
Ellicott City Improvements
Recommendations

December 1988

Land Design/Research, Inc.

Ellicott City Improvements Recommendations

Prepared for

Ellicott City Restoration Foundation

Prepared by

Land Design/Research, Inc.

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Introduction

Ellicott City represents a significant opportunity for Howard County because of its unique setting and interesting history. The retail district, centered on Main Street, is beginning to enjoy some revitalization momentum. The continuation of this momentum is largely dependent upon the ability of the public sector to respond with appropriate public amenities.

Land Design/Research, Inc. was retained by the Ellicott City Restoration Foundation to make recommendations for improving the City's public spaces. This report summarizes those recommendations.

The major obstacle to immediate improvement is the presence of overhead power lines, which are an extreme blight on the visual environment of Ellicott City. If the City is ever to reach its highest potential, these lines should be buried or relocated away from Main Street. However, the Foundation and its consultants recognize that this represents a longer term effort. In an attempt to build on the current revitalization interest, a three to five – year strategy has been developed.

The first section describes eight projects for areas which would not be impacted by burial or relocation of the power lines, and which would contribute greatly to improving the visual impact of Ellicott City as a whole. Each of the targeted sites is described with a schematic design plan, perspective sketch and cost estimate.

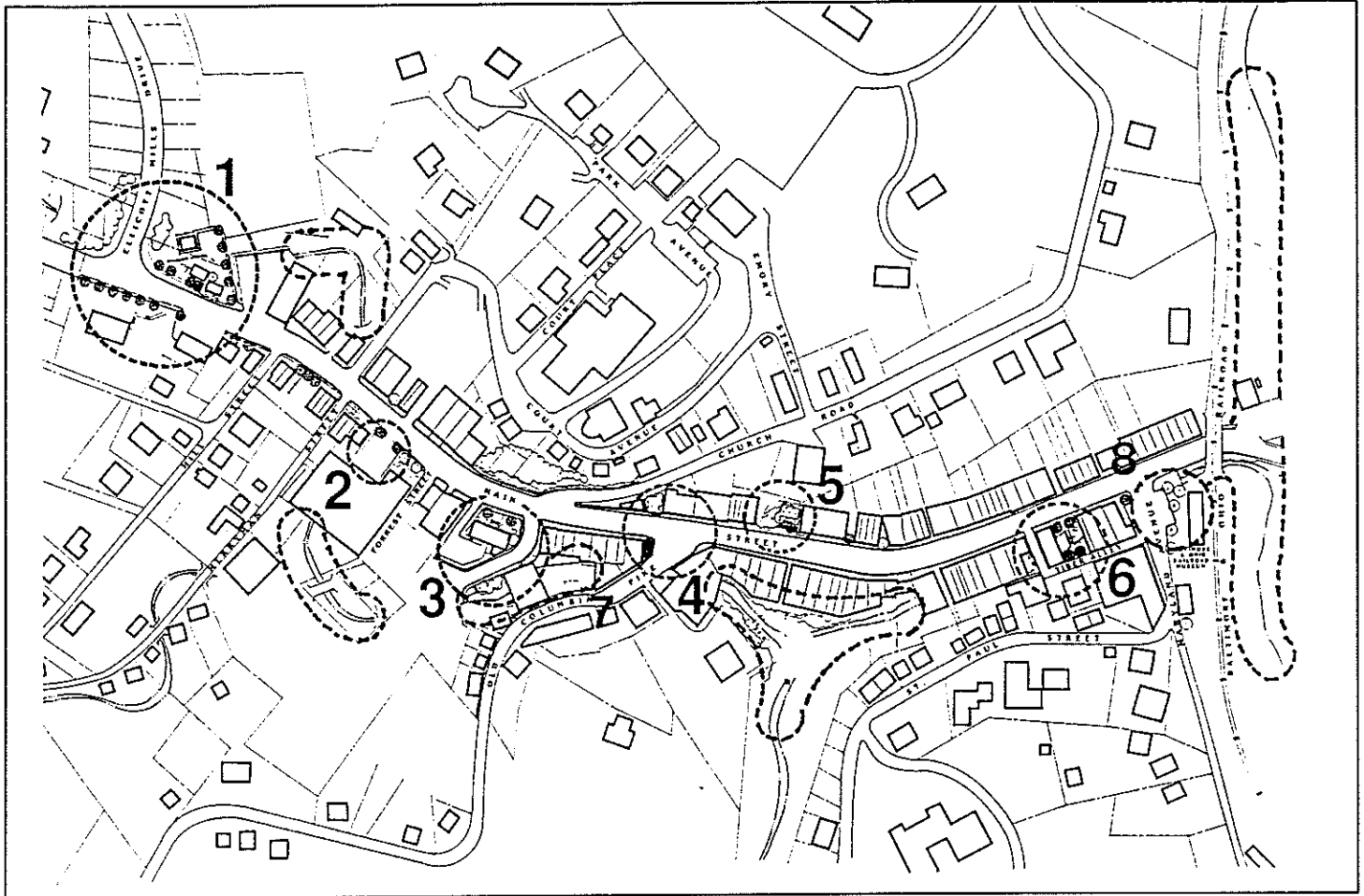
The second section of this report describes the walkway improvements for Main Street which, while essential, should not be undertaken until the disposition of the power lines has been determined.

The third section presents a recommended palette of paving materials and street furniture for use throughout Ellicott City. The fourth section proposes acquisition of a parcel of land for parking and presents a preliminary plan.

Development of a consensus on the design vocabulary and early implementation of the eight targeted projects can maintain the critical momentum in the interim.

Section I

Eight Targeted Areas



Preliminary Cost Estimate of the Eight Targeted Areas

<i>Item</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Total</i>
Area 1	The Upper Entry	\$126,000-142,000
Area 2	The Parking Lot Improvements	10,000-19,500
Area 3	The Post Office Entry	70,300-97,650
Area 4	The Corner Plaza	19,900-29,250
Area 5	The Seating-Step Park	32,600-34,600
Area 6	The River Pocket Park	80,300-85,700
Area 7	Ellicott City Sign Program	35,000-
Area 8	Plaza Maintenance	13,000
<i>Total</i>		<i>\$386,100-456,550</i>

Overview

Area 1 The Upper Entry

This area is a gateway into Ellicott City for vehicles and pedestrians. As a formal "front door," the treatment for this area should project the image of highest quality, establishing the character of Ellicott City. Currently, this area is undefined and lacking in human scale, order and consistency.

Recommended improvements are:

- installing brick sidewalks and trees;
- developing a *corridor* from the parking lot to Main Street by planting trees and shrubs;
- defining *edges* by constructing retaining walls; and
- strengthening the *urban fabric* of Ellicott City's historic development with the siting of the antique building.

Area 2 The Parking Lot

Main Street has a consistent development edge and historic character that is disrupted by the existing parking lot and building setback.

The suggested improvements will re-establish the historic setbacks as well as provide some screening of the existing parking. The proposed trees and shrubs will be planted on line with the facade of the adjacent buildings. The shrub height will be maintained at 30", which will screen the wheel-base of automobiles in the parking lot. Replanting the trees at grade in front of the existing building and replacing the railroad ties with six inch curb will establish a more urban treatment consistent with Ellicott City's image.

Area 3 The Post Office and Parking Entry

The setback of the Post Office makes this site a reference point in the town. Given the important role of the building and its placement in front of a large public parking lot, improvements around the Post Office will provide a strong image for Ellicott City.

Currently, the Post Office front yard is unimproved. It could be enhanced by adding two formally placed trees, shrubs and brick paving.

The public parking lot behind the Post Office will be the first impression for many visitors to Ellicott City. That impression can be improved in several ways. Ample sidewalks from the parking lot to Main Street should be installed, and Hamilton Street's turning radius should be widened by eliminating curbside

parking. The nearby stream can be featured by adding small plazas and railings for pedestrian access. Cars can be screened by planting trees and hedges in place of five parking spaces.

Area 4 The Corner Plaza

This corner is not only one of the most visible in town, but also the first impression of Ellicott City for visitors arriving on Old Columbia Pike. Currently, this area is unused and undefined — apart from a mural of Ellicott City painted on a wall to disguise its “party wall” condition.

Pedestrian use can be encouraged by providing trees and benches. The masonry environment can be softened by installing a planting bed at the base of the building. There are many possible solutions to the “party wall” condition; for example, a wood sculpture, a pictorial history wall, or a stuccoed wall with canvas awning. Further study is needed to develop the most appropriate treatment of this wall. The chosen solution will be highly visible and will contribute to Ellicott City’s special identity.

Area 5 The Seating-Step Park

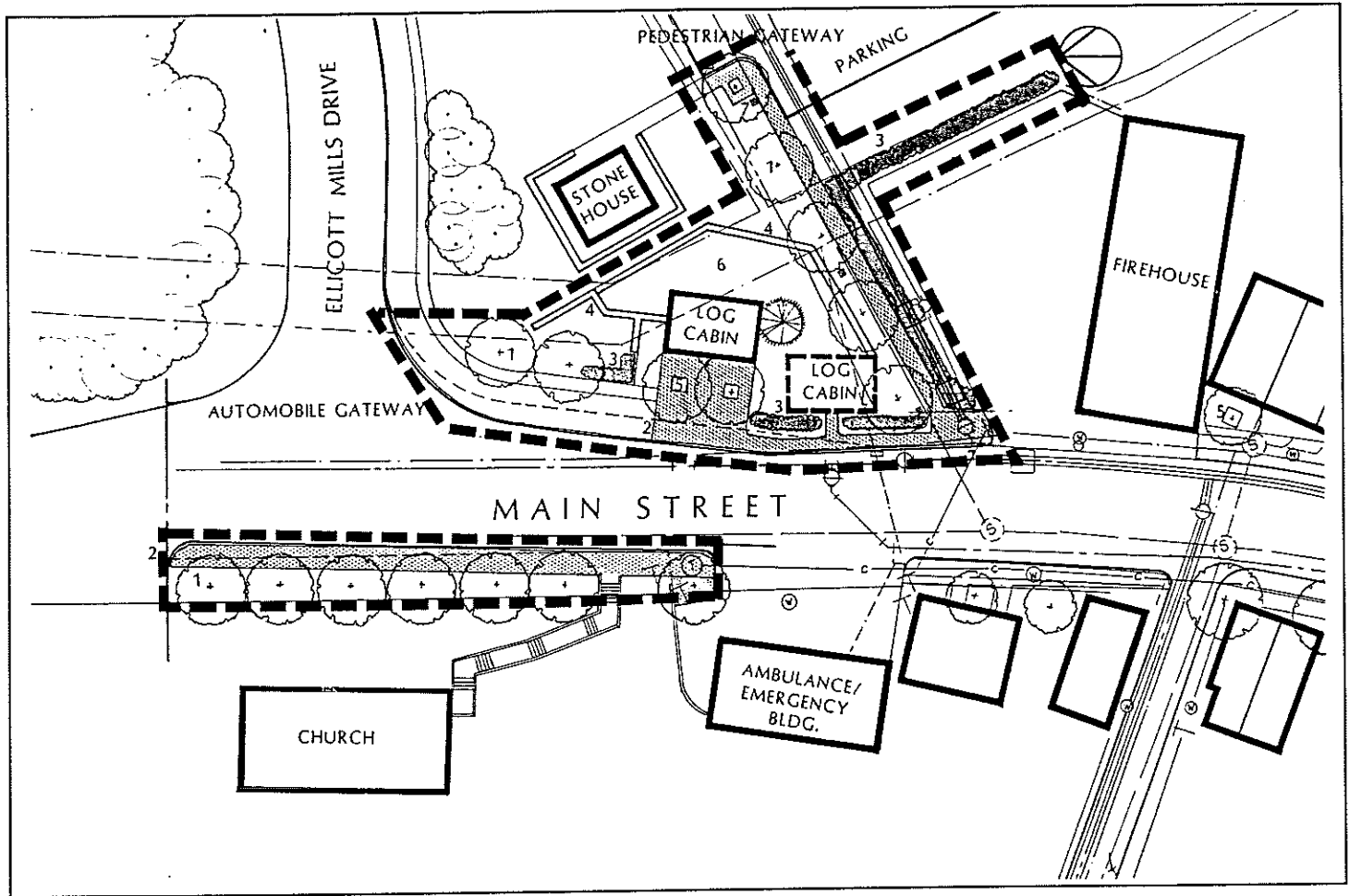
This lot is an excellent opportunity for the town to provide a small park with shade to be enjoyed by visitors in the hot summer months.

Currently, the lot is under-utilized because of a low wall along the sidewalk which acts as a barrier. The elimination of this wall and the installation of a series of steps will provide easy access and an opportunity for visitors to rest while watching people walk by. The park can become an informal amphitheatre on the street life of Ellicott City.

Area 6 The River Pocket Park

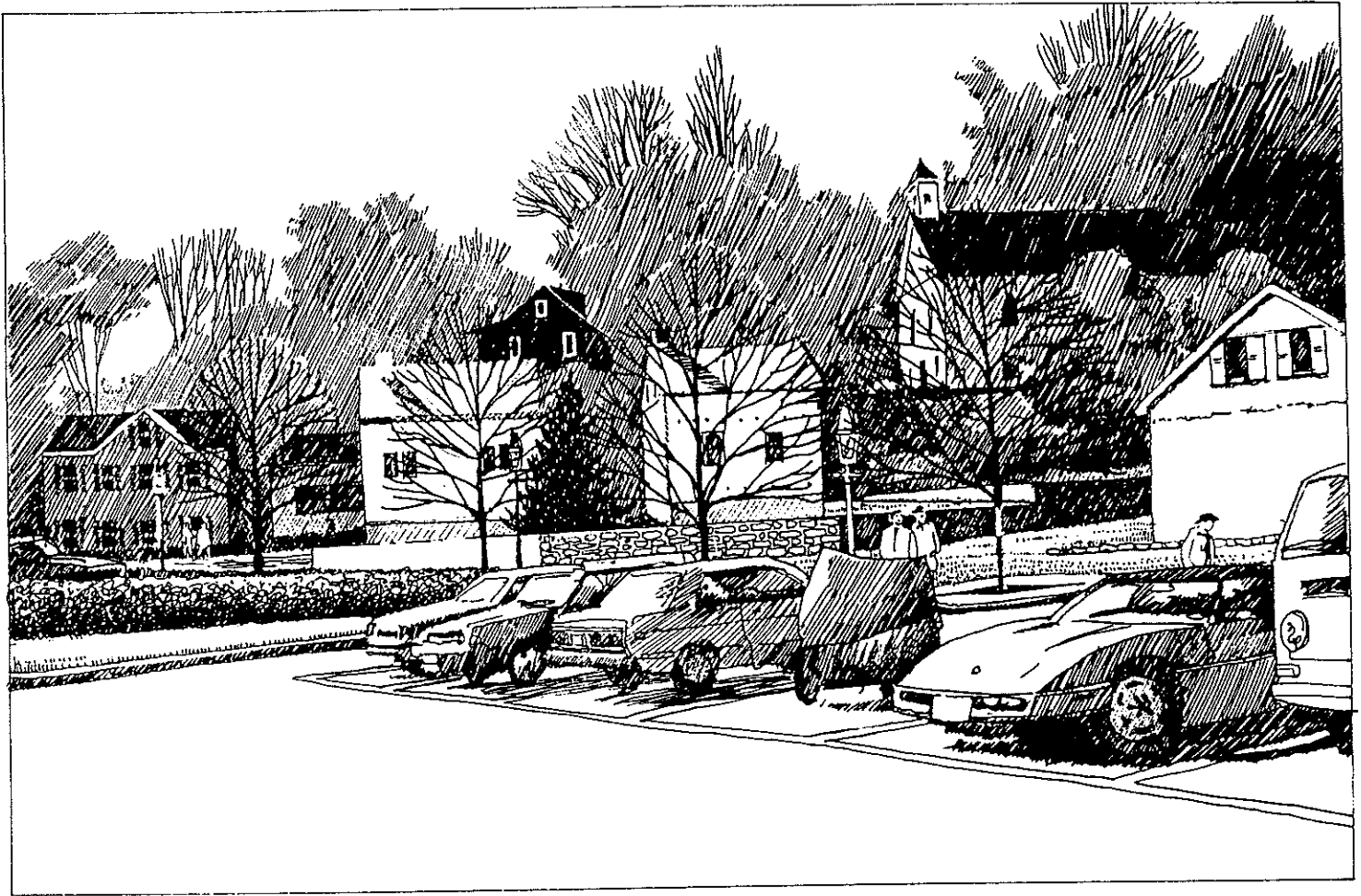
Water features are always enticing elements in the landscape. Ellicott City’s image is uniquely defined by the Tiber River that runs under and between its buildings.

Currently, the parcel illustrated as Area 6 is up for sale. Public acquisition and improvement of this parcel could create a park that would showcase the river and its part in Ellicott City’s historical development.

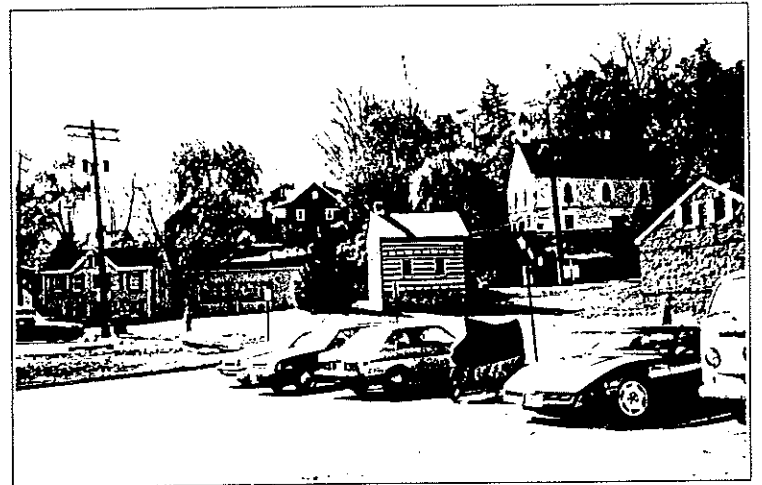


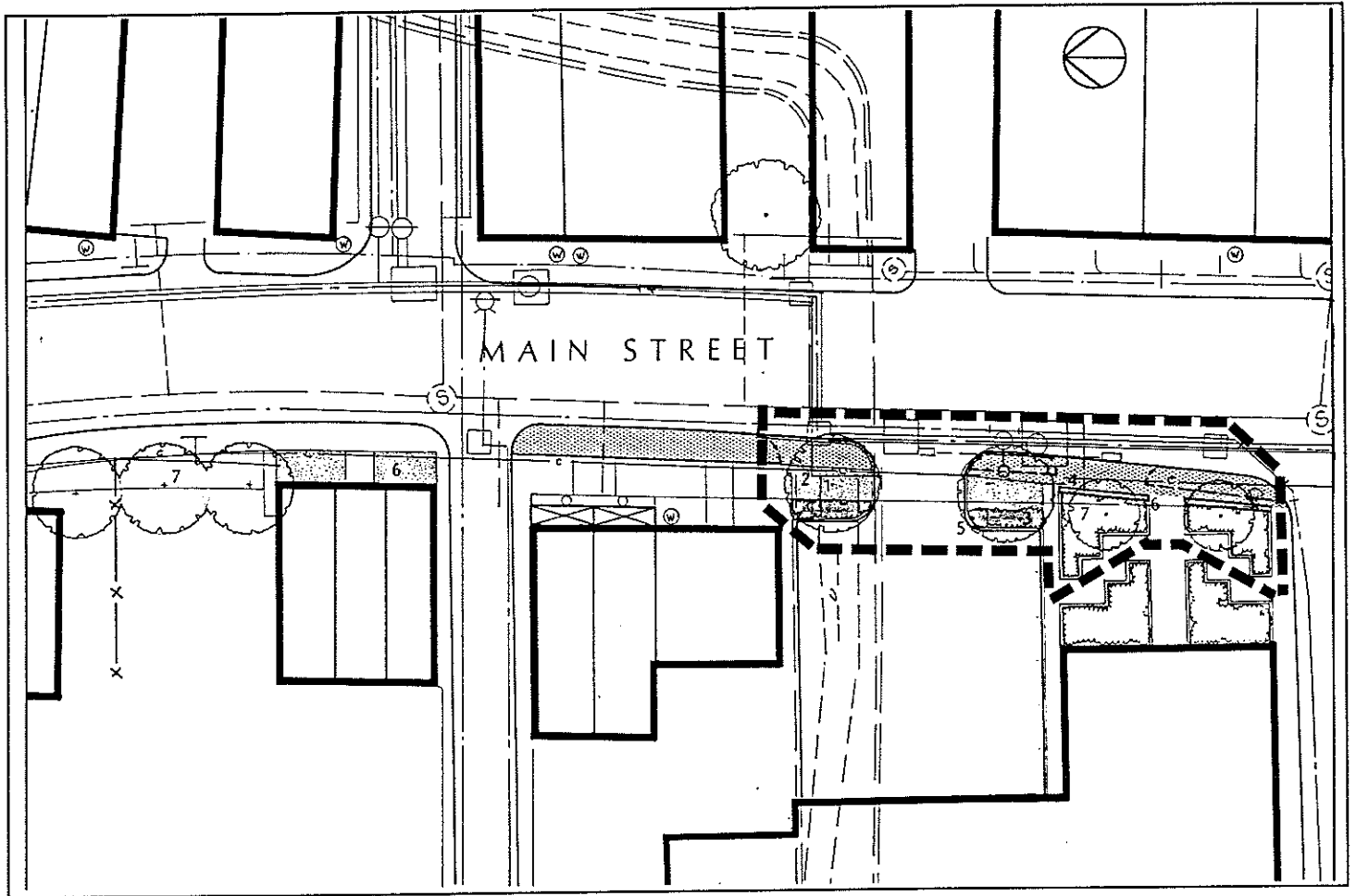
Preliminary Cost Estimate Area 1: The Upper Entry

<i>Item</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	Trees	\$15,750	4" caliper
2	Paving	33,000	brick
3	Shrubs	3,200	3'-0" wide
4	Fieldstone retaining walls	19,840	4'-0" height
5	Tree grates	2,700	5'-0" square
6	Sod	1,160	---
7	Lighting	8,100	---
8	Fill	8,280	---
9	Curb	5,000-17,000	concrete or granite
	<i>subtotal</i>	<i>\$97,030-109,030</i>	
	<i>contingency</i>	<i>28,970-32,970</i>	<i>(30%)</i>
	Total	\$126,000-142,000	



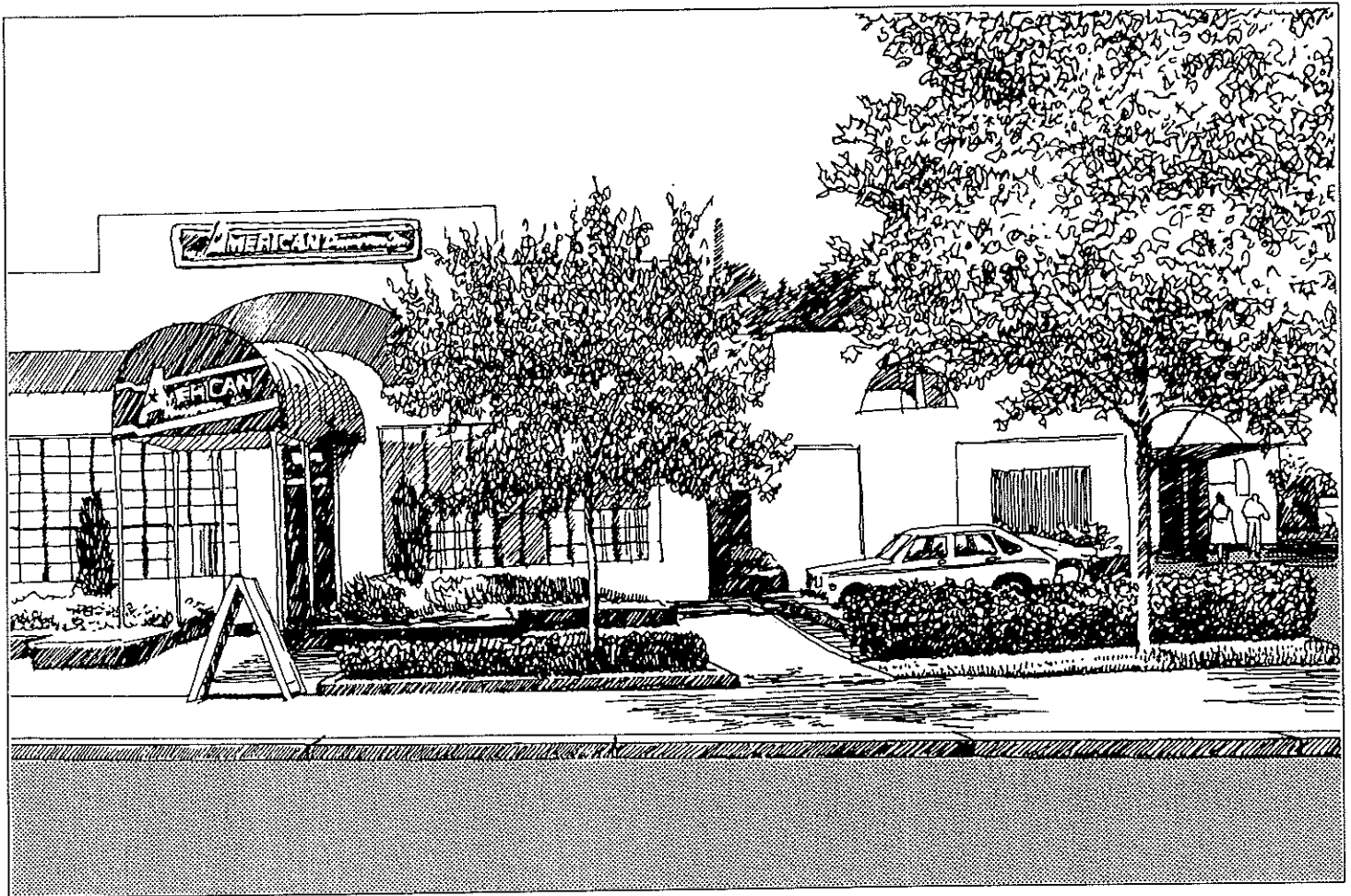
Public acquisition and improvement of this parcel could create a park that would showcase the Tiber River and its part in Ellicott City's historical development.





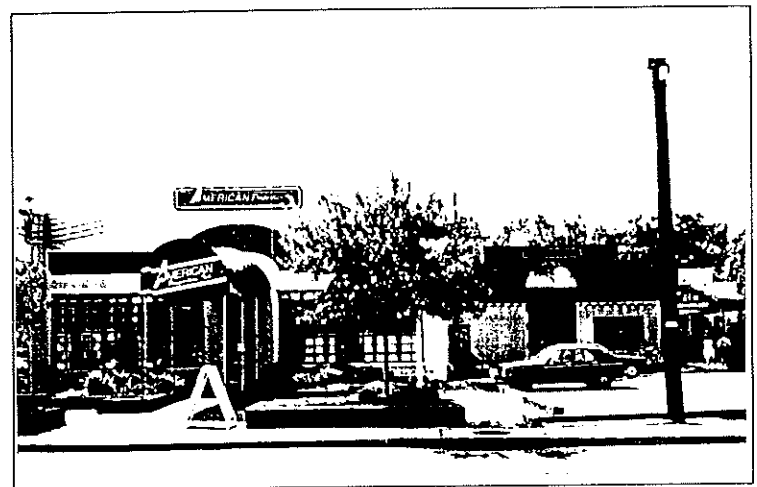
Preliminary Cost Estimate Area 2: Parking Lot Improvements

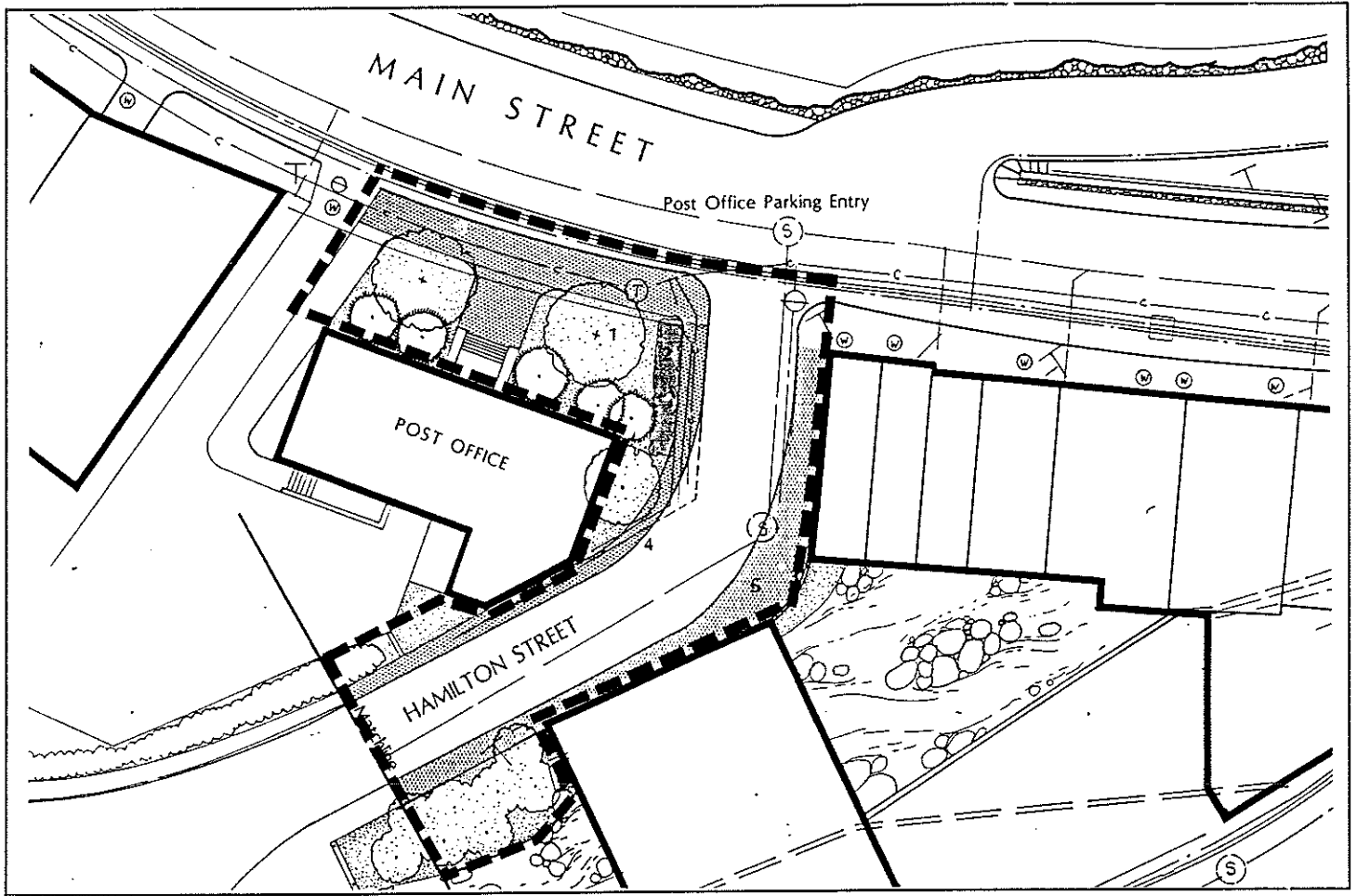
Item	Item	Total	Remarks
1	Shade trees	\$1,500	4" caliper
2	Sod	160	---
3	Shrubs for screening	360	3'-0" height
4	Paving	2,700	brick
5	Curb	2,600-9,000	concrete or granite
6	Planting strip	200-1,000	concrete or granite
7	Regrade trees	250	set to grade
subtotal		\$7,770-14,970	
contingency		2,230-4,530	(30%)
Total		\$10,000-19,500	



Planting trees and shrubs on line with the facade of the adjacent buildings will re-establish the historic set back and screen the wheel-base of automobiles in the parking lot.

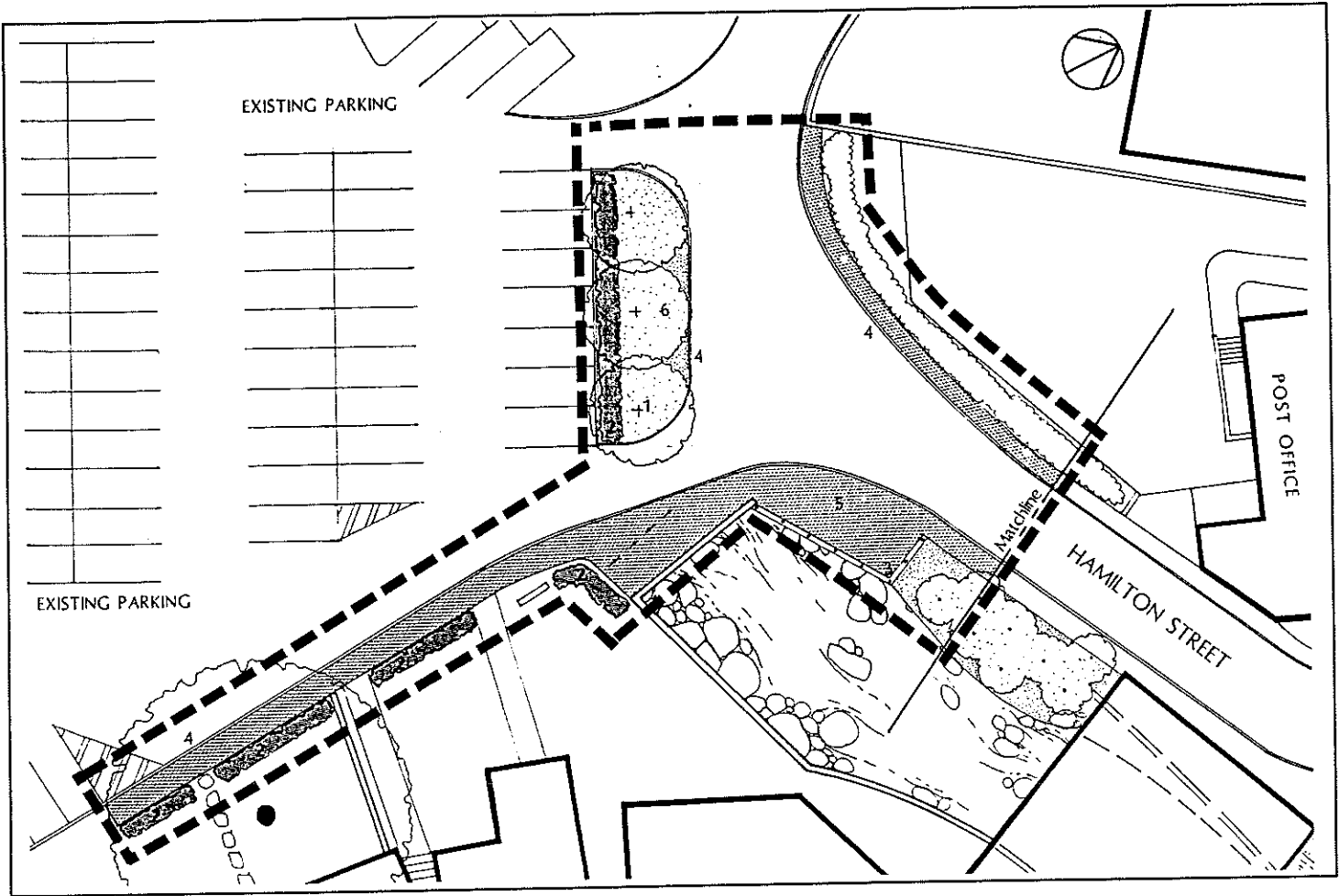
Replacing the existing railroad ties with six inch curb will create a more urban treatment consistent with Ellicott City's image.





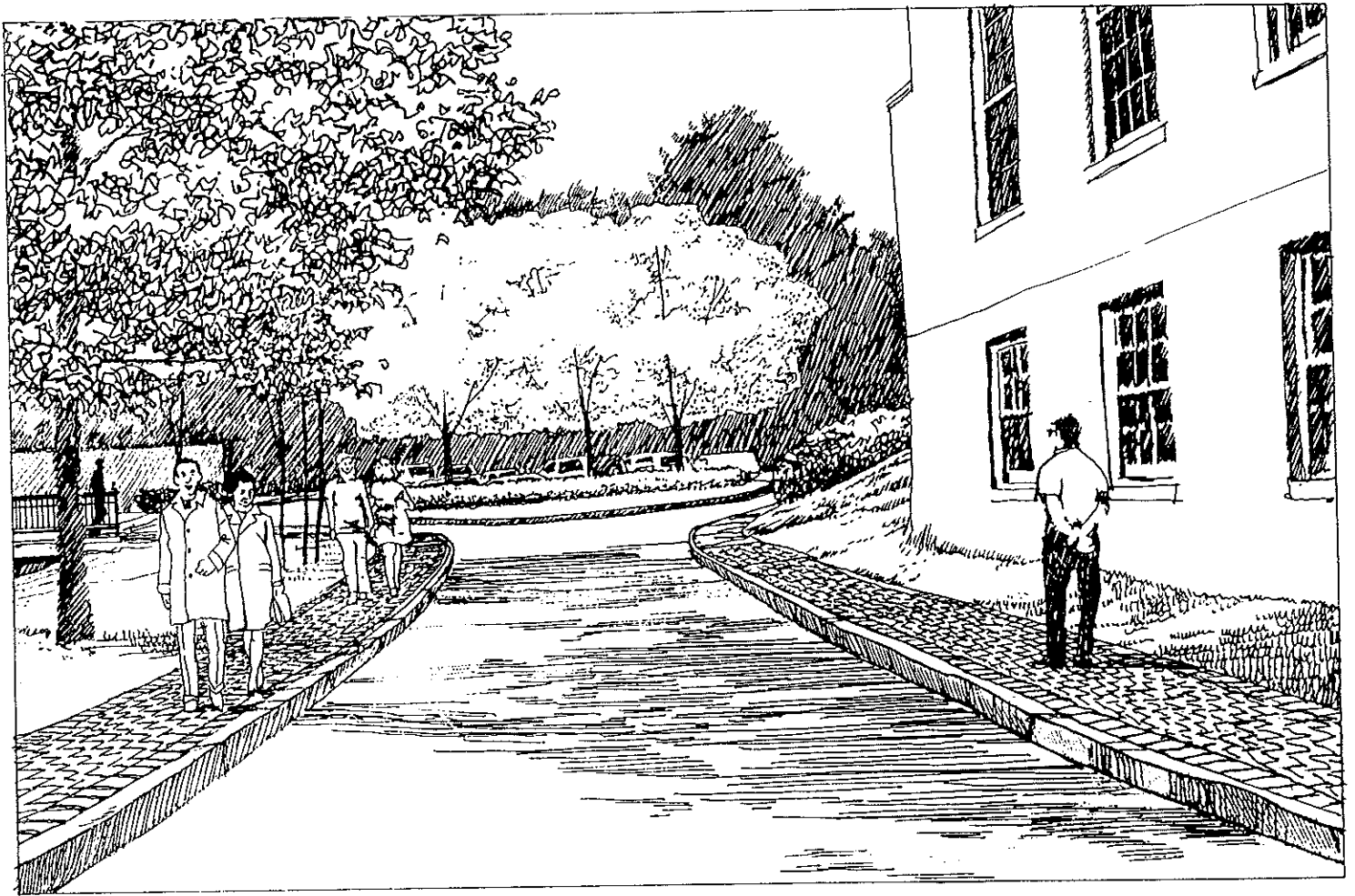
Preliminary Cost Estimate Area 3: The Post Office

Item	Item	Total	Remarks
1	Shade Trees	\$1,500	4" caliper
2	Shrubs	450	3'-0" height
3	Railing	1,125	steel
4	Curb	5,500-17,000	concrete or granite
5	Brick	23,000	
	<i>subtotal</i>	<i>\$31,575-43,075</i>	



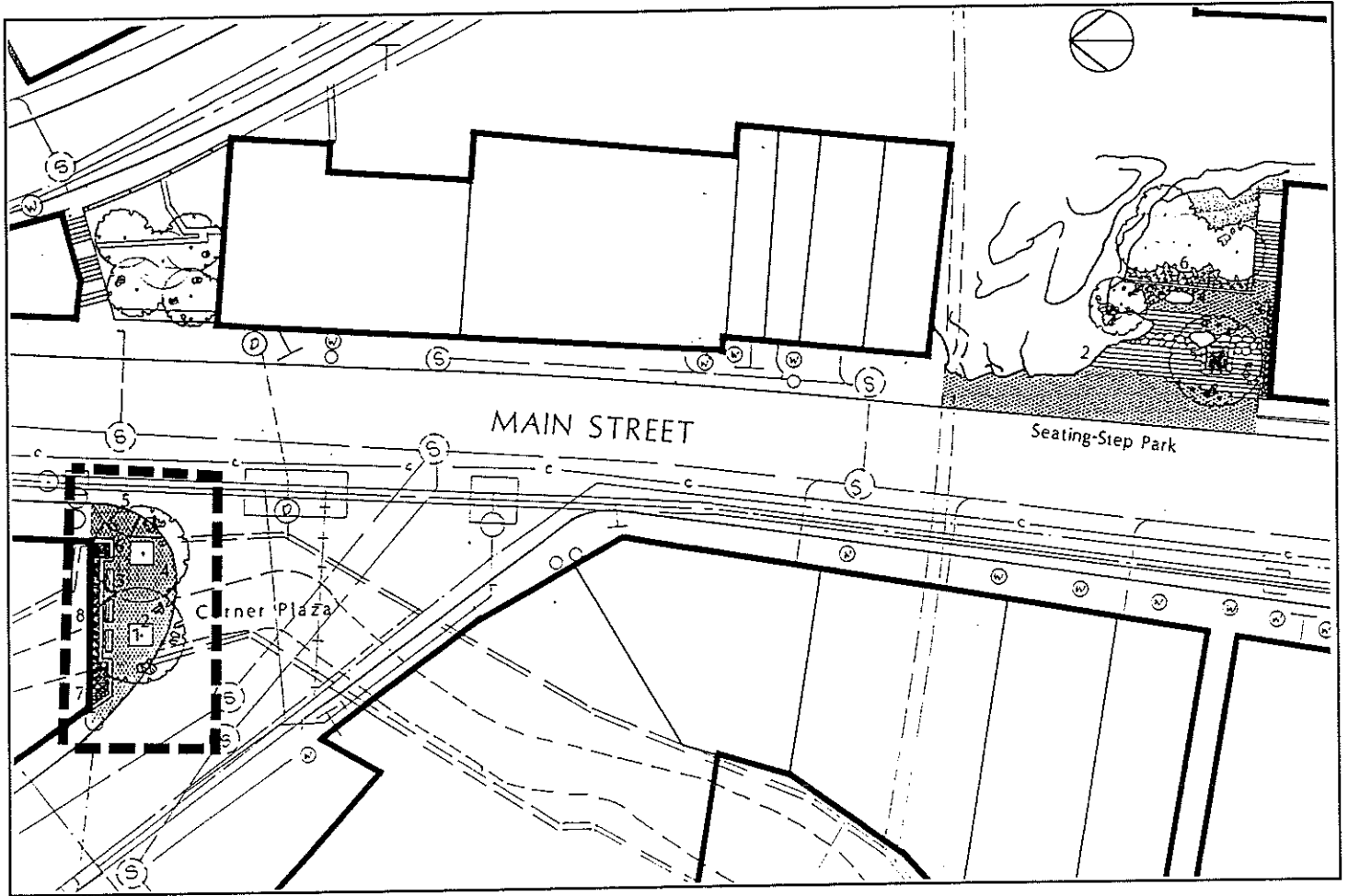
Preliminary Cost Estimate Area 3: The Post Office Parking Entry

Item	Item	Total	Remarks
1	Shade Trees	\$2,250	4" caliper
2	Shrubs	3,000	3'-0" height
3	Railing	7,500	steel
4	Curb	10,000-31,000	concrete or granite
5	Brick	31,000	
6	Sod	360	
	subtotal	\$54,110-75,110	
	contingency	16,200-22,500	(30%)
	Total	\$70,310-97,643	



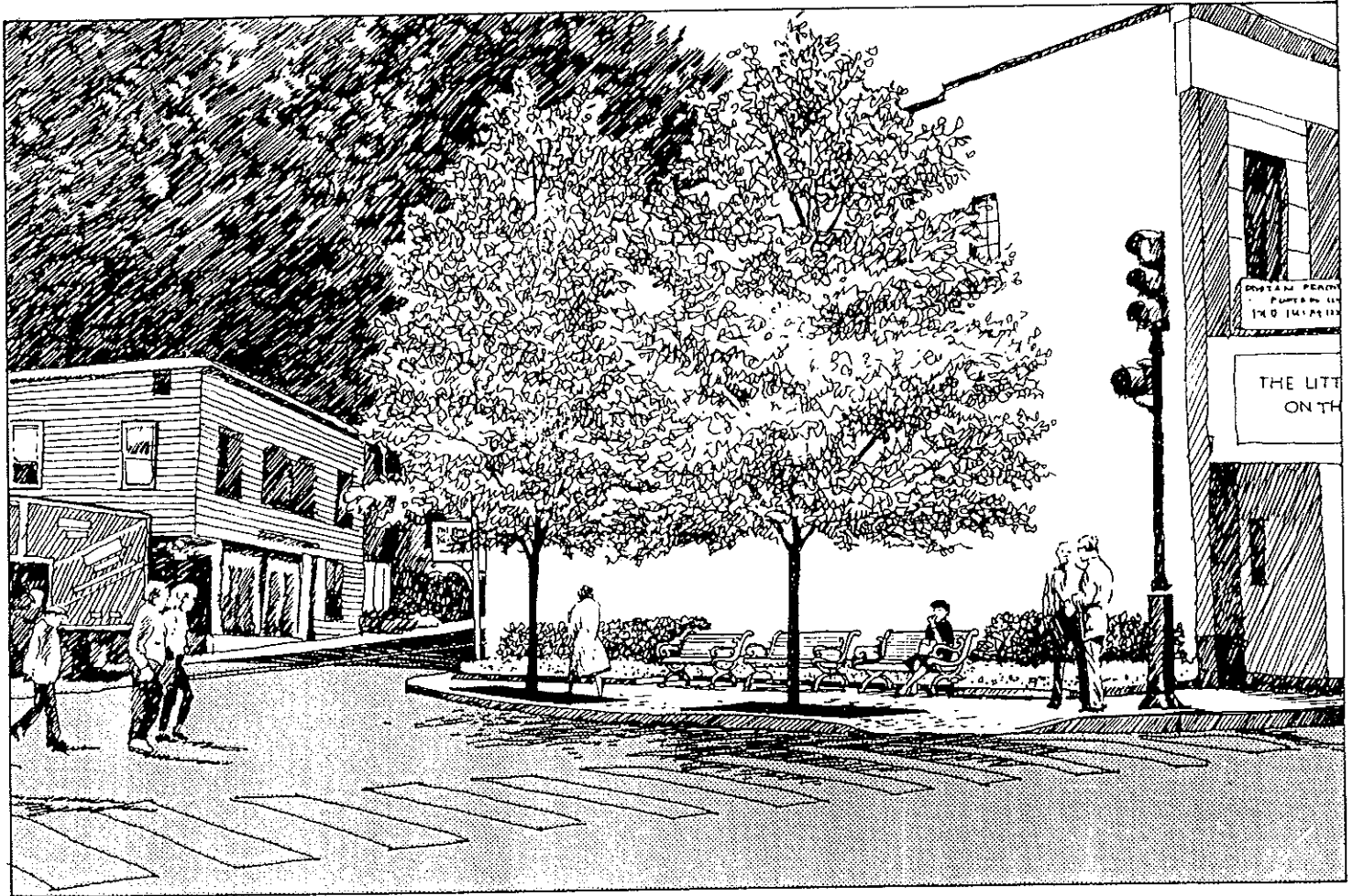
The public parking lot behind the Post Office will be the first impression for many visitors to Ellicott City. This impression can be improved in several ways: sidewalks, screening of cars, and featuring a nearby stream by adding small plazas and railings for pedestrian access.





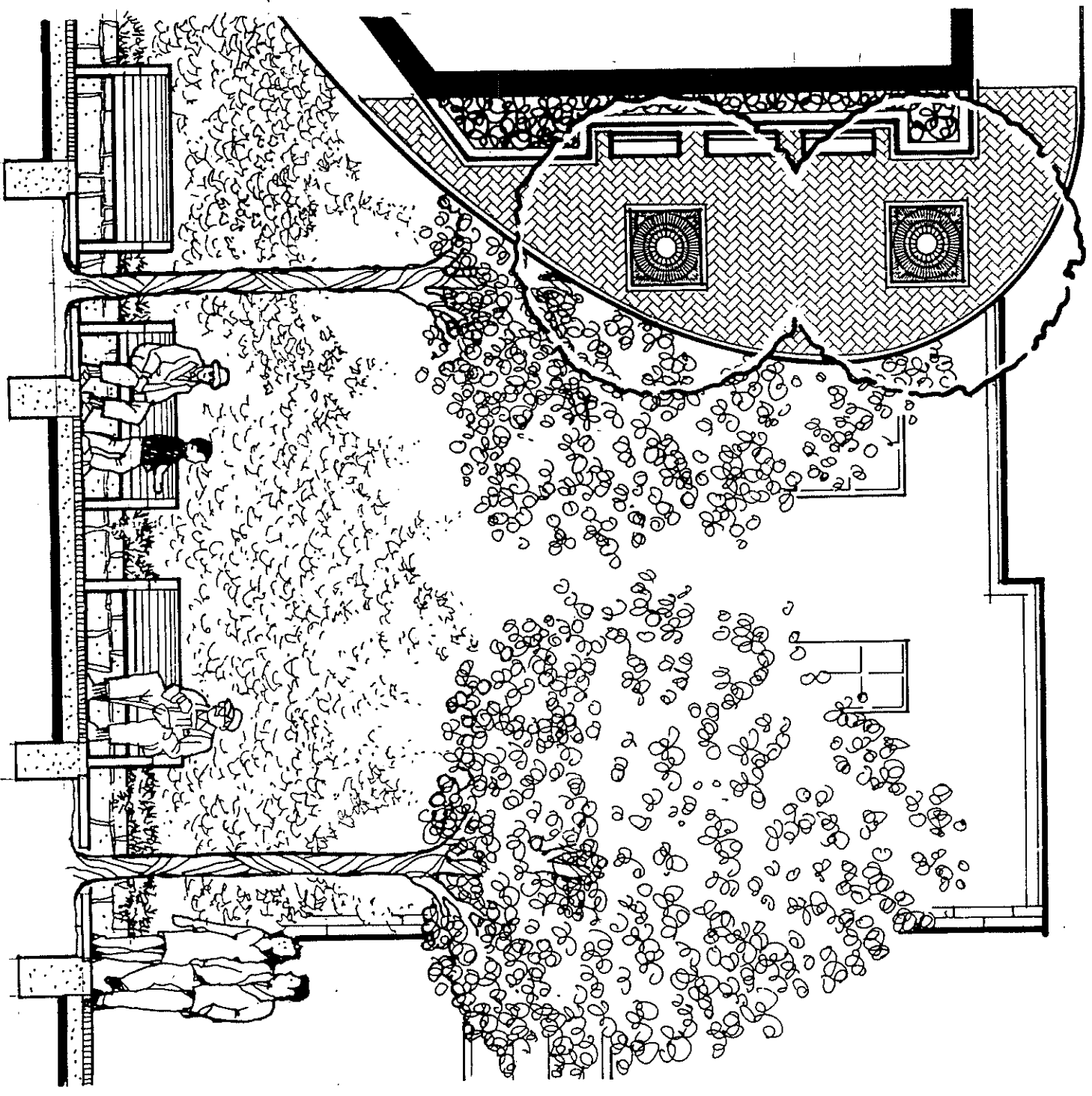
Preliminary Cost Estimate Area 4: The Corner Plaza

Item	Item	Total	Remarks
1	Tree	\$1,500	4" caliper
2	Tree grates	1,350	5'-0" square
3	Benches	3,300	5'-0" length
4	Brick paving	5,700	---
5	Curb	1,400-7,500	concrete or granite
6	Planter edge	500-1,575	concrete or granite
7	Groundcover and bulbs	1,575	---
	<i>subtotal</i>	\$15,325-22,500	
	<i>contingency</i>	4,575-6,750	(30%)
	Total	\$19,900-29,250	

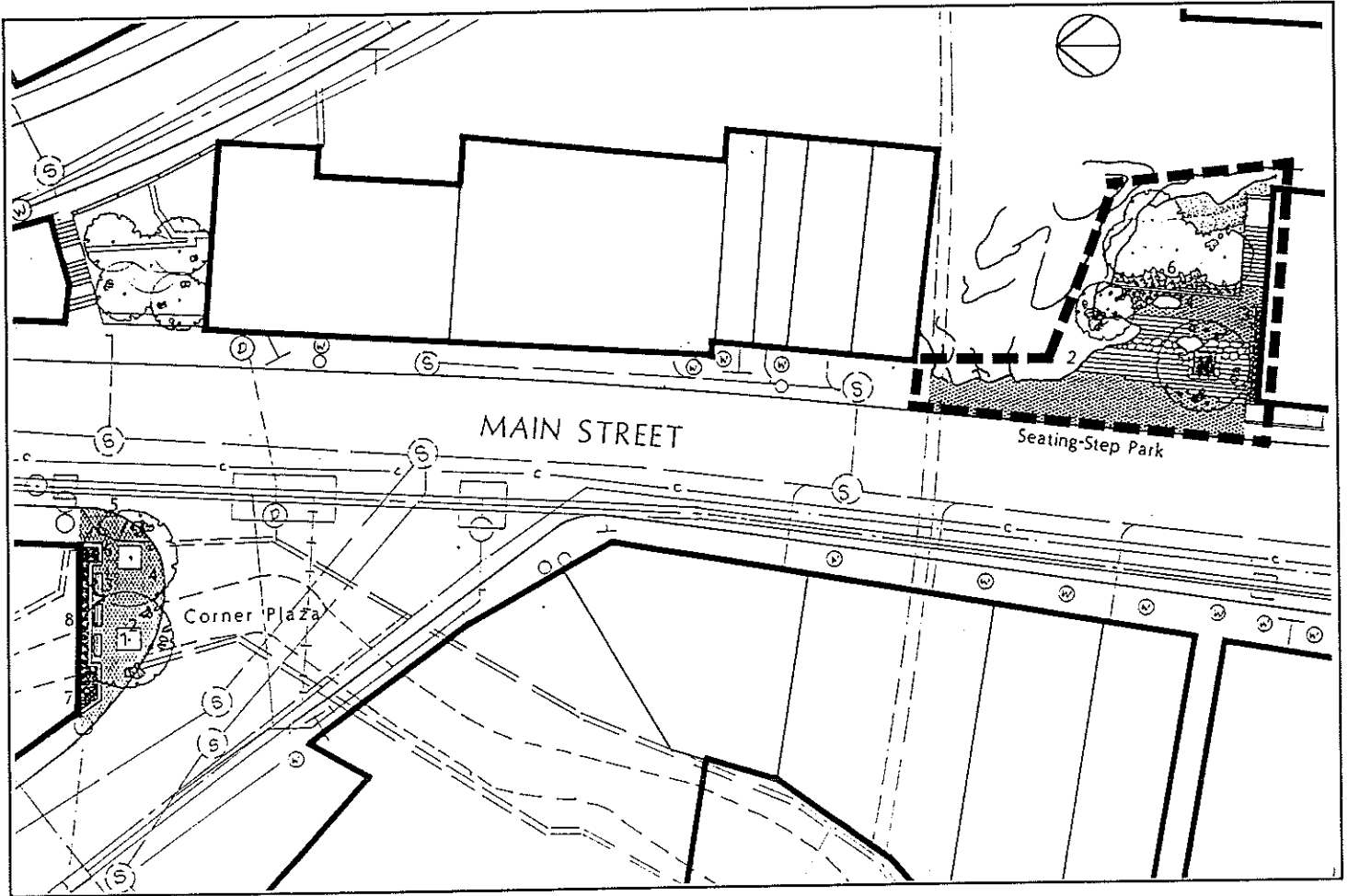


This corner is one of the most visible in town, and the first impression of Ellicott City for visitors arriving on Old Columbia Pike. Currently, this area is unused and undefined. Pedestrian use can be encouraged by providing trees and benches.



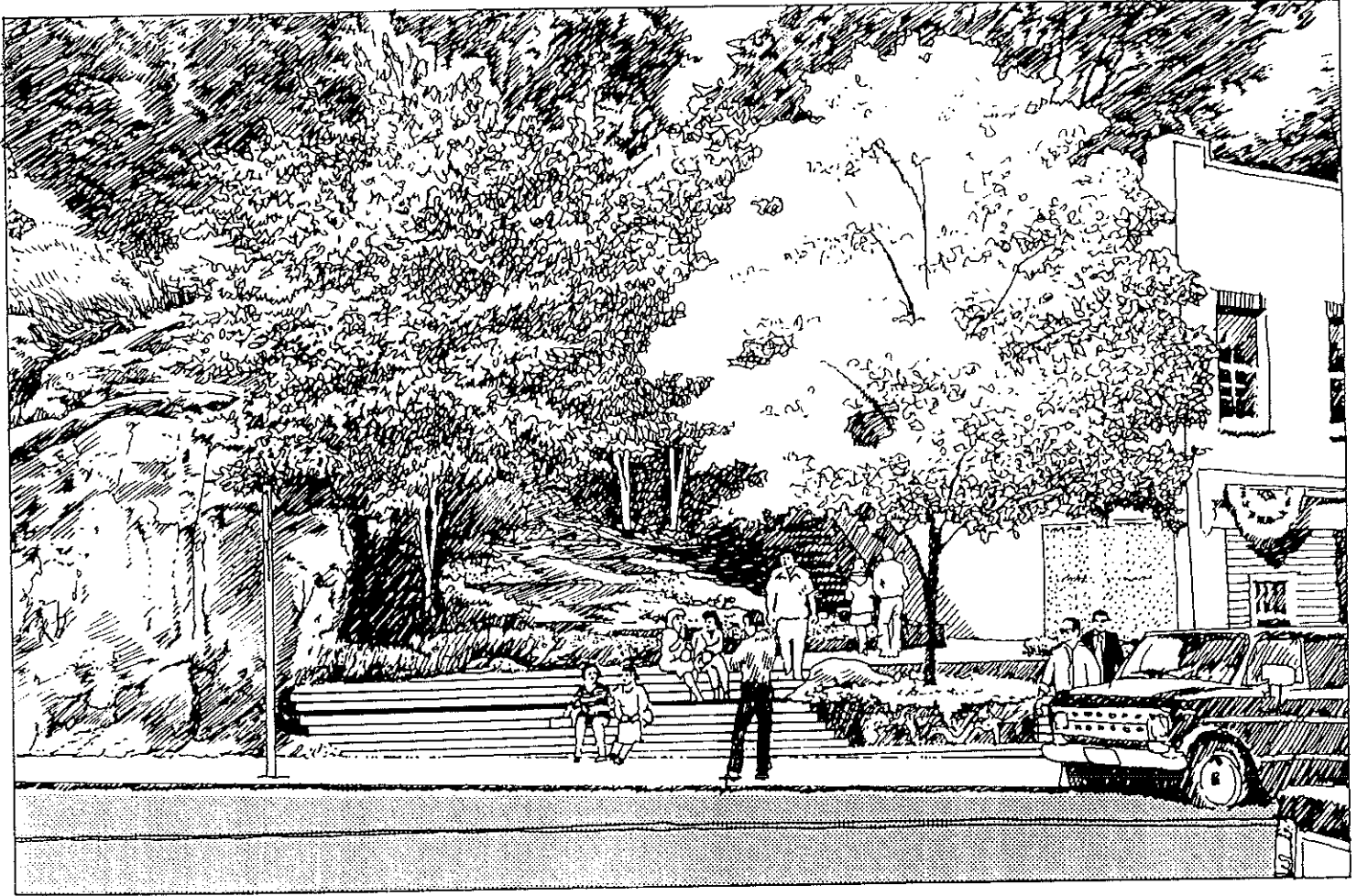


Area 4 The Corner Plaza Plan and Section

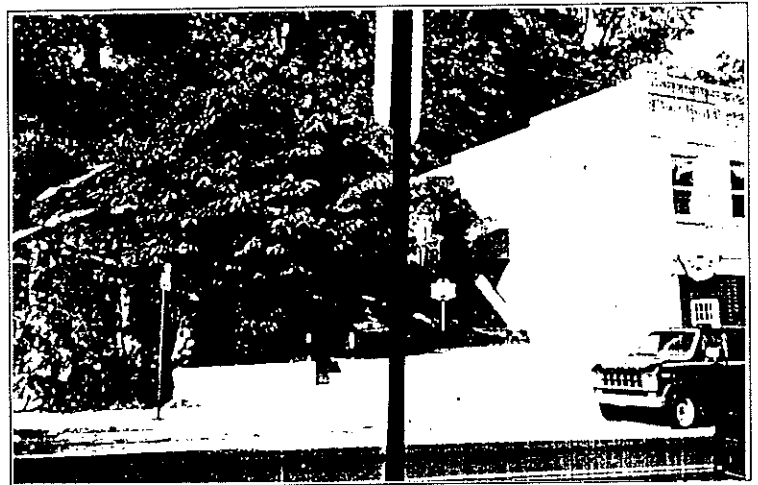


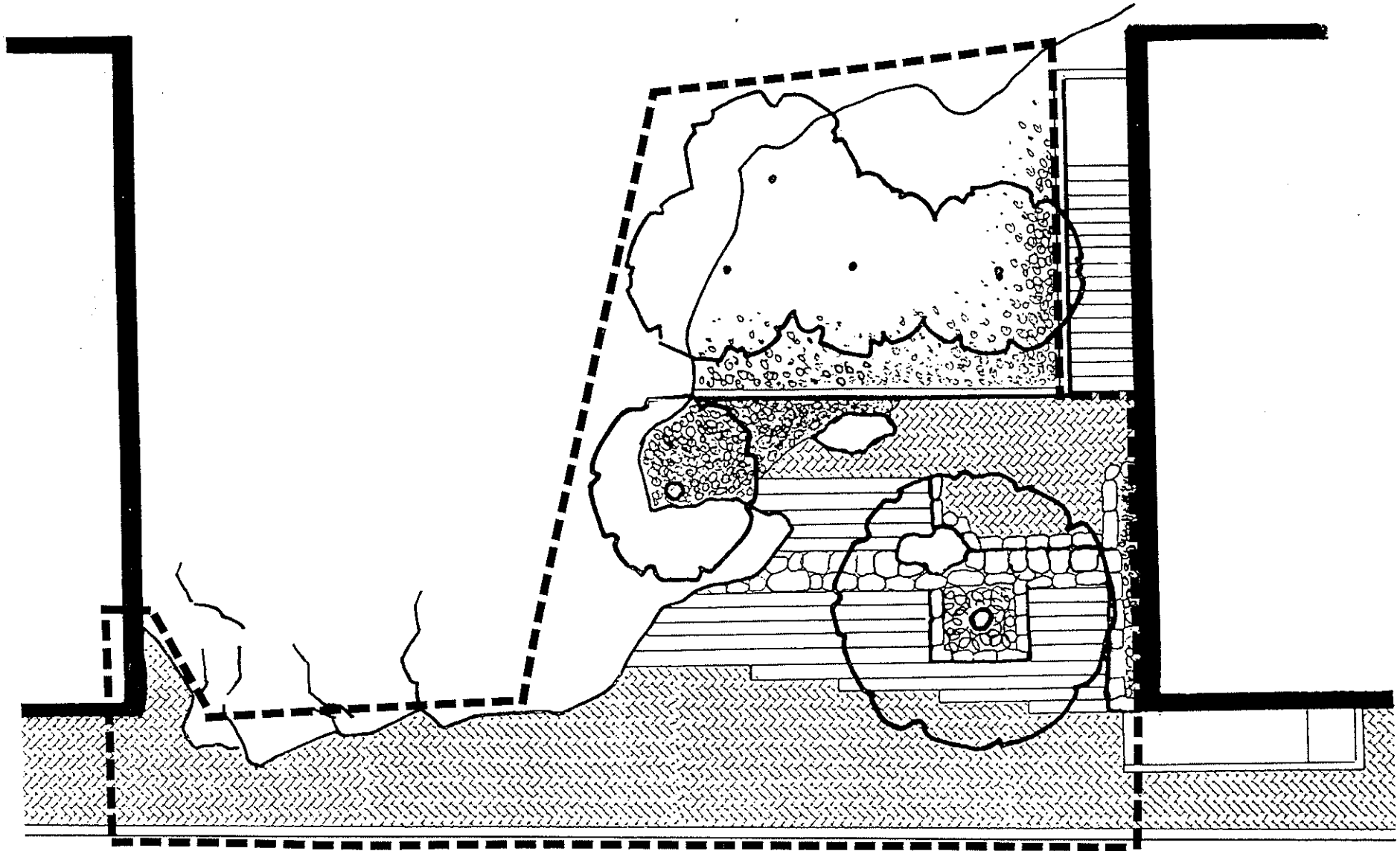
Preliminary Cost Estimate Area 5: The Seating-Step Park

Item	Item	Total	Remarks
1	Trees	\$750	4" caliper
2	Granite steps	9,800	---
3	Retaining walls	7,600	field stone
4	Granite edging	870	---
5	Cobble paving	2,000	---
6	Groundcover and bulbs	3,000	---
7	Curb	1,000-2,500	concrete or granite
	<i>subtotal</i>	\$25,100-26,600	
	<i>contingency</i>	7,500-8,000	(30%)
	Total	\$32,600-34,600	



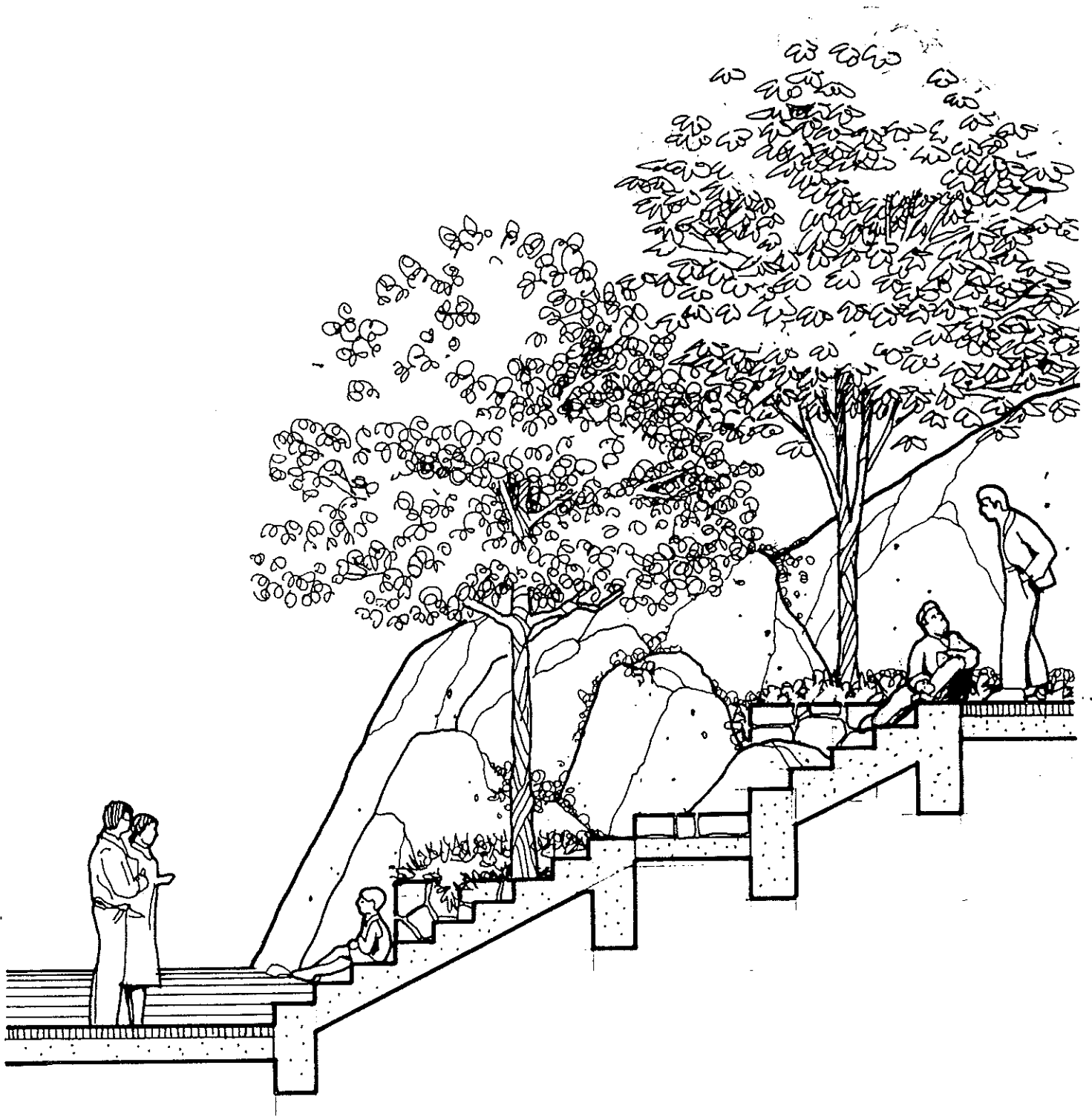
Elimination of the existing wall and installation of a series of steps will provide easy access and opportunity for visitors to rest while watching people walk by. The park can become an informal amphitheater on the street life of Ellicott City.



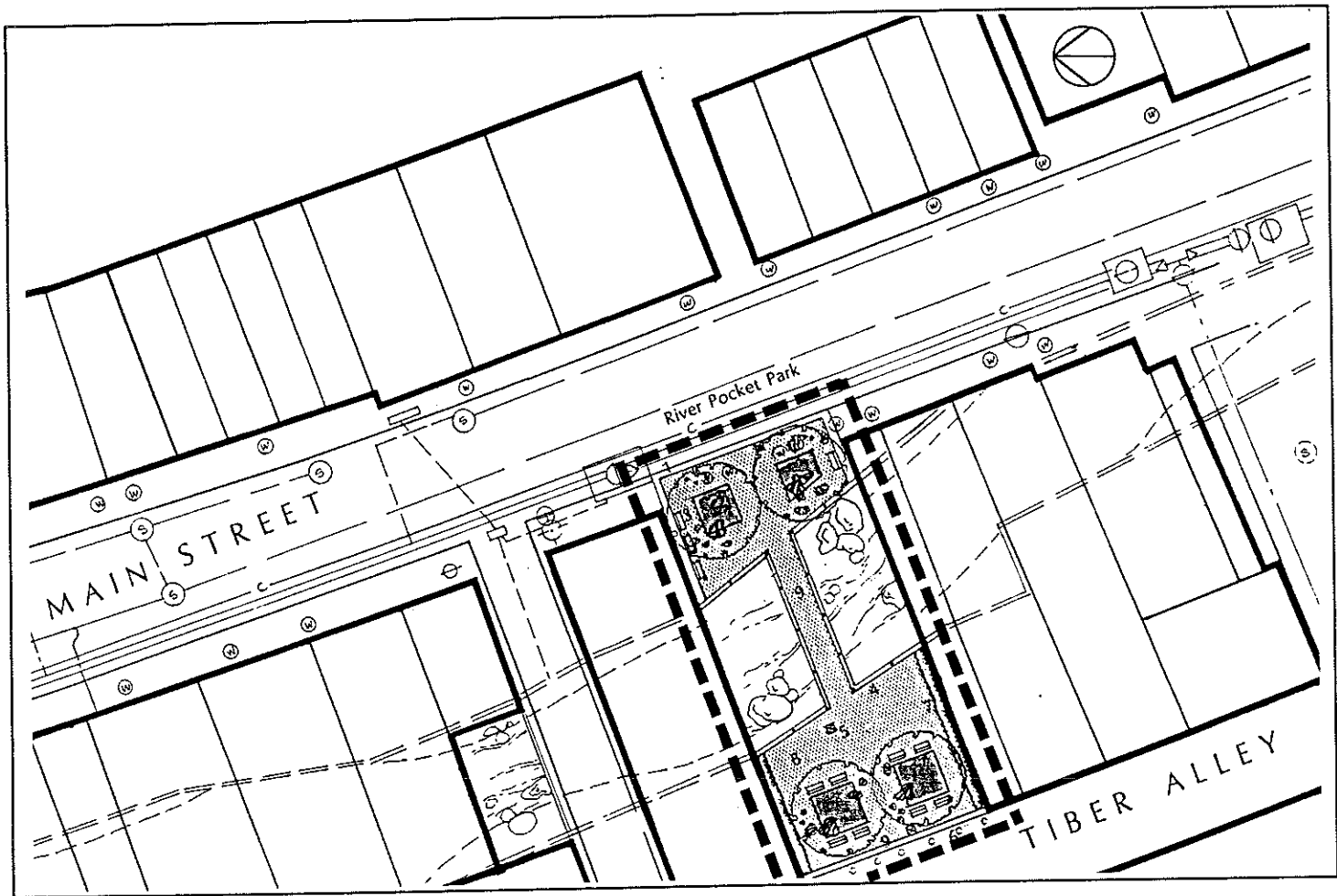


Area 5 *The Seating-Step Park* Plan

Ellicott City, MD

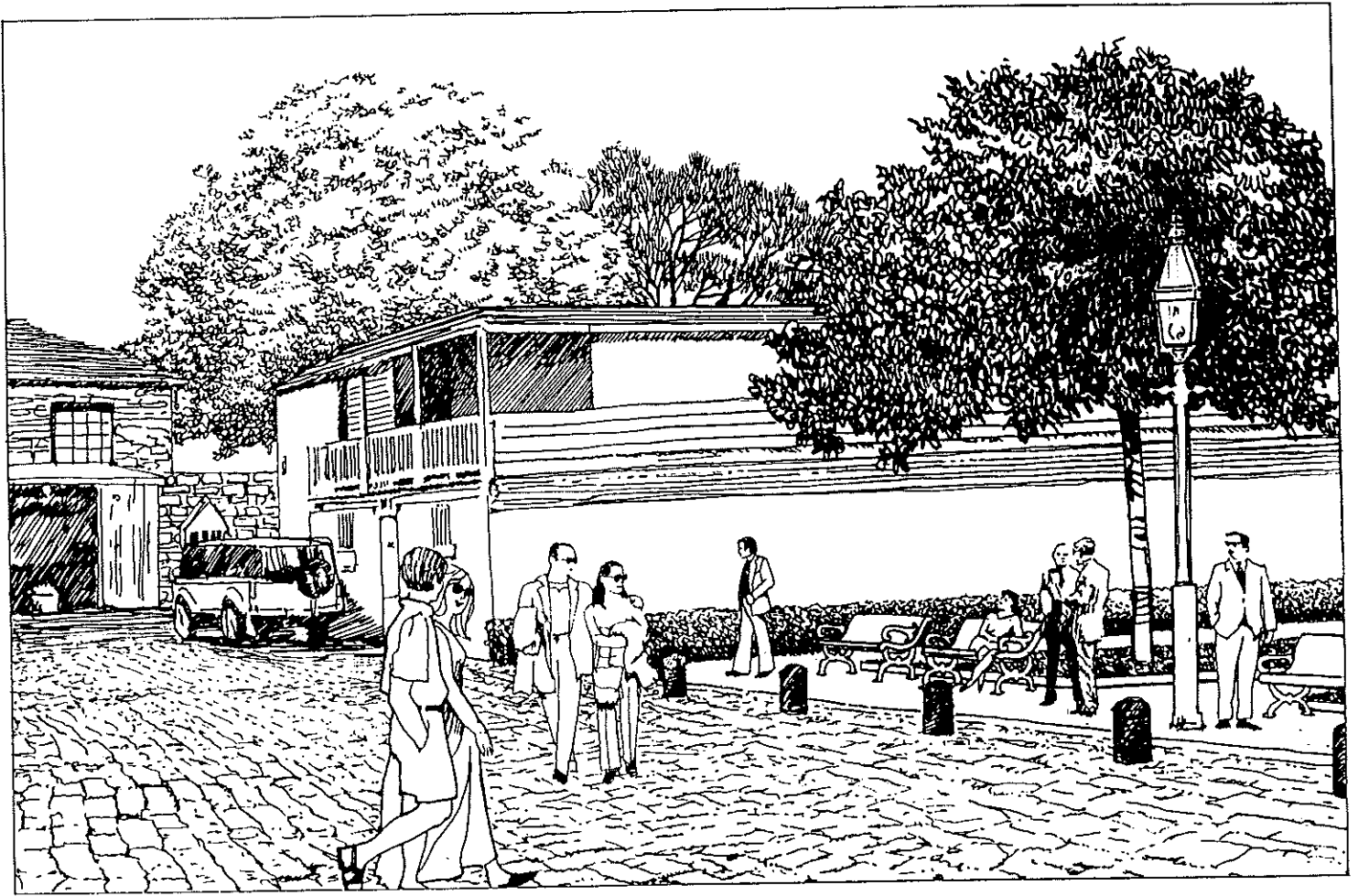


Area 5 *The Seating-Step Park Section*



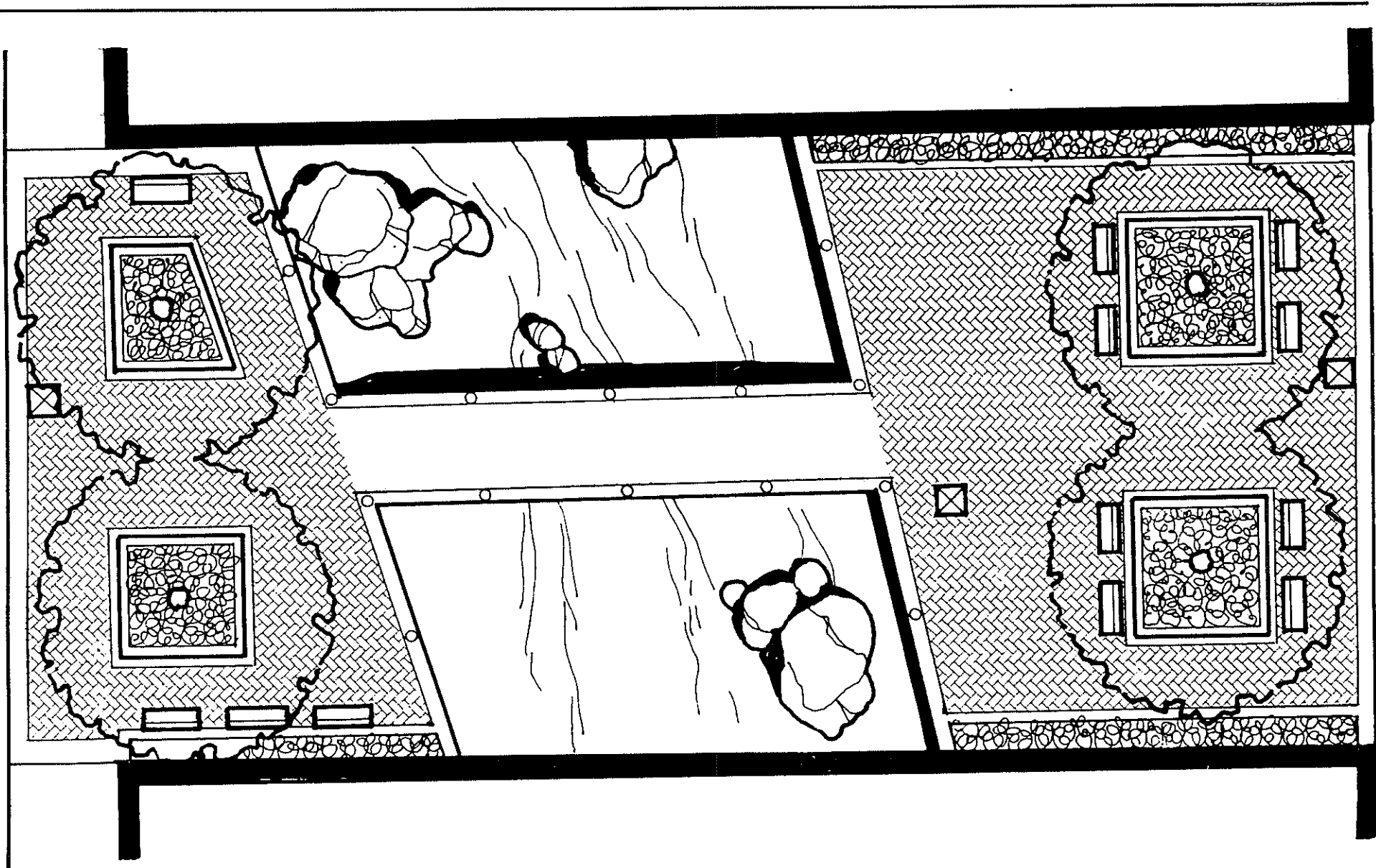
Preliminary Cost Estimate Area 6: The River Pocket Park

Item	Item	Total	Remarks
1	Feature strips in paving	\$800 -5,000	concrete or granite
2	Trees	3,000	4" caliper
3	Benches	13,200	5'-0" length
4	Railing	6,750	steel
5	Lighting	8,100	cast iron
6	Bollards	1,200	---
7	Planting beds, groundcover & bulbs	2,700	---
8	Brick paving	12,000	---
9	Bridge (optional)	14,000	---
subtotal		\$61,750 -65,950	
contingency		18,550 -19,750	
Total		\$80,300 - 85,700	



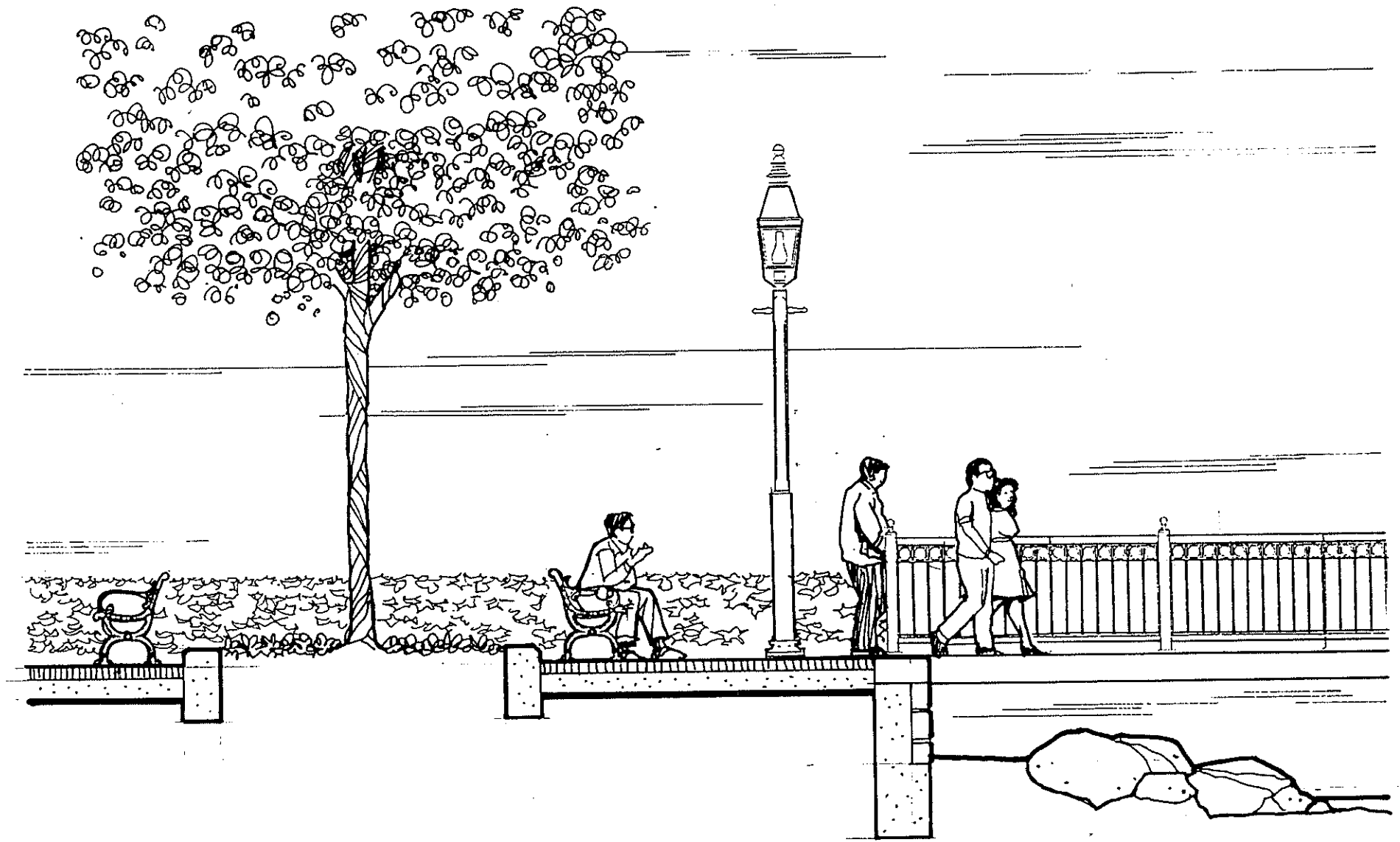
This area is a gateway into Ellicott City for vehicles and pedestrians. As a formal "front door," the treatment for this area should project the image of highest quality, establishing the character of Ellicott City.





Area 6 *The River Pocket Park* Plan

Ellicott City, MD



Area 6 *The River Pocket Park* Section

Ellicott City, MD

Area 7 Plaza Maintenance

The plaza in front of the railroad station was constructed according to the design prepared by LDR approximately ten years ago. In general, the plaza has held up well, but some maintenance is now needed. In particular, the benches should be upgraded to the style recommended in the Design Vocabulary section. Some of the plant material and trees have been vandalized and should be replaced.

Preliminary Cost Estimate Area 7: Plaza Maintenance

<i>Item</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	Trees	\$2,250	4" caliper
2	Benches	6,600	5'-0" length
3	Shrubs	1,150	---
	<i>subtotal</i>	<i>10,000</i>	<i>---</i>
	<i>contingency</i>	<i>3,000</i>	<i>(30%)</i>
	<i>Total</i>	<i>13,000</i>	

Area 8 Ellicott City Sign Program

Public signs – traffic signs, street signs, and signs providing direction, identification or other information – are critical to a city's image.

The existing public signs in Ellicott City present an unattractive appearance and make way-finding difficult. Parking resources are particularly difficult to locate.

A coordinated public sign program should be developed for implementation throughout Ellicott City. This program would be developed in collaboration with the Department of Public Works and would provide definitive guidelines for all aspects of sign design, content and placement.

Preliminary Cost Estimate Sign Program Study

<i>Total</i>	<i>\$35,000</i>
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River Clean-up

A clean-up program is recommended for all visible river edges in Ellicott City. It may be advisable to clean out the underground portions of the Tiber River as well.

All debris, extraneous rock and building materials should be removed from the exposed portions of the Tiber River from Ellicott Mills to the Patapsco River. Vegetation should be eliminated from the banks of this section of the river. The Howard County side of the Patapsco River should also be cleaned up, removing debris and inappropriate vegetation.

Funds have already been allocated for the river clean-up; the work should proceed as soon as possible.

Section II

Main Street

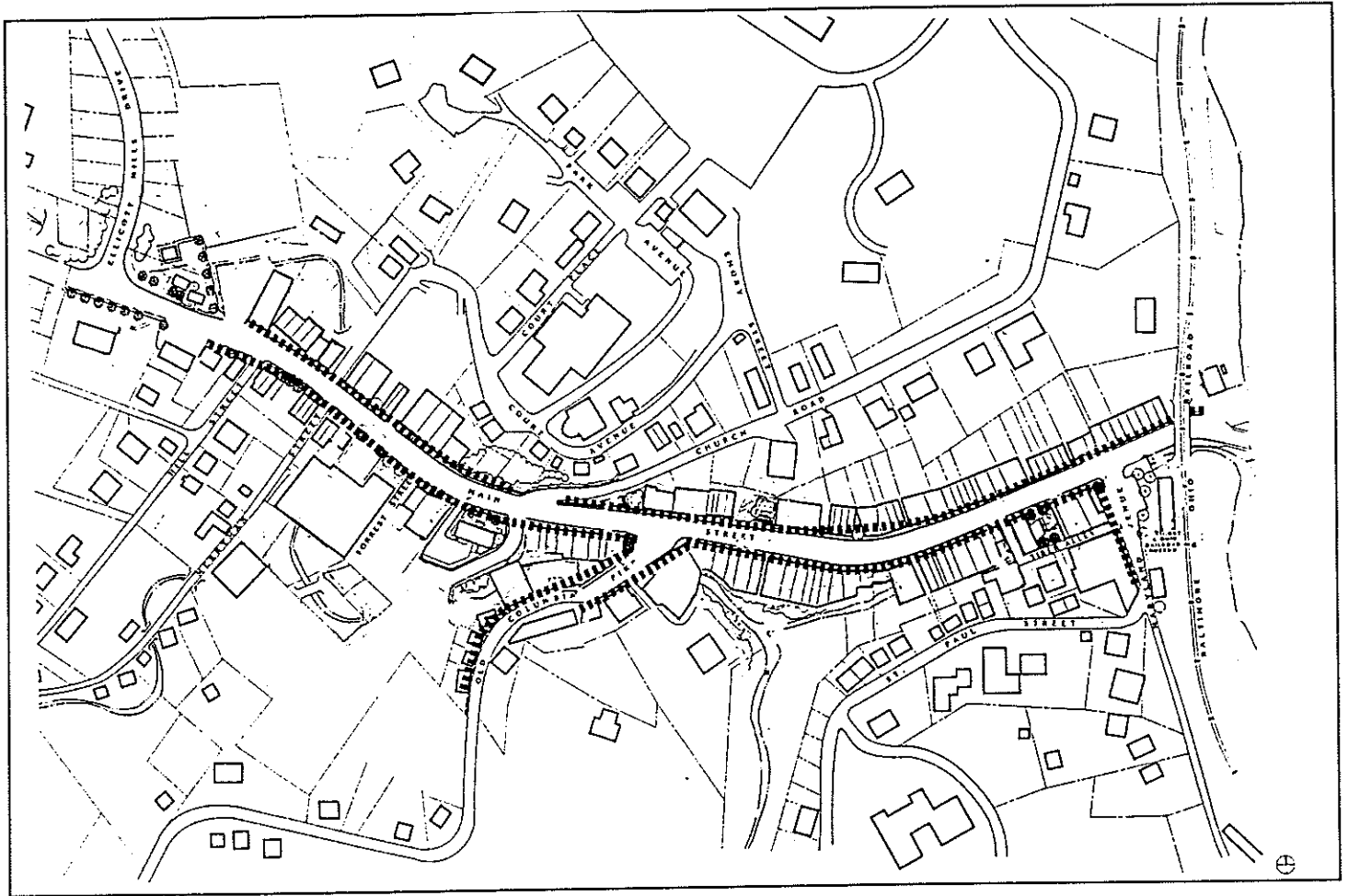
Section II - Main Street

The sidewalks along Main Street are in need of major improvement. However, it would be foolish to commit the funds required for this effort until decisions are made on the disposition of the power lines.

A thorough analysis of the power line situation should be undertaken to examine the available options, study the feasibility of each option and develop cost estimates. Based on the findings of this analysis, a strategy should be developed and implemented.

Once the lines are buried or relocated, sidewalk improvements can proceed. The recommended treatment is brick, laid in a herringbone pattern on a bed of granite "fines". The rationale for selection of this material is presented in the Design Vocabulary section.

Granite curbing is also recommended. While expensive, granite is the most attractive and durable curb material, and its appearance would be most compatible with the locally quarried stone used throughout the district.



Preliminary Cost Estimate Section II: Main Street Walkway Improvements

<i>Item</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1	Removal	\$35,000-50,000	sidewalk & curb
2	Brick paving	300,000-320,000	---
3	Curb	65,000-350,000	concrete or granite
4	Pedestrian lights	175,000-200,000	cast iron
5	Benches	20,000-25,000	---
	<i>subtotal</i>	<i>595,000-945,000</i>	---
	<i>contingency</i>	<i>178,000-285,000</i>	<i>(30%)</i>
	Total	773,000-1,230,000	

Section III

Design Vocabulary

Design Vocabulary

While Ellicott City's Historic District contains a wide variety of styles which reflect the evolution of the colonial Mill Town, it does have a unique visual quality that can be respectfully emphasized. Although the City's buildings are not refined versions of architectural styles, they are very rich in their materials (such as granite, brick and iron). Ellicott City reflects simple and functional design. The recommendations that follow are compatible with that character.

Paving

Brick Brick paving is attractive, long wearing and comfortable. Its scale and character are very much in keeping with the stone and brick architecture of Ellicott City.

Type A modular, mottled colored brick surface will not only give a more authentic appearance, it will also hide city dirt and discolorations better than other choices.

Pattern The herringbone pattern has the strongest bond of all brick configurations. It also has a more interesting pattern than running bond.

Installation A properly prepared brick setting bed is long lasting and flexible for repair work. A bed of "granite fines," (not sand) is as strong as a mortar bed, but allows bricks to be taken up without being destroyed.

Granite Curb Granite curb is the most durable, though expensive, curbing material. It is also the material most appropriate to the town. Granite curbing is well worth its cost in quality and endurance. If necessary, installation can be phased.

Granite Cobbles Cobbles are indigenous to Ellicott City, and they provide more flexibility and interest than other paving choices. While many people are attracted to cobbled paving, the attraction soon disappears if must be walked on for any length of time.

Granite cobbles can be used between building steps, in front of windows and out of the pedestrian flow, to add color and textural contrast to the brick while accommodating the various setbacks and perforations in the building edge.

Cobbles near rock outcroppings Flexible granite cobbles of various sizes (2"-4") between rock outcroppings and the brick sidewalk edge can help to prevent weed and dirt buildup while providing visual interest.

Street Furniture

Lights and Luminaires The Franklin Light post is the earliest American colonial post (1751, Philadelphia). Consequently, it has a simplicity of design that reflects the character of Ellicott City. The cast iron version is recommended for its authenticity and durability.

The Hancock Luminaire is a narrow rectangular lantern with simplicity and elegance compatible with Ellicott City. Also, this rectangular lantern form – as opposed to a square type – echoes the forms of the buildings and windows along the street.

Railing The proposed railing is a simple design for custom fabrication. This design incorporates a small amount of detail for visual interest while remaining straightforward. Steel posts and pickets are recommended over aluminum for their longevity.

Trash Receptacles The recommended receptacle is a commercial product that requires no special fabrication. The design is compatible with the railing and street post signage.

Benches The bench is a commercial product that requires no custom fabrication. This comfortable cast iron bench is the most compatible design for Ellicott City.

Tree Grates Tree grates, when used, should be made of durable cast iron, painted black, in a pattern that reflects the street furniture design.

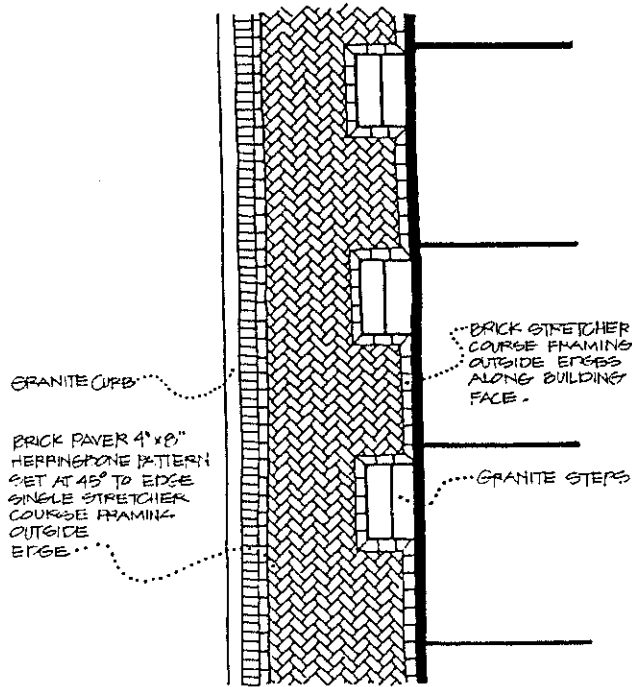
Signage The recommended pole for all signage is a simple square, straight steel pole (2"-4", depending on height). Specific recommendations on the design and placement of public signs would be developed as part of the coordinated sign program recommended in the preceding section.

Color All steel and cast iron components should be painted black. The street signs and special signage can give a special image to Ellicott City through the use of color. The granite building materials used throughout the City are very responsive to the color "Fire Engine Red" (PMS 032 Red). The greys in the town make this color *sing*. White lettering on this bright background is suggested.

Trees While the selection of particular species of trees can be addressed at a future date, general guidelines for street trees include:

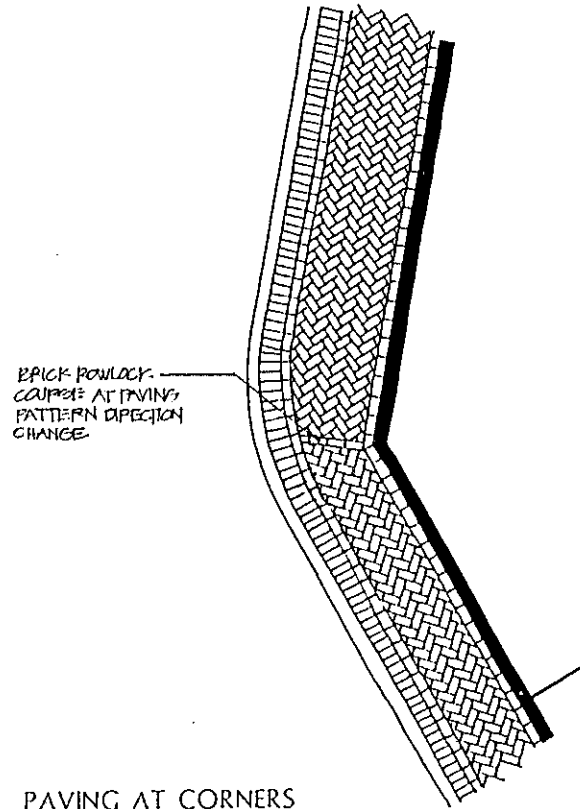
- they should be of substantial size to provide an immediate impact to the street;
- they should have a strong overhead canopy to give the pedestrian a feeling of a natural arcade above; and
- limbs should be removed up to at least 8' to provide visibility of storefronts.

Maintenance Ellicott City is an area of concentrated pedestrian activity, and maintenance is of paramount importance to its image. It is important for the area to receive attention beyond normal routine maintenance. A special staff of maintenance workers with specific responsibility for Ellicott City is recommended, with funding allocated on an annual basis. This designated staff can respond quickly to merchants' concerns and can also assist with special assignments such as mounting and removing seasonal decorations.



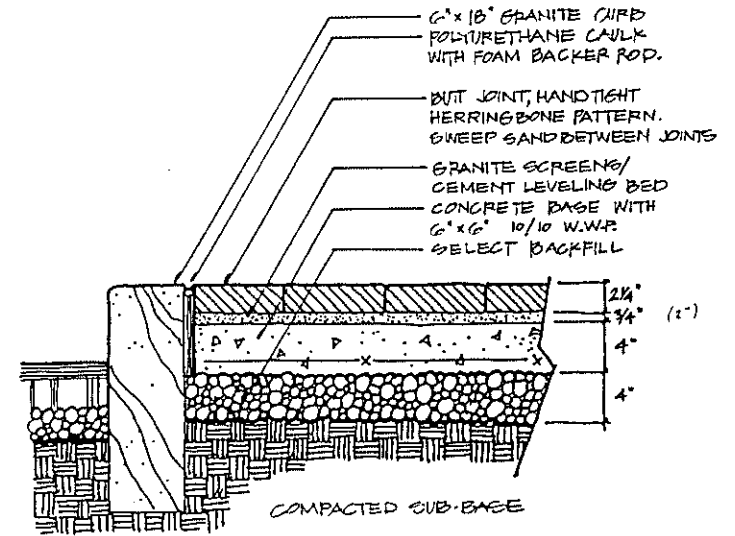
TYPICAL PAVING AT SIDEWALK

Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"



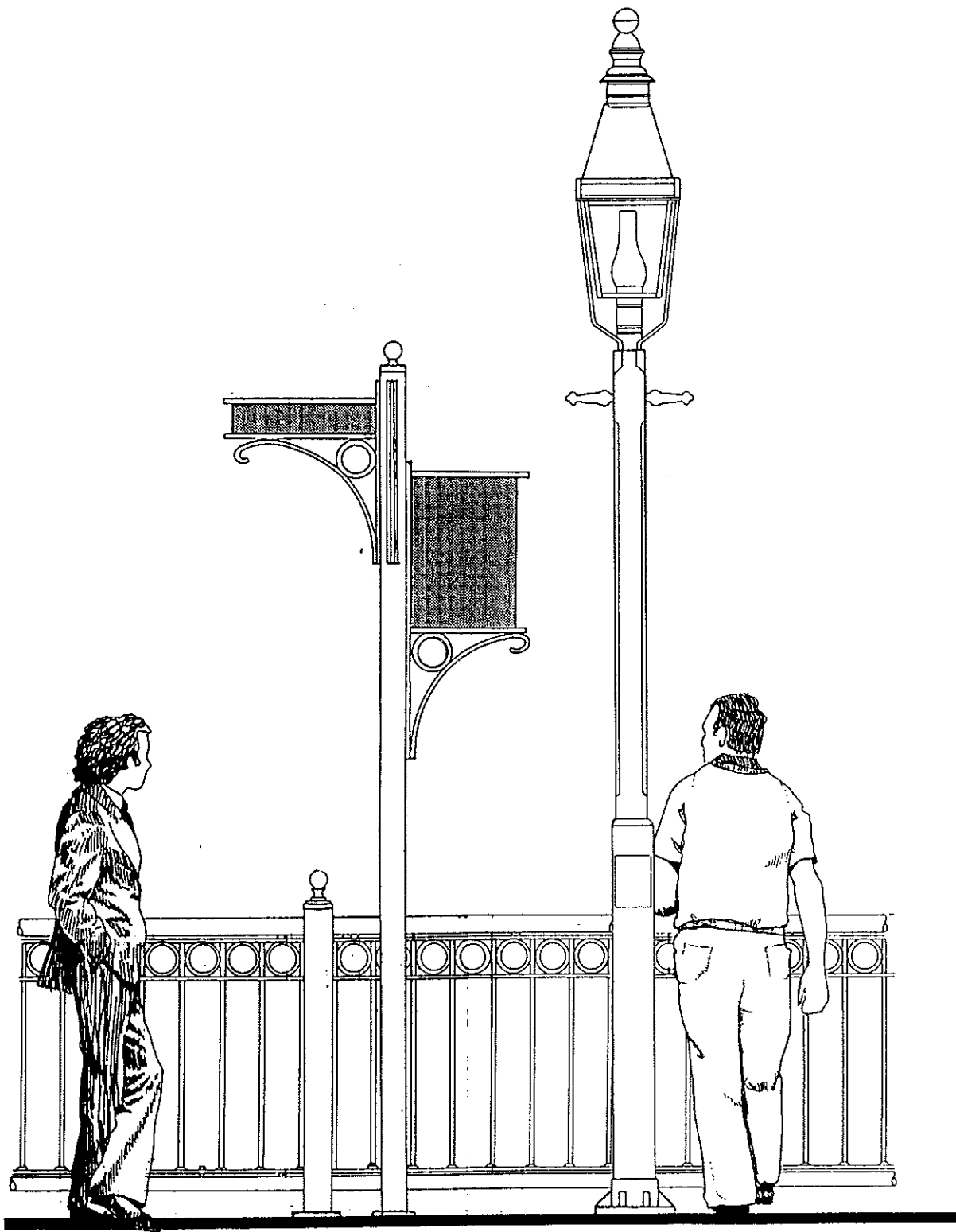
PAVING AT CORNERS

Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

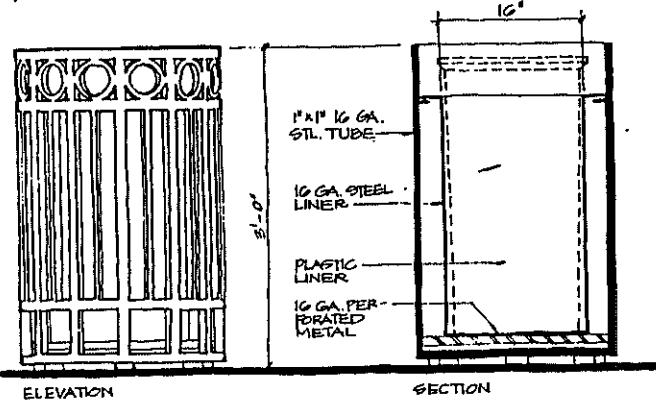
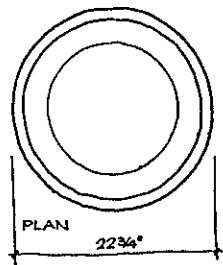


TYPICAL GRANITE CURB AND BRICK PAVING

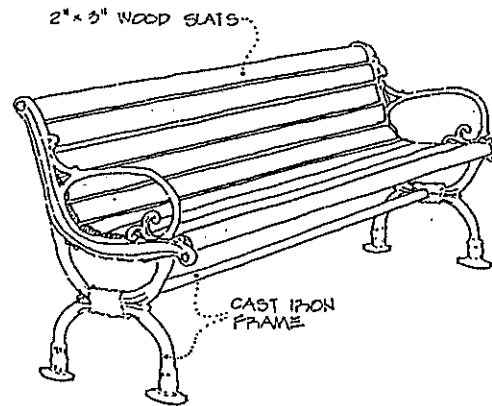
Scale: 1 1/2" = 1'-0"



Light Post and Luminaire, Railing and Sign Post



TRASH RECEPTACLE AND LINER



5' Round Tree Grate

