

*The following fact sheet was prepared by the American Revolution Center in response to questions and comments from residents made at the July 19 Board of Supervisors meeting, and received by Township in letters, emails and phone calls.*

**What is The American Revolution Center?**

The Center is a private, 501(c)(3) charitable organization that owns a pre-eminent collection of Revolutionary War artifacts, which will be the foundation for an educational center and museum dedicated to the study of the American Revolution and its legacy. The Center is engaged in raising \$150 million private dollars to fund construction of the museum complex.

**Why is land within the boundaries of Valley Forge National Historical Park for sale?**

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is selling 125 acres of land, 78 of which are within the Park boundaries established by Congress in 1984. As with several other properties within the 1984 boundaries, this land has always been privately held. For most of its history since the Revolutionary War era, the property has been farmed. The existing zoning regulations allow residential housing developments, public use buildings and public and private schools.

**Who is buying the other 47 acres that the Archdiocese is selling and what will happen to that land?**

The Center is partnering with Montgomery County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to purchase all 125 acres. Public funds will go toward the purchase of about 47 acres, all of which will be held as open space. Under a new and more restrictive set of local ordinances, no less than 75% of the 78 acres to be purchased by the Center will be open space. The Center has engaged noted archeologists, land planners, landscape architects and historians to study and advise on the care, development and maintenance of the site.

**Why is The American Revolution Center interested in being located within Lower Providence Township?**

In so many ways, the Lower Providence 78 acre site is an ideal place for the American Revolution Center. In 1906, the Center's founding organization, The Valley Forge Historical Society, first set its goal to build a museum commemorating our nation's founding at Valley Forge. The collection was built in the early 1900s with the understanding that it would one day be put on display at Valley Forge. The Center's mission is to inform and inspire people about the founding period of our Nation using this collection. The Valley Forge area remains the ideal location to tell the complete story of those who sacrificed so much to give us the freedoms we enjoy today.

The 78-acre site in Lower Providence Township has a gentle slope that allows for 50% of the museum building to be underground. The property provides the Center's landscape architects with an opportunity to preserve open land in an environmentally and ecologically sound fashion. For instance, the property near the intersection of several trails, the use of which the Center will enhance as part of its program to improve the physical experience at this long neglected property.

As private property, the Center can develop the museum and ancillary uses in accordance with local regulations and in cooperation with its neighbors and Lower Providence Township officials.

### **What are the benefits to Lower Providence Township?**

Current regulations allow more dense development of the property than proposed by the Center. The current rules allow housing developments, public buildings of many kinds, public and private schools as well as greater building and impervious coverages. For its more modest project, the Center has engaged some of the world's most respected experts whose talents have been and will continue to be directed toward the most responsible development of these 78 acres for the museum, the conference center and the grounds that make up this project. While any development of the property would have some effect on the Township, the Center intends to be a forward thinking conservator of the property. With a dedication toward sound stewardship of the property, the Center will be a good neighbor and a good partner to the community.

### **Why was a zoning change required?**

The current zoning for the land, R-2 Residential, allows dense residential development. An existing "overlay" district allows, among other things, municipal building and private and public schools. As an option to those uses, the proposed ordinance would permit the museum and associated uses.

### **Did a developer write the ordinance?**

No. There is no "developer" for this effort. The American Revolution Center is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, and the Center will build and operate the museum complex. The actual language of the ordinance results from the collaboration, negotiations and discussions among the staffs of the Center, Lower Providence Township, the Lower Providence Township Supervisors, the Montgomery County Commissioners and the Montgomery County Planning Commission.

### **Does the ordinance allow for commercializing the site?**

No. The Center's mission is education about the Revolutionary War era and all proposed activities are directed toward accomplishing and implementing that mission. The museum will have gallery and display areas, an auditorium, office spaces, archival and restoration studios and storage spaces, and a library. The Center will also provide outdoor trails and historical displays. Like most similar non-profit museums, those will be primarily funded by income from the Center's endowment, private donations, memberships, and facilities admission fees. And, like most similar non-profit museums, the Center proposes to provide visitor amenities consistent with the Center's theme like museum gift shops, an ATM and restaurants. Specialized dining options are similarly prevalent in museums and National Parks, with some historical attractions offering period-specific menus and services. Such visitor amenities not only generate revenue to support on-site programs but allow visitors to stay in close proximity to the attraction and enhance the educational experience offered by immersing visitors in the atmosphere of the location. In providing such services, the Center will follow standards of The American Association of Museums, which encourages museums to operate "in a fiscally responsible manner that promotes its long-term sustainability."

### **Will archaeology be done on the site?**

Yes. The Center has engaged an experienced and well-respected archaeological firm to develop the most responsible protocols for determining the archaeological significance of the site and its excavation if appropriate.

### **Why is a conference center and lodging proposed for the site?**

Like other similar locations, the Center also plans a conference center as an essential part of its educational mission. The conference center will host meetings of major academic organizations. A modest lodging component will be included as part of the conference center in order to provide accommodations not only for visiting scholars but also for individuals and families who want a longer stay at the Center's museum and on the Center's grounds. Providing this kind of facility is no different than that provided at many other historic sites and National Parks.

### **Who will operate the conference center and lodge? How big is it?**

The Center will operate the conference center. The conference center is limited to 52-feet in height (about 3 ½ stories), 99 rooms for lodging and 20,000 square feet of conference space.

### **Will there be an observation tower?**

No. What is planned is a terrace/viewing platform that is within the footprint of the museum building. The terrace/viewing platform is below the roofline of the museum.

### **What about traffic?**

The Township has a comprehensive set of regulations regarding traffic studies and has placed these into the zoning ordinance. The Center will follow the Township's land development procedures. Specific issues that are discussed during this land development process include traffic, stormwater, landscaping, parking and lighting. The Township staff will endeavor to assure that the ARC will comply with all Township Ordinances and the current Act 209 Traffic Study. The Center must also seek outside agency approvals that involve the Lower Providence Township Municipal Sewer Authority, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Audubon Water Authority, Montgomery County Conservation District and PennDOT.

### **What will it cost to visit The American Revolution Center?**

The Center will provide some visitor services at no charge. Bikers, hikers, birders, and other recreational users will be encouraged to use the Center's outdoor trails that connect to other trails in the region. The grounds will be open without charge. Visitor amenities such as the restaurant and gift shop will be available to all. Museum admission will be comparable to major cultural attractions in the region.

### **What is the estimated economic impact of the project?**

Township officials estimate that the Township will receive \$800,000 to \$1,000,000 in amusement taxes each year as a result of the project. The Center is projected to create 855 new direct and indirect jobs and provide an overall annual economic impact of \$50 million for the region.

### **How can you be sure of your attendance projections?**

The Center has worked with three different consultants to analyze attendance. The most recent study was completed in July 2007. All studies have been consistent in their conclusions.

**Why can't the Center work out their differences with the NPS?**

Since 1995, the Center and its predecessor, the Valley Forge Historical Society, have worked with the NPS in an effort to locate the Center's museum complex within the federally owned Valley Forge National Historical Park. After all the discussions, negotiations, written agreements and the best efforts and intentions of all concerned, the NPS could not come to an agreement that had the certainty the Center needed to successfully raise the funds necessary for the museum project. The Center is eager to work with the National Park Service to enhance the visitor experience to the Valley Forge area.

**What is the timeline for the project?**

The Center is embarked on a fundraising campaign to raise \$150 million. It should take 2-5 years to complete the project once approvals are in place and funds are in hand.