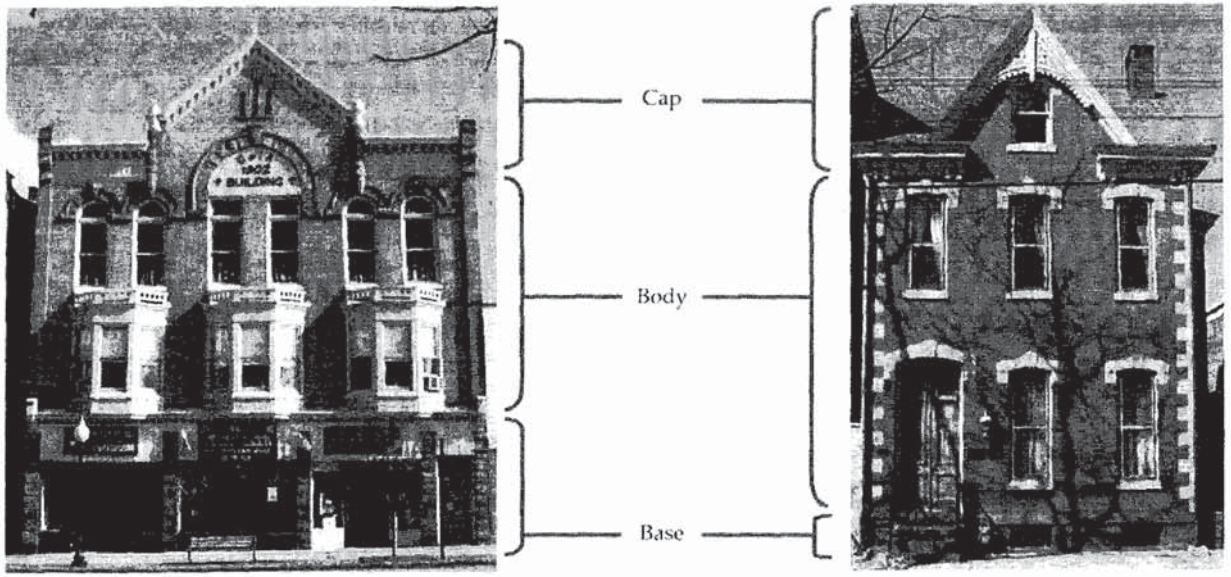
The façade on the side of this building is broken up and softened by architectural elements consisting of vertical brick courses, awnings, and landscaping.

Base, Body, and Cap

The basic composition of most building facades include three primary components as follows:

- **Base**—A portion of a building foundation, or in the case of stores, the first floor of a building which is distinct from the upper floors.
- **Body**—One or more architecturally similar stories that are distinct from the base.
- **Cap**—The roof of a building, including a cornice or parapet where the body of the building ends.

For renovations and alterations, a distinct base, body, and cap should be retained in the front façade of existing buildings. For new construction, each new building should have a distinct base at the street level, but at a minimum, a body with a consistent character for the main and upper stories, and a cap. The base, body, and cap should roughly line up with the base, body, and cap of adjoining buildings.

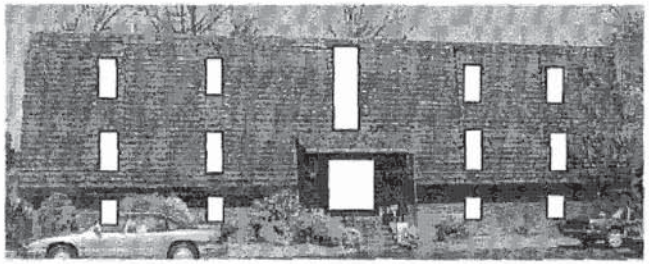


Proportion of Walls to Openings

The number and size of windows and doors in a building strongly affect its appearance. The amount of open space in a wall can be expressed as a ratio or percentage. For example, a building with twice as much wall space as windows and doors would have a 2 to 1 ratio.

Typically, historic buildings have a wall to openings ratio between 2 to 1 (or 33 percent openings) and 1 to 1 (or 50 percent openings). More often, new nonresidential buildings have walls that are largely glass or largely wall. For the front façade of existing buildings, if the front façade window and doors are replaced, the new ones should use the same space as the windows and doors they are replacing. They should not create a larger or smaller opening in the wall. If the property owner can demonstrate that the current doors and windows are not original, the façade may be restored to its original proportion of wall to opening.

This building has a wall to opening ratio of 1 to 1 (50 percent).



In contrast, the building to the left has a wall to opening ratio of 10 to 1, which would not be appropriate within the TNC District.

This building has a wall to opening ratio of 1 to 1.

Proportion of Walls to Openings (cont'd)

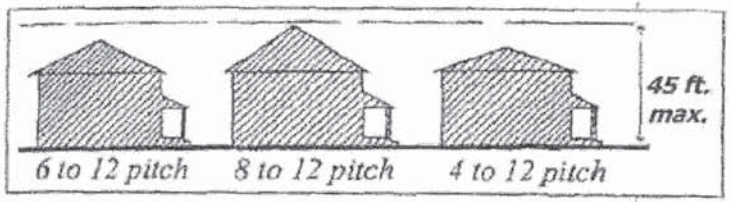
The following design standards will enhance the appearance and appeal of the building façade:

- For the front façade of new buildings or additions, blank walls should be discouraged along any wall facing a street, parking, or pedestrian area.
- The proportion of wall area to opening area (i.e., windows, doors) ranging from 2 to 1 to 1 to 1 should be provided. For Shopping Center and Convenience Store uses that generally require a greater display window area consideration should be given to increasing the overall front façade wall to opening ratio to a maximum of 1 to 2 (or 67 percent openings).
- The ground floor front façade should be a minimum of 60 and maximum of 75 percent of windows.
- Buildings on a corner lot or fronting on two streets shall treat each side of the building located on the street as a front façade.
- Smoked, reflective, or black tinted glass in windows is prohibited.
- Blank walls shall not be permitted along any exterior wall facing a street, parking area, or walking area. Walls or portions of walls where windows are not provided shall have various architectural treatments that are similar to the front façade, including materials, colors, and details. Examples of architectural treatments include: masonry (but not flat concrete block), vertical/horizontal articulation, lighting fixtures, projecting cornice, projecting canopy or awning, and trellis containing planting. All plan proposals shall include drawings detailing the architectural treatments that satisfy the goals of the design guidelines.

Typically, shopping centers require greater display window areas as illustrated in the Springhouse Village Center above. Therefore, a façade wall to opening ratio of 1 to 2 is appropriate.

Roof Styles

Examples of roof styles are saddleback, (often called ridge or gable), gambrel, hipped, mansard, and flat. The type of roof and its pitch (slope) determine the overall shape of the roof. Roofs should be in keeping with the character of the historical buildings in the township. Roof form should be appropriate to a building's design and context. Architectural embellishments such as cross-gables, dormers, belvederes, masonry chimneys, cupolas, and other similar elements are encouraged where appropriate to complete the architectural style of the building. Both gable and hipped roofs should have overhanging eaves on all sides that extend a minimum of one (1) foot beyond the building wall. Mansard roofs may only be used on buildings of three (3) stories or more in height. Where hipped roofs are used, it is recommended that the minimum pitch should be 6 to 12. Pitched roofs shall have a minimum slope of 8 to 12 and a maximum of 12 to 12. Where dormers are proposed, gable roofs should provide a minimum pitch of 8 to 12. Other roof types should be appropriate to the building's architecture.



These buildings in the village of Lumberville have a roof pitch of approximately 8 to 12, creating an aesthetically pleasing architectural appearance.

In contrast, the buildings in Buckingham Green have a flatter roof pitch (approximately 6 to 12), which makes the dormers look out of scale.

Roof Styles (cont'd)

Flat roofs shall be avoided unless a vegetated or green roof is to be employed. Flat roof buildings should include appropriate architectural elements to provide architectural interest. For instance, all visibly exposed walls shall have an articulated cornice that projects horizontally from the vertical building wall plane. All air conditioning units, HVAC systems, exhaust pipes or stacks, satellite dishes, and other telecommunications receiving devices shall be thoroughly screened from view from both the public right-of-way and adjacent properties by using parapets, walls, or roof elements. Such screening devices should be compatible with the proposed building materials.

Awnings are used here to provide cover for pedestrians and provide architectural interest along front façade.

Awnings

Fixed or retractable awnings are permitted at ground floor level and on upper levels where appropriate, if they complement a building's architectural features, such as cornices, columns, pilasters, or decorative details; do not impair façade composition; and are designed or added as an integral part of the façade. Canvas is the preferred material, although other water-proof fabrics may be used. Metal, or internally lit awnings are prohibited. In buildings with multiple storefronts, or on adjacent buildings, compatible awnings should be used as a means of unifying the structure or block. Whenever possible, awnings should extent the width of the adjacent sidewalk in order to provide shelter during inclement weather and prevent rain from dripping onto pedestrians.

Soft retractable awnings can be opened or rolled up depending on weather conditions.

Building Materials

From the colonial era until the beginning of the 18th century, most of the buildings in Solebury were constructed of brick, stone, stucco, or wood. Recently, product advancements have resulted in various synthetic siding materials.

A. General

Materials proposed for buildings in the TNC District should reflect the architectural influences and materials found in the township and the region.

B. Preferred façade materials include:

- brick
- stone native to the region
- wood clapboard, trim and detailing

C. Acceptable façade materials include:

- simulated wood clapboard (cementicious or vinyl) provided it is not used on the front façade
- stucco, providing that it is not more than 50 percent of the façade (excluding windows)
- split-face cement block (highly textured)
- glass block

D. Other acceptable building façade materials (upon review by the board of supervisors) include:

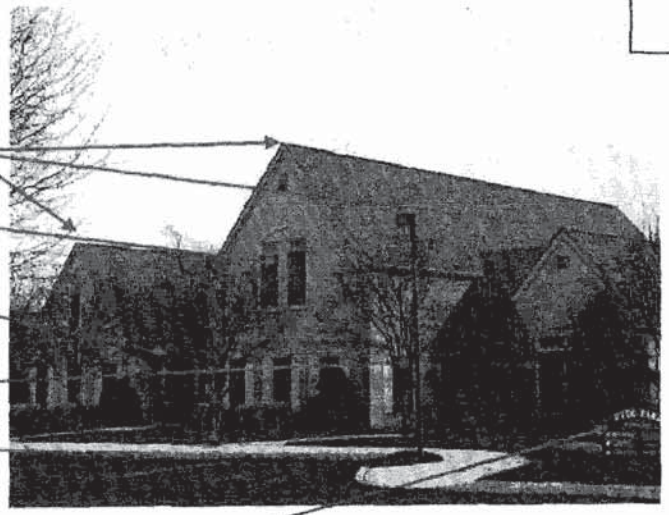
- simulated brick
- simulated stone

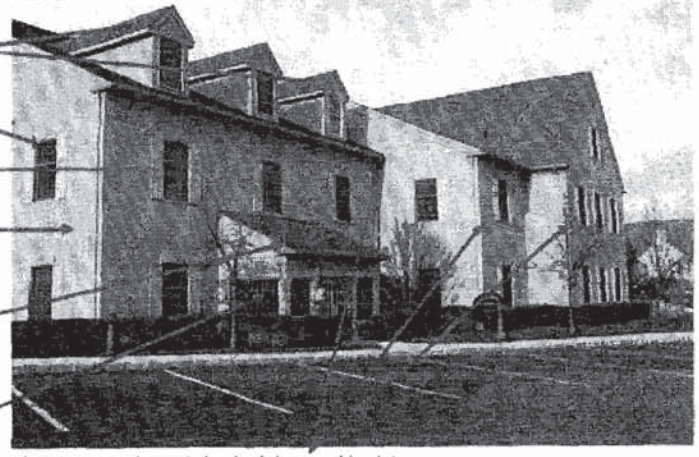
Wood trim complements brickwork for an attractive, high quality appearance in Palmer Square, New Jersey.

A combination of stone and simulated wood clapboard is successfully used in the Sycamore Center in Newtown Township.

Some Appropriate Examples with Key Architectural Elements

Hyde Park

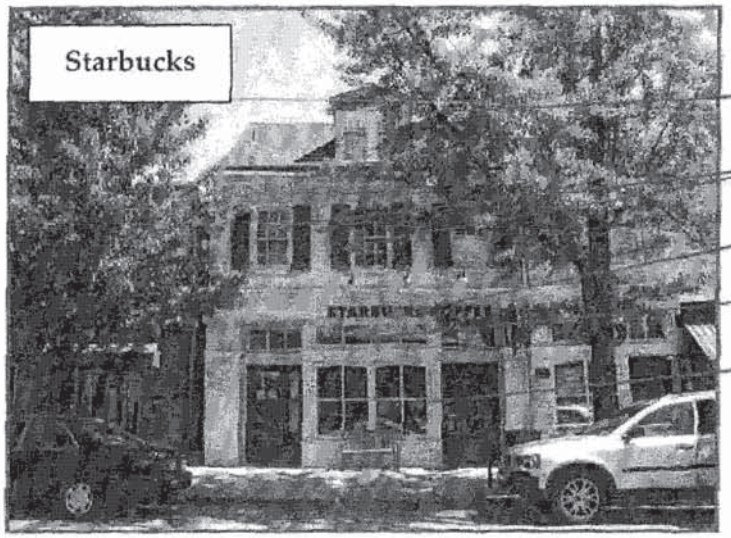




Structure contains varied setback from parking lot.

Fountainville Center

Some Appropriate Examples (cont'd)



Dormer

Sash windows with shutters

Refined signage doesn't dominate front building facade

Transom-style windows

Decorative display windows

Various national franchises such as Starbucks, Walgreens, and McDonalds may be willing to work with a community to satisfy their unique development vision.

Gable roofs

Dormers

Stone façade and vinyl siding in earth tones

Pediment over entrance way with columns

Awnings

Staggered exterior walls provides architectural interest

Some Appropriate Examples (cont'd)

The use of cornice, pediments, and parapets provide visual interest to the flat roof structure.

Effective vertical articulation and varied building materials and color to break up building mass.

Lintels and shutters complement sash windows

Street trees soften the hardscape and provide aesthetic appeal.

Period light fixtures

Mullion display windows

Federal or Greek Revival style brick chimney

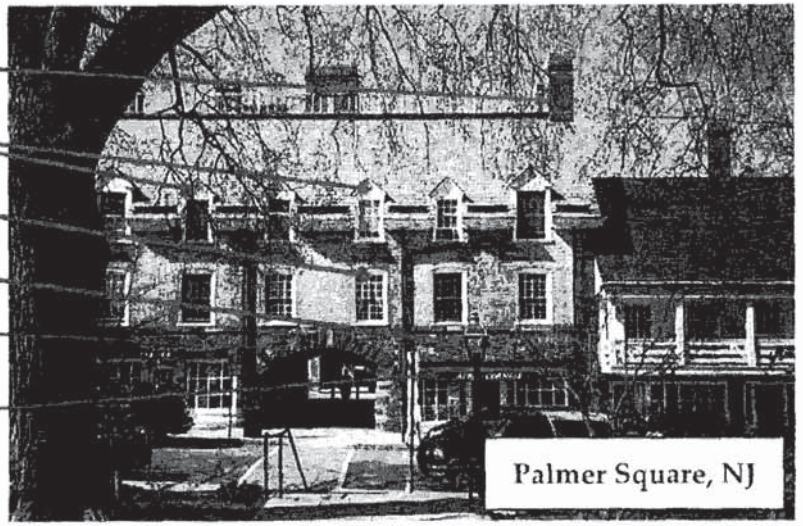
Multiple dormers

Sash windows

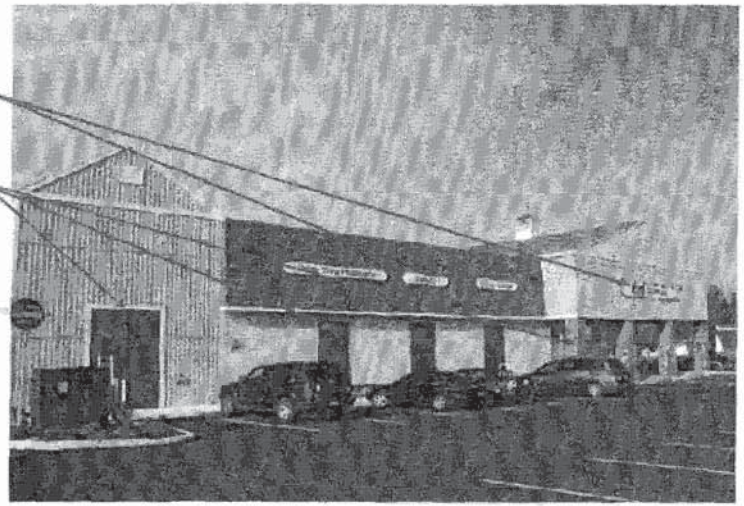
Period light fixtures

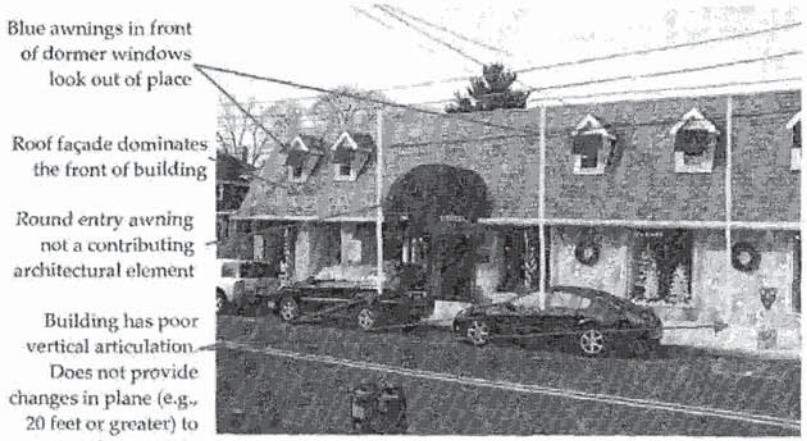
Stone-arch pedestrian tunnel

Decorative awning over mullion display windows



Architectural Elements That Are Not Appropriate for Solebury





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Photography and illustrations provided by Bucks County Planning Commission except as noted:

Page 4 and 5, architectural style illustrations - *A Field Guide to American Houses* (1984). Virginia and Lee McAlester.

Page 6, architectural elements illustrations - Borough of Pottstown Ordinances Governing Subdivision, Land Development, and Zoning (Adopted 2003) and *Penndel Design Guidelines* (February 2005). Kise Straw & Kolodner Inc.

Page 7, horizontal articulation diagram - *Penndel Design Guidelines* (February 2005). Kise Straw & Kolodner Inc.; photo of blank façade - The Cyburbia Gallery (http://www.cyburbia.org/gallery/showgallery.php?cat=2).

Page 8, base, body, and cap photos - Borough of Pottstown Ordinances Governing Subdivision, Land Development, and Zoning (Adopted 2003).

Page 9, proportion of walls to openings photos, Borough of Pottstown Ordinances Governing Subdivision, Land Development, and Zoning (Adopted 2003).

Page 11, roof pitch diagram – Montgomery County Planning Commission.

Page 12, photos of awnings - The Cyburbia Gallery (http://www.cyburbia.org/gallery/showgallery.php?cat=2).

Page 15, photo of Starbucks - Montgomery County Planning Commission.

Page 16, photo of Kentlands, Maryland - PennSCAPEs, Pennsylvania Strategies, Codes and People Environments (CD ROM) (2003). The Hamer Center for Community Design Assistance, School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, Penn State University.