



Lower Providence Township

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Valley Forge Corporate Center: Ready to Rebound

LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP – Lower Providence Township wants developers to know it’s not business as usual in the Valley Forge Corporate Center. Zoning changes, reduced impact fees and pending transportation improvements have set the stage for the reinvention of the 300-acre business park.

Leaving nothing to chance, Lower Providence is working aggressively to revitalize the ’60s-era corporate center and move it from its industrial park roots. The zoning changes were adopted to add much-needed amenities to the center and allow for retail, restaurants, and other mixed uses. The Township has taken an active role, partnering with property owners and the broker community to promote the business park and recruit businesses.

“Township officials have been incredibly responsive,” says Bill Martini, Director of Acquisitions for Mountain Development, owner of several properties in the VFCC. “Rarely do we see the kind of attention and care that we’ve received from Lower Providence Township.”

Larry Maister, Senior Director/Broker for Cushman & Wakefield real estate, agrees. “There aren’t many townships that take a proactive approach to help landlords fill their buildings. The Township’s position is ‘what can we do to help.’ The assistance is refreshing,” says Meister. Maister’s group is part of recent successes in the corporate center, bringing Star Career Academy to the former Katherine Gibbs School and retaining Archway with full use of its Monroe Boulevard facility.

The focus fell on the VFCC about three years ago when the center’s mounting vacancy rate caught the attention of the Township. A closer look revealed a hybrid of dated industrial warehouses, aging office buildings and a sprinkling of modern facilities. The VFCC, suffering from an identity crisis and offering few amenities for employees, clearly needed help.

Today about 43 percent of the center’s space remains vacant. There are more than 40 individual building owners within the complex. From the beginning, the goal of the Township’s revitalization push has been simple: Create and retain jobs, fill buildings and increase property owner values. The process has involved creating a master plan for growth, with the Township hiring a landscape architect, urban planner and engineer to work with staff, property owners and tenants.

Larry Fedorka, Senior Director of Property Management for Mack-Cali real estate, has been interested in the process from the beginning. “The concept is dynamic and forward-thinking,” says Fedorka of the Township’s master plan. He notes that the multiple ownership within the corporate center does present a challenge.

To date, the Township has invested \$144,000 for the Master Plan study, \$620,000 for infrastructure improvements, and \$120,000 for steps to implement the plan.

The VFCC enjoys a prime location minutes from the PA Turnpike, Schuylkill Expressway, and Routes 202, 363, 422. Planned improvements, including a full interchange at US 422 and PA 363, will make access to the center even easier. Other distinct advantages include a by-right 90' building height, incentives such as reduced ACT 209 traffic impact fees, high-speed fiber optic communication cables, and dual service electric.

The Township is encouraging a wide range of companies – from pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical services to financial and data firms - to take advantage of what the center has to offer. Entities who recently found homes in the VFCC include AVM/Café Excellence, the Anderson School, BioClinica, and UGI (temporarily displaced from King of Prussia.)

While redevelopment is a long-term effort, officials recognize that future success rests on what is done today.

“The corporate center is a lifeline for Lower Providence,” said Lower Providence Township Supervisor Marie Altieri, a member of the VFCC Revitalization Committee. “We’ve made a significant investment of time and money and it’s been a joint effort with the property owners and tenants. We are committed to making this plan successful.”

Details of the VFCC master plan can be found on the Township website, www.lowerprovidenc.org.

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