

## **Plan for Community Facilities & Services**

### **Introduction**

The term “community facilities and services” encompasses both real property and a variety of administrative and service functions that all contribute to the quality of life in the Township. Not all of these properties and functions are under the direct control of the municipal government, so the Township’s capacity to effect change is in some cases limited. In all cases, improvements must be carefully considered to assure that appropriate value is received for any additional expenditure.

### **Township Office and Administration**

The current Township Building on Providence Road is centrally located and as easily accessible to Township residents as any one location could be. However, the property has serious shortcomings.

- The building and the site generally are crowded, as it accommodates the Township’s administrative offices, the Authority offices, a public meeting room, a conference room (also used for small meetings), the Township Police Department, and the road maintenance facilities.
- The meeting rooms lack appropriate equipment for presentations. The layout of the main meeting room is such that it is difficult to display plans or exhibits in a way that they may be clearly viewed by those sitting at the head table as well as those in the audience.
- Township employees are cramped in an inefficient layout that makes it difficult for them to do their jobs and to meet with the public with any degree of privacy.
- Parking at the building is limited.
- Expansion on the current site is problematic as the site is in a developed area and is constrained by other buildings: the Walden school to the south and the District Justice’s office to the north. The only adjacent open space is occupied by one of the Township’s few playgrounds: eliminating this facility is not an acceptable option. It may be possible to expand upward, if an engineering analysis proves that the existing structure and its foundation can accommodate the additional load.
- The Township’s administrative staff are fully utilized, or nearly so. A detailed staff utilization analysis is beyond the scope of this plan, but we suspect that additional personnel may improve operational efficiency.

The only possible way to expand the existing building significantly is to add an additional storey to the building. However, even if an engineering analysis should demonstrate that this is feasible, it will not address the issue of inadequate parking. The clearest option to address the space needs - short of constructing an entirely new building - is to remove one or more of the existing functions from the Township Building and establish them at some alternate site. This alternate site need not - and *should* not - be far afield: the Township could approach the District Court and The Walden School to determine if they would be willing to provide space for Township operations. Alternately, the Township could make this need an opportunity to

join with nearby municipalities in a multi-municipal or regional association to provide a variety of services. This would allow the cost of any new facilities - not to mention the cost of the service itself - to be spread across a number of participants while providing a higher level of service to all involved.

**GOAL: Provide a high-quality environment for users of the Township Building, promoting the efficiency of Township employees and usefulness to Township residents.**

Objective 1: Commission a study of the current Township Building to quantify resources and space needs associated with the various functions of the building.

Objective 2: Using data from the space needs study, evaluate the feasibility of moving some Township functions off site or of establishing a “satellite office” for the Township.

Objective 3: Identify staffing requirements.

Objective 4: Identify potential funding sources to pay for prior objectives.

Objective 5: Identify and benchmark parameters to measure the efficiency of Township government and the provision of Township services.

**GOAL: Establish agreements with one or more nearby municipalities for the cost-effective provision of public services.**

Objective 1: Identify those services where intermunicipal cooperation is most appropriate for Upper Providence Township; consider police and road maintenance services in particular.

Objective 2: Identify and initiate action with those municipalities most likely to be amenable to entering into an intermunicipal agreement with Upper Providence.

## **Emergency Services**

The category of emergency services includes police and fire protection along with ambulance services and emergency response. Of all of these, the Township is a direct provider of only police protection: the Upper Providence Police Department is headquartered in the same building as the Township offices. First-response fire protection is provided throughout the Township by the Rose Tree Fire Company, located near the interchange of U.S. Route 1 and Providence Road. Although the Township contributes substantially to the fire department, it is an independent volunteer group and not under the direct control of the Township. The Media Fire, Hook & Ladder Co. No. 1 provides the Township with ambulance service. As required by law, the Township has an Emergency Management Plan with the Township Manager designated ex officio as the Emergency Services Coordinator. This plan provides the Township with a series of “standard operating procedures” (“SOP’s”) to follow in the event of an incident requiring emergency response. Typical examples of such incidents include severe weather conditions and traffic accidents involving the spillage or other release of potentially hazardous substances. Less typical incidents - but still necessary for Upper Providence - could include incidents at any of the numerous chemical production facilities in the region or a terrorist attack.

Police and fire protection services both received high marks in our 2004 survey of Township

residents (residents were not specifically asked to comment upon ambulance services or emergency management). Naturally, we wish to assure that this level of satisfaction is preserved and that these services remain excellent from a quantitative perspective as well.

**GOAL: Maintain the current high level of satisfaction with the Upper Providence Township Police Department.**

Objective 1: Work with police staff to establish appropriate service measures, benchmark values of those measures, and the cost of providing such services.

Objective 2: Work with police staff to assure continued access to the resources necessary to meet community needs.

Objective 3: Identify possible sources of funding that would allow for improvements without adding to the fiscal burden of the Township.

Objective 4: Explore the possibility of providing police protection service under contract to nearby municipalities.

**GOAL: Improve emergency preparedness at the Township level.**

Objective 1: Raise public awareness of emergency planning in the Township; provide appropriate, basic emergency information on the Township website.

**Recreational Facilities**

This plan takes a broad interpretation of the term “recreation,” including open space areas suitable for “passive” activities like hiking and birdwatching along with “active” facilities like baseball diamonds, soccer fields, and basketball courts. Our inventory of recreational facilities in Chapter 18 notes that there is a good supply of open space within the Township, but that very little of it is under Township control. Similarly, most of the facilities for active recreation are on School District property or are owned by private sports leagues. The supply of public facilities for active recreation is poor, with the Township owning only a few playground areas. The 2004 public survey indicated that some of these playground areas were suffering from excessive use and were not as well maintained as they could be.

The ability of the Township to provide more open space and recreational facilities is clearly hampered by the extent of development and the price of real estate. The bright spot in this picture is that the Township recognizes that the protection of environmentally sensitive lands is often compatible with allowing trails or passive recreation use of such lands. Securing control of such lands is generally less expensive than acquiring more readily developable property; such acquisition also assures that the land will not be developed at any time in the future, when demand for housing may be high enough to bear the cost of overcoming the environmental constraints. In May of 2003, the Township issued a bond for the purpose of providing funds for the acquisition of open space.

**GOAL: Provide for a full range of trails and recreational activities through the acquisition and development of property as well as through co-operative arrangements with other agencies.**

Objective 1: Implement the recommendations of the open space network plan prepared for the Township by the Natural Lands Trust in 2003.

Objective 2: Develop capital improvement and long-term maintenance plans for existing Township recreational facilities.

Objective 3: Meet regularly with representatives of Rose Tree Media School District to promote optimum utilization of District-owned facilities by the public.

Objective 4: Coordinate with the Delaware County Parks Department regarding Township participation in the imminent update by the County of the Rose Tree Park Master Plan and assure that this plan addresses Township use of the Park.

Objective 5: Coordinate with and assist existing athletic and sport associations to improve and to maintain existing facilities and programs for active recreation and to develop new ones.

Objective 6: Pursue creation of an Open Space and Recreation Plan in cooperation with surrounding municipalities and/or the Rose Tree Media School District.

**GOAL: Acquire control of environmentally sensitive lands for the dual purposes of providing recreational opportunities and preventing inappropriate development.**

Objective 1: Identify specific physical limits of environmentally sensitive features requiring protection, noting particularly where it is necessary to provide a level of protection beyond what may be accomplished through Ordinances.

Objective 2: Evaluate properties identified in Objective 1 to determine if their acquisition is necessary to implement other Township goals (such as the provision of recreational trails) or if some other level of control is sufficient, such as purchase or donation by the owner of easements or development rights.

Objective 3: Contact owners of properties identified in Objectives 1 and 2 to inform them of the Township's interest in their property and to determine if they are amenable to granting or selling to the Township sufficient control of their property to meet Township goals.

Objective 4: Acquire sufficient interest in properties identified in Objectives 1 and 2 to prevent development that would negatively affect the natural environment or would hinder the achievement of other Township goals.

Objective 5: Identify funding sources that are available for the purpose of promoting this goal.

### **Educational Facilities**

The Township is not a direct provider of education (other than an annual donation to the Media-Upper Providence Public Library), but the quality of public schools, the availability of well-regarded private schools, and the accessibility of a variety of post-secondary institutions (both within and immediately adjacent to the Township) are important elements of the quality of life enjoyed by Upper Providence residents. This being the case, the Township has a clear interest in assuring that these various institutions are able to thrive at their current locations. While each of educational institutions have their own programs and goals, it is the desire of

the Township to have a cooperative relationship with each of them.

**GOAL: Establish and maintain regular contact with the School District and other educational institutions in the Township in order to identify and promote mutually beneficial objectives.**

Objective 1: Review Township land use regulations and other ordinances to identify areas where the interests of the owners of property surrounding schools are not adequately protected as well as areas where regulations are unnecessarily restrictive upon school operations; amend as necessary.

Objective 2: Enlist the assistance of schools in addressing traffic concerns, such as excessive speeds, lack of safe pedestrian access, inadequate traffic controls, and safe access to public transportation.

Objective 3: Establish a co-operative relationship with the School District regarding the availability of District-owned recreational facilities to the public.

Objective 4: Continue to support the Media Upper Providence Public Library through both direct funding and in-kind assistance with library programs.

## **Utilities**

We have already noted that the Township has limited control over the provision of most utilities. In most cases, this control is restricted to regulating what infrastructure is permitted within the rights-of-way of Township roads: electric lines, gas mains, fiber-optic cable, CATV lines, and water mains are some examples. The most notable exception is sanitary sewerage, which is controlled by the Township Sewer Authority. The Authority is legally distinct from the municipal government, but the Township Supervisors appoint the Authority Board and the Authority offices are in the Township building. The Township also has some control in that the provision of public sewerage is implemented through the Township's sewage facilities plan, prepared under the authority of Pennsylvania Act 537.

At this time, the provision of public sewerage in the Township is generally limited to the area south of U.S. Route 1. With a very few exceptions, the properties north of this highway rely upon individual on-site systems. The availability of public sewerage is a critical land use issue, as it typically dictates the feasibility of high-density development. In communities with high development pressure (like Upper Providence), reliance upon individual on-site disposal systems supports land use policies that call for larger lot sizes. This is consistent with what we in Upper Providence; however, suitability for an on-site disposal system is determined by soil properties, not just lot size. If soils are not suitable, the size of the lot is immaterial. With increasing development pressure, marginally suitable lands are being used for home sites. Even when the lots are large, malfunctioning sewer systems are becoming more common, resulting in unpleasant odor at least and contaminated groundwater at worst. This situation, in combination with the increasing cost of providing public sewerage, has created a division among Township residents regarding the need for such service:

- Residents who currently have access to public sewerage are more or less neutral on the issue of whether the service area should be expanded, provided that such expansion will not result in additional costs to them. While these individuals may appreciate the

environmental benefits, a significant expansion of service may require expansion of the treatment facilities, resulting in higher costs for all users.

- Residents who rely on properly functioning on-sites systems are understandably reluctant to pay for a service that they don't need, particularly since construction assessments and connection fees are typically in the thousands of dollars.
- Residents who have malfunctioning systems are, naturally, the strongest proponents of expanding public sewerage. Although they would also have to pay a significant sum for installation and connection, they are already paying to have their systems pumped at regular intervals.

Naturally, the Township must identify the policy that is best for the municipality as a whole, and must do so in cooperation with the treatment providers. This requires consideration of not only what may be accommodated by the treatment providers and local soil conditions, but of overall land use policy as well.

**GOAL: Implement sanitary sewerage policy that is consistent with the future land use element of this Comprehensive Plan as well as with municipal environmental protection policies.**

Objective 1: Review and amend Sewage Facilities (Act 537) Plan as necessary in order to be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.

Objective 2: Catalogue the locations of recent on-lot system malfunctions in order to identify any patterns or clusters. Develop a strategy to address any such concentrations and incorporate such strategy in a new Act 537 Plan or an amendment to the existing plan.

Objective 3: Limit extension of sewerage infrastructure into low density and environmentally sensitive areas to include only existing development.

Objective 4: Assure that areas intended to accommodate high-density residential development and all non-residential development will have access to off-site sewage disposal.

Objective 5: Develop and implement a program of regular inspection of on-site sewage disposal systems on properties that border Springton Lake, Crum Creek, or Ridley Creek.

Objective 6: Secure membership in the Central Delaware County Authority (CDCA) with the intent to assure availability of sewerage capacity as may be necessary to meet Township needs.