

Community Facilities & Services

Introduction & Purpose

Community facilities are the public and quasi-public properties that accommodate municipal operations or provide some service to the public that contributes to the functioning of the Township or to the quality of life generally. Examples include the Township Building and the services provided directly by the municipality, schools, emergency services (police and fire protection, ambulance service), parks and other recreational facilities, libraries, and hospitals. The original purpose of township government was to build and maintain roads. While this remains a significant responsibility, many other duties are now included. Increasingly, local governments are finding that there are able to provide municipal services more efficiently by joining with surrounding communities in multi-municipal associations. This chapter is organized by type of service, with special notice of ownership and access where applicable. Figure 18.1 shows the locations of the described facilities.

Township Office and Administration

The Upper Providence Township Building is located along Providence Road just north of the Media Borough line and contains the Township administrative offices, the Police Department, the offices of the Township Sewer Authority, and meeting space for the various municipal agencies.

Pennsylvania Act 62 of 1972 (the “Home Rule Act”) enabled municipalities to develop systems of local government apart from the system of first- and second-class townships, boroughs, and cities that was in effect in most of the state. In 1974, Township residents approved a proposal to form a Government Study Commission for the purpose of examining local governance and considering if some other form should be considered. In February 1975, this Commission recommended that the Township pursue some new form of governance, better suited to the specific conditions of Upper Providence Township. At the direction of the Board of Supervisors (the Township was then a second-class township), the Commission drafted a Home Rule Charter that was subsequently approved and adopted in November 1975. This charter, with some amendments approved in November 1996, remains in effect today. The introduction to the current version states that the purpose of adopting a Home Rule Charter was to provide “...for increased local control, more responsiveness and openness in government, increased citizen participation, increased fiscal responsibility, ethical standards, and environmental provisions.”

The Home Rule Charter divided the Township into five districts (see Figure 18.1) and established a five-member Township Council as the governing body; the residents of each district elect one member of council to a four-year term. The Council members elect a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman from among themselves to serve one-year terms in such positions. The other citizen boards in Upper Providence are the Code of Ethics Commission, the Environmental Commission, the Planning Commission, the Recreation Board, the Sewer Authority, and the Zoning Hearing Board. The members of these agencies are volunteers appointed by Council.

The day-to-day operations of the Township are supervised by a full-time professional Township Manager, who is appointed by Council. The Manager directs a professional staff that includes the Township Controller/Secretary-Treasurer, Zoning Officer, various code enforcement personnel, and the public works personnel whose principal responsibility is the maintenance of roads and Township properties; ex officio, the Manager is also the Emergency Management Coordinator. The Township Police Department is technically under the aegis of the Township Manager, but the Police Chief bears direct responsibility for the operations of the department.

Upper Providence Township

935 N. Providence Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-565-4944

web: www.upperprovidence.org

Emergency Services

All emergency services in the Township are connected to the Delaware County “911” emergency response system. The telephone numbers provided for the emergency service providers are for non-emergency use.

As noted above, the Township has its own **police department**. There are currently twelve full-time police officers, including the Chief of Police headquartered in the Township Building on Providence Road. Their address is the same as the Township Building (provided immediately above); their non-emergency telephone number is 610-566-8445.

The first-response **fire department** for the entire Township is Rose Tree Fire Company Number One, based near the interchange of Providence Road with U.S. Route 1. This volunteer company was established in 1953. They commemorated their fiftieth anniversary in 2003 by restoring and rehousing their original fire truck: a 1953 American LaFrance pumper.

Rose Tree Fire Company No. 1

1275 N. Providence Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-566-5891 (non-emergency)

web: www.rosetreefire.org

Ambulance service is provided throughout the Township by the Media Fire, Hook & Ladder Co. No. 1, a volunteer company based in the Borough of Media. Their non-emergency telephone number is 610-565-3737.

There are no hospitals within the Township, although **Riddle Memorial Hospital** is nearby in Middletown Township. Riddle is a 252-bed fully accredited, not-for-profit, acute-care

community hospital associated with the Thomas Jefferson University hospital cancer network. The much-smaller **Springfield Hospital** is found along PA Route 320 in Springfield Township, just to the east of Upper Providence. Springfield is a 32-bed not-for profit community hospital associated with the Crozer-Keystone Health System providing comprehensive acute care services and wellness care.

Riddle Memorial Hospital

1068 W. Baltimore Pike

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-566-9400

web: www.riddlehospital.org

Springfield Hospital

190 W. Sproul Rd.

Springfield , PA 19064

tel: 610-328-8700

web: www.crozer.org

Recreational Facilities

This inventory is limited to recreational and open space facilities within the Township that are open to and accessible by the general public. Most of these are also owned by some public agency. This inventory excludes open spaces created as part of a residential cluster development and facilities at the public schools. While the latter are, in a sense, owned by and accessible to the public, their availability for general recreational use is subject to the needs of school programs.

State-Owned Facilities

Only a small portion of **Ridley Creek State Park** is in Upper Providence, but it includes the Sycamore Mills historic area, one of the park's major interpretive areas. The park covers approximately 2,600 acres (4 square miles) of the Ridley Creek corridor and surrounding lands. In addition to extensive natural areas, the park includes the Colonial Pennsylvania Plantation, the Sycamore Mills Historic Area, and Hunting Hill mansion. Sycamore Mills was a small village that grew up around a mill along the Ridley Creek. Today, the miller's house, the office and library, and several of the old mill workers' dwellings are used as private residences. Hunting Hill was built in 1914 using as its core a stone farmhouse built in the eighteenth century; the mansion grounds are remarkable for their formal gardens, which were designed by the Olmstead Brothers who also designed New York City's Central Park. Today, the mansion houses the park offices and reception center. The park provides facilities for a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities, including fishing, hiking, cycling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and tent camping.

Ridley Creek State Park

1023 Sycamore Mills Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-892-3900

web: www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/ridleycreek.aspx

County-Owned Facilities

The core of **Rose Tree Park** is the grounds of the former Rose Tree Fox Hunting Club, located near the center of Upper Providence Township. The club was first chartered by local fox-hunting enthusiasts in 1859, and re-organized and incorporated in 1881. The Club was a well-known venue for horse racing as well as hunts, and by the early years of the twentieth century, the property included a barbell-shaped steeplechase course, a large grandstand for spectators, paddocks, and a vast parking lot. The club was an early victim of suburban sprawl, as the advancing tide of residential development was eliminating fox habitat as well as the open fields and woods necessary for the sport. The last hunt was held in April 1964 and the acreage was sold to Delaware County. The County purchased some adjacent acreage to bring the park area to its current 120 acres, making it one of four major parks in the County system. Today the land includes both open areas and woodlands along with remnants of the sporting history of the site: portions of the steeplechase track are still in place, and three historic buildings are still standing. The buildings accommodate offices for the County.

Rose Tree Park

1671 N. Providence Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-891-4663

web: www.co.delaware.pa.us/depts/rosetree.html

In addition to Rose Tree, there are two smaller County parks in Upper Providence. The entrance to **Glen Providence Park** is near the intersection of Kirk Lane and Third Street; the park property extends up to the Media Borough line. Much of the park land is steeply sloping and heavily wooded; recreational facilities are limited to a hiking trail. The smaller **Martin Park** is at the intersection of Farnum and Crum Creek Roads. Like Glen Providence, the land is steep and wooded. A hiking trail provides access to a historic mill structure.

Municipal Facilities

The only park or recreational facilities owned by the Township outright are a few small playground areas: Berman Park, Ray Roche Park (adjacent to the Township Building), Lou Scott Park, Thompson Park, and the Weldon Street Tot Lot. The Township is also home to two small parks - Houtman Park and Phillip Green Park - that are owned by the Borough of Media.

Other Facilities

Township residents mostly use school facilities owned by the Rose Tree Media School District for active recreational use. The Township has a formal agreement with the School District that allows all Township residents free access to **Cherry Street Field**, located just off Providence Road near the Media Borough line. The Cherry Street property accommodates active recreational uses and includes a baseball diamond.

In addition to the properties owned by the public sector, there are privately owned properties that are open to the public.

Although not within the Township, the **Tyler Arboretum** deserves special mention as a major open space area located nearly adjacent to the Township line. The arboretum property covers 650 acres (just over one square mile) abutting Ridley Creek State Park and includes horticultural collections, rare specimens, ancient trees, historic buildings, and seven hiking trails with a total length of more than twenty miles. The property was originally granted to Thomas Minshall, an English Quaker, by William Penn in 1681. Remarkably, the property remained in Minshall's family for eight generations, until Laura Tyler - one of Minshall's direct descendants - bequeathed the land in 1944 to a Board of Trustees that had been established to operate the property as an arboretum. The arboretum began in the early 1800's due to the efforts of brothers Jacob and Minshall Painter. The Painters were interested in the study of natural history, a popular pursuit of the day. In 1825, they dedicated a portion of their land to the systematic planting of more than a thousand varieties of trees and shrubs, many of which were not native to the area. Among those that have survived to this day is a giant sequoia tree that is the Pennsylvania state champion and the symbol of the arboretum.

Tyler Arboretum

515 Painter Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-566-9134

web: www.tylerarboretum.org

The **Broomall Lake** property in Media Borough is immediately adjacent to the County's Glen Providence Park. This property is privately owned and is *not* open to the general public, but we note it here as it creates a contiguous open space area with the public parkland.

Educational Facilities

Upper Providence Township is part of the Rose Tree Media School District along with Media Borough, Middletown Township, and Edgmont Township. The school district was created in July 1966 by the merger of the Media Borough and Rose Tree Union School Districts. At this time, the district operates four elementary schools, Springton Lake Middle School, and Penncrest High School. Rose Tree Elementary School and Springton Lake are located within Upper Providence Township. Current enrollment at Rose Tree Elementary is approximately 300 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, Springton Lake has about 1,000 students in grades six through eight, and Penncrest High currently has 1,350 students in grades nine through twelve.

Rose Tree Media Education Center

308 N. Olive St .

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-627-6000

web: www.rosetree.k12.pa.us

Rose Tree Elementary School

1101 First Ave.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-627-7200

Springton Lake Middle School

1900 N. Providence Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-627-6500

Penncrest High School

134 Barren Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-627-6200

There are four private schools within the Township. **St. Mary Magdalen School** is operated by the Roman Catholic Church and provides education for grades one through eight as an alternative to the public school system. The nearest Roman Catholic high school is Cardinal O'Hara on Sproul Road in Springfield Township. **The Walden School**, located near the Township Building, is a non-sectarian Montessori school for children in pre-school through eighth grade. The **Benchmark School** is a private day school for students aged 6 through 14 with the stated mission "...to create lifelong learners, thinkers, and problem solvers among those children who enter the school as bright, struggling readers." Although the focus is on children with reading difficulties, the school provides a full academic program as an alternative to the public school system through eighth grade. The only post-secondary school in the Township is the **Pennsylvania Institute of Technology**, which offers certificates and two-year associate degrees in technical and business programs. Some P.I.T. classes are open to high school students who may earn transferable college credits.

St. Mary Magdalen School

2430 N. Providence Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-565-1822

web: www.stmarymagdalen.net

The Walden School

901 N. Providence Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-892-8000

web: www.thewaldenschool.org

Benchmark School

2107 N. Providence Rd.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-565-3741

web: www.benchmarkschool.org

Pennsylvania Institute of Technology

800 Manchester Ave.

Media , PA 19063

tel: 800-291-9363

web: www.pit.edu

Naturally, all of the schools have libraries, but there are no public libraries in the Township. The nearest branch of the Delaware County Library System - and the one designated to serve the Township - is the **Media-Upper Providence Free Library** in Media. Upper Providence Township makes an annual cash donation - currently \$70,000 - toward the operating expenses of the library.

Media-Upper Providence Free Library

1 E. Front St .

Media , PA 19063

tel: 610-566-1918

web: www.medialibrary.org

Utilities

Upper Providence residents have full access to all utilities. The recent deregulation of the telephone and electric industries has resulted in residents being able to choose the agency that provides them with these services. In contrast, several utility providers are still location-based: water supply, sanitary sewerage, and cable television. The entire Township is part of the water supply franchise area of **Aqua America, Inc.**, which was known as Philadelphia Suburban Water until January 2004. Originally established as the Springfield Water Company in 1886 by an association of professors from Swarthmore College, Aqua America is now the largest U.S.-based, publicly traded water utility in the country, serving approximately 2.5 million residents in fifteen states. The dam that created Springton Lake was a venture of the Springfield Water Company, and the lake continues to serve to this day as a water supply source for Aqua America. The **Upper Providence Township Sewer Authority**, based at the Township Building, provides sanitary sewerage to the southern portion of the Township, conveying sewage to a treatment facility along Ridley Creek. In addition, Aqua America provides sanitary sewerage to properties along Crum Creek Road. **Comcast Corporation** is currently the designated provider of cable television throughout the Township.

Aqua America, Inc.

Corporate Headquarters

762 Lancaster Ave.

Bryn Mawr , PA 19010

tel: 610-525-1400

web: www.suburbanwater.com

Comcast Corporation

Corporate Headquarters

1500 Market St .

Philadelphia , PA 19102

tel: 215-665-1700

web: www.comcast.com

Planning Implications

- Upper Providence residents have access to a range of open space areas, but facilities for active recreation are less available. The few available facilities are heavily used and show signs of wear. Although many residents participate in local sports leagues, we expect that the lack of facilities hinders wider participation, and securing a “home field” is difficult. The availability of School District facilities eases the situation somewhat, but the needs of various school teams naturally take precedence.
- The quality of the public education available in the Township has been cited as a significant attraction for residents. Although the Township has no jurisdiction over the school

district, it is in the interest of each agency to have an open line of communication with the other. Furthermore, the land use policies established by the Township will have a direct effect upon the tax revenue available to the School District and a less direct effect upon enrollment.

- Reliance upon Springton Lake as a public water supply indicates that the Township should promote the water quality of this resource through enforcement of development and use regulations designed to minimize the chance of contamination.
- The availability of a wide range of utilities almost goes without saying in a community such as Upper Providence. There are still some areas without public or community sewerage, which may have environmental impacts.

Source: Riddle Memorial Hospital website.

Source: Springfield Hospital website.

Benchmark School website, 2004.

Not all parts of the Township are served by public sewerage; properties that do not have access must rely upon individual on-lot disposal systems or other means of treatment and disposal.