

Alternative Themes

The next phase of the Old York Road Corridor Improvement Plan, Phase B, will be the **Visioning** phase. In the Visioning phase, plans and other materials will be developed that portray different ways in which the corridor could evolve over the next five-to-twenty-five years. These plans will focus on **Alternative Visions** for the future of the corridor. Each Alternative will present a distinct concept for the function, features, and general character of the corridor as a whole and for specific parts of it. Each Alternative will suggest different implications for the corridor and its subareas – in terms of land use mix, redevelopment potential, circulation system, urban design qualities, community facilities, housing profile, recreational opportunities, and other issues.

Illustrations and descriptive materials will be generated to promote discussion. Each Alternative will suggest various opportunities and various problems. Members of the Steering Committee will be expected to distinguish among the Alternatives and to identify which Alternative makes the most sense or, if none of the Alternatives is totally agreeable, to indicate which aspects of the various Alternatives seem worthwhile. This process is cyclical, with review of one set of Alternatives one month leading to generation of a new set of Alternatives and, in turn, its review the next month. The process is intended to gradually narrow the range of choice and allow convergence on an approach that seems best suited for the corridor's future. It is that preferred approach, as modified through public review, which is expected to form the foundation for the generation of the Draft Corridor Improvement Plan in Phase C.

As a lead-in to Phase B, three **Alternative Themes** have been identified. These are the basis for the work to come in the first cycle of the Alternative Visions phase; the work exploring these Alternatives has not yet formally begun. The three Alternative Themes are *Town & Gown*, *Commerce Corridor*, and *Health & Welfare*.

Alternative A: Town and Gown

Assumptions

Alternative A, Town and Gown, proposes that two areas along Old York Road be targeted as centers for future development and redevelopment. One area would become the new center of Abington Township, with a mix of retail, residential, recreation, and institutional uses. A relocated municipal building, a post office, and a branch library would be the civic presence in the new Town Center, emphasizing its community orientation. The second area would be a residential and entertainment district with

facilities that support, and are supported by, a partnership between Abington Township and Penn State Abington.

Characteristics

The major focus for this theme is creating destination areas with the support of two key institutions that are located within the Old York Road Study area – the Township and Penn State Abington. These institutions would take a more prominent place along the corridor, in combination with a mix of retail, residential, and office uses. Both settings include mixed use buildings arranged in a walkable setting, with sidewalks, streetscape amenities, on-street parking, and surface parking lots located behind buildings. The “town” center would include the municipal services mentioned previously, as well as retail, office, open space and medium density residential uses. The “Gown” center would include an entertainment or theater complex for staging live performances, along with eating and drinking establishments and apartment units in mid-rise buildings.

Alternative B: Commerce Corridor

Assumptions

Alternative B, Commerce Corridor, focuses on the economic development of several existing concentrations of businesses along the Old York Road corridor. Currently, businesses along the corridor are spread fairly evenly throughout the corridor. This theme proposes that six distinct areas become targeted as locations for future development and redevelopment. The largest retail area is located near the intersection with the Fairway. Here, one subarea serves as a mixed-use center with retail, office, open space, a hotel, and residential uses. Across the Fairway, still within walking distance from the mixed use center, is a subarea for professional offices. On the west side of Old York Road, across from the Fairway, is a new, concentrated, modern facility for auto sales. Two historic shopping areas near the intersection with Susquehanna Street and further north on Old York Road, near the intersection with Roy Avenue, are the focus of infill efforts. Finally, at the intersection with London Street, a redeveloped London Center is the focus for entertainment, with a first run movie theater, eating and drinking establishments, retail use and medium-high density residential use.

Characteristics

Focused centers for commercial use is the prevailing theme for Alternative B. Distinct mixed retail and office areas are identified as destinations along the corridor. The new Town Center and London Center contain three-to-six-story mixed-use buildings set in walkable settings, with uses that support both daytime and nighttime use. The

professional office subarea establishes contemporary and flexible office space for employers looking for office space that is convenient to transit. The auto sales subarea reinvents the way auto dealerships utilize their properties for the display and storage of vehicles. In this new arrangement, multiple dealerships share stacking mechanisms and loading areas so that they can occupy a smaller amount of space. This new arrangement maximizes the dealers' visibility and accessibility. The older commercial areas near Susquehanna Street and Roy Avenue focus on streetscape, façade, and parking improvements that will provide a boost for existing business owners and encourage future investors in this area.

Alternative C: Health and Welfare

Assumptions

Alternative C proposes that the influence of Abington Memorial Hospital is harnessed in the identification of the corridor for activities associated with healthy living. The Health and Welfare alternative also attempts to translate an approach to medicine that emphasizes the healing of body, mind, and spirit into a land use, development, and urban design approach for the revitalization of the corridor. Buildings and streets would be arranged so as to encourage walking and/or biking from one space to another. Parks, open space, and plants would be prevalent in pocket parks and along roadways. Linkages between the many existing and planned health and welfare facilities on and off the corridor would be made. Land use, architecture, landscape and street design would focus on making people feel safe and comfortable.

Characteristics

This concept builds on emerging national trends toward healthier lifestyles by promoting improved pedestrian facilities and new bike facilities along the length of the corridor, with a new, programmable park at Old, Old York Road, and several identifiable centers. One focus area is a Health and Welfare Campus with specialized care offices, outpatient services, alternative medicine practices, parks and athletic fields. The Abington Memorial Hospital Visitor Support center includes a hotel, eating and drinking establishments, and convenience retail that can serve as a home base for those families of the AMH out of town patients. Finally, a Life Stage/Lifestyle Center organizes the redevelopment of properties around a central theme such as pre- or post-natal/family services, geriatric care, pediatric care, or alternative and preventative medicine.