

BEDFORD TOWNSHIP SITE + ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN MANUAL: KICKOFF REPORT

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KICKOFF REPORT

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INTRODUCTION: HOW DID WE GET HERE?

This document is the first step toward the creation and adoption of a Site and Architectural Manual for Bedford Township. In recent years, elected and appointed officials in the community have been working diligently with business owners, residents and other stakeholders to satisfy the needs of the growing Bedford Community while protecting the Township's most desirable characteristics. This Manual is intended to contribute clarity, guidance and insight with regard to the design of commercial properties, and to make a positive impact on the built environment. The Site and Architectural Design Manual is the result of the community's willingness to try a progressive and effective approach to design regulation. Working with existing and potentially new legislation and planning documents, these guidelines will help the community realize its vision for the built environment.

THE ROLE OF A SITE AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN MANUAL

A Site and Architectural Design Manual is made up of guidelines. It is intended to inform the decisions of elected and appointed officials, communicate ideas to potential developers, engage the public, and drive the development of a high-quality aesthetic composition that is complementary to and builds upon the valuable character inherent in a place. These guidelines are the design counterpart of the future land use map contained in the Township Master Plan. They are the result of a planning process involving a variety of staff, officials, residents and other

stakeholders, and their ultimate purpose is to provide a foundation on which decisions can be made with regard to land development.

Take, for instance, the example of a proposed rezoning to accommodate the development of an automobile refueling station in an area dominated by single-family residential homes. In order to make an accurate determination and



an appropriate ruling, the Planning Commission and Township Board refer to the Township Master Plan, which indicates in its future land use map that the parcel is planned to continue as a residential use. This future land use classification was derived from the public input process and was adopted as the unified vision the community had for itself. It is with this in mind that the Planning Commission can feel secure making its recommendation and the Township Board can feel informed about its final decision.

The Site and Architectural Design Manual works in precisely the same manner. The Manual is the aesthetic vision the community sets for itself. While the Master Plan sets forth a vision for the placement and transitioning of land uses, the Manual will address the desired visual outcome once said land uses are developed. If a developer wants to construct a restaurant in a commercial

district, which permits this type of land use, he or she would generally be allowed to develop such a use. However, that approval hinges upon a positive determination that the proposed development complies with all facets of the Zoning Ordinance and any other local ordinances. In those cases where the Zoning Ordinance remands to the Planning Commission responsibility for making a determination with regard to site or architectural



elements, such as color and color scheme, materials, varying of facades, positioning of buildings, and compatibility, decisions can often be complex and difficult to justify. Without any document representing a unified vision and setting forth a series of guidelines, the Planning Commission does not have a solid foundation on which to base its decisions in this regard. Thus, like a Master Plan, the Site and Architectural Design Manual establishes ideas, intentions, illustrations, and justifications that guide the land development decisions of a community.

Master Plans are often developed with a common theme. Preservation of rural assets, mixing of land uses, promotion of pedestrian character, or the development of a cosmopolitan

atmosphere can serve as goals under which a Master Plan is developed. Those goals are determined during the planning process. Most commonly, the plan does not seek to, nor does it need to, drastically alter the community to achieve these goals. The Master Plan does, though, serve to effect incremental change to correct those obstacles or weaknesses that prohibit the meeting of the goals and that build upon existing strengths of the community. The Site and Architectural Design Manual works in much the same way. By encouraging desirable elements, and discouraging undesirable ones, the Manual will incrementally preserve those valuable features it identifies and will prevent future undesirable visual elements from proliferating. Ultimately, the Manual will help create a unified site and architectural character.

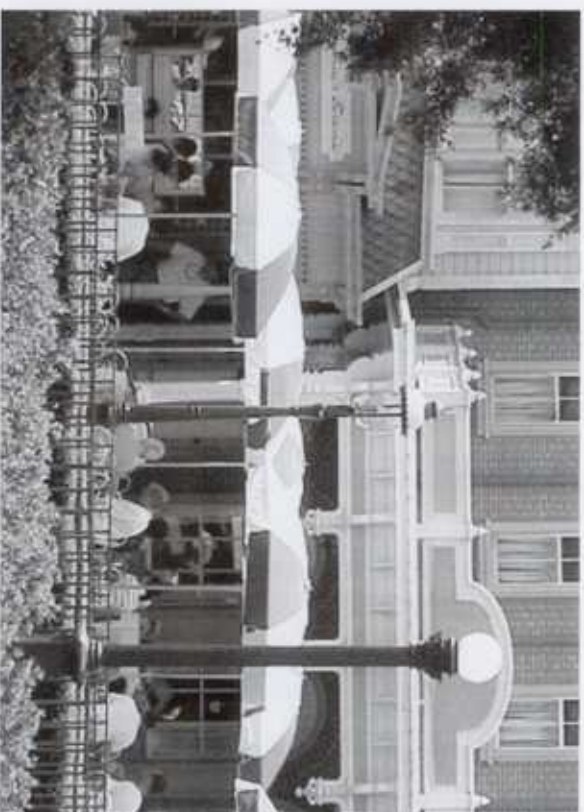
This is not to say that all buildings and sites should look the same. As in a Master Plan, where, for instance, the designation of “commercial” is applied, many uses are thus encouraged under a single umbrella. However, all those uses are generally dedicated to the provision of goods and services to the community, be they oil change shops, grocers, or greeting card stores; they all have a comparable purpose. The Manual can accomplish a similar outcome within individual districts by setting forth guidelines for building types, orientation, positioning of landscaping, and other elements without specifically requiring a particular architectural style, color or theme. Many of the most desirable locations in the world are characterized by a wide variety of architectural styles ranging from Second Empire to Neoclassical to Colonial. However, the scale, orientation, site design, palette and materials are of similar concept and quality, unifying them as a neighborhood in these areas. Bedford Township’s commercial areas are no different. Consider the striking wall of architectural

masterpieces along Chicago's Michigan Avenue, juxtaposed against Lake Michigan. The style of these buildings varies wildly, from the most ostentatious Richardsonian Romanesque buildings to the most contemporary steel and glass structures. They work as an environment, however, because they share the same setbacks, site improvements, street presence, massing, access, and scale.

HOW WILL THE MANUAL WORK?

In order to position the Site and Architectural Design Manual as a relative part of the land development review process, we must first define exactly what mechanisms it consists of and how they relate to those in the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance. The Manual will be made up of a series of *guidelines*, specific to each zoning district. The *guidelines* illustrate for the reader, be it a potential developer or a Township Planning Commissioner, a variety of methods through which the *requirements* of the Zoning Ordinance could be met. The *requirements* of the Ordinance are those legislative approaches to meeting the *standards* the community has set for itself in the Ordinance and Master Plan. *Standards* are the strongest bridge in many cases between the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. The *standards* are essentially articulated in the general intent of the Master Plan, the intent of the Zoning Ordinance, and the intent of the individual districts.

For instance, if the Master Plan seeks to establish a pedestrian friendly, sustainable downtown campus, this is a *standard* the community has set for its Downtown. The Master Plan might also encourage the effective transitioning between non-



compatible uses and the protection of residential areas. This is a *standard*. Therefore, the Zoning Ordinance may *require* a landscaped, earthen berm to screen the side of an intense commercial property from adjacent residential uses. This manual would then respond to that *requirement* with a series of illustrated *guidelines* that provide options and suggestions on how the developer might meet the requirement. The *guidelines* could include ideas about undulating the berm, staggering vegetation, preferred species of vegetation, etc. Those *guidelines* will be created from the input of the participants throughout this process, and will represent the desired outcome.

It is in this way that *guidelines* illustrate and inform users of the *requirements* that are in place to help the community meet the *standards* it has set for itself in the Master Plan and Zoning

Ordinance. The Site and Architectural Design Manual will use guidelines and act as a benchmark on which developers can build designs. Township elected and appointed officials can base decisions, and the community can express and realize its own vision for the aesthetic character of Bedford Township.

WHAT WILL THE KICKOFF REPORT ACHIEVE?

The general intent of this first report is to ground the planning process, provide insight as to what the final document will contain, generate initial feedback, and present some cursory findings. The content herein will provide a framework for the public input phase and the investigation of strengths and weaknesses with the existing built environment. Following will be the setting of the goals and objectives and the formulation of a draft document.

Included in this first phase was a general canvassing of the commercial areas within the Township and a wholesale photographic survey of nearly every commercial property. With the initial information and photographs, the Project Team will be able to develop a Visual Preference Survey (which will be defined in a later section of this report), generate preliminary discussion topics, assess the existing conditions of old and new development, illustrate the document, and develop an outline for the remainder of the project. Also, the Team will be familiar with the general nature and character of the Township, including the villages and rural areas within.

A CURSORY ANALYSIS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN BEDFORD TOWNSHIP

Regardless of the position of individuals and parties involved, it can be safely assumed that all the stakeholders in the Bedford Township community aspire to help the Township evolve as an attractive, desirable place to do business, live and visit. Each individual's picture of an attractive, desirable place, however, may differ. Therefore, this analysis will seek to spark a series of discussions and plan a round of community input that will help the Township, the stakeholders, and the Project Team develop guidelines that will accurately depict and support a collective community vision for the built environment.

To that end, we have compiled a series of informative graphics depicting a variety of commercial sites within the Township. These images have been annotated with comments identifying specific discussion elements of site and architectural design and are arranged to see specific differences between scale and age of certain development types. The intent of this series of photographs and supporting text is to fuel interest, focus input around specific topics, analyze existing conditions and point out trends of prominent desirable and/or undesirable design factors. The comments are not necessarily meant to portray a professional opinion, but are directed to the reader to generally make a determination with regard to the specific element for themselves. The thoughts and ideas born of this initial analysis will hopefully empower project participants to formulate opinions and new ideas for the next workshop.

The photographs were not chosen because of, nor are they meant to represent, any specific use, but were chosen for their diversity of site and architectural elements, including massing, scale, landscaping, signage, materials, orientation, access and circulation, to name a few. Some comments may be redundant throughout many of the illustrations. This is deliberate and intended to point out a common theme or unifying element, good or bad, of the existing built environment within the Township.

Please review the following illustrative photographs and supporting observations.



AUTOMOBILE REFUELING STATION

- Unscreened rooftop mechanical equipment
- Flat roof with no architectural detail
- Painted split face concrete block construction
- Flat facade
- Access appropriately limited to fewer curb cuts
- Backlit plastic monument sign



- Flat roof canopy with recessed lighting
- Insufficient vinyl fencing screen
- Appropriately scaled lighting
- No sidewalks
- Insignificant landscaping in poor condition



AUTOMOBILE SERVICE CENTER



Gabled roof over portions of buildings

Low quality chain link fence and gate

Unscreened parking area for vehicles in for repairs

Lack of sidewalks

No curbs

Signage limited to wall signs

Flat roof building

Simple block construction and plain color emphasize two-dimensional, featureless facade

Open garage door faces main thoroughfare

No clearly defined access point, vehicles pull directly out or onto main thoroughfare

CAR WASH



Attractive use of high quality roofing materials; unique color

Exit point positioned toward right of way

Insufficient screening for adjacent uses

Split-face block construction staggered with decorative block construction

Glass blocks allow light in, prevent blank walls, and add interest, staggered with windows

Multi-gable roof lends architectural interest

New landscaping contributes to site

No striping to assist in traffic direction, resulting in a vast, featureless surface

No curbing throughout

Vertical elements vary facade



FINANCIAL INSTITUTION; ESTABLISHED

Careful preservation of mature vegetation

Large backlit pole sign

Small scale wall sign

No front yard screening

Curb and gutter in parking area



Simple roofline, steep roof pitch

Tall pole lighting

Limited site landscaping

Single access drive to main road



FINANCIAL INSTITUTION; NEW

Multi-peaked, varied
roofline

Attractive, nearly
symmetrical design
adds curb appeal
and distinction to
the facade

Discreet drive-
through lane with
awning in lieu of
substantial canopy

Varied vegetation

Curbs throughout

Substantial low
ground cover
buffers area
between building
and parking lot



Entrance structure
creates a multi-
dimensional facade

High quality brick,
block and stone
construction with
multiple colors and
textures

Dramatic,
architecturally
significant entrance
facing street

Digital copy sign

High quality
monument sign
matched to
materials of building

No sidewalks or
pedestrian
amenities

RETAIL CENTER; SMALL

Building set far from right-of-way with a large parking area; limits access to cars only, hinders ability of structure to interact with the streetscape

Substantial vertical elements add architectural character to facade

No curbs in parking area

No sidewalks or pedestrian amenities

Lack of front yard vegetation or screening



Clock tower differentiates development and creates visual interest while serving a practical purpose

Unique roof color
Symmetrical design suggests a single use, disguises conventional strip mall layout

Forward gables break massing of main roofline

Prominant central feature simulates a unified entrance

Attractive, appropriately-scaled site lighting, though lights are not downward directed or shielded

Lack of parking lot landscaping

RETAIL CENTER; MEDIUM

- Flat roof
- Attractive cornice
- Recessed entrances and vertical elements vary facade
- Curbs throughout
- Crowded, backlit signage



- Large scale site lighting
- Adequate landscaping along right-of-way
- Efficient limiting of access points
- No parking lot landscaping islands



Vertical elements
along facade

Relatively little
detail to break up
long facade

Flat roof provides
no roofline
character

No pedestrian
connections or
amenities from
parking areas to
businesses

RETAIL CENTER; LARGE



Too large, too few
light posts

Sparse front yard
landscaping

Facade cluttered by
multiple backlit
signs

No parking lot
landscaping to
break up or direct
traffic through a
vast, uninteresting
parking area



ANCHOR RETAIL

Banded facade and varied materials create visual interest

Exceptionally high quality construction for large structure

Sidewalks along facade, not connected with parking area

New vegetation limited to small trees



Peak breaks up roofline

Light poles too tall

Attractive wall signs, appropriate in scale

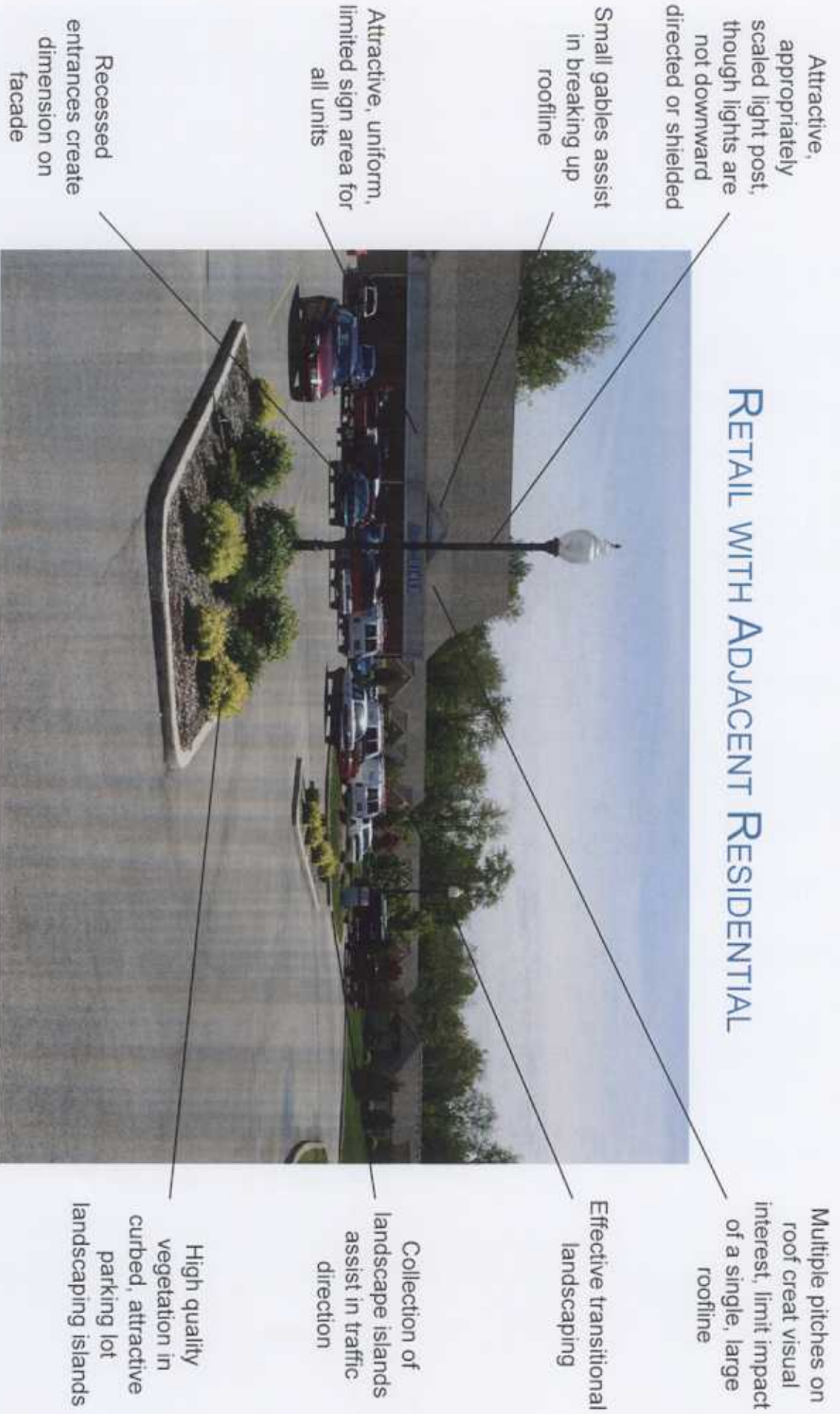
Prominent defined entrance point serves to break up facade

Curbs throughout

Parking lot islands not sodded or landscaped with shrubs or ground cover



RETAIL WITH ADJACENT RESIDENTIAL



FAST FOOD RESTAURANT; ESTABLISHED

Oversized signage for district

Vegetation scale matches scale of signage

Manicured attractive front yard

Lack of sidewalks or pedestrian amenities



Large wall sign

Partially pitched roof adds interest, masks flat roof character of structure

Variety of mature bushes maintained

Curbed parking area

Temporary sign



INSTITUTIONAL

Preservation of mature vegetation

Multiple peaks and gables lend architectural significance

Aesthetically pleasing neutral color palette

High quality brick construction

Recessed areas create relief in front facade, though entrance is hidden and unwelcoming



Rooftop dish location in prominent visual location

Chain link fence with barbed wire functional, but unwelcoming and unscreened

No signage or numbering to identify the building; relies exclusively on freestanding signage

Curbed parking area



DOWNTOWN RETAIL/SERVICE

Pitched roof with gable ends facing main thoroughfare

Attractive wall sign

Pitched roof for drive-through lane

Streetside vegetation softens facade

No curb

Appealing "downtown" entrance for pedestrians



High quality construction materials

Mature vegetation maintained

Small directional sign

Large projecting sign in keeping with urban character of lot

Streetside windows help business engage pedestrian and automobile traffic

STARTING POINT

The preceding graphics represented a broad spectrum of new and old commercial development types in the Township at a variety of scales. These development types vary in height, style, floor area, land use, age, location and positioning. Despite their diversity, however, many common themes were identified throughout the section.

Considerations of site and architectural design are universal, and many desired features apply to all developments. For instance, a lack of parking lot landscaping is as important to the appearance of a small office building's parking area as it is to a large commercial retail center. Signage that is not in keeping with the surrounding area and the nature of the site can be as difficult an obstacle to aesthetically pleasing design in urban areas as it can in suburban areas. However, it is not necessarily true that a single rule for signage, landscaping or other site features could serve all masters in this case. The regulations must be varied according to the individual requirements of the district. The needs and limits of appropriateness are different in each district. Therefore, we must identify certain site design elements that are important and customize them to meet the needs of each district.

Hopefully, many of the themes identified in the photographs, such as high-quality materials, monument signage, insufficient screening, a lack of sidewalks or out-of-scale lighting will help project participants focus on these universal elements and begin thinking about solutions for each district. In the end, these are the types of elements which should be the focus of the final design recommendations.

NEXT STEPS: AN OUTLINE

This section will provide a basic summary for how the remainder of this project will be completed. This outline defines briefly the required elements of the major phases planned for the Manual's development. The project is scheduled to last approximately six (6) to seven (7) months. The first month encompassed the Research and Analysis Phase, which is already underway. The previous sections of this Kickoff Report are the result of the work undertaken during the first phase. The next steps are tentatively planned as follows:

Months 2-3: Community Input

A Community Workshop for residents, officials, and potential users of the document, providing an opportunity to bring their ideas to the table, will be the next step. This workshop will allow the project team to present its findings thus far, report on the status of the Manual's development and get initial feedback. Most importantly, however, the participants will work with the Project Team to complete two important activities that will guide the formulation of the recommendations in the final report. The activities will be as follows:

- *Visual Preference Survey*: Using the images captured in the Research and Analysis phase and images from other communities, Wade-Trim will facilitate an exercise in which participants will rate their preferred architectural and site design styles. The results of the survey will be crucial to understanding the preferred outcomes the community expects of the Site and Architectural Design Manual.

- *Visioning Session:* Small groups generate specific ideas and collectively express them to the entire group in this exercise. The ideas are then discussed by the participants and potentially voted upon to build consensus.

Month 4: First Cover-to-Cover Draft

Incorporating the results of the Community Input Phase, the project team will begin to create a draft document. The draft will include a preliminary collection of chapters, photographs, and illustrations, and should closely resemble the final product. Once completed, the draft will be distributed among the Township Planning Commissioners during a short presentation at the first available meeting.

Month 5: Review

The Planning Commission is then charged with contributing their overall review and comment. The Project Team will attend a meeting of the Commission's choosing to allow sufficient time to adequately scrutinize the Manual and generate a final round of input.

Month 6 or 7: Final Adoption and Distribution

Incorporating the thoughts, corrections, input and ideas from the final review of the draft in Month 5, the Project Team will submit a final copy for adoption by the Planning Commission.

Once adopted, the Site and Architectural Design Manual will be reproduced and delivered for use!

The components of the final document may include the following:

1. Introduction
2. Background Information
3. Definitions
4. Existing Conditions
5. Goals and Objectives/Intent
6. Design Recommendations by District including:
 Landscaping and Lighting
 Architectural Design
 Site Design
7. Implementation Recommendations
8. Conclusion
9. Appendix
 Visual Preference Survey Results
 Goals and Objectives Visioning results

WHERE DO WE HOPE TO END UP?

The desired outcome of this process is not to develop a sophisticated and effective planning tool, although that is the vehicle by which the outcome can be accomplished. The ultimate goal of this process is to encourage and approve the highest quality commercial developments possible in Bedford Township. It is the mission of this project to guide development in a subtle and consistent way, and to protect the rights of owners while contributing to the common good.

The finished manual will be a large format, full-color, spiral bound document with laminated covers. It will be rich with illustrations and will follow a logical and easy-to-use format. A useful illustrated architectural dictionary will be developed for the manual to aid in interpretation and provide clarity for both seasoned users and those users new to land development regulations. Many photographs will be used to illustrate concepts, convey ideas, and beautify the Manual. The final formatting and content, however, will ultimately be driven by the input of the Planning Commission and the community.

The Site and Architectural Design Manual will provide uniform advice to developers, will inform and validate the decisions of elected and appointed officials in the Township, and will solidify the community's vision for itself.