The Early Automobile Suburb: A Context for Preservation
“Mr. Ford, it will take a hundred years to tell whether you have helped us or hurt us, but you certainly didn’t leave us like you found us.”

--Will Rogers
1893 World’s Fair, Chicago
1904 World’s Fair, St. Louis

Automobile Parade of 285 Cars
Auto Registrations by Year

- 1900
- 1910
- 1920
- 1930

0 5,000,000 10,000,000 15,000,000 20,000,000 25,000,000 30,000,000
The Great American Gridiron
The advent of the auto and the end of the grid
Mission Hills, Mt. Lebanon ... the end of the grid
Where did the idea come from ...??
A Context for the Town’s Plan

“All the way back to the 18th Century!!”
“Capability Brown” (1716-1783) and the English Naturalistic Style of Landscaping
Humphry Repton (1757-1818)
Kenwood Estate
Kenwood Estate
The 19th Century
“Rural Cemetery” Movement

Mt. Auburn Cemetery
Boston, 1831

Henry A.S. Dearborn
Mt. Auburn Cemetery
Cambridge, Mass.
1831
19th Century American Designers

Olmsted         Vaux         Downing    Davis
Llewellyn Park,
West Orange, N.J

A. J. Davis
1856
How the idea got here

.. from English estates to American “Rural Cemeteries”
How the idea got here .....

... from English estates to American “Rural Cemeteries”

... to America’s early urban parks
How the idea got here ….

... from English estates to American “Rural Cemeteries”

... to America’s early urban parks

... to our earliest suburbs
20th Century Developers:
Found a Ready Pattern for the Automobile

J. C. Nichols
Kansas City

Lawrence Stevenson
Mt. Lebanon
The “Picturesque” Suburb

• Build with land contours, not against them.
• Create vistas in the streetscape.
• Provide common areas in the landscape.
• Use deed restrictions and, sometimes, architectural review to create consistent neighborhood character.
... build with land contours
Virginia Manor, Mt. Lebanon, From USGS Map
(Orange highlight shows the contour line at 1120 feet of elevation)
create vistas in the streetscape
Mt. Lebanon

Mt. Auburn
... provide common areas in the landscape
Riverside, Illinois          Olmsted & Vaux       1868
Claverach Park
Clayton, Missouri
... neighborhoods are historic because

- The extraordinary design of our neighborhoods represented a new kind of “Picturesque” landscape -- specifically adapted to accommodate the automobile.
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• The extraordinary design of our neighborhoods represented a new kind of “Picturesque” landscape -- specifically adapted to accommodate the automobile.

• We were among the first towns anywhere to do that; we did it well; and it is relatively rare to have done it so extensively.
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- This planning was done just as the changes brought by the automobile were first becoming evident.
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• Many experts consider this style the high point of suburban design as expedience led to its disappearance after World War II.
A Context for the Houses

“Culture, Aspirations … and England, again!!”
English Arts & Crafts influence on what we call “Tudor”

Sir Edwin Lutyens
1869-1944

C.F. A. Voysey
1857-1941
Cotswold Styles
... our houses are historic because

- Our ’20s and ’30s houses are extraordinarily fine and faithful examples of specific types of historical revivals and other styles popular in that period.

- We have more of these houses and they are set in greater concentrations than those in any other suburb in Western Pennsylvania and in many other regions of the country as well.
The Awareness Campaign

Living with Styles

THE HOUSES OF MT. LEBANON
“Living With Styles” magazine articles – over 30 of them in a six year period

“Living With Styles” booklet – promoted and sold in town and at Borders and Barnes & Noble

“Living With Styles” posters – for display at local businesses
“Living With Styles” House Fairs -- Bring your photos and design professionals will help you solve your problems

“Living With Styles” Trolley Tours -- Hour-long neighborhood tours on Molly’s Trolleys-style small busses
Block Parties (with handouts)
Slide shows on “What Makes Mt. Lebanon Historic” for school, church and civic groups
Slide shows for every municipal government board and authority.
Walking tours (including ones for second graders)
Bus tours for newly-hired teachers
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