

Recommendations

To summarize, the Valley Forge Corporate Center (VFCC) is currently in flux. The VFCC's manufacturing and flex markets are relatively weak and experiencing high vacancies. While the office market is fairly healthy for now, particularly Class B+ space, the VFCC will be experiencing a five-fold increase of vacant Class A space by 2009 with the departure of three major tenants. A new Class A office building is currently under construction and another is proposed, adding to the impending glut of premier office space. Furthermore, Class A office appears to be currently commanding rents higher than most tenants are willing to pay at the VFCC. Exacerbating the situation is an identity problem and a current lack of quality amenities that can attract and retain high quality businesses to make the VFCC competitive with other office centers.

As a result, we recommend reinventing and repositioning the VFCC by diversifying its uses and increasing its overall appeal. This means moving away from the light manufacturing and industrial uses that characterized the Corporate Center in its early years while strengthening its office supply. It also means enhancing amenities to support present and future high quality tenants that command higher rents.

Recommendations Summary

The following recommendations offer a foundation for how VFCC can best position itself to capture market activity:

Near-Term (Now – 3 years)

In the near-term, start with tangible items that will result in success and create momentum to continue redevelopment. Start with the following strategies:

1. Continue the re-organization of the VFCC Business Association toward continued growth and redevelopment of VFCC.
2. Rename the VFCC and postal address to better reflect its location, redevelopment and new identity
3. Identify and implement site / landscape improvements that will be visible early initiatives that will signify new activity at the center.
4. Institute a unified, thematic signage program throughout the VFCC to improve visibility and identity
5. Create a more walkable, pedestrian-oriented environment in the VFCC through additional sidewalks and trails, crosswalks, and pathways – including linkages to nearby regional recreational trails.
6. Continue to pursue the Expo Center and Velodrome developments to diversify markets and jump-start continued redevelopment in the VFCC
7. Revise zoning to accommodate a new vision for the center that includes more mixed uses

Recommendations

8. Pursue funding for infrastructure improvements that will act as catalysts to private sector investments
9. Continue pro-active Township / VFCC partnership initiatives to attract new tenants and retain existing tenants

Mid-Term (3 – 5 years)

Next, begin to develop the amenities that will support the retention of current office users and the incremental investment by existing and new office building developers. Seek to first redevelop property that is very low performing, particularly industrial and flex space, for conversion to other uses, primarily commercial and entertainment.

1. Introduce a human-scaled, limited residential components to the VFCC that will enliven it in the evenings and on weekends, support expanded retail and dining services, and provide housing options for employees of the park
2. Create an entertainment area located near the proposed Expo Center / Velodrome with restaurants and shops that could be easily accessed from Route 422, serving businesses, customers, visitors to the new American Revolution Center, and new residents of the VFCC
3. In the same vicinity, introduce a new hotel to further capitalize on the growing activity and business in and around the VFCC
4. Create attractive public spaces that tie together the new mix of uses in the VFCC
5. Actively recruit tenants to higher quality existing Class A and B+ space in the VFCC

Long-Term (5 – 10 years)

In the longer-term, once the above projects are underway or completed and anticipated traffic improvements have been completed, seek to develop new competitive Class A office space once the office market improves and current surplus is reduced.

1. Develop new Class A office space in strategic locations in the VFCC that support the new residential, commercial, and entertainment development (and vice versa)
2. Simultaneously, upgrade existing older office and flex space in the VFCC to present a better image and be more effectively integrated with the new Class A buildings

The above approach will require careful coordination between Lower Providence Township, property owners, business owners, tenants, and developers, and it won't happen overnight. However, the end result will be a reinvented Valley Forge Corporate Center – an exciting and diverse destination whose successes will continue for decades to come.

Detailed Recommendations

Near-Term Action Items (Now – 3 years)

In the near-term, start with tangible items that will result in success and create momentum to continue redevelopment. Start with the following strategies:

1. Continue the re-organization of the VFCC Business Association toward continued growth and redevelopment of VFCC.

During this planning study, the VFCCBA has met at least three times to discuss all of the issues contained within this report. Several communications tools and inter-park initiatives have been discussed within the organization. These include regular meetings, electronic newsletter, social events and other initiatives. The Township has been supportive of these efforts and will maintain frequent communications with VFCCBA leadership toward the continued vitality of the organization.

2. Rename the VFCC and postal address to better reflect its location, redevelopment and new identity.

The name “Valley Forge Corporate Center” has received mixed reactions from various property and business owners. There seems, however, to be a consensus that a name change will be beneficial and the consultants share this view. The creation of a new identity should begin by changing the name of the corporate center. The consultants, along with business association members, Township officials, and committee members have submitted more than 50 possible new names. A complete list is contained in the appendix. The following names were among, in the consultant’s view, among the most promising.

- Audubon Landing
- Lower Providence Landing
- Riverside Town Center
- Parkside Town Center
- Audubon Town Center
- Town Place at Providence

3. Identify and implement site / landscape improvements that will be visible early initiatives that will signify new activity at the center.

New landscape and site improvements, coordinated with a unified signage system and center name, will greatly add to the center’s visibility, appearance and overall aesthetic. Landscape and related improvements are especially important on the perimeters of the center, where the view from the outside helps shape the center’s image. The current primary image-creating view is from

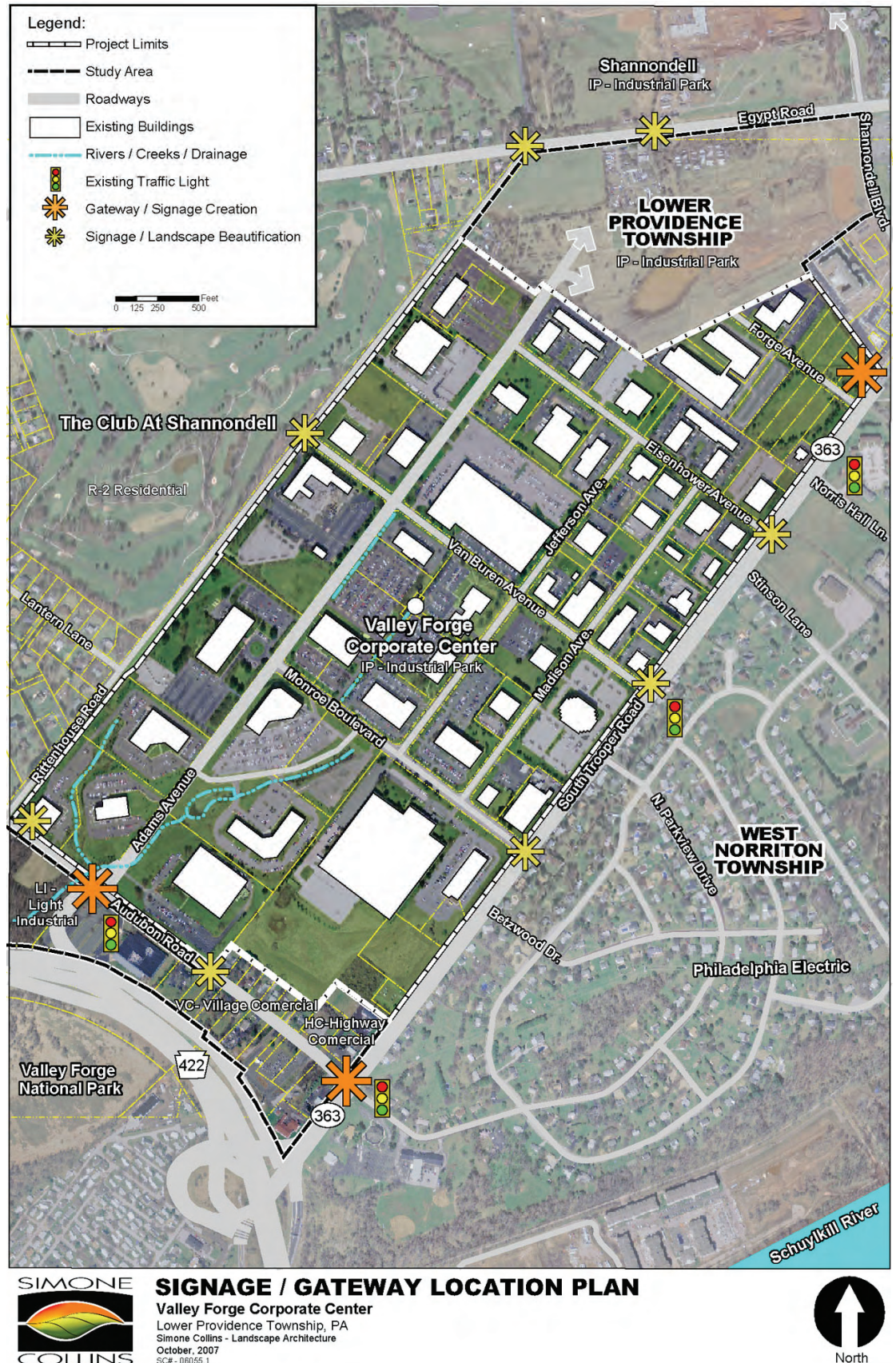
Recommendations

Trooper Road and secondarily from Audubon Road. When the Adams Avenue ramp is completed, this access point will form another primary image-creating entrance. Short term landscape improvements should be concentrated along Trooper and Audubon. Please refer to the Signage / Gateway Plan on the following page that illustrates major and minor gateways to the center.

The existing trees along Trooper Road have been unattractively pruned by the power company to avoid the overhead power lines. Since it is not feasible to bury these lines, new small trees (that will not approach overhead line height) along Trooper Road in combination with attractive understory plants and perennials, could have a major aesthetic impact along this corridor. Special planting treatments could be undertaken at each of the four existing entrances from Trooper Road. Short term landscape improvements should also be considered at Adams and Audubon, that can be moved when ramp / roadway improvements are completed. More modest landscape improvements should also be undertaken along Rittenhouse Road at Van Buren Avenue. It is suggested that the Township work with the individual property owners at the various driveways on Rittenhouse Road to implement similar planting improvements. Refer to the Signage / Gateway Plan for an overview of key identity creating locations.

4. Institute a unified, thematic signage program throughout the VFCC to improve visibility and identity.

A highly visible, memorable and unique signage program is an important component for a revitalized center. Current individual signs are of many varying materials and styles create confusion and a lack of continuity. The Township should take the lead to work with the VFCCBA and all property owners to create a unified system, with implementation by individual property owners over time. This might take the form of a Township initiative to retain a design consultant to create the signage system. If voluntary compliance and participation is determined not to be possible, revisions to the zoning ordinance could consider mandating a unified system through the land development process. The VFCCBA has begun to develop concepts for logos. It was also suggested that the proposed gateway features could incorporate work from a local artist(s) in the form of sculpture, banners, or signage detail.



Recommendations

5. Create a more walkable, pedestrian-oriented environment in the VFCC through additional sidewalks and trails, crosswalks, and pathways – including linkages to nearby regional recreational trails.

Create a detailed plan for these important infrastructure improvements. These facilities should be added to the Township's official map with these improvements implemented through both the land development process and via dedicated funding obtained through grants. Refer to the Road Improvement/Trail Plan, located at the end of Chapter Three, for an overview of the proposed system.

The Road Improvement and Trail Plan depicting existing conditions and proposed circulation improvements can form the basis of a more detailed plan. As outlined in the Analysis Chapter, existing sidewalks are disconnected and have various issues with ADA accessibility. This results in poor pedestrian circulation throughout the Corporate Center. The Road Improvement / Trail Plan proposes to connect existing sidewalks so that sidewalks are provided on at least one side of all streets in the center. Sidewalks are proposed on both sides of the street for major roads in the VFCC such as Van Buren Avenue, Adams Avenue, and Eisenhower Avenue. A trail that will connect the VFCC to the commercial area in the vicinity of Egypt and Trooper Roads is suggested through the proposed Eisenhower Circle. This trail would continue along Adams Avenue to Monroe Boulevard where the trail is proposed to follow the natural drainage course to provide a connection to the proposed Jefferson Square. From Jefferson Square the trail continues to Audubon Road with proposed regional connections to both the Schuylkill River and Audubon Loop Trail. It is intended that the development of these trails be conducted in conjunction with the proposed land developments and roadway improvements on Adams Avenue and Audubon Roads. An off road pedestrian connection is also proposed the entire length of Monroe Boulevard.

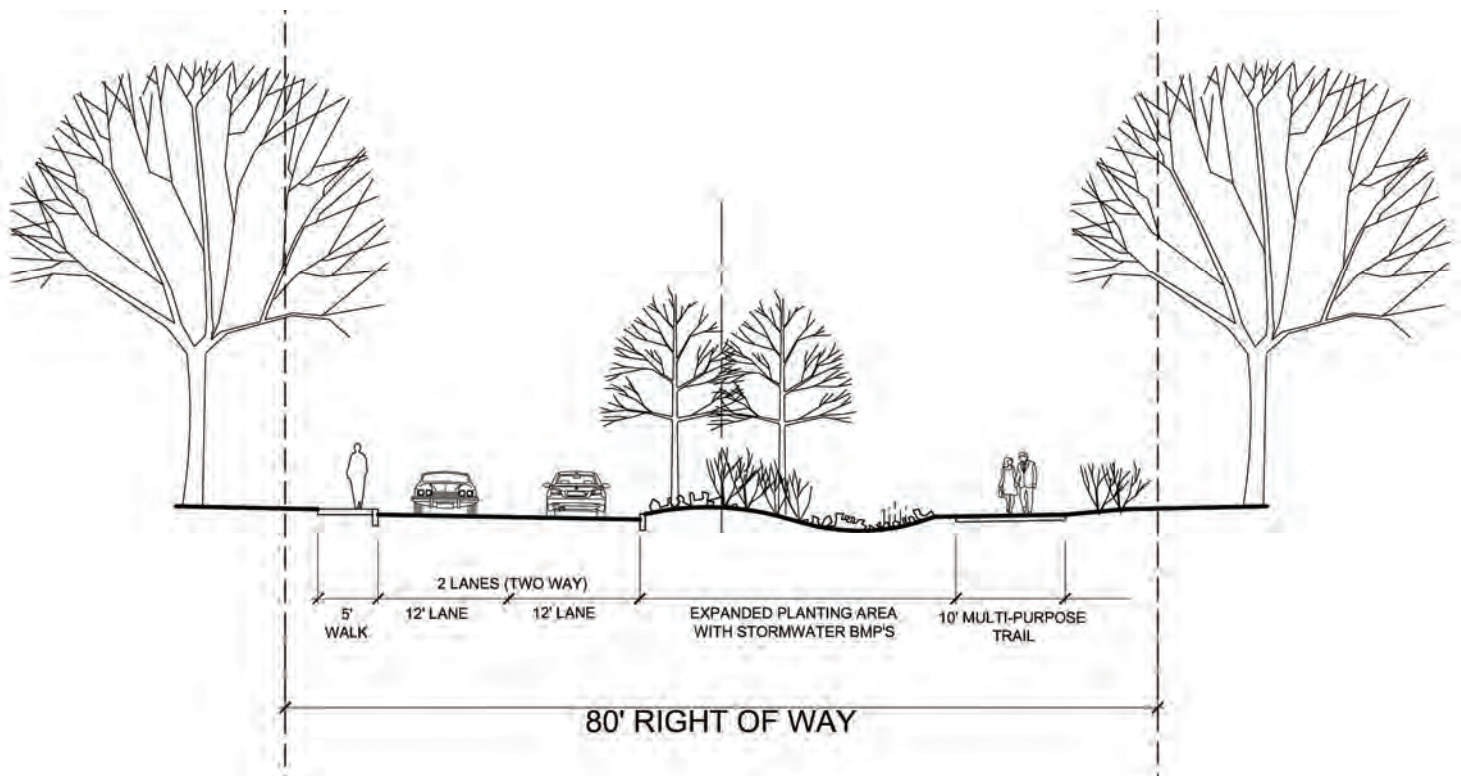
Marked pedestrian crossings are proposed at all intersections along Adams Avenue since future plans call for this road to become a through street which will eventually connect a Route 422 interchange with Egypt Road, vastly increasing the need for pedestrian safety along this corridor. It is also expected that Audubon Road will require lane widening to accommodate future traffic associated with the new interchange and the American Revolution Center. Marked Pedestrian crossings are strongly recommended along Audubon Road at the intersections of Adams Avenue, the proposed Jefferson Avenue, and Trooper Road.

In addition to adding infrastructure for improved pedestrian circulation, traffic calming measure should also be implemented throughout the VFCC to slow traffic and make pedestrian and vehicular movements safer.

The incorporation of traffic calming measures may also be used as a way to create additional green or open space within the VFCC and as means to provide stormwater management controls. The graphic at the bottom of page 37 depicts a concept for narrowing Monroe Boulevard to two lanes to provide an expanded planting area and stormwater best management practices that would act to provide separation between traffic lanes and a new off-road multi-purpose trail with the Township right-of-way.

The potential for providing chicanes, a sequence of tight serpentine curves, along Jefferson Avenue and Madison Avenue was identified as a potential traffic calming measure that would help to reduce speeds and improve the quality of the pedestrian environment.

The Lower Providence Township Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program, prepared by McMahon Associates in 2003, contains information regarding chicanes and a variety of additional traffic calming measures. This report shall be used to identify and guide the Township in determining calming measures that may be applicable to the internal streets within the VFCC.



Monroe Boulevard Traffic Calming Concept.

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6. Continue to pursue the Expo Center and Velodrome developments to diversify markets and jump-start continued redevelopment in the VFCC.

The Township should continue its efforts with various property owners to realize these facilities.

7. Revise zoning to accommodate a new vision for the center that includes more mixed uses

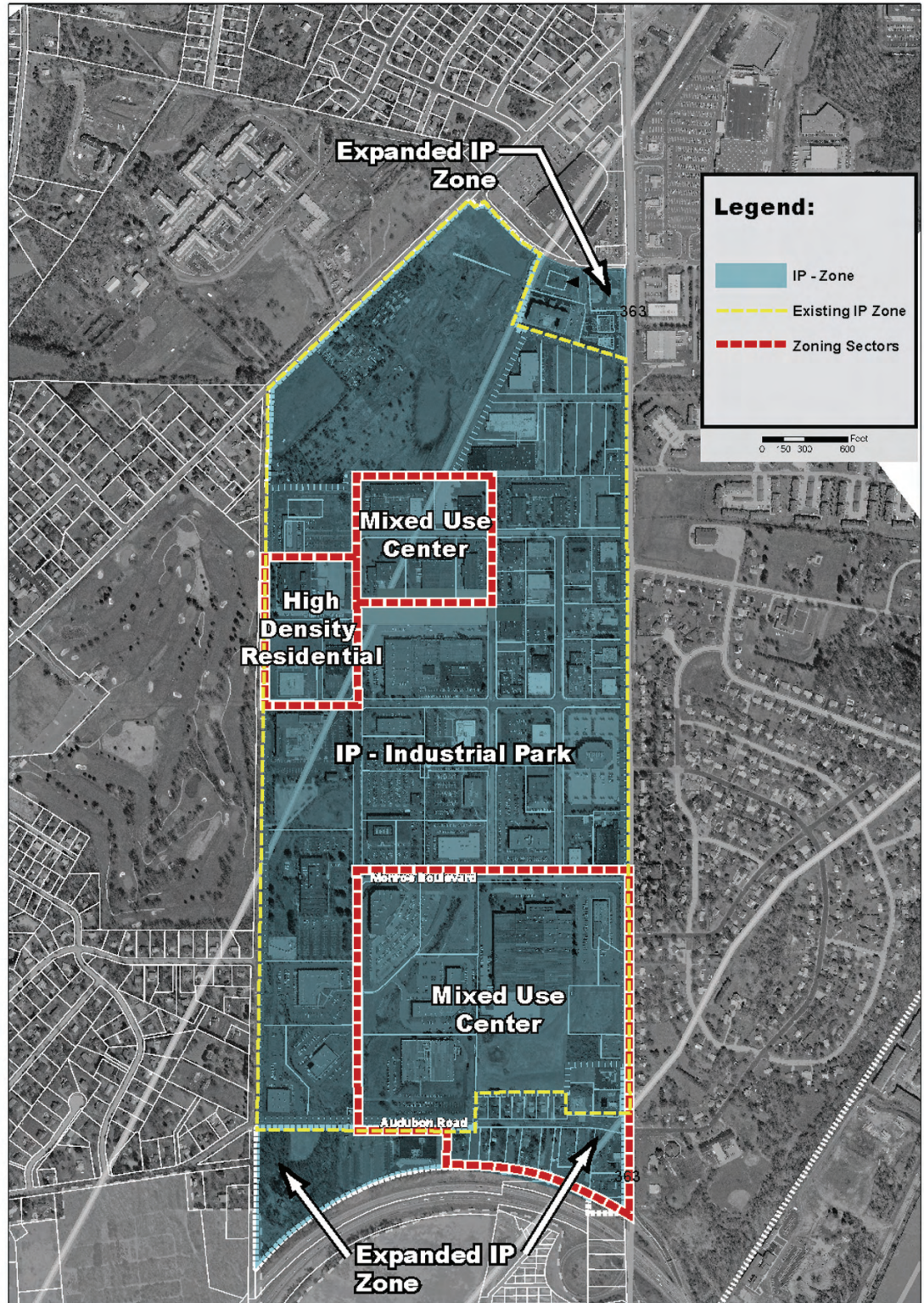
Revisions to the zoning ordinance and map are proposed to include the following:

- Expand the IP Zoning District to include the properties along both sides of Audubon Road that would entail elimination of the existing Village Commercial (VC) District.
- Creation of “sectors” within the IP zoning district that would allow mixed uses and / or residential uses only within those sectors.
- Remove most restrictions on hotel use.
- Allow class two commercial uses in mixed use center sectors.
- Allow most uses presently only allowed by Conditional Use to be permitted by-right in mixed use sectors of IP district.
- Rename IP-Industrial Park District to better reflect the intent of the zoning, such as “Town Center Mixed Use District”.
- Revise area, bulk and setback requirements for mixed use sectors to closer building to street relationships and higher building density.
- Add proposed streets rights-of-way to the Township Official Map. Add proposed trail rights-of-way to the Township Official Map.

Please refer to the proposed Zoning Sector map on the following page that illustrates the creation of sectors and the proposed new limits of the IP zoning district.

8. Pursue funding for infrastructure improvements that will act as catalysts to private sector investments

Lower Providence Township should strive to develop a funding strategy that optimizes use of matching public funds. This approach will minimize expense to the Township and publicly funded improvements will act as a catalyst to promote investment by the private sector. A listing of potential improvement funding sources is included in Chapter Four of this report.



ZONING SECTORS
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 SC# - 00055.1

