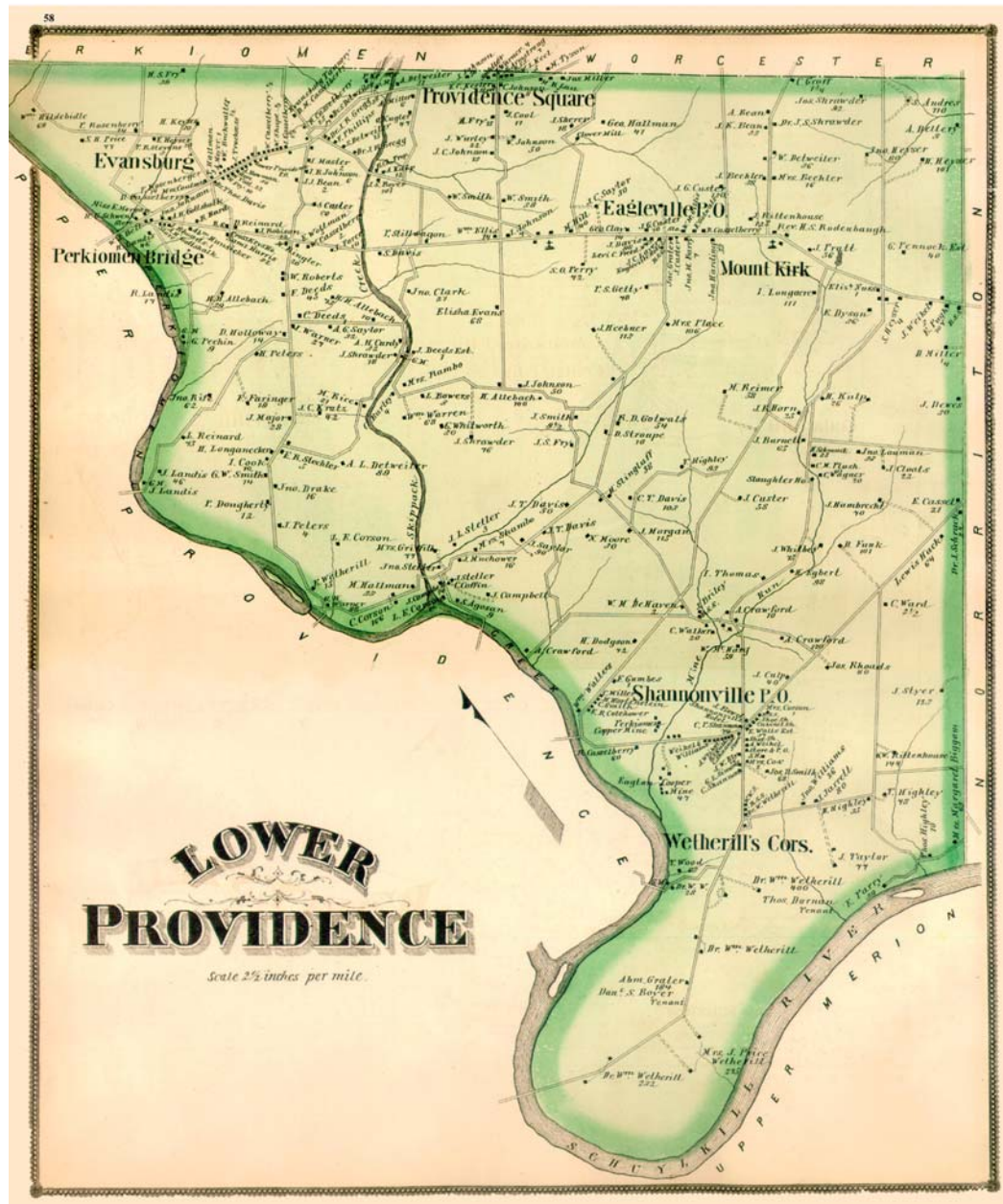


# Lower Providence Township Comprehensive Plan



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# Comprehensive Plan

M O N T G O M E R Y C O U N T Y P L A N N I N G C O M M I S S I O N



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## CHAPTER ONE

### COMMUNITY SETTING AND REGIONAL POSITION

Lower Providence Township is located in southern Montgomery County at the confluence of the Schuylkill River and the Perkiomen Creek. Approximately 22 miles northwest of Center City Philadelphia—the focal point of the Delaware Valley—the township contains 14.8 square miles. It is bordered by West Norriton, Skippack, Worcester, Upper Merion, and Upper Providence Townships and the Borough of Collegeville in Montgomery County, as well as Schuylkill Township in Chester County.

The township is one of the nine communities that comprise the Lower Perkiomen Valley. (The remaining communities are Limerick, Lower Frederick, Upper Providence, Perkiomen, and Skippack Townships and the Boroughs of Collegeville, Trappe, and Schwenksville.) Traditionally, this valley has been farmland surrounded by a few boroughs and small villages. Lower Providence, located closer to Norristown and Philadelphia than the others, has been experiencing suburban development since 1950. During the 1990s the entire valley was feeling the pressures of suburban growth. This is particularly true of the communities located along the Route 422 Expressway corridor. This corridor was one of the fastest-growing areas in the county during the 1990s and is expected to sustain a high growth rate throughout the next decade. Projections indicate that by 2010 most of the valley will be a highly developed suburban region.

Regionally, Lower Providence is best known as the home of Mill Grove, Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary, the Valley Forge Corporate Center, St. Gabriel's Protectorate, the General Washington Recreation Center, the historic village of Evansburg, and the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. It also contains portions of Valley Forge National Historical Park and Evansburg State Park.

Several major Montgomery County roads provide access to the township including Ridge and Germantown Pikes, Egypt and Pawlings Roads, and Route 363. The township is also bisected by the Route 422 Expressway. This major regional road has a partial interchange in the township and a full interchange in the nearby Oaks section of Upper Providence Township. Recent development, both in the township and in the surrounding area, has placed a lot of traffic on these roads. Some, such as Egypt Road, have become greatly congested, causing traffic to seek alternate routes through local neighborhoods. Alleviating this congestion and its attendant problems has become a major policy issue for Lower Providence. Public transportation opportunities currently are limited to bus service on several major roads in the township and service to the Valley Forge Corporate Center, a major employment center.

The township has numerous recreational amenities. Along with the lands of Valley Forge and Evansburg parks and property owned by Montgomery County, the township owns over 250 acres of parkland. Collectively, this land accounts for almost 25 percent of the township's total land area. Three water bodies in the township—the Skippack and Perkiomen Creeks and the Schuylkill River—significantly add to these amenities, providing fishing, boating, and other water-related recreational opportunities. Lower Providence augments these natural amenities with extensive recreation programs. The township has a full-time recreation director and has developed programs for township residents in every age category.

Lower Providence contains a variety of development, ranging from historic villages to modern residential enclaves and shopping centers. Given its position in the Lower Perkiomen Valley, the township is experiencing rapid suburban development. This gives the township great vitality but also creates problems that can be solved only through diligent planning and ongoing cooperation with neighboring communities.

## CHAPTER TWO

# TOWNSHIP HISTORY

Lower Providence Township, similar to most communities, has developed according to its geographic position. The way in which the township has developed and prospered is a reflection of its relationship to transportation routes, other communities, and the natural features of its landscape. To fully understand the current nature of the township, it is useful to briefly examine the forces that have created its present character.

Originally inhabited by the Lenni-Lenape tribe of Native Americans, the land area that Lower Providence now occupies was a part of the original grant to William Penn. Penn reserved a large tract of land on the east side of the Schuylkill River for himself around the intersection of the Perkiomen Creek, naming it the “Manor of Gilberts” in honor of his mother’s family. This tract covered basically the area now made up of the two Providences—Worcester, Skippack, and Perkiomen Township. Over a period of years, Penn relinquished some of these holdings. In 1699, he conveyed 5,000 acres—essentially the western half of the present Lower Providence Township—to the Pennsylvania Land Company. Also prior to 1700 he sold the area of the far northwest corner of the present Lower Providence Township to Jacob Tellner. Tracts in both of these areas were sold over the following several decades, with most of the area being settled prior to the 1760s. The first settlers were largely Anglican, although there were also some German and Dutch settlers. Curiously, there were few Quakers.

In 1725, the settlers drafted a petition to form a township, but their request received no action. They tried again a few years later, and on March 2, 1729 the Township of Providence was founded. It included the present Upper Providence and Lower Providence Townships and the Boroughs of Collegeville and Trappe.

The origin of the name “Providence” is not known. Tradition says the area was settled by some of the followers of Roger Williams of Rhode Island and was named after the settlement located there. Another theory indicates that it was named after a West Indian island of the same name. This theory also has merit given that several original settlers had come from that and neighboring islands.

For some unknown reason, Providence Township was split into Upper Providence and Lower Providence Townships in 1805. Presumably, Perkiomen Creek, which forms the border between the two, presented a barrier for communication between the two sections. It was not until 1799 that the creek was bridged. Besides this crossing, fording points were extremely limited. It is possible that the two sections did not have enough in common to remain as one municipality. Also, in this era before efficient communications and modern transportation, the residents may have found the township simply too big to govern and decided that a logical division was along the Perkiomen Creek.

One of the earliest villages to develop was Evansburg, formerly known as Hustletown. Its original settlers were Anglicans who founded St. James Episcopal Church in 1700. The village was eventually renamed after the Reverend Evan Evans, the first rector of the church. By 1800, the village was known throughout the region as a manufacturing center for Kentucky Long Rifles. This rifle was developed on Pennsylvania’s eighteenth century frontier, and Evansburg was the home of one of its most noted creators, Owen Evans. On December 1797, he received a contract from Governor Mifflin to make 1,200 rifles for the state militia. It was one of the largest contracts ever awarded an individual gunsmith. Many of his rifles were used in the War of 1812. His house still stands on Germantown Pike.



Eventually four other villages developed in the township. By the mid-nineteenth century, Eagleville, Providence Square, Audubon, and Trooper had begun to be settled. Both Eagleville and Providence Square were established around factories used for the manufacture of carriages. Audubon, originally settled after copper was found there in the early 1800s, prospered after a post office was established there in 1828. Originally called Saylor's Corner, it was known for many years as Shannonville, after a local family of that name. Eventually it was renamed Audubon, after its most famous resident, John James Audubon. Trooper, which developed around an inn that was identified by a sign of a mounted trooper, prospered during the Civil War when a sawmill was converted to a woolen and cotton mill. However, most of its residential development did not occur until the early twentieth century. Figure 2-1 shows the location of these early villages.

The Revolutionary War came to Lower Providence, on September 19, 1777, when General Washington and troops set up camp in Evansburg and Trappe. Washington used the Derrick Casselberry house as his headquarters. The next day, September 20, a Council of War was held in St. James Church. On September 21, Washington rode to the Vaux house (now the site of Fatlands) in Audubon to observe British troop movements across the Schuylkill and stayed the night there. The following morning, September 22, Washington returned to Evansburg. Later that same day the British General Howe arrived at the Vaux house and stayed the night. Meanwhile, Washington and his troops moved out of Evansburg toward Camp Pottsgrove.

Returning to the area on October 3, Washington's troops passed through the area of Germantown Pike and Skippack Pike on the way to the battle of Germantown. On October 4 or 5, Washington's troops retreated from Germantown to Evansburg, and St. James Church was used as a hospital. Some 150 of his soldiers died and were buried in a mass grave in the church's cemetery.

From December 19, 1777 until June 18, 1778, the troops staying at Valley Forge required supplies and food from surrounding farmers including those in Lower Providence. General Sullivan constructed a log bridge across the Schuylkill, downstream from Fatlands Ford, making it possible to more easily supply Valley Forge troops—even to drive cattle across the river. Although this provisionary bridge soon collapsed from ice flows, its location is still shown on Morris's 1848 map of the county.

During the early nineteenth century, the township prospered as a farming community with five villages. By the mid-1800s, the economic picture of Lower Providence shifted from agriculture to mining. Lead mines had operated prior to 1800, but it was not until copper mines became prominent that the mining industry flourished in the township. By 1810, the population of the township was 904 people. The population grew to 1,146 in 1820. By 1850, there were 1,961 people. The chief stimulation of township growth during this period, aside from the copper industry, was the township's geographic location, at the confluence of the Perkiomen Creek and the Schuylkill River. The latter served as a route to the western part of Pennsylvania. This gave the township a water transportation network as well as waterpower. Along with the Skippack Creek, these water bodies served and still serve the township in guiding growth. Today, however, the prime consideration is water supply and recreation, not transportation.

The copper industry, through the impetus of several mining companies, grew in the 1800s with shafts being driven along Mine Run. As a result of several factors, including mismanagement, inferior-quality ore, and a decline in quantity, these companies went out of business by 1884.

During the 1950s, a federal government report documented the results of core borings to determine the feasibility of recommencing mining in the township and concluded there was no value of the existing minerals.

Throughout the Victorian period, modern transportation improvements began to have an impact on the township. The Pennsylvania Railroad was first to reach the township in 1884. However, this line did not have the impact in Lower Providence as it had in other places. The rail line traveled through a small portion of the lower end of the township. The Betzwood Station in West Norriton served this portion of Lower Providence.

## **Historic Map of Lower Providence**

large pullout map

The trolley car was the next mode of transportation to serve Lower Providence. Tracks were constructed in 1896 as far as the Skippack Creek, where a park was established to entice the curious to ride to the end of the line. The line was extended to Collegeville, and connections finally were made to Pottstown and points further west. Later a line was extended north from Trooper along Trooper Road to the villages of Fairview, Skippack, Lederach, Harleysville, and Souderton Borough, but it was not successful and was short lived. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the automobile developed as a transportation medium and began to affect many communities. In the Great Depression era, as many as 2,000 trucks crossed Lower Providence daily with coal for Philadelphia and other points in the Delaware Valley. Motor buses maintained regular schedules to Norristown and Conshohocken while other lines traveled to Reading from Philadelphia.

With the automobile, employees were able to live in Lower Providence and commute to plants and offices in the Norristown-Bridgeport area. There was no modern industry within the township until 1929 when an airplane engine company, known as Lee Motor Company, was established at Germantown Pike and Cross Keys Road. A very modern plant and airplane hangar were erected, but due to metallurgical problems and an engine slightly ahead of its time, the company was forced to resort to converting World War I Liberty engines to power rum runners (fast boats for the illicit bootleg trafficking of alcoholic beverages into the United States). The company sold the plant in the Great Depression era of the early 1930s. The present Superior Tube Company was incorporated in 1934 and has been an important factor in the development of Lower Providence.

In the twentieth century, the housing market became an important part of Lower Providence. In the first decades of the century, the area south of Ridge Pike in Trooper was plotted and developed with bungalows and American foursquare-style houses. Some infill development occurred in the other villages. A resort-oriented community was established near the confluence of the Schuylkill River and the Perkiomen Creek in the Perkiomen Junction section of the township. However, construction virtually halted during the Great Depression, and a flood in July of 1935 caused the damage or complete loss of many summer homes along both the creek and the river.

After World War II, residential construction began to boom in the township. Following the national trend, families began leaving the urban areas en masse for suburban subdivisions. During the 1950s, the township's population tripled. The number of houses rose from 1,426 in 1950 to 2,955 in 1960. Along with this boom came related commercial uses. The township's first shopping center, Parkridge, was developed in the early 1950s. By 1970, two more had been constructed—one in Eagleville and another in Audubon.

All of this development had a sobering effect on the township. The board of supervisors, formed in 1899 with three members and enlarged to five members in 1972, worked with the county planning commission to create the township's first zoning ordinance. After a reportedly explosive meeting at the old Trooper School, the zoning ordinance was adopted on May 3, 1955. Two years later, the township planning commission was established with five members. The commission's first effort was to create a Limited Industrial Ordinance. It suggested the land bordered by Trooper, Egypt, Rittenhouse, and Audubon Roads as the area for this district. Today, much of this area contains one of the township's most successful developments, the Valley Forge Corporate Center. Other manifestations of increased development were the creation of a township police force in 1954 and the development of a second fire station, in Audubon, in 1958. This station came only 13 years after the creation of the township's first fire station.

Lower Providence saw continued growth during the 1960s and 1970s. The populations of Audubon and Eagleville exploded as the township experienced its first developments of garden apartments and townhouses in these areas. While development slowed during the 1980s, owing largely to a public sewer moratorium at the Oaks Treatment Plant, this was only a temporary situation. When the moratorium was lifted in the late 1980s, development—primarily residential—exploded. This was especially prominent in the area between Audubon and Eagleville where, in a very short time, the landscape was transformed from a rural one to one of cul-de-sacs and single-family dwellings.

Lower Providence enters its fourth century as a rapidly expanding suburban community. In just 50 years it has grown from a rural community, populated by farmers and small villages, to a suburban landscape of shopping centers and single-family houses. In this sense, its story is not unique. It is one found throughout the country. However, it is a distinct place with a history older than Montgomery County itself. As Lower Providence plans for its future, it will use the policies contained in the succeeding chapters to balance the need for growth and economic viability, while retaining its history and sense of place.

## CHAPTER THREE DEMOGRAPHICS

### DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

The information in this chapter summarizes population and housing trends for Lower Providence Township. To provide a broader context, comparisons to Montgomery County are made where possible. The information presented in this chapter draws from the 2000 Census as well as the 1990 Census, Montgomery County data, and Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) projections and estimates.

#### *Population*

The Philadelphia/Wilmington/Atlantic City/Vineland-Millville-Bridgeton Consolidated Metro-politan Statistical Area (CMSA) experienced a population gain of 295,526 persons during the 1990s. This translates to a 5 percent increase, slightly larger than the increases in previous decades. Montgomery County experienced a 10.6 percent increase in population during the 1990s. This amounted to a population change of 71,986 persons, taking the population from 678,111 to 750,097. Montgomery County added more people within that decade than any other county within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This growth within the county may be attributed to a 25 percent increase in the number of children during the 1990s as well as the completion of the Route 422 Expressway. This expressway prompted a lot of development, and communities along the expressway corridor grew the fastest during the decade.

Table 3-1  
**POPULATION GROWTH, 1920-2000**

	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Lower Providence	2,221	3,189	3,822	5,687	9,955	15,169	18,945	19,351	22,390
Percentage Increase	—	85.5%	93.8%	73.5%	70.9%	74.5%	80.1%	90.4%	62.7%
Montgomery County	199,310	265,247	289,247	353,068	516,682	624,080	643,621	678,111	750,097

Source: US Census Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 1

The overall population in Lower Providence Township has increased dramatically since the early twentieth century. **Table 3-1** shows the steady increase of population within the township over the last 80 years. In 1920, 1.1 percent of the county's population lived in Lower Providence Township. That percentage was almost triple in 2000 with a figure of 2.98 percent. Another indication of the changing growth pattern can be seen in the "Percentage Increase" row for Lower Providence Township. This row, showing the percentage increase for each decade from 1920 to 2000, depicts a steady increase of residents throughout the years. During the 1990s, the township grew by approximately 3,039 residents. Between 1920 and 2000, Lower Providence Township experienced an increase of 20,169 residents. This increase is attributed to an increase in the number of children born in the township and to improved countywide transportation systems. These factors, coupled with the township's stellar educational system, all contributed to the increase in population throughout the township.

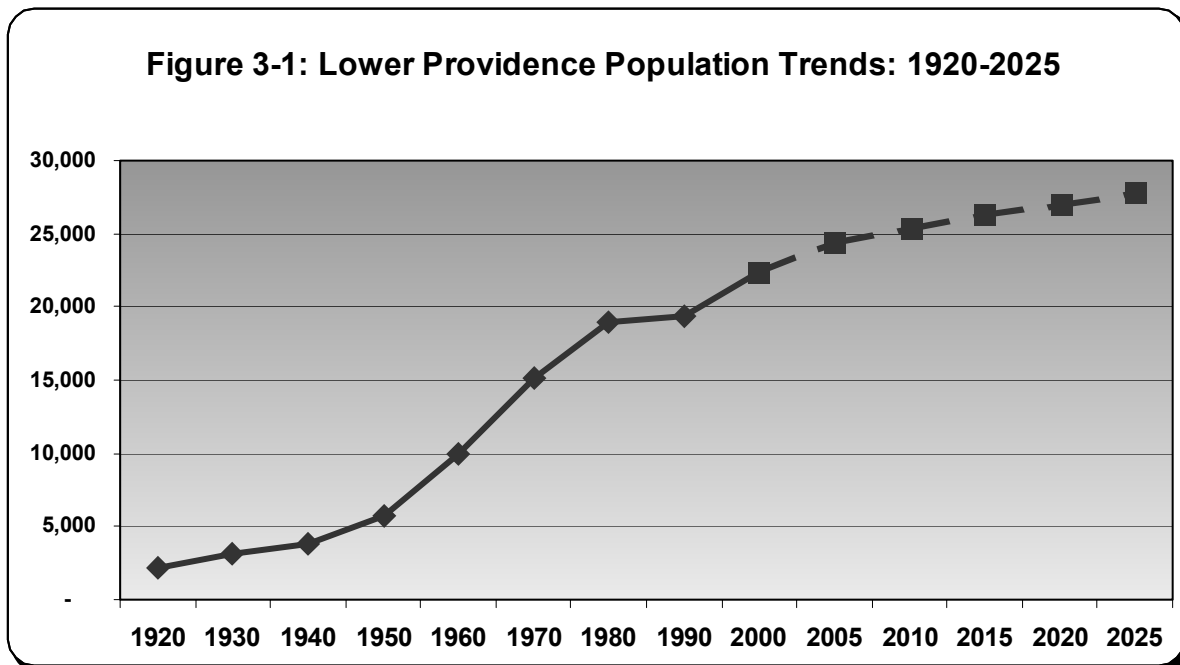
## Population Projections

**Table 3-2** contains population forecasts conducted by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC). **Table 3-2** indicates that Lower Providence Township will continue to grow during the next 25 years. Although the township is approaching buildout, Lower Providence is predicted to grow by approximately 5.4 percent (5,400 residents) by 2025. In contrast, the entire population of Montgomery County is predicted to increase by 14 percent.

Table 3-2  
POPULATION PROJECTIONS, 2000-2025

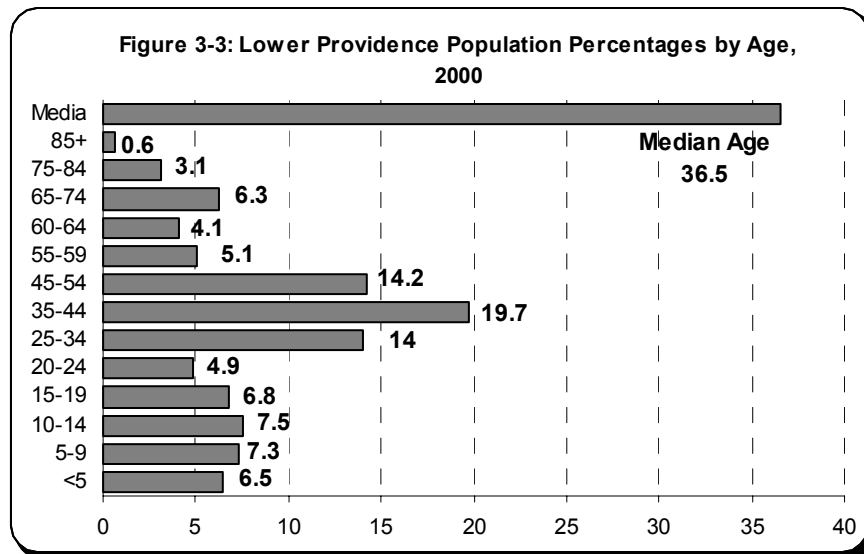
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	Absolute Change 2000-25	Percent Change 2000-25
Lower Providence	22,390	24,350	25,430	26,260	27,030	27,790	5,400	24.0%
Montgomery County	750,097	776,340	797,990	818,210	838,700	857,030	106,933	14.0%

**Figure 3-1** below shows the existing and projected population history of Lower Providence Township from 1920 to 2025. With the exception of a period of minimal growth between 1980 and 1990, the township has experienced and will continue to experience a significant increase in population for the next several decades. The dotted lines indicate population projections.



## Age Characteristics

The age profile (**Figure 3-3**) for Lower Providence Township reveals that in 2000 the township was comprised largely of the 25-54 age cohorts. Based on the data in **Figure 3-3**, 47.9 percent of the population was between the ages of 25 and 54, while 33 percent were under the age of 24, and 19.2 percent were 55 and older. In 2000, the median age of a Lower Providence Township resident was 36.5. Overall, the percentages attributed to each of the



age cohorts in Lower Providence were similar to those of the county. (Some slight variations occurred at either end of the age ranges.)

## Housing Profiles

The U.S. Census Bureau defines a household as a person or persons occupying a single housing unit. A household can be broken down into two categories. A family household consists of two or more persons living in a single housing unit. A nonfamily household is defined as one person or a group of unrelated persons occupying a single housing unit. Nationally, as well as locally, households are changing. There has been an overall increase in nonfamily and single-person households since the 1970s.

**Table 3-3**  
**HOUSEHOLD PROFILES, 2000**

	Population in Houses	Number of Households	Average Household Size	Number of Family Households	Percentage of Households
Lower Providence	20,478	7,446	2.75	5,604	75.3%
Montgomery County	726,840	286,098	2.54	197,640	69.1%

Fragmentation of the family unit, through divorce, death of a spouse, or children leaving home to form their own households, has contributed to an increase in the number of households and a decrease in the size of households. Average household size is determined by dividing the number of persons in households by the number of occupied housing units. The average household size has declined nationally as households continue to diversify. **Table 3-3** indicates that the average household size in Lower Provi-

In 2000, the 7,716 housing units within Lower Providence Township constituted 2.59 percent of the total housing units in Montgomery County. **Figure 3-4** illustrates that single-family detached housing was the most prevalent type of housing structure in Lower Providence. This was followed by multifamily housing, which includes apartment buildings and residential conversions that can accommodate three or more households in one structure. As households change so do housing types. Single-family attached housing units, which include townhouses, twins, and duplexes, have steadily increased as a percentage of total housing units over the past 20 years.

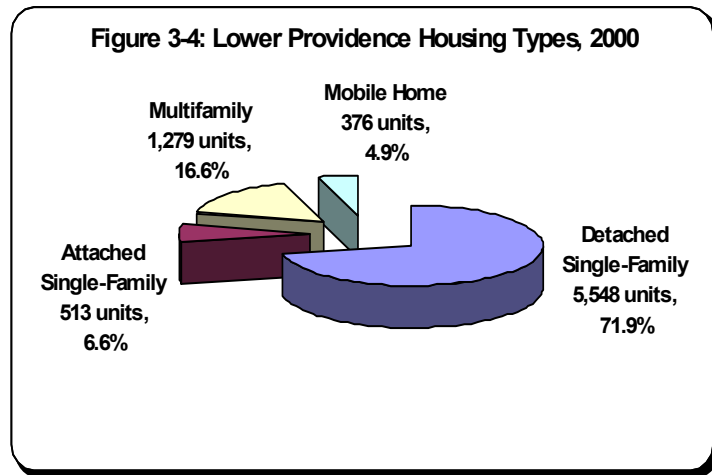


Table 3-4  
**HOUSING TYPES, 2000**

	Single-Family Detached	Single-Family Attached	Multi-Family	Mobile Home	Total # of Units: 2000 Census
Lower Providence	71.9%	6.6%	16.6%	4.9%	7,716
Montgomery County	56.0%	18.7%	24.3%	0.9%	297,434

**Table 3-4** shows that the housing type distribution in Lower Providence was similar to that of the county in 2000. An exception is single-family attached units, where the county percentage exceeded that of Lower Providence. **Table 3-4** also illustrates that the percentage of mobile homes throughout the township greatly exceeded the county percentage.

### ***Housing Tenure***

The 2000 housing tenure pattern depicted in **Table 3-5** indicates that the majority of residents in Lower Providence Township owned their homes. **Table 3-5** shows the owner to renter ratio in Lower Providence was similar to that of the county in 2000.

Table 3-5  
**HOUSING TENURE AND VACANCY STATUS, 2000**

	Occupied		Vacant	For Seasonal, Recreation Use	Total Housing Units
	Owner	Renter			
Lower Providence	79.3%	20.7%	3.2%	0.3%	7,716
Montgomery County	73.5%	26.5%	3.8%	0.3%	297,434

In Lower Providence, 79.3 percent of the residents owned their homes and 20.7 percent rented. In Montgomery County, 73.5 percent owned their homes and 26.5 percent rented.



## Vacancy

**Table 3-5** also shows the number of vacant units within Lower Providence. Overall, in 2000 the township had a 3.2 percent vacancy rate, which was below Montgomery County's rate of 3.8 percent.

## Educational Attainment

The educational attainment of Lower Providence Township in 2000 reflected the prevailing economy within the township (refer to **Table 3-7**). **Table 3-6** indicates 42.3 percent of the Lower Providence population over the age of 25 had a high school diploma or less; 38.8 percent of Montgomery County's population had the equivalent educational attainment. **Table 3-6** shows that 57.6 percent of the population in Lower Providence had attended college or obtained a professional degree as compared to 61.2 percent of the county.

Table 3-6  
**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, 2000**

	9th Grade Education	9th to 12th Education No Diploma	High School Graduate	Some College or Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Post Graduate Degree
Lower Providence	3.2%	9.3%	29.8%	22.8%	23.7%	11.1%
Montgomery County	3.0%	8.5%	27.3%	22.4%	23.1%	15.7%

## Labor Force

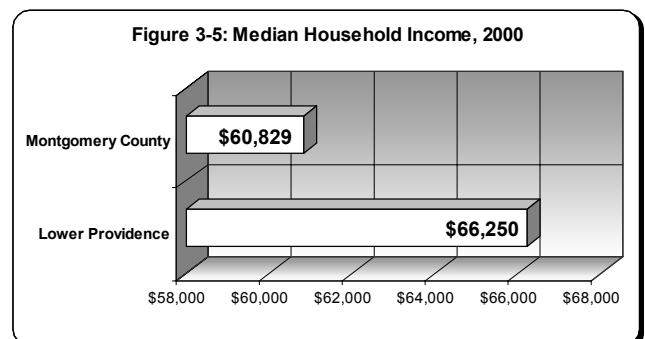
**Table 3-7** shows that in 2000 the industries of manufacturing, education and health, as well as the professional category dominated the labor force within Lower Providence Township. These four combined industries were responsible for employing 45 percent of the working force 16 years of age and older. Manufacturing was the largest employer of Lower Providence labor force with 15.7 percent, while the education and health industry was the largest employer of the Montgomery County labor force with 21.6 percent.

Table 3-7  
**LABOR FORCE BY INDUSTRY**

	Construction	Manufacturing	Wholesale Trade	Retail Trade	Transportation	Information	F.I. R. E.	Professional	Educational, Health	Other Services	Public Administration
Lower Providence	5.0%	15.7%	5.6%	10.9%	4.5%	5.6%	10.7%	14.9%	14.4%	4.1%	3.1%
Montgomery County	5.6%	15.0%	3.9%	11.3%	3.2%	3.5%	10.0%	12.9%	21.6%	4.5%	2.7%

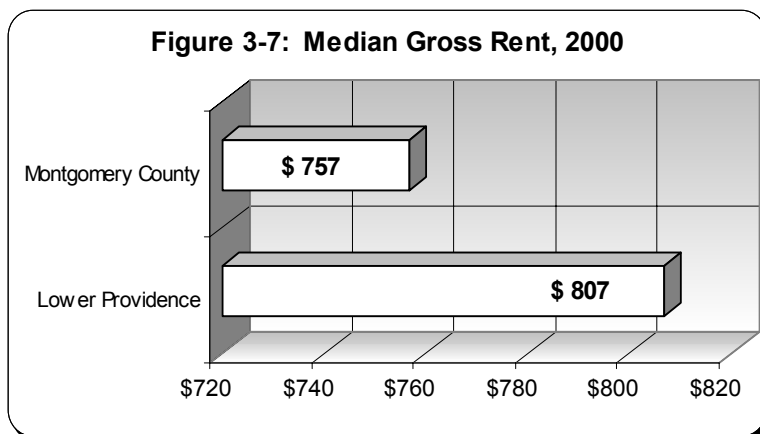
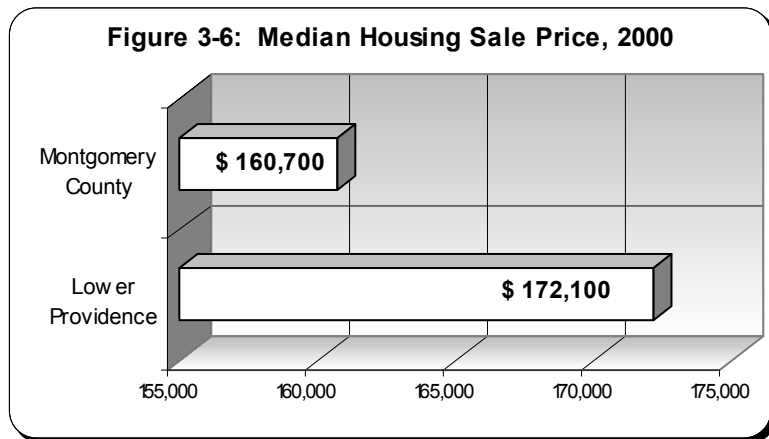
## Median Income

The 2000 Census reports the median household income Lower Providence was almost \$6,000 higher than the Montgomery County median value, as indicated in **Figure 3-5**. Median Housing Value and Sale Prices.



### ***Median Housing Sale Price***

In 2000, the Census indicates the median housing sale price was significantly higher in Lower Providence than throughout Montgomery County, as indicated in **Figure 3-6**. This pattern most likely can be attributed to prime location factors associated with the township, combined with access to major transportation routes and employment centers.



### ***Median Gross Rent***

Gross rent is defined as contract rent plus utilities. **Figure 3-7** shows that the 2000 gross rent in Lower Providence was slightly higher than that of the county. This slight increase can be linked to the higher median real estate values within the township.

\* All sources of data for the tables and figures came from the U.S. Census Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 1. & Montgomery County Housing Units Report, 1999.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# NATURAL FEATURES

This chapter inventories and describes the township's natural features. Natural features range from below-surface bedrock to the treetops of woodlands. For planning purposes, the most relevant natural features are geology, topography, soils, surface water and floodplains, and woodlands. These features create the unique landscape that is Lower Providence. They contribute to its attractiveness, add value to its built environment, and sustain its livability. Their preservation not only ensures the township will be a desirable place to live but that it will also be a livable place.

## GEOLOGY

Except for surface outcrops, bedrock geology is unseen. As a result, its influence on natural features is not always acknowledged. However, since bedrock geology is the foundation of an area, the influence is both strong and pervasive. Bedrock, along with the hydrologic cycle, is responsible for the changes in elevation, steep slopes, location of watercourses, and orientation. Orientation, in turn, will influence vegetative communities, soils, and availability of sunlight. The bedrock or parent material has a great influence on the type of soil formed. For example, hard, igneous bedrock has resulted in soils with a high stone and boulder content. Groundwater yield differs from one bedrock formation to the next. In Montgomery County, the difference ranges from under 1 gallon per minute (gpm) to over hundreds of gallons per minute.

Montgomery County is located in the Triassic Lowland and Piedmont Upland section of the Piedmont Physiographic Province. The Triassic Lowlands are primarily red shales and sandstones, with intrusions of diabase. Four formations—Stockton Sandstone/Conglomerate/Shale, Lockatong Argillite/Shale, Brunswick Shale/Sandstone, and diabase—make up the Triassic Lowlands. The Piedmont Upland is comprised of metamorphic and igneous rock (granite and schist), although there is a band of carbonate rock that stretches east from Chester County to Abington Township. Wissahickon Schist/Granite Gneiss/Hornblende Gneiss, Chickies Quartzite, and Leger/Dolomite/Elbrook/Conestoga Limestone are the formation found in the Piedmont Upland. There are only three formations underlying Lower Providence Township. These are described below.

1. **The Stockton Sandstone/Conglomerate/Shale formation** underlies most of the southern third of the township, roughly south of Park Avenue and Pinetown Road. This formation is primarily coarse sandstone, which tends to form ridges resistant to weathering. The groundwater resources in this formation are the best of any formation—a fact that has aided the rapid development of areas underlain by the formation.
2. **The Lockatong Argillite/Shale formation** underlies most of the central third of the township, roughly between the Park Avenue/Pinetown Road corridor to the south and a line stretching from upper Grange Avenue to the Yerkes area in the north. This is part of a larger band, several miles wide, which runs from the Mont Clare area in Upper Providence Township to the Montgomery/Horsham Township border. Resistant to weathering, these rocks form the prominent Methacton Ridge, which runs through central Montgomery County. The ridge has some of the highest elevations in central Montgomery County, with panoramic views of the Schuylkill River Valley. Generally, the Lockatong formation exhibits low groundwater yields.
3. **The Brunswick Shale/Sandstone** underlies most of the northern third of the township, roughly corresponding to the neighborhood of Evansburg. The same formation underlies most of the northwestern half of Montgomery County, except for where several diabase intrusions are found. Brunswick Shale/Sandstone is characterized by reddish brown rock. At areas where diabase sills and dikes occur in the Brunswick formation, Argillite was formed as a result of the heat from the molten rock. Argillite is a harder form of Shale. Groundwater yields vary. Secondary openings, such as joints and fractures, are the key to adequate flow.

The township geographic formations are delineated in **Figure 4-1**.

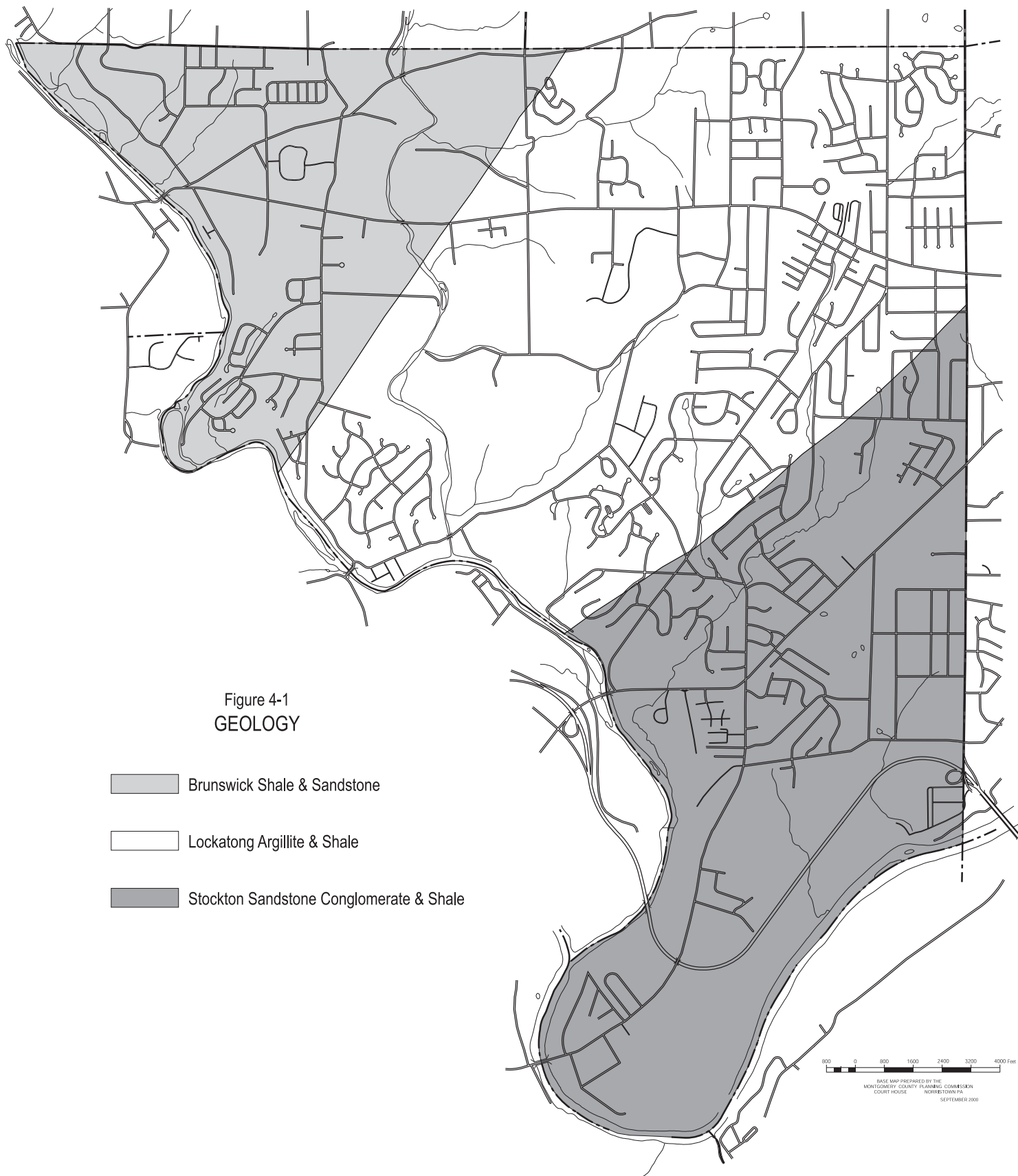
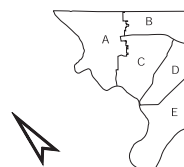


Figure 4-1  
GEOLOGY

- Brunswick Shale & Sandstone
- Lockatong Argillite & Shale
- Stockton Sandstone Conglomerate & Shale

800 0 800 1600 2400 3200 4000 Feet  
BASE MAP PREPARED BY THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
NORRISTOWN, PA  
SEPTEMBER 2000



## TOPOGRAPHY

### *Steep Slopes*

Steep slopes are natural features of the landscape that limit development and provide community character. They are also environmentally sensitive areas.

The degree of slope and soils present on steep slopes are in balance with vegetation, underlying geology, and precipitation levels. Maintaining this equilibrium reduces the danger to public health and safety posed by unstable hillsides. The Soil Conservation Service's Soil Survey for Montgomery County has four classifications for slopes: 0 to 3 percent, 3 to 8 percent, 8 to 15 percent, and 15 to 35 percent. Not all sloping areas fit neatly into these four classes of slopes, and slopes do not always exhibit the same characteristics. Generally speaking, as the slope increases, the depth of topsoil and the ability of the soil to support structures decrease. Steep slopes often have a combination of vegetation, climate, soil, and underlying geology that differs from the surrounding area. Frequently, this means that the environmental sensitivity of the steep slope is different as well. Susceptibility to erosion and mass movement may be greater than the surrounding area, especially if vegetation is removed. An increase in runoff and sedimentation from disturbed slopes requires an increased public expenditure for flood control and stormwater management. Also, different plant species and the associated wildlife that depend on these plants may be present only on the slopes, creating unique recreation opportunities.

The USGS Topographic Quadrangles show that Lower Providence Township has an extensive amount of steep slopes. **Figure 4-2** shows two categories of steep slopes: slopes between 15 and 25 percent and slopes exceeding 25 percent. Slopes this steep (15 percent and above) affect 7 percent of the entire township. Steep slopes are located in all parts of the township, but they generally can be found along several water bodies: Skippack Creek, Eagleville Run, Mine Run, Perkiomen Creek, and the Schuylkill River as well as many tributaries.

Some of the steeply sloped land in the township has been developed over the last few decades, for several reasons. One is that the township had no steep slope ordinance until 1998. A second is that when much of the township was developed (in the 1950s), builders did not preserve steep slopes as well as they do today. Slopes were considered an obstacle to development, something to be eliminated, instead of an amenity to be preserved.

Associated with slopes are elevation and relief. The highest point in the township is in the northeast section, between Church Road and Park Avenue, near the Worcester Township border. It is 495 feet above sea level. Conversely, the lowest point is only 65 feet above sea level. It is located in the center of the Schuylkill River near Betzwood. The range between the highest and lowest points, called the relief, is 430 feet. The relatively long distance between these two points results in a gradual rise in the township's topography from its southern edge to its northern boundary. Other high points in the township are in the vicinity of the old Moyer Landfill and near the Eagleville Hotel in Eagleville. Refer to **Figure 4-1: Geology**.

### *Watersheds and Drainage Areas*

All of Lower Providence Township lies within the Schuylkill River watershed. Within that watershed, there are distinct drainage areas relating to all of the major creeks. The Perkiomen Creek drains nearly the entire township not drained directly by the Schuylkill River or the west branch of the Stony Creek (see below). There are several smaller subwatersheds within the Perkiomen Watershed. The largest is the Skippack Creek, which runs through Evansburg State Park and drains most of the north central part of the township along with its tributaries (including the Eagleville Run and Rock Run). The Mine Run drains much of the south central part of the township, between Egypt Road and Sunnyside Avenue. Other smaller creeks drain directly to the Perkiomen Creek including the Schatz Run (near River Road and Township Line Road), the Miller Run (near Skippack Road), and the French Run (near Cross Keys Road). The west branch of the Stony Creek drains the northeastern corner of the township, between Trooper Road and Church Road, north of Ridge Pike. The Stony Creek drains directly into the Schuylkill River at Norristown.



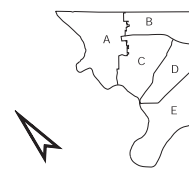


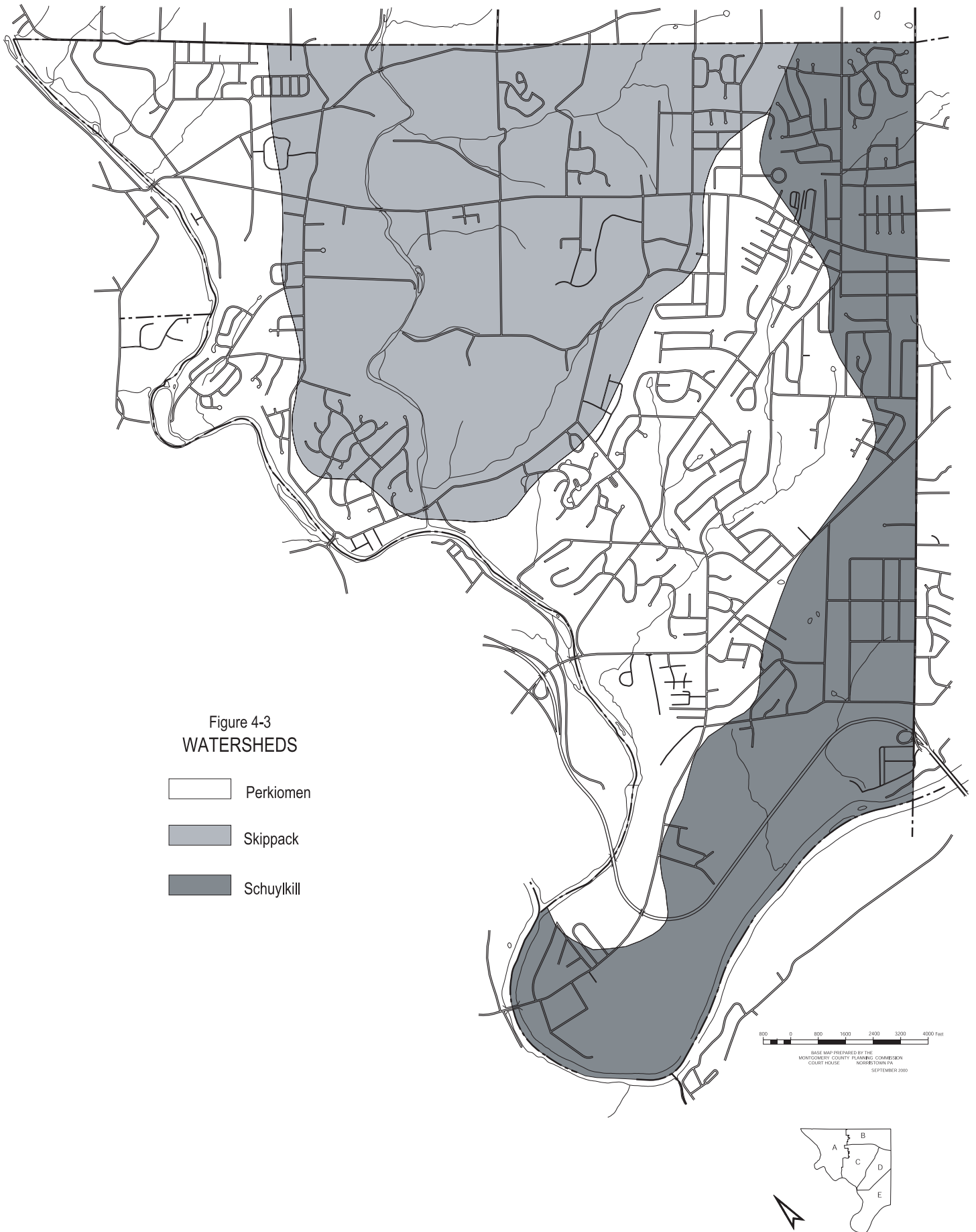
Figure 4-2  
STEEP SLOPES

Greater than (15%)

800 0 800 1600 2400 3200 4000 Feet

BASE MAP PREPARED BY THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
COURT HOUSE  
SEPTEMBER 2000







Finally, the Indian Creek drains a small part of the township near Trooper Road between Ridge Pike and Egypt Road. The Indian Creek drains directly into the Schuylkill River at Port Indian in West Norriton Township.

Lower Providence Township participated in the Stony Creek/Saw Mill Run Act 167 Stormwater Management Plan, along with several other municipalities in central Montgomery County. When fully implemented, the plan will coordinate both the volume and the rate of stormwater runoff throughout the 24.8-square mile watershed.

## ***Soils***

Soils are a natural assortment of organic materials and mineral fragments that cover the earth and support plant life. The composition of soils changes slowly over time, due to weathering of rock and activity of soil organisms. As a consequence, soils vary with respect to depth to bedrock, depth to groundwater, color, mineral characteristics, fertility, texture, and erodibility.

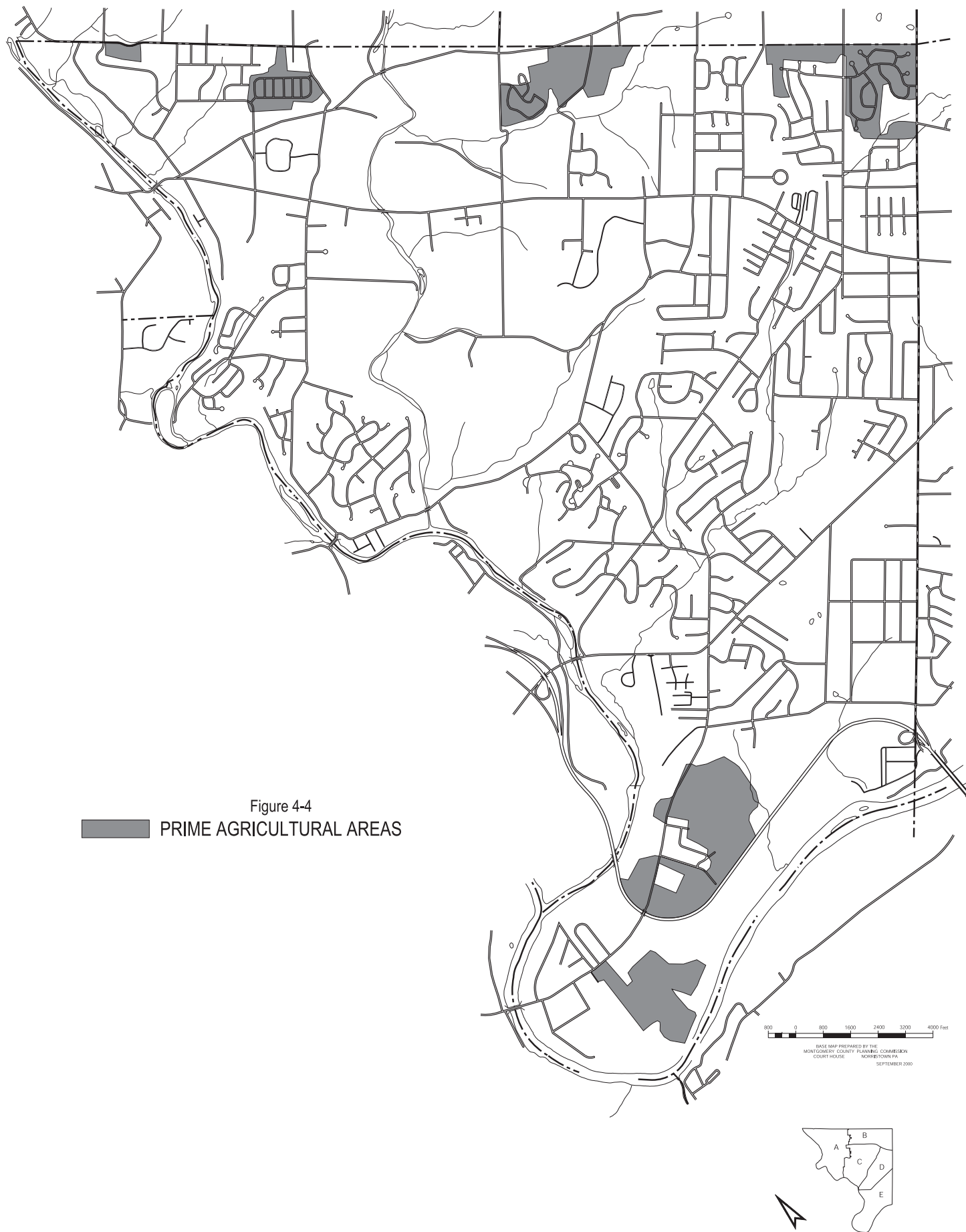
Conversely, the type of soil influences the vegetative cover of the land, which affects the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater, wildlife diversity, rates of erosion, and the aesthetic quality of the landscape. The different types of soils also influence development patterns, the percolation rates of different soil associations control the speed and amount of water flowing into the ground. If an area contains poor drainage, the site may be unsuitable for any kind of development or farming. If the drainage is too great, septic systems could be discharging untreated effluent into nearby streams, rivers, and groundwater supplies. The shrink-swell capabilities of different soils also affect development patterns. If there is a high level of shrink-swell, foundations may be ripped apart and damaged due to the shifting soils.

Though soils are diverse, soil scientists have classified the soils found in Montgomery County into several groups called soil series. Soils listed within the same series will display similar subsurface characteristics. The surface characteristics of soils within a particular series can vary in slope, degree of erosion, size of stones, and other easily recognizable features.

Soils are one of the most influential natural features. The soils in Lower Providence Township are a result of the hydrology and the weathering capacity of the underlying geology. The orientation of the land and the types of vegetation that grow in the soils also influence them. Conversely, the type of soil influences the vegetative cover of the land, which affects the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater, wildlife diversity, rates of erosion, and the aesthetic quality of the landscape. In addition to the soil mapping units, soils can also be divided into prime and important agricultural soils, hydric components, and alluvial soils. The groups of soil pertinent to Lower Providence Township are described on the preceding page.

## ***Prime and Important Agricultural Soils***

The agricultural capability of soil is measured based on fertility, depth to bedrock and groundwater, texture, erodibility, and slope. Based on these characteristics, soils are classified as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, and other land. **See Figure 4-4.** Prime farmland includes deep, well-drained, and moderately sloped soils that can support high yields of crops with little management. Farmland of statewide importance includes soils that support cultivation but require careful crop management. The remaining soils are best used for pasture and woodlands or non-agrarian uses. Nearly all of Lower Providence Township has soils considered to be prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance. One area of prime farmland is the southern part of the township, south of Sunnyside Avenue and Ridge Pike all the way to the Schuylkill River. Another is the far northwestern part of the township, between the Perkiomen and Skippack Creeks. A majority of the remaining soils in the township. The only major exceptions to this pattern are areas with large-scale development, such as the Ridge Pike corridor, the Audubon area, and the Valley Forge Corporate Center. These areas have “made land,” which means that the land has been significantly graded and filled. Other exceptions include land with very steep slopes, where the quality topsoil has eroded over time.



**Hydric Soils:** Hydric soils are periodically wet soils in an undrained condition that often support the growth of wetland vegetation. Some hydric soils are found in drained conditions; these will not exhibit wetland vegetation. Hydric soils that have been drained for agricultural use are one example of this situation. Soils with major hydric components are a conservative indicator of wetlands. Other soils have hydric components in limited settings such as depressions, bottomlands, swales, drainage ways, and alluvial soils. These soils have a high water table and frequently pond.

Lower Providence Township has several areas of hydric soils. For the most part, they correspond to the water bodies in the township: Schuylkill River, Eagleville Run, some parts of the Mine Run, Schatz Run, Miller Run, French Run, Rock Run, and the west branch of the Stony Creek. Interestingly, most of the land along the Skippack Creek is not hydric soils. There is one large area of hydric soil not associated with a creek. It is on the northwest side of Sunnyside Avenue, from Farmhouse Drive nearly to Highley Road.

**Alluvial Soils:** Alluvial soils are related to hydric soils and are frequently, but not always, located within a floodplain. These soils have been deposited by flowing water and are not stable as a result of their texture and composition. The presence of alluvial soils is only one indicator of a floodplain. Changes in the tributary drainage area or slope of the adjacent stream may create a floodplain that is either larger or smaller than the area of alluvial soils. Also, alluvial soils do not indicate the probability of recurrence of a flood (for example, a 100-year flood). An important aspect of alluvial soils is that they often form aquifer recharge areas—places where rainwater can be quickly absorbed by the earth. See **Figure 4-5**.

### ***Surface Waters and Hydrology***

**Floodplain and Stream Corridors:** The 100-year floodplain is a feature that will affect the health, safety, and welfare of Lower Providence residents. Floodplains, low-lying areas adjacent to rivers, streams, creeks, and other bodies of water, are subject to periodic flooding when precipitation causes the volume of water to exceed the capacity of the waterway. Much of the time, floodplains are dry. The most important role of a floodplain is to store overflow of nearby water bodies until normal flow can resume. During storms, however, the floodplain stores and conveys floodwater. The true risks of developing within a floodplain are that you have a 1-% chance of being flooded this year. The terminologies “floodplain” and “100-year floodplain” denote measurements of risk and have nothing to do with frequency. This means if your residence is located within a 100-year floodplain there is roughly a 1 in 4 chance that your home will be inundated in a catastrophic flood over the life of a 30-year mortgage. Development within the floodplain reduces the carrying capacity and increases the level and destructive ability of floodwater. In addition to carrying floodwaters, the floodplain and stream corridor serve other important functions. The condition of the stream corridor itself is important in minimizing erosion and water pollution, protecting water quality (temperature and velocity), and providing animal habitat and recreation opportunities. Well-vegetated corridors will reduce pollutant loads to streams, shade the stream, and provide habitat for wildlife. When vegetation is preserved along the banks of feeder streams as well as the main stem, pollutant loads are greatly reduced. Wetlands that filter and impede stormwater and provide a habitat for aquatic life are frequently found along the corridor. Unconsolidated gravel and stone deposits along the corridor allow for groundwater recharge. People also benefit from stream corridors, as these corridors provide opportunities for trails and other forms of recreation.



The township is traversed by numerous floodplains. Besides those of major waterways, such as the Schuylkill River and the Perkiomen and Skippack Creeks, floodplains exist along all or part of the following streams: Schatz Run, Miller Run, French Run, Rock Run, Mine Run, Eagleville Run, Myers Run, and four unnamed tributaries of the major waterways (two drain into the Perkiomen Creek, one drains into the Skippack Creek, and the other into the Schuylkill River). In general, most of the floodplain areas are undisturbed as a result of the undeveloped nature of the banks along the streams and river as well as the protection afforded by Evansburg State Park for the Skippack Creek. The most important exception is development in the Audubon area, where some parts of the Mine Run floodplain have been developed. Other parts of the Mine Run floodplain have been permanently preserved under the ownership of the township. Lower Providence adopted a floodplain conservation ordinance in 1973 and amended it in 1979, 1988, and 1998. **Figure 4-5** shows floodplains in Lower Providence Township.

The Federal Clean Water Act requires Pennsylvania to establish water quality standards for all streams and other water bodies in the state. The standards establish criteria that need to be met to protect designated water uses. Streams are evaluated periodically to ensure that the water quality standards associated with the uses are met. The higher the standards, the higher the waterway's value for protection and propagation of aquatic life, and the higher the stream quality.

Below is the federal government's list as it is used in Montgomery County and a summary of what the water quality criteria are based on. The list is prioritized from the lowest designation (WWF) to the highest (EV).

- WWF Warm Water Fishes** – Maintenance and propagation of fish species and additional flora and fauna that are indigenous to a warm-water habitat.
- CWF Cold Water Fishes** – Maintenance and/or propagation of fish species including the family Salmonidae and additional flora and fauna that are indigenous to a cold water habitat.
- TSF Trout Stocking Fishes** – Maintenance of stocked trout from February 15 to July 31 and maintenance and propagation of fish species and additional flora and fauna that are indigenous to a warm water habitat.
- EV Exceptional Value Water** – A stream or watershed that constitutes an outstanding national, state, regional, or local resource such as waters of national, state, or county parks or forests; water used as a source of unfiltered potable water supply; waters of wildlife refuges or state game lands; water that has been characterized by the Fish Commission as "Wilderness Trout Streams"; and other waters of substantial recreation or ecological significance.

In Lower Providence, the federal government has designated the following waterways:

Perkiomen Creek .....	<b>TSF</b>	Schuylkill River .....	<b>WWF</b>
Skippack Creek .....	<b>TSF</b>	Stony Creek .....	<b>WWF</b>
Mine Run .....	<b>TSF</b>	Unnamed tributary of Schuylkill .....	<b>WWF</b>
Unnamed tributary of Perkiomen .....	<b>TSF</b>		

**Hydrology:** Water is a valuable and finite resource. It is consumed by people and industry, enjoyed at recreation facilities, employed in the assimilation of treated sewage, and integral to the landscape. The average rainfall in the county varies from 43 inches near City Line Avenue in Lower Merion Township to 47 inches in the vicinity of the Green Lane Reservoir in Upper Hanover Township. It should be noted that in any given year, annual precipitation could vary from the average by as much as 10 inches. Generally speaking, 25 percent of precipitation becomes direct runoff, 50 percent evaporates or is transpired by plants, and 25 percent replenishes groundwater. The surface water that falls on or is carried through Lower Providence Township affects the topography, soils, vegetation, and groundwater. Most of the



township is in the Perkiomen Creek and Schuylkill River watersheds, which also include most of the municipalities in central and western Montgomery County.

Municipalities that are upstream contribute surface water flow to Lower Providence. Those downstream receive flow from Lower Providence. The water flowing through the township comes from two natural sources: direct runoff and groundwater. A third manmade source may also contribute to stream flow: treated effluent discharged from sewage treatment plants, which tends to dampen the variation between high- and low-flow periods.

Groundwater behaves much like surface water. It flows like a stream, only much more slowly. Groundwater is tapped as a source of drinking water and for industrial purposes where surface water is unavailable. Groundwater replenishment occurs slowly as precipitation and, in some cases, stream water seeps through the soil down into the aquifer. Open, undisturbed land is essential to groundwater recharge. Vegetation serves to retain precipitation where it falls, allowing it to soak into the soil rather than run off the surface. Impervious surface from development prevents infiltration of precipitation.

Lower Providence residents and businesses obtain more than half of their water supply from groundwater (both public and private wells) and the rest from surface water. The southern part of the township is served by the Audubon Water Company, which draws all of its water from wells. The Evansburg Water Company serves the small area in the northwestern corner of the township with water drawn from wells. Some homes along Evansburg State Park and the Pawlings Road neighborhood have individual wells. Most of Eagleville and Trooper are served by the Pennsylvania American Water Company, which draws all of its water from surface supplies.

## ***Wetlands***

Wetlands have value and are worthy of protection due to a number of characteristics. However, it is easier to discuss the benefits of wetlands than it is to delineate the wetland itself. Some wetlands are easily recognizable by most people because the presence or influence of water is obvious. However, many wetlands are subject to only seasonal flooding. For much of the year, surface water may not be present. Still other wetlands develop in areas where the soil is saturated for long periods but is never flooded. Non-tidal wetlands account for most of the wetlands in the United States. They are located throughout the nation's interior, removed from tidal effects. Non-tidal wetlands are located along rivers and in the fringes along streams or upland depressions. The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have defined wetlands as "Those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions." Before any wetlands may be filled or disturbed in the least, a Section 404 permit must be obtained from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

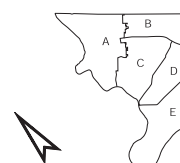
Depending on where they are located, wetlands may serve one or more beneficial functions. Almost all wetlands provide a protected habitat for the development of young birds, amphibians, and fish. These, in turn, support many other species of wildlife. Wetlands also mitigate flooding by holding back floodwater and slowing stream velocity. Wetlands improve water quality as well. They act as giant sponges absorbing stormwater runoff and releasing it slowly to rivers and estuaries. This efficiently prevents downstream flooding and recharges the groundwater table in the process. As water flows through a wetland, it slows and drops much of its sediment load. In addition, nutrients that can cause algae blooms and other pollution problems are taken up by wetland vegetation. Many wetlands contain a diversity of plants and animals that provide beautiful locations for sightseeing, hiking, fishing, hunting, boating, bird watching, and photography. Wetlands are also a valuable asset that provides countless opportunities for environmental education and public awareness programs.



Figure 4-6  
WETLANDS

0 800 1600 2400 3200 4000 Feet

BASE MAP PREPARED BY THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
COUNT HOUSE  
HARRISTOWN, PA  
SEPTEMBER 2000



Lower Providence has a considerable amount of wetlands, based on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service. The land under the Perkiomen Creek, Schuylkill River, and the lower reaches of the Skippack Creek are in the riverine ecological system. Riverine wetlands are hydrologically associated with a river and include mud flats, coastal plains, and shoreline wetlands. Some land alongside those water bodies, as well as along the Rock Run, Eagleville Run, Mine Run, and west branch of the Stony Creek, are in the Palustrine ecological system. Additional small wetland areas that are scattered across the township and not associated with water bodies are in the Palustrine ecological system. Palustrine wetlands include all non-tidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, mosses, and lichens. The NWI offers a broad-based generalized overview of wetlands; other wetlands may exist in the township. Hydric soils, primarily Bowmansville, Croton, Doylestown, Hatboro, and Watchung soil associations, may also indicate the presence of wetlands. The Army Corps of Engineers or a qualified consultant should be enlisted for a final determination where wetlands are suspected to be present. These wetland areas are shown in **Figure 4-6**.

### ***Vegetation and Woodlands***

**Woodlands:** The original vegetation of Montgomery County was a dense forest of hardwoods, which covered over 99 percent of the county. Oaks were the dominant species, but Chestnut, Tulip Poplar, Hickory, Ash, Red Maple, and Dogwoods were also present. Several hundred years of clearing and cultivation, as well as recent rapid development of houses and commercial facilities, have reduced these woodlands to a shadow of their former extent. The principal types of woodlands remaining in the county are:

**Red Oak** – This species comprises approximately 60 percent of all remaining woodlands. Northern Red Oak is predominant, but Black, Scarlet, and Chestnut Oak are also abundant.

**Ash/Maple/Elm** – These comprise roughly 19 percent of all remaining woodlands. Local mixtures will vary and include minor species such as the Slippery Elm, Yellow Birch, Black Gum, Sycamore, and Poplar.

**Eastern Red Cedar** – This species and associated species—Gray Birch, Red Maple, Sweet Birch, and Aspen—cover 18 percent of the county’s wooded acres.

**Sugar Maple/Beech/Yellow Birch** – The remaining three percent of woodlands is comprised of this association. Associated species include Red Maple, Hemlock, Northern Red Oak, White Ash, and Tulip Poplar.

Woodlands and hedgerows serve many purposes, both functional and aesthetic. Woodlands prevent erosion, provide habitat for wildlife, produce oxygen, provide buffers for creeks, reduce ground surface temperatures, and provide recreational opportunities for residents. Hedgerows and wooded corridors also prevent erosion and provide cover for wildlife movement, shelter, and migration. The species of tree found within various woodlands depends on the soil, slope, and orientation. For instance, as a result of the short period of solar exposure, the soils on north-facing slopes will tend to be cooler and moister than on south-facing slopes. Trees growing on north slopes tend to be softwoods (evergreens such as Pines and Hemlocks) while the south slopes tend to have hardwoods (deciduous trees such as Oak and Beech). Different species of trees attract different types of wildlife. In general, the more diversity in vegetation, the more species of animals it can support.

The distribution of woodlands in Montgomery County can be described in three different patterns. Small widely scattered stands can be found east of the central county ridge, often strung along alluvial soils. Long linear stands along streams and on alluvial soils are typical in the central part of the county. Large forested blocks of land, often hundreds to thousands of acres in size, are found on ridges in the central and northern areas of the county.



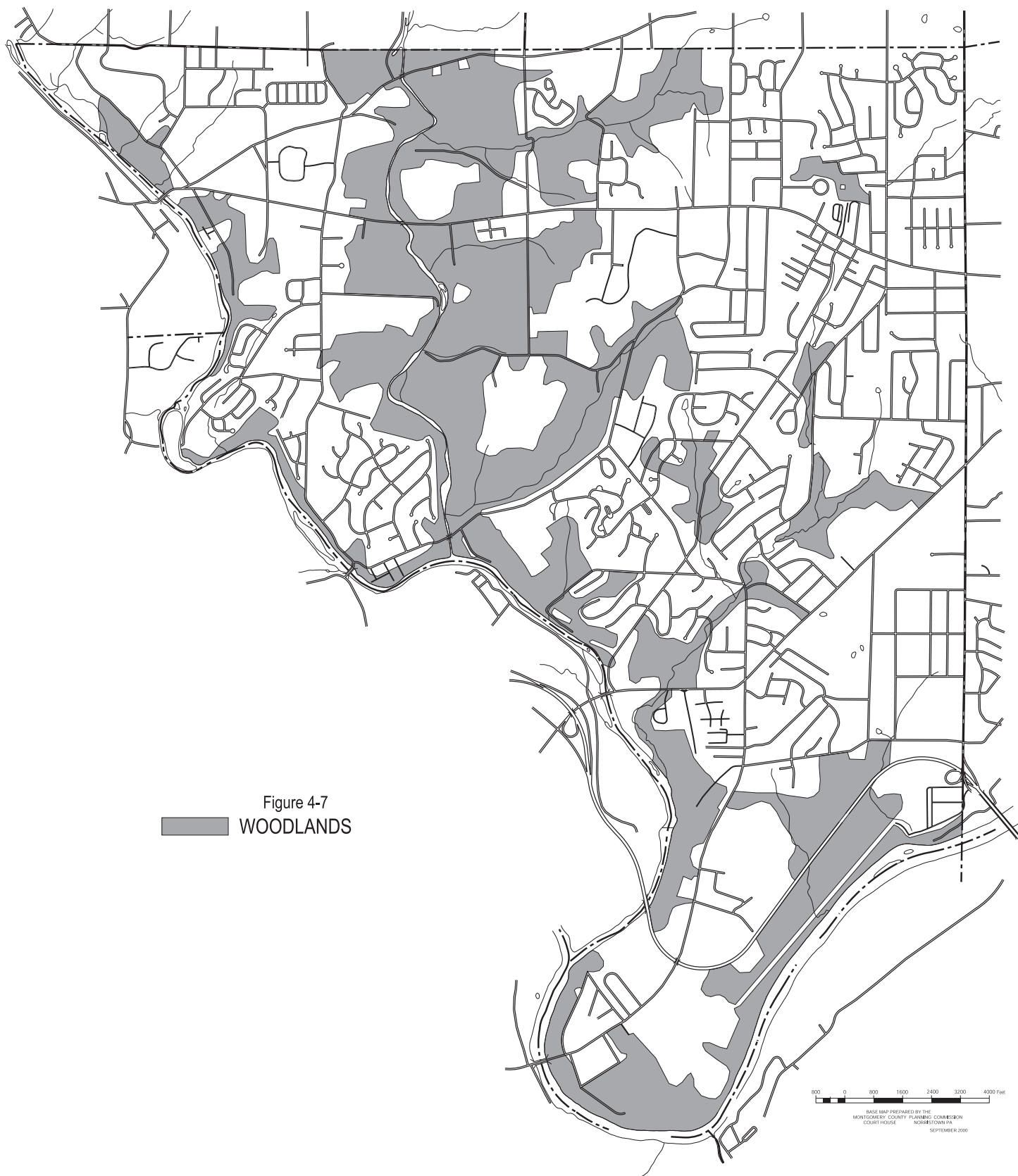
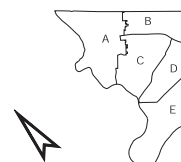
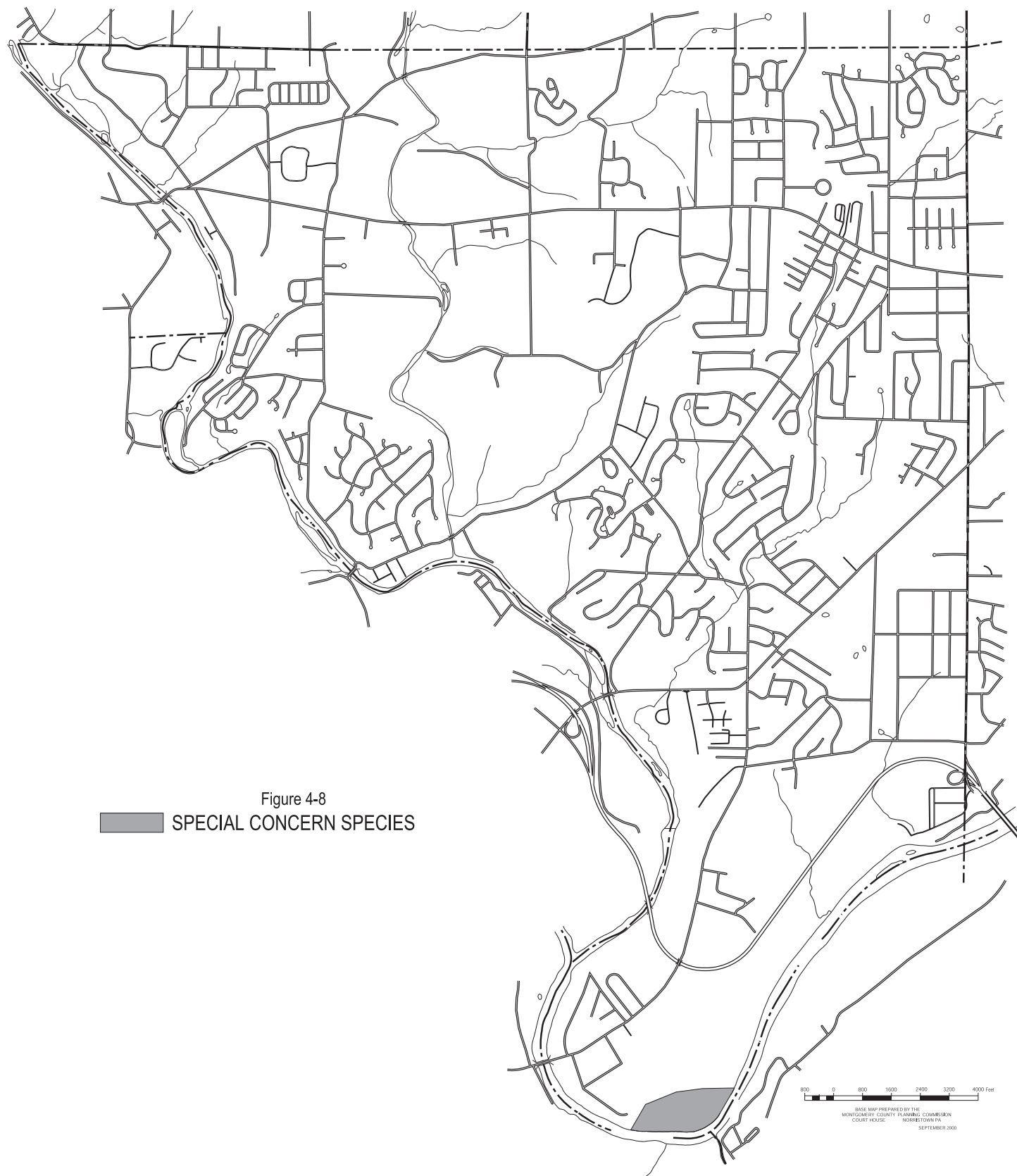


Figure 4-7  
WOODLANDS

0 800 1600 2400 3200 4000 Feet

BASE MAP PREPARED BY THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
COURT HOUSE  
NORRISTOWN, PA  
SEPTEMBER 2000





Approximately 35 percent of the county's woodlands are located on soils that provide an excellent site for trees. From a commercial standpoint, the returns from woodlands on these soils justify expenditures for forest management programs. The remaining woodlands are on soils that provide a good to poor site for woodlands. Woodlands are probably still the best use for the poorer soils, as those soils also have a low value for cropland and agriculture.

Forested areas are scarce in the built-up portions of the county. In the eastern portion of the county, substantial stands occur in and around Fort Washington State Park, in Bryn Athyn Borough, at the confluence of the Skippack and Perkiomen Creeks, and along the Mill Creek in Lower Merion. Extremely large stands are located in the western part of the county including the woodlands surrounding Green Lane Reservoir, a stretch of woodlands running from Upper Pottsgrove to Lower Frederick, and a second growth forest in Marlborough, Salford, and Upper Salford Townships along the Ridge Valley Creek. The latter example is unique in that it is the largest contiguous forested area in Montgomery County. Although this forest is not known to contain unique species, it is important due to its large, contiguous nature.

**Figure 4-7** shows the wooded areas and major hedgerows in Lower Providence Township. It is based on information collected for the 1996 county open space plan; some wooded areas may have been cleared for development since then. Much of the township's land is wooded, especially Evansburg State Park. In addition, most of the land along the Perkiomen Creek and Schuylkill River is wooded, since it was never developed or farmed because of the presence of the floodplain. Most of the very steeply sloped land is also wooded. Finally, some large stands remain in the well-developed part of the township (Eagleville, Trooper, and Audubon), but many of these trees are expected to be removed as the land is developed.

The township does contain two sites that were noted by the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI). This inventory was established in 1982 as a joint venture between the Nature Conservancy, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. This inventory has since become the state's chief storehouse of information on outstanding natural habitat types, sensitive plant and animal species, and other noteworthy natural features. Of the two sites, one is located within Valley Forge National Historical Park. Known as Pawlings Pond, it is an abandoned siltation basin that has reverted to a vegetated habitat. The site contains rare native plants and various threatened animal species. PNDI lists this site as one of statewide significance, having a general priority for preservation. It is one of 21 such sites located throughout Montgomery County. Ranked somewhat lower is Eagleville Woods, a site of local significance, which has a medium ranking for preservation. This site is noted for its stand of Beech and Red Oak trees. This type of site is somewhat uncommon in the county and includes locally interesting native flora. These sites are delineated in **Figure 4-8**.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EXISTING LAND USE

This chapter provides an analysis of Lower Providence Township's existing land use. While land use is subject to constant change, such an analysis is useful because it gives a reasonably accurate assessment of the current development pattern in the township.

**Figure 5-1** provides an inventory of the existing land uses in Lower Providence Township.

Figure 5-1  
**EXISTING LAND USES – JUNE 2000**  
*Lower Providence Township*

Land Use	Acreage	% of Total
<b>Residential</b>		
Country Residence	429.8	4.27%
Single-Family Detached	3161.8	31.43%
Twin	58.4	.58%
Single-Family Attached	27.2	.27%
Mobile Home	58.4	.58%
Multifamily	83.0	.82%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3818.6</b>	<b>37.96%</b>
<b>Commercial</b>		
Retail	143.5	1.43%
Office	160.1	1.59%
Mixed Use	116.2	1.15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>419.8</b>	<b>4.18%</b>
<b>Industrial</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Institutional</b>	<b>2119.0</b>	<b>21.12%</b>
<b>Utility</b>	<b>74.0</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Open Space</b>		
Public	1968.9	19.5%
Private	300.5	2.98%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2269.4</b>	<b>22.48%</b>
<b>Vacant Land</b>	<b>1038.4</b>	<b>10.34%</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>305.7</b>	<b>3.04%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,057.9</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LAND USES

#### ***Residential***

Residential uses account for the largest single land use in Lower Providence. Over one-third of the township is devoted to some type of housing. To get an accurate picture of this dominant land use, it is necessary to individually analyze each residential category.

**Country Residence:** This category consists of single-family dwellings on 5 to 20 acres. It is analyzed separately from other single-family dwellings not only because it differs in appearance from the typical single-family house in a residential development but also because it allows further subdivision possibilities. Once common throughout the township, country residences now are generally found in obscure areas, such as places where access is poor, or hidden in woodlands. Most of the township's country residences are located in the Providence Square area, between East Mt. Kirk Avenue and Evansburg State Park.

**Single-Family Detached Dwellings:** Of all the residential land uses, single-family detached dwellings constitute the largest grouping. This type of housing comprises over 80 percent of the township's housing stock. Located throughout the township, they range from small cottages to bona fide mansions, such as Fatlands.

**Twins or Single-Family Semi-Detached Dwellings:** These residential dwellings comprise less than 1 percent of the township's housing stock. Many predate 1950 and are located in the older villages.

**Single-Family Attached:** Commonly known as townhouses, most of this housing type is relatively new in Lower Providence. The majority of these dwellings are located in Eagleville in the Eagle Development, which was built in the 1970s. A more recent development is the 180-unit Providence Green development in Evansburg.

**Mobile Homes:** Besides a handful of scattered mobile home sites, the township has four mobile home parks—the oldest dates back to the 1950s. Three are located adjacent to each other in Trooper. They are Trooper (96 units), Sunnyside (79 units), and Shady Ridge (14 units). The other is Valley Forge Terrace (222 units), which is located near Betzwood.

**Multifamily (Apartments):** The township has four apartment complexes: Audubon Court (174 units), Colony Arms (120 units), Eagle Stream (292 units), and Mill Grove (338 units). They are all in either Audubon or Eagleville and were designed as garden apartments, although Mill Grove has several buildings with townhouses attached as end units.

## ***Commercial***

This category accounts for less than 5 percent of the township's total land use and is broken down into three subcategories.

**Retail:** Most of this use is confined to the township's four shopping centers: Park Ridge, Eagleville, Audubon Square, and Audubon Shopping Center. Other retail development consists of strip commercial development, primarily located along Ridge Pike.

**Office:** This use is located throughout the township and is found in every building type from converted houses to large modern office buildings. The highest concentration of offices is located in the Valley Forge Corporate Center.

**Mixed-Use:** Mixed-use properties contain both a residential and commercial use. Typically, a residential rental unit is combined with a ground level commercial use. In Lower Providence, these properties are usually in converted older dwellings in or near the villages.

## ***Industrial***

The most visible industrial use in the township is Superior Tube in Evansburg. Besides some scattered sites throughout Lower Providence, the remaining industrial uses are in the Valley Forge Corporate Center.

## ***Institutional***

Institutional uses account for over 20 percent of the township's total land use. A variety of these uses are found in Lower Providence. They range from religious facilities to the county prison in Eagleville. Besides the prison, township institutions with regional recognition include Eagleville Hospital, founded in 1909, and St. Gabriel's Protectorate, founded in 1896.

### ***Utility***

Significant lands devoted to this use are public water and sewer pumping stations and the natural gas line, which runs through the southern portion of the township.

### ***Open Space***

This land use is divided into two categories—public and private.

**Public:** This category includes all public parkland located in the township. Besides the state-owned Valley Forge and Evansburg parks, it includes the county-owned Mill Grove and the township's park system.

**Private:** This category involves private open space land owned by homeowners associations.

### ***Vacant Land***

Classified vacant by the county, this category involves privately owned land that presently is unused. Most of the township land designated as vacant is developable and zoned residential.

### ***Agriculture***

Once the dominant land use in Lower Providence, agricultural land now constitutes only 3 percent of the township's total acreage.

**Figure 5-2** delineates the existing land uses in Lower Providence.

## CHAPTER SIX

# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### INTRODUCTION

The goals and objectives represent the framework for the Lower Providence Comprehensive Plan. They set forth the township's rationale for the policies contained within this document. In general, they are formulated to preserve and enhance the township's quality of life. More specifically, they address various issues that can affect this quality.

#### ***Land Use***

##### **Goal**

To promote an orderly pattern of land use that balances the need to utilize land for development with the need to preserve it for recreational and environmental needs.

##### **Objectives**

Work to protect existing residential neighborhoods from conflicting land uses and detrimental development.

Promote the retention and character of the historic villages in the township through the establishment of clear boundaries and zoning that enforces their distinct characteristics while allowing for appropriate new development.

Ensure the preservation of open space parcels in designated areas of the township by using innovative zoning techniques, as described in Chapter Nine.

Establish a dialogue with neighboring municipalities regarding land use, zoning, and development issues.

Establish a dialogue with governmental bodies and institutional uses that own large landholdings in the township to discuss the future planning of these sites.

Update the zoning code to ensure that accessory uses (such as home occupations) or mandated uses (such as group homes) in residential neighborhoods do not create nuisances.

Ensure the preservation of open space parcels in designated areas of the township by using innovative zoning techniques, as described in Chapter Nine.

#### ***Housing***

##### **Goal**

To encourage a range of housing types that will meet the needs of the township's residents, to promote residential development that is consistent with established development patterns, and to ensure that the value of the township's existing housing stock is maintained.

##### **Objectives**

Provide a varied housing stock that addresses the needs of all residents.

Develop regulations for residential conversions.

Ensure that the existing housing stock remains desirable through code enforcement.

Ensure that infill development is compatible with existing residential development.



## ***Economic Development and Commerce***

### **Goal**

To provide for a strong, diverse economic base within the confines of the township's established character.

### **Objectives**

Limit the expansion of commercial or industrial zoning to areas within established nodes.

Promote the redevelopment of the Germantown Pike Industrial Corridor between Cross Keys Road and Ridge Pike.

Promote the redevelopment of the Ridge Pike corridor between Evansburg State Park and the Borough of Collegeville.

Promote the redevelopment of the Ridge Pike corridor between Trooper Road and Park Avenue.

Continue to provide for commercial development that meets the needs of the township's various neighborhoods.

## ***Community Facilities***

### **Goal**

To ensure that all areas of Lower Providence are adequately served by public safety agencies/organizations and that the public service needs of all residents are met.

### **Objectives**

#### **Public Safety:**

Establish a dialogue with public safety professionals to address common concerns.

Ensure that all new developments are located and designed to be adequately served by public safety agencies/organizations.

#### **Public Service:**

Establish a dialogue with local boards to provide input on the location of new schools, libraries, or other public facilities.

Serve all new developments with public sewer and water.

## ***Transportation***

### **Goal**

To promote solutions to existing road and traffic problems and to encourage transportation alternatives to the automobile.

### **Objectives**

Implement the roadway improvements recommended in the transportation chapter of the comprehensive plan.

Coordinate with SEPTA and the county to improve the existing transit service.

Develop corridor studies for the township's major commercial arteries that emphasize streetscape enhancement and community identity. In particular, recognize Ridge Pike, between Trooper and Eagleville, as "downtown" Lower Providence and enhance the township's various gateways.

Coordinate with the appropriate agencies to address regional traffic and roadway concerns in the township.



Promote safe, efficient pedestrian and bike trails/sidewalks.

## ***Natural Features and Cultural Resources***

### **Goal**

To promote the preservation and enhancement of significant natural features and cultural resources that defines and distinguishes the township's unique environment and history.

### **Objectives**

#### **Natural Features**

Enact a riparian buffer ordinance for stream corridor and wetland preservation.

Enact a scenic resource protection ordinance to preserve the scenic roadways and vistas described in Chapter 4 of the township's 1995 Open Space Plan.

Encourage houses to be hidden from view along scenic roadways.

Adopt stormwater best management practices to promote stream water quality and groundwater recharge.

Require open space preservation for developments using the Alternative Development Plan in the R-2 District.

Amend the steep slope ordinance to restrict excessive grading and lower the steep slope classification from a 25 percent grade to a 15 percent grade.

## ***Cultural Resources***

Develop regulations for the sensitive reuse of old structures.

Develop regulations to permit bed-and-breakfasts in old structures.

Work with the township historical society to catalog all historic buildings and sites in the township.

Develop incentives to preserve old structures during the land development process.

Create a local historic district for Evansburg and consider a historic overlay district for the township.

Develop village enhancement plans for the township's historic villages.

## ***Parkland & Recreation***

### **Goal**

To maintain livability in the township, parkland suitable for active and passive recreation should be obtained.

### **Objectives**

Implement policies of the 2000 update of the township's recreation plan.

Work with the county on the establishment of the Schuylkill River Trail.

Revise the existing (OSRD) Open Space Residential District to require that a percentage of the designated open space be designed for active recreation.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN

The proposed land use plan is a significant component of the comprehensive plan. It is the township's policy statement for future growth and development. Ideally, it is the land use blueprint for Lower Providence Township. Pragmatically, it serves as the township's defense against unwanted requests for rezonings and should forestall undesirable land use conflicts.

During the planning process, Lower Providence's existing character as a predominately residential community with distinct nodes of commercial, office, and industrial uses was acknowledged and chosen for its future growth pattern. Continuing primarily as a residential community, future nonresidential development would be limited to providing commercial uses for the convenience of township neighborhoods, while office and light industrial use would be developed to ensure a continued healthy tax base. This type of development should be located within low-density office parks.

It was further acknowledged that the township is entering its third century as a stable community. Older residential neighborhoods are well maintained and still desirable. New residential growth is compatible with existing patterns. Existing commercial development is still viable (the township's three oldest shopping centers, Audubon, Eagleville, and Park Ridge, were extensively remodeled recently). Healthy demand exists for office and light industrial space. The township's largest industrial park—Valley Forge Corporate Center—is rapidly approaching buildout, and another industrial park has been proposed nearby. Currently, almost 200,000 square feet of speculative office space is being built in the township.

Several areas of concern were identified in the planning process. Much of the township's rural landscape is disappearing, the integrity of several historic villages is being compromised by development, and the commercial corridor along Ridge Pike is beginning to fray. For the first time since its inception, the township is struggling with maintaining the quality of life that makes it so desirable and gives it a sense of place. The land use plan was formulated to build on the township's existing strengths and contains policies to reinforce these strengths.

## LAND USE PLAN

Implementing the township's land use goals requires a two-stage process. The initial stage presents a strategy for achieving many of the goals formulated by the township. Referred to as the Strategic Plan, it focuses on areas throughout Lower Providence where changing the existing zoning to implement the township's goals and objectives would be desirable. The second stage, entitled the Schematic Plan, contains the land use policies for the entire township. While the Schematic Plan will serve as the official land use plan for Lower Providence, it can be fully achieved only through enacting the changes described in the Strategic Plan.

## STRATEGIC PLAN

Implementing the land use/zoning changes listed below is considered particularly important to forestall land use conflicts, to direct higher-density residential development toward established commercial nodes, to further a well-planned community, and to implement the township's goals and objectives contained in Chapter Six. The proposed changes are also delineated in **Figure 7-1**.

### *Audubon*

1. **Egypt Road Corridor – Across from Lower Perkiomen Valley Park.** Currently zoned VC Village Commercial, this district is intended to promote existing village preservation. Given the limited development in this area, its proximity to the Audubon/Oaks interchange of Route 422, and the recent construction of an office building, a zoning change to PBO Professional Business Office is recommended.

## ***Betzwood***

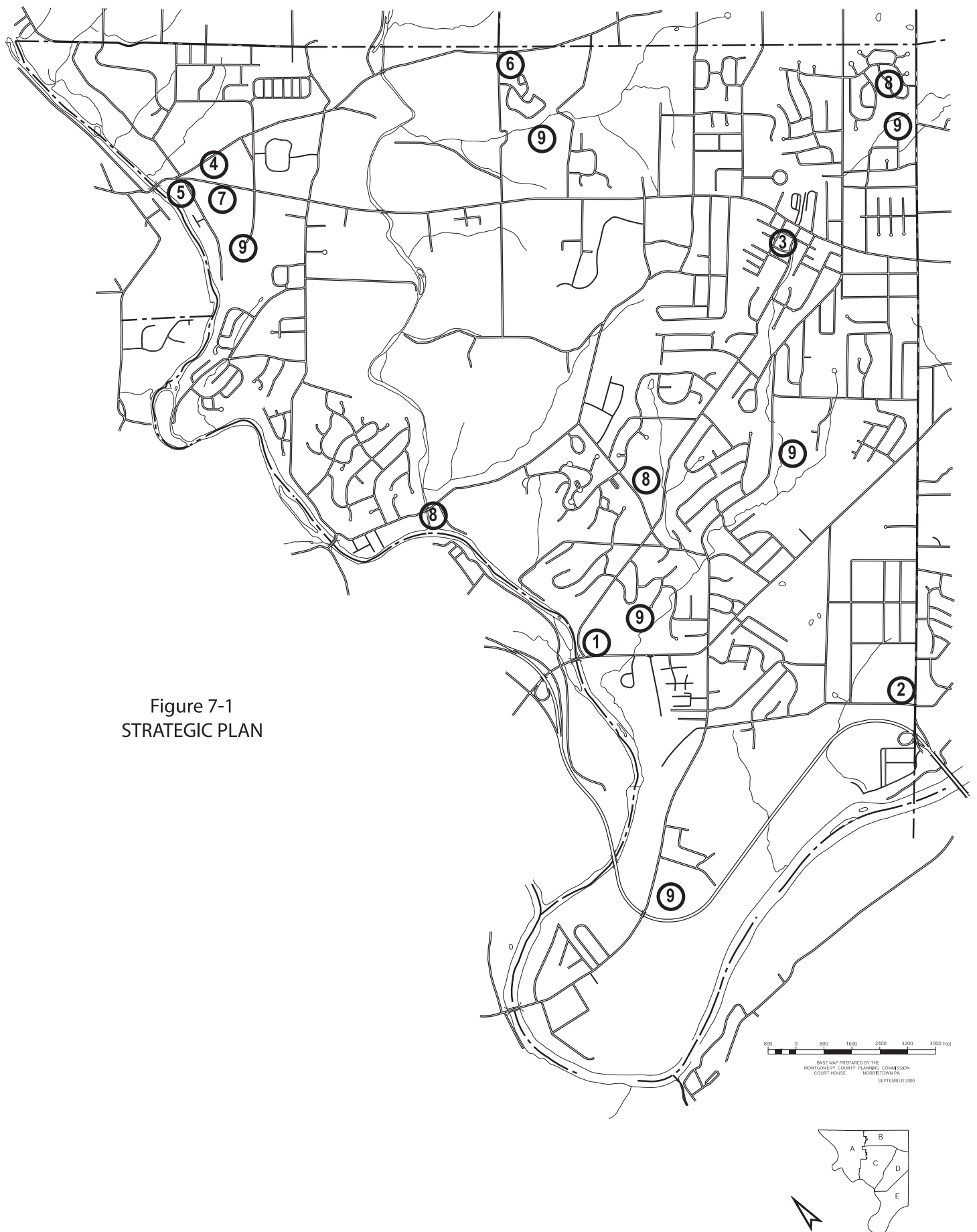
2. **Trooper and Audubon Roads.** During the planning process, it was decided that the zoning of several parcels in the area of the Trooper and Audubon Roads intersection needed to be changed.
  - A. The properties on the southwest corner of this intersection are currently zoned IP Industrial Park and R-2 Residential. Given their current commercial uses and proximity to the Route 363 on-ramp to Route 422, a change to HC Highway Commercial is appropriate.
  - B. Just west of the intersection, VC Village Commercial zoning straddles both sides of Audubon Road. Adjacent to the Valley Forge Corporate Center, this land is proposed to be rezoned to IP Industrial Park, the same designation as the corporate center.
  - C. To allow for expansion of the Valley Forge Corporate Center, yet ensure that all future development is controlled by appropriate regulations, the LI Light Industrial land south of Audubon Road at the intersection with Rittenhouse Road will be rezoned to IP Industrial Park.

## ***Eagleville/Trooper***

3. **Neighborhood South of Ridge Pike on Both Sides of Sunnyside Avenue.** This established neighborhood, first platted in the 1920s, is currently zoned R-2 Residential, which requires 25,000-square foot lots. Given that most of the existing lots range from 8,000 to 10,000 square feet, the majority of dwellings in the neighborhood are located on nonconforming lots. Also, many existing lots in the neighborhood are vacant and undevelopable unless combined. This area should be carefully evaluated to see what is the best way to handle the existing non-conformities.

## ***Evansburg***

4. **Germantown Pike Corridor, Opposite Superior Tube.** To promote industrial development in this area and to prevent strip commercial development along Germantown Pike, the GC General Commercial zoning will be changed to LI Light Industrial. This rezoning will not be applied to the existing commercial properties near the intersection of Ridge Pike and Germantown Pike.
5. **Collegetown Inn.** During the early 1990s, this site was overlaid with institutional zoning in anticipation that the site would be developed for age-restricted housing. Given the successful revival of the inn as a restaurant, this overlay should be rescinded.
6. **Germantown Pike at Grange Avenue.** This area is zoned HC Highway Commercial. During the planning process, the township decided to reconsider the zoning for this area after determining that the existing zoning permitted uses and development which were too intense for this area. Wanting to permit some commercial uses in this area, the township examined all of the existing commercial districts. It was discovered that the township lacked a medium-intensity commercial district, jumping from the historical village-oriented VC Village Commercial zoning to the intensive GC General Commercial zoning. The township decided to formulate a new zoning district designed for neighborhood commercial areas. The new NCD Neighborhood Commercial District will be applied to this area.
7. **Ridge Pike Between Level Road and Germantown Pike.** Similar to number 6 above, the township decided the existing GC General Commercial zoning allowed development that was too intense for the corridor, while several commercial parcels zoned PBO Professional Business Office or R-2 Residential were inappropriately zoned. The township has proposed that the new NCD Neighborhood Commercial District be applied to this area.



### *Various Township Areas*

8. **Harry F. Hoy Memorial Park, Hoy Park Annex, Highley Road Park, Windswept Lane Proposed Park, and the General Washington Country Club.** In keeping with township policy, these public parks should be overlaid with the Public Facilities and Open Space Overlay District.
9. **Pechin Mill Road, Providence Square, Park Avenue Near Woodland Avenue, Lower Providence Rod and Gun Club, Heyser (now Omni) Landscaping, and St. Gabriel Protectorate.** These sites provide significant open space adjacent to developed areas. Currently zoned either R-1 or R-2, this designation should be modified to permit residential development that mandates cluster development under a modified version of the existing OSRD Open Space Residential District. This modified version would require tracts over 5 acres to be developed as cluster developments. This will ensure that a percentage of every eligible tract is preserved as open space. This will allow development at the existing underlying density while ensuring that a percentage of every eligible tract is preserved as open space.

### SCHEMATIC PLAN

The Schematic Plan is the township's official land use plan. While largely achieved through enacting the changes proposed in the Strategic Plan, it is also reflective of existing land uses and zoning, given that much of Lower Providence's development pattern is well established. Developed in accordance with the township's goals and objectives, it is the township's statement regarding land use policy and the guide for future development.

The land use plan divides the township into the following land use categories:

#### ***Residential***

The residential category is further divided into subgroups that reflect the various residential densities and housing types found in the township.

**LD Low-Density.** Low-density residential consists of single-family houses at one dwelling unit or less to the acre. It is primarily proposed for the township's center adjacent to Evansburg State Park. Other areas include parts of the Perkiomen junction and the township's northwest corner bordering Skippack Township.

**MD Medium-Density.** Medium-density residential contains single-family houses at a density range of 1.7 to 2.4 dwelling units to the acre. This is the largest land use designation in the township and includes most of the developed neighborhoods. It covers most of Audubon, Eagleville, Trooper, Perkiomen junction, and Arcola.

**HD High-Density.** High-density residential consists of a variety of housing types ranging from single-family detached to townhouse complexes. The density ranges from 3 to 6 dwelling units per acre. This grouping consists of much of the older pre-World War II neighborhood in Trooper, the township's mobile home parks, townhouse developments, and all of Yerkes.

**MF Multifamily.** Multifamily residential is the township's densest residential category. It allows development, generally in garden apartments or congregate care age-restricted facilities, at a range of 6 to 15 dwellings per acre. This designation encompasses all of the township's garden apartment complexes and the age-restricted Shannondell community.

**Open Space Preservation (OSP).** Six areas have been designated for open space preservation (Pechin Mill Road areas, Providence Square, Park Avenue near Woodland Avenue, Lower

Providence Rod and Gun Club, Heyser (Omni) Landscaping, and St. Gabriel Protectorate).

These areas would be permitted to develop under the densities that their current zoning permits, but unlike traditionally zoned areas, the clustering of houses and the preservation of open space areas would be required.

### ***Commercial/Office***

This category consists of two designations: HIC High-Intensity Commercial and LIC Low-Intensity Commercial. While both designations allow a mix of commercial and office uses, they differ on the scale and intensity of these uses.

**HIC** High-Intensity Commercial contains the township's most intensive commercial uses. Shopping centers and highway-oriented uses, such as fast-food restaurants and gasoline stations, are permitted. Office uses are permitted but are usually an accessory to commercial uses. The HIC designation is primarily found along Ridge Pike and at the intersection of major roadways. All of the township's shopping centers have this designation.

**LIC** Low-Intensity Commercial emphasizes office uses, either business or professional, and limited commercial uses, particularly those appropriate for a converted residential building. It is designated along Egypt Road near the Route 422 interchange and in sections of the older villages.

### ***Industrial***

This category has two designations that differ only in their development regulations. IN Industrial allows industrial development on individual lots without any unified development plan. IP Industrial Park allows similar development but in a planned industrial park setting. IN Industrial is primarily on the western border of Evansburg. IP Industrial Park consists of the Valley Forge Corporate Center and adjacent vacant land on which a similar development is envisioned.

### ***Institutional***

The nature of INT Institutional land use does not lend itself easily to designation of mapped areas for institutional use prior to either the need arising for specific uses or requests for approvals of proposals by institutional organizations. As a result, only existing large, established sites that are likely to remain for the long term, such as schools, the township building, the county prison, and Eagleville Hospital, is shown. Institutional uses include schools, religious institutions, municipal services, and emergency services.

### ***Open Space/Parkland***

OP Open Space and Parkland is designated for existing public parks such as Evansburg State Park, Valley Forge National Historical Park, Mill Grove, and township parks.

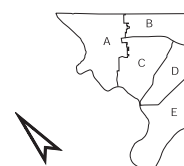
A map delineating the Schematic Land Use Plan is shown in **Figure 7-2**.





Figure 7-2  
SCHEMATIC PLAN

800 0 800 1600 2400 3200 4000 Feet  
BASE MAP PREPARED BY THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
COURT HOUSE  
NORRISTOWN PA  
SEPTEMBER 2000



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### HOUSING AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Lower Providence Township is predominantly a suburban residential community. Nearly 40 percent of the township's total land area is comprised of various residential areas. This development pattern was created during the rapid suburbanization that occurred in many municipalities throughout the Delaware Valley during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. This residential development pattern has been acknowledged throughout the planning process of the comprehensive plan and recognized as a dominant land use for the township's future growth. These factors make the housing chapter particularly important, especially since the earliest of this development is at the half-century mark. This chapter details a plan that has been formulated to ensure the continued stability of the township's existing housing stock and to address the needs of all of township residents.

The Housing and Historic Resources Chapter is designed to implement the township's housing goal of continuing to encourage a range of housing types that will meet the needs of residents, promote residential infill development that is compatible with established development patterns, and to ensure that the value of the township's existing housing stock is maintained. To implement this, the township has developed the following objectives:

- Continue to provide a varied housing stock that addresses the needs of all residents.
  - Revise and update the regulations for accessory uses in residential districts, and develop regulations that allow the sensitive adaptive reuse of old structures.
- Ensure that the existing housing stock remains desirable through code enforcement.
- Ensure that infill development is compatible with existing residential development.

#### LOWER PROVIDENCE HOUSING: PRESENT CONDITIONS

Before describing the implementation process for the Lower Providence Township Comprehensive Plan, it is useful to review the housing and relevant demographic data that was used to formulate it.

##### ***Housing Data***

Perhaps the most important aspect of the township's housing stock is its diversity. Multifamily apartment complexes, townhouse developments, and four mobile home parks have provided numerous housing choices for Lower Providence residents. Furthermore, there are wide ranges of single-family houses on lots ranging from 8,000 square feet to country residences on tracts over 5 acres. **Figure 8-1** shows the township's housing units by type, as indicated in the 1990 Census. **Figure 8-2** shows the township's housing growth by type from 1990-1999.

Figure 8-1  
**HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE**

Housing Type	Amount	% of Total Units	County Rank
Single-Family Detached	4,586	67.9	20
Single-Family Attached	615	9.1	(2)
Multi-Family (Apartment Bldg. - 5 or more units)	1,139	16.9	24
Mobile Homes	419	6.2	4 <sup>(3)</sup>

**Figure 8-2**  
**1990-1999<sup>(4)</sup>**

<b>Total Township Units</b>	<b>Units Built</b>	<b>Single-Family Detached</b>	<b>Single-Family Attached</b>	<b>Mobile Homes</b>
7,937	1,111	978	113	13

- (1) This buildout figure for housing units is from the Land Use Assumptions Report. The figure is somewhat higher than the 2000 Recreation Plan estimates. It reflects the earlier starting date for the assumptions report and the report's estimated counts for some property that has since been recommended for rezoning or is no longer proposed for residential development.
- (2) The township ranked 53rd for townhouses and 37<sup>th</sup> for 2- to 4-unit structures.
- (3) The township ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in the county for total units.
- (4) No multifamily units were built. Shannondell is not included in this amount, since it did not receive final approval until after the 1999 cutoff date. However, if counted, this would raise the number to 2,500 units.

Lower Providence's median year for housing construction was 1965. Montgomery County's median year was 1959. The township's housing stock is slightly newer than the county's housing stock. The age of the township's housing stock by recent decades is shown in **Figure 8-3**.

**Figure 8-3**  
**LOWER PROVIDENCE: AGE OF HOUSING**

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Amount Built</b>
April 1990 – March 1999 .....	1,111
1980 – March 1990 .....	625
1970 – 1979 .....	1,807
1960 – 1969 .....	2,072
1950 – 1959 .....	1,161
1940 – 1949 .....	537
1939 or before .....	608
<b>Total Built</b>	<b>7,921</b>

As **Figure 8-3** indicates, the greatest growth in housing occurred between 1960 and 1969. Sixty-three percent of the township's existing houses were built in the 30-year period of 1950-1970. Fifty-five percent of the total current units are at least 30 years old, having been built prior to 1970.

### ***HISTORIC STRUCTURES***

Most of this plan is oriented toward the future. Its emphasis is on ensuring neighborhood stability. However, the township was first settled over 300 years ago and contains a wealth of historic buildings. Some of these buildings are of national importance and all are of community significance. These are the structures that give the township's built environment its sense of place. Therefore, part of this plan is devoted to promoting their preservation, either through legislative mandate or flexibility in adaptive reuse. The list below provides an inventory of the township's most significant buildings.

## **National Register and National Landmark Sites**

Lower Providence Township contains several sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The best known is Mill Grove, and later was the residence of naturalist John James Audubon, built in 1762. Mill Grove has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1972 and on the National Historic Landmarks list since 1989. The Evansburg Historic District has also been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1972. The district is centered on Germantown Pike near Evansburg Road and includes many historic structures now used as homes, businesses, and other uses. Finally, the Germantown Pike “Eight Arch Stone Bridge,” built in 1792 over the Skippack Creek, has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1970. Figure 8-4 shows the locations of these sites.

## **Community Historic Resources**

There are numerous sites in the township that are not listed on the national register, but appear in the Inventory of Historic and Cultural Resources prepared by the Montgomery County Planning Commission in 1975 or in the township’s Bicentennial History of 1976. (For a brief description and history of each site, please refer to these documents.) For the purposes of this comprehensive plan, the important sites are listed and mapped. Their approximate locations are shown in **Figure 8-5**.

1. William Buckwalter House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1884.
2. George Coulter House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1814.
3. Jacob Zollers House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1844.
4. Evansburg Methodist Church, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1841.
5. Evansburg Methodist Church House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1842.
6. Abraham Harman House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1839.
7. Owens Evans Houses, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1790.
8. Christian Dull House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, exact date unknown, prior to 1800.
9. Christian Rekup House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1797.
10. Second Public School, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1827.
11. John Keyser Blacksmith Shop, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, date unknown.
12. Stephen Rush House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1803.
13. Edward Evans House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built 1806.
14. Samuel D. Patterson Jr. House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1856.
15. Keyser Store, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1867.
16. Evansburg Inn, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1803.
17. Weber House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1866.
18. Vandersloot House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1877.
19. Glebe House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1732.
20. Abraham Everhart House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1844.
21. William Casselberry House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1872.
22. Isaac Casselberry House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, date unknown.
23. Ann Casselberry House, Evansburg Road, Evansburg, built circa 1798.
24. Derrick Casselberry House, Evansburg Road, Evansburg, built prior to 1734.
25. S.P.G. School and Library, Evansburg Road and Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1792.
26. St. James Church and Cemetery, Evansburg Road and Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built 1843.
27. Isaac Mester House, Evansburg Road, Evansburg, built circa 1869.
28. Samuel D. Shupe House, Evansburg Road, Evansburg, built circa 1869.
29. Jesse Bean Jr. House, Evansburg Road, Evansburg, built prior to 1877.
30. Paul Engle House, Evansburg Road, Evansburg, built 1708.
31. Daniel Croll Farm, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1835.
32. Dr. Jacob Grigg House, Old Baptist Road, Evansburg, built prior to 1813.



Figure 8-4  
NATIONAL REGISTER SITES  
OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

- ① Mill Grove
- ② Evansburg Village
- ③ Eight Arch Stone Bridge





Figure 8-5  
COMMUNITY HISTORIC RESOURCES  
— Not listed in National Register

See text for explanation of numbers

33. Funkite Cemetery, Germantown Pike and Skippack Creek Road, Evansburg, founded circa 1815.
34. Keyser's Mill, Germantown Pike and Skippack Creek Road, Evansburg, built prior to 1835.
35. Peter Williams Tavern, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built circa 1790.
36. Samuel Bard House, Old Baptist Road, Evansburg, built 1832.
37. The Changing House, Old Baptist Road, Evansburg, built 1832.
38. Baptist Style House, Old Baptist Road, Evansburg, built circa 1820.
39. Letitia Penn House, Old Baptist Road, Evansburg, built circa 1813.
40. Funkite Houses (4), Germantown Pike and Grange Avenue, built prior to 1811.
41. Fry Family House, Grange Avenue, built circa 1877.
42. Samuel and Benjamin Nutter House, Grange Avenue, built circa 1834.
43. George Evans House, Grange Avenue, built prior to 1854.
44. Jacob Cope House, Grange Avenue, built circa 1785.
45. Christian Rosenberry House, Grange Avenue, date unknown.
46. Arcola Mill Complex, Arcola Road, date unknown.
47. Casselberry Residence, Egypt Road and Mine Creek, Audubon, built 1809.
48. Audubon Sunday School, Egypt and Surrey Roads, Audubon, built 1878.
49. Audubon Inn, Egypt Road and Park Avenue, Audubon, built prior to 1776.
50. Jack's Tavern (Bud's Bar), Egypt Road and Park Avenue, Audubon, built prior to 1776.
51. Union Church, Pawlings and Audubon Roads, Audubon, built 1830.
52. Fatlands, Pawlings Road, Audubon, built 1776, remodeled 1845.
53. Eagleville Hotel, built circa 1725.
54. Levis House, Audubon, built prior to 1795.
55. Brenz House, Pawlings and Egypt Roads, Audubon, built 1818.
56. Beswick House, Egypt Road, Audubon, built in 1860s, exact date unknown.
57. Ennis House, Egypt Road, Audubon, built prior to 1847.
58. Lamb/Felton House, Crawford Road, Audubon, built prior to 1730.
59. Blue Bonnet Farm, Park Avenue, Audubon, built prior to 1826.
60. Still Pond, White/Trone House, Park Avenue, Audubon, built circa 1760s.
61. Pine Hill Farm, 121 Pinetown Road, Audubon, built circa 1761.
62. Emery's House, Pawlings Road, Audubon, built circa 1850.



63. St. Gabriel's Protectorate, Pawlings Road, Audubon, begun 1896.

## ***HOUSING***

The housing section of the Lower Providence Township Comprehensive Plan contains numerous policies and recommendations designed to implement the four objectives described below. The township's goal of addressing its housing needs for future growth, preserving its historic resources, and enhancing neighborhood stability will help the township's housing goals become reality.

**OBJECTIVE ONE:** Continue to provide a varied housing stock that addresses the needs of all residents.

Policy 1.1 **Expanded Housing Choices:** In 2000 the township approved the rezoning of a tract of land that had previously permitted only single-family detached dwellings to allow the construction of age-restricted townhouses. Notwithstanding the approved multifamily Shannondell Complex, the township felt that this project offered an additional housing option. The township will continue to examine requests for higher-density housing, provided it feels the request satisfies a legitimate need.

**OBJECTIVE TWO:** Revise and update the regulations pertaining to residential uses and districts. Also, develop regulations that allow the sensitive reuse of old structures.

Policy 2.1 **Accessory Uses:** The existing standards for accessory uses date from 1955 and are antiquated, failing to meet many of the needs of the twenty-first century. In particular, the home occupation regulations need to be revised and strengthened. Also, setbacks for accessory structures need to be revised and expanded to include such uses as swimming pools or tennis courts.

Policy 2.2 **Bed-and-Breakfast:** This use is permitted only in the VC, GC, and HC Districts and has no regulations, making it a probable nuisance. The township will draft appropriate regulations and will also consider allowing this use in other areas, provided it involves the preservation of an old building and is in a location where it will not cause disruption for the adjoining properties. This option could help preserve large older buildings throughout Lower Providence.

Policy 2.3 **Residential Conversions:** Similar to **Policy 2.2**, these are allowed only in the VC, HC, and GC Districts and are not regulated very well. New standards will be drafted to consider allowing residential conversions in more areas of the township. This also could help preserve large older structures throughout Lower Providence.

Policy 2.4 **Village Plan:** The township will work on a village enhancement plan for areas such as Evansburg and Audubon. The village plan will promote safe pedestrian movement and streetscape improvements and will require that modern additions be located behind historic structures.

Policy 2.5 **Historic District:** The township will create a local historic district and architectural review board to regulate new construction, remodeling, and demolitions proposed in Evansburg. The township will also consider creating historic overlay zoning for various historic properties throughout the township.

Policy 2.6 **Incentive Zoning:** The township will amend its existing zoning in order to give incentives to developers that save old structures, both houses and outbuildings, during the development process. These incentives will be available for both cluster development and conventional development. These incentives could involve density bonuses or waivers of some required improvement or fees, etc.

Policy 2.7    **Nonconforming Use Ordinance:** Nonconforming uses can create serious problems and deteriorate an area's quality of life, especially in a residential area. However, all of these uses have legal rights. Therefore, it is important to have a strong, effective nonconforming use section in the zoning ordinance. The township's current ordinance largely dates from 1955. It is recommended that this section be updated with current and more effective standards.

Policy 2.8    **Residential Districts:** Much of the language pertaining to residential districts in the zoning ordinance is antiquated or confusing. Therefore, these sections will be rewritten with contemporary language and, where appropriate, new standards.

**OBJECTIVE THREE:** Ensure that the existing housing stock remains desirable.

Policy 3.1    **Implementation of the Proposed Land Use Plan:** The land use plan is designed to eliminate undesirable development and land use conflicts by making a series of recommended changes to the township zoning map and adopting several new zoning districts. In particular, this plan was designed to eliminate intensive nonresidential development adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods.

Policy 3.2    **Continued Enforcement of Township Codes:** The township will continue to enforce its building and property maintenance codes to guarantee that problem properties do not create a blight that affects adjacent properties or areas.

Policy 3.3    **Continued Monitoring of Houses Along Busy Corridors:** The township will continue to monitor the viability of houses along busy streets as residential uses. If and when these houses lose their livability, the township may draft an ordinance that would allow converting these houses to small offices.

**OBJECTIVE FOUR:** Ensure that infill development is compatible with the existing surrounding housing stock and its density.

Policy 4.1    **Landscape Buffers:** The landscape buffer requirements in the township's subdivision and land development ordinance will be amended to permit the township to require buffering for infill housing in residential areas. As part of the subdivision ordinance, these standards could be waived when determined as unnecessary.

Policy 4.2    **House Orientation:** The township will develop design standards for the subdivision and land development ordinance to encourage infill housing to be properly oriented to existing dwellings. For example, requiring that a proposed rear yard be oriented to an existing rear yard rather than a front or side yard. This could prevent a lot of conflicts between existing and proposed housing. Similar to **Policy 4.1**, these standards could be waived by the township when deemed not to be appropriate.

Policy 4.3    **Variance Requests:** The township will vigorously oppose any variance requests that increase the density of residential infill development.

## CHAPTER NINE

# PARKLAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Parkland is a significant and defining feature of any municipality. Providing a welcome break from the built environment, its presence adds greatly to the aesthetic appeal and stability of a community. This chapter examines the existing parkland in the township, makes recommendations to accommodate future needs, and determines how it can continue to best serve the recreational needs of all residents. It also describes techniques to preserve natural resources and open space throughout Lower Providence, a desirable goal as the township's rural landscape develops.

This chapter should be viewed as a supplement to the 1993 Lower Providence Township Recreation Plan and its 2000 selective update, and the 1995 Lower Providence Township Open Space Preservation Plan. The goals of these documents have been incorporated throughout the comprehensive plan, when appropriate. Nowhere is this more apparent than in this chapter. Similar to the collaborative efforts that led to the 1995 plan, this chapter has been formulated through the combined efforts of the township planning commission and the parks and recreation board.

### EXISTING PARKLAND

Any examination of existing parkland in Lower Providence invariably turns to the 1993 Recreation Plan and its 2000 update. These documents provide a complete list of all parkland and significant open space parcels in the township—public and private. This inventory divides the township into five zones, labeled A-E. Zone boundaries were determined after examining the physical characteristics of various areas of the township. Constraints, such as major roads, natural features, and wide --swaths of preserved open space, were the primary factors in determining these zones. Also, the proximity of existing or potential neighborhoods to parkland was a factor.

The five zones and their boundaries are as follows:

#### **Park Zone A**

This zone is approximately 2,700 acres in area and is bounded by the Perkiomen Creek, Skippack Township, the eastern boundary of Evansburg State Park, and Skippack Creek. The zone includes the neighborhoods of Palm Beach Farms, Beverly Park, Evansburg Grandview Park, Orioles Meadow, Cold Spring Crossing, Arcola Woods, and Arcola Hills. Evansburg Point Park and all of Evansburg State Park are located in this zone.

#### **Park Zone B**

This zone is approximately 1,400 acres in area and is bounded by the eastern boundary of Evansburg State Park, Worcester Township, Trooper Road, and Ridge Pike. The zone includes the neighborhoods of Longview Acres, Breckenridge, Village Green, Sherwood Park, and Trooper. Eagleville Park, Charles J. Eskie Memorial Park, and Sherwood Park are located in this zone.

#### **Park Zone C**

This zone is approximately 2,000 acres in area and is bounded by the Skippack Creek, the eastern boundary of Evansburg State Park, Ridge Pike, Sunnyside Avenue, Pinetown Road, and the Perkiomen Creek. The zone includes the neighborhoods of Collegeville Park, Eagleville Heights, Norristown Park, Sunnyside Farms, Birds Eye View Farm, and PineCrest.

#### **Park Zone D**

This zone is approximately 1,400 acres in area and is bounded by Pinetown Road, Sunnyside Avenue, Ridge Pike, Trooper Road, and Egypt Road. The zone includes the neighborhoods of Barry Heights, Audubon Hunt, Fairview Park, Nottingham Woods, Audubon Gardens, and The Pines.

### **Park Zone E**

This zone is approximately 2,300 acres in area and is bounded by Egypt Road, Trooper Road, the Schuylkill River, and the Perkiomen Creek. The zone includes the neighborhoods of Casselberry Farm, Mill Grove, Colony Arms, Audubon Meadows, Audubon Close, Valley Forge Terrace, and Little Farm Estates. The Valley Forge Corporate Center, General Washington Recreation Area, Mill Grove, Audubon Recreation Fields, and Valley Forge National Historical Park are located in this zone.

**Figure 9-1** delineates these zones. **Tables 9-2** through **9-6** provide an inventory of parkland and significant open space parcels in the five zones. The numerical designations of each parcel in the tables correspond to their location in zone maps, delineated in **Figures 9-7** through **9-11**.

**Table 9-6** indicates that the township currently has 197.5 acres of parkland. When significant open space parcels under township ownership are included, this total rises to 304.1 acres.

## **RECREATION NEEDS**

In a suburban community, such as Lower Providence, where a third of the total land use is devoted to single-family housing, providing for recreational needs is an important component of any comprehensive plan. Fittingly, the 1993 Recreation Plan and its 2000 update provide a detailed analysis of the current and future recreation needs of the township's residents. It is important to incorporate the recommendations of the 1993 plan in this chapter.

Following nationally accepted standards, the 1993 plan utilizes two methods of determining how much parkland will be necessary to serve the future needs of Lower Providence residents. The primary method uses a population to total parkland ratio. This method was devised by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), a national association of recreation professionals, and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), the regional planning agency for the Delaware Valley. When further refined for Lower Providence, this ratio states that for every 1,000 residents, 10.5 acres of parkland is needed. The second methodology, also devised by the above organizations, uses a parkland to population ratio. Parkland is characterized as either serving community or neighborhood needs, with a designated percentage of this parkland being allocated for both. Neighborhood parks are defined as serving a local area and generally range in size from 5 to 20 acres. Seventy-six percent of the township's total parkland should be devoted to neighborhood parks, and these parks should be equally distributed throughout the township. Community parks serve the entire township. They should be over 20 acres and centrally located. Twenty-four percent of a township's total parkland should be for community parks. In relation to the township's primary methodology of 10.5 acres of parkland per every 1,000 residents, neighborhood and community parkland needs become 8.0 acres and 2.5 acres respectively. <sup>(1)</sup> Lower Providence currently has only one community park, Eagleville Park, which surrounds the township complex. All other parks are classified as neighborhood parks. As recommended by NRPA and DVRPC, only township-owned parkland with unrestricted access was studied. Therefore, parks, such as the Evansburg State Park and the majority of the General Washington Recreation Complex, were not included. While these are important amenities, they should not be included as part of the township park system.

Building upon these methodologies, the next step performed for the plan was a residential buildout analysis, which determined the amount of housing units that could be constructed in each zone. By using these figures and an estimated average household size, it was determined that Lower Providence could have an estimated population of 32,966 at buildout. <sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) *As rounded accordingly.*

(2) *Obviously, future population estimates are subjective and can differ not only as a result of the methodology used to determine them but also through such actions as rezonings, the purchase of vacant land, etc.*

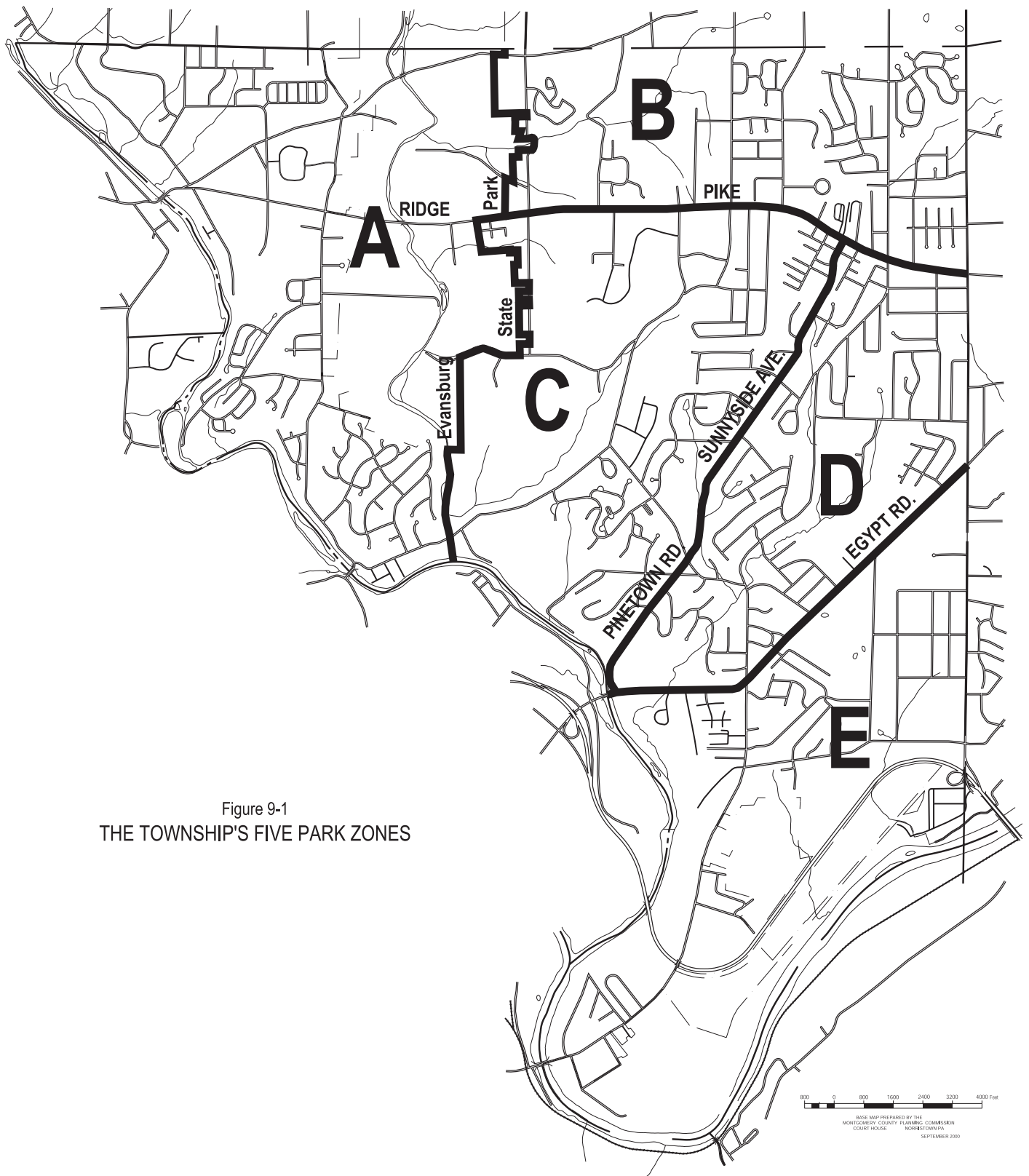


Figure 9-1  
THE TOWNSHIP'S FIVE PARK ZONES

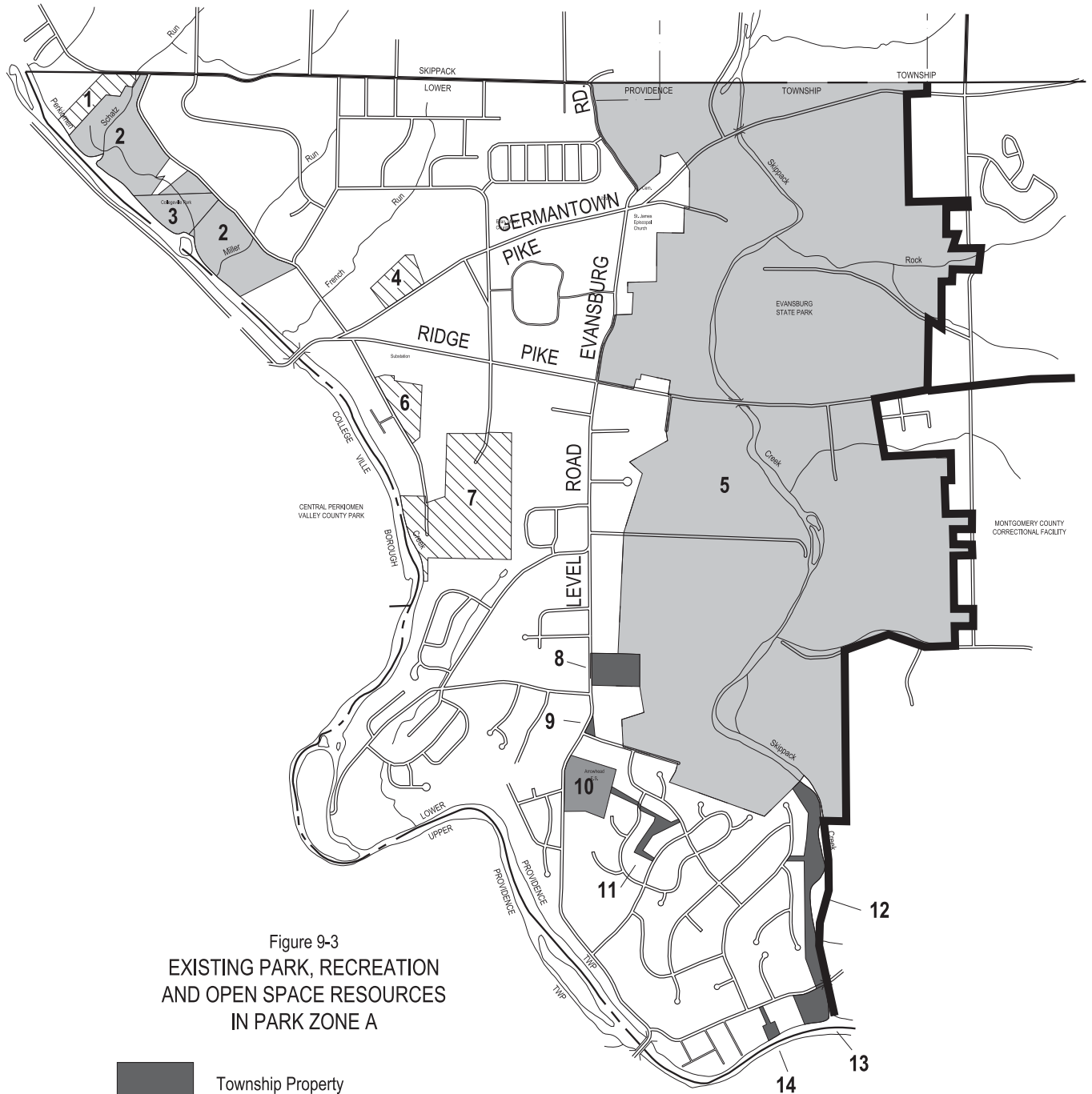
Table 9-2  
**INVENTORY OF PARK AND OPEN SPACE PARCELS**  
*Park Zone A*

Site	Description	Acres
Site #1 — Guideline Services Day Care	(formerly Creek's Edge Day Care Center, private property) 1 baseball field; basketball courts; 1 swimming pool; cabins	9.4
Site #2 — Perkiomen Creek Open Space	(county property) None	67.2
Site #3 — Perkiomen Creek Open Space	(Collegeville Boro. Property) None	14.9
Site #4 — Lower Perkiomen Indians Little League Complex <sup>(1)</sup>	(private property) Superior Tube Site	
Site #5 — Evansburg State Park	(state property) Historic/interpretive mill; picnic tables and grills; creek access for fishing; hiking/equestrian trails	1000
Site #6 — Perkiomen Valley Sportsman Association	(private property) Practice ranges	12.9
Site #7 — Local 380 IBEW Facility	(private property) 1 baseball field; 2 sand volleyball courts; Picnic pavilion	46
Site #8 — Evansburg Point Park <sup>(2)</sup>	(state property; leased by township) 1 lighted football field; storage building and press box; natural area; restroom facilities	13.6
Site #9 — Level Road Schoolhouse	(township property) Historic building for community meetings	0.2
Site #10 — Arrowhead Elementary School	(Methacton School District property) 2 baseball fields; 1 soccer field (seasonal); 1 hockey field (seasonal); playground apparatus; hard-surface, multi-purpose play areas	12.8
Site #11 — Cold Spring Drive Open Space	(township property) None	3.2
Site #12 — Skippack Creek Open Space	(township property) None	16.4
Site #13 — Harry F. Hoy Memorial Park	(township property) To be developed	4.0
Site #14 — Hoy Park Annex	(township property)	1.2
<b>Subtotals for Park Zone A:</b>		
Township Property		25.0
County Property		67.2
State Property (Twp. Leases 13.6 acres)		1013.6
School District Property		12.8
Private Property		68.3
Collegeville Borough Property		14.9
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1201.8</b>

(1) This site is being sold by Superior Tube. The 1993 Plan indicates that the recreation area was 10 acres. However, this was probably only the actively used land, for the 1999 Subdivision Plan lists the affected lots (8,9,10,11) as totaling 34.1 acres. As part of this subdivision, the township may take possession of Lot 12, which contains 19.0 acres.

(2) Proposal to lease an additional 22.5 acres from the state to expand this park.





BASE MAP PREPARED BY THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
COURT HOUSE, NORRISTOWN PA  
SEPTEMBER 2000

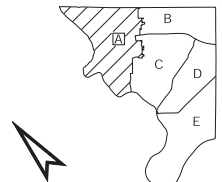




Table 9-4  
**INVENTORY OF PARK AND OPEN SPACE PARCELS**  
*Park Zone B*

Site	Description	Acres
Site #1 — Eagleville Park <sup>(1)</sup>	(township property) 1 baseball field; 1 basketball court; 4 tennis courts; 2 shuffleboard courts; 2 horseshoe pits; playground apparatus; picnic pavilion, tables and grills; biking/walking path; amphitheater; nature trail	63.6
Site #2 — Eagleville Elementary School	(Methacton School District property) 2 baseball fields (1 baseball field lighted); 1 soccer field (seasonal); 1 hockey field (seasonal); playground apparatus; hard-surface, multi-purpose play areas	18.6
Site #3 — Lower Providence Twp. Volunteer Fire Company	(private property) Picnic pavilion	15.0
Site #4 — Walker Lane Open Space	(township property) None	2.9
Site #5 — Charles J. Eskie Memorial Park	(township property) 1 softball field; 1 basketball court; walking path; playground apparatus	10.8
Site #6 — Sherwood Park	(township property) Tot lot play apparatus	1.0
Site #7 — Brant Park	(township property) To be developed as a neighborhood tot lot	1.5
Site #8 — Windswept Park	(township property) To be developed as a neighborhood tot lot	1.0
<b>Subtotals for Park Zone B:</b>		
Township Property		80.8
School District Property		18.6
Private Property		15.0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>114.4</b>

(1) Township records for this park are only 24 acres. It appears that 63.6

acres is the whole site. This total includes the recently acquired Cotteta and Wooded Glen properties. In the 1993 Plan, 30 acres was used for the total active parkland. For this update, 41 acres will be used. This includes the 30 acres and the Cotteta and Wooded properties (rounded).



Figure 9-5  
EXISTING PARK, RECREATION  
AND OPEN SPACE RESOURCES  
IN PARK ZONE B

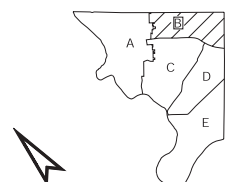
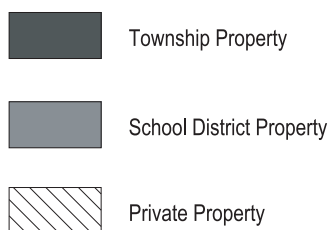


Table 9-6  
**INVENTORY OF PARK AND OPEN SPACE PARCELS**  
*Park Zone C*

Site	Description	Acres
Site #1 — Hideaway Day Camp <sup>(1)</sup>	(private property) Swimming pool; picnic pavilion; basketball court	75.0
Site #2 — Eagleville Hospital	(private property) 1 basketball court; 1 tennis court	3.0
Site #3 — Eaglestream Apartments	(private property) 1 swimming pool; playground apparatus	1.0
Site #4 — Arcola Intermediate School	(Methacton School District property) 7 tennis courts; 1 multi-purpose, hard surface court; 1 baseball field; 3 football fields; 4 soccer/hockey fields; natural area	68.0
Site #5 — Pond View Drive Open Space	(township property) None	5.3
Site #6 — Featherbed Lane Open Space	(township property) None	14.3
Site #7 — Highley Road Park	(to be developed as active recreation. Total includes acres from Sunnyside Development)10.5	1.579
<b>Subtotals for Park Zone C:</b>		
Township Property		30.1
School District Property		68.0
Private Property		79.0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>177.1</b>

(1) There is a plan to subdivide 67 acres from this site by the Gambone Corporation for the development of houses.



Table 9-8  
**INVENTORY OF PARK AND OPEN SPACE PARCELS**  
*Park Zone D*

Site	Description	Acres
Site #1 — Upper Mine Run Open Space	(township property) None	20.0
Site #2 — Woodland Elementary School	(Methacton School District property) 2 baseball fields; 1 soccer field (seasonal); playground apparatus; 2 basketball courts; hard-surface, multi-purpose play area	21.4
Site #3 — Sunnyside Avenue Open Space	(township property) None	16.4
Site #4 — Jode Road Open Space	(township property) None	5.2
Site #5 — Pinetown Road Open Space – East	(township property) None	2.0
Site #6 — Pinetown Road Open Space – West	(township property) None	4.3
Site #7 — Shearwater Drive Open Space	(township property) None	9.5
Site #8 — Lower Providence Rod and Gun Club	(private property) Practice ranges	47.7
Site #9 — Audubon Elementary Property	(Methacton School District property) Indoor facilities – YMCA; 1 baseball field; 1 multi-use playfield; 1 basketball court; playground apparatus; hard-surface, multi-purpose play area	14.0
<b>Subtotals for Park Zone D:</b>		
Township Property		57.4
School District Property		35.4
Private Property		47.7
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>140.5</b>



Figure 9-9  
EXISTING PARK, RECREATION  
AND OPEN SPACE RESOURCES  
IN PARK ZONE D

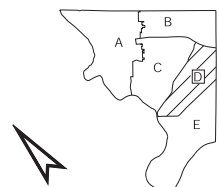
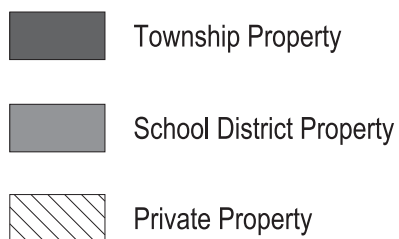






Table 9-10  
**INVENTORY OF PARK AND OPEN SPACE PARCELS**  
*Park Zone E*

Site	Description	Acres
Site #1 — Mill Grove Apartments	(private property) 1 tennis court; 1 swimming pool; playground apparatus; hard-surface, multi-purpose play area	1.0
Site #2 — Audubon Court Apartments	(private property) Playground apparatus; 1 swimming pool	1.0
Site #3 — Mill Grove	(county property) Historic home of John James Audubon; hiking/walking trails; nature study areas	170.2
Site #4 — Audubon Recreation Field	(county property; leased by township) 7 baseball fields; playground apparatus; picnic tables and grills; snack stand	17.0
Site #5 — General Washington Recreation Area <sup>(1)</sup>	(township property – specialized public access) 18-hole golf course; 1 swimming pool 4.2	(106.6) 4.2
Site #6 — St. Gabriel's Hall	(private property) 1 swimming pool; 3 basketball courts; 2 baseball fields	253.0
Site #7 — Schuylkill River Open Space	(county property) None	5.2
Site #8 — Valley Forge National Historic Park	(federal property)	560.0
<b>Subtotals for Park Zone E:</b>		
Township Property <sup>(1)</sup>		4.2
County Property (Twp. Leases 17.0)		192.4
Federal Property		560.0
Private Property		255
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1118.2</b>
<b>Township-Wide Totals:</b>		
Township Property <sup>(2)</sup>	Parkland Twp. Owned	197.5 304.1
County Property (Twp. Leases 17.0)		259.6
State Property (Twp. Leases 13.6)		1013.6
Federal Property		560.0
School District Property		113.4
Private Property <sup>(3)</sup>		92.7
Collegeville Borough Property		14.9
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2555.8</b>

- (1) Only 4.2 acres contain unrestricted public access. Therefore only this acreage is counted as parkland for this inventory.
- (2) Township owned includes all of the General Washington Recreation Center.
- (3) Deleted 10 acres from the Superior Tube site



Figure 9-11  
 EXISTING PARK, RECREATION  
 AND OPEN SPACE RESOURCES  
 IN PARK ZONE E

-  Township Property
-  County Property
-  Federal Property
-  Private Property



Therefore, by combining this population figure with the primary methodology of 10.5 acres per every 1,000 residents, it can be determined that the township will need 346 acres of parkland to satisfy its population at buildout. Of this total, 262.9 acres should be for neighborhood parkland, while 83.1 acres should be used for community parkland, using the 76/24 percent methodology.

### ***Neighborhood Parkland Needs***

Using the above estimates, it is then necessary to examine each park zone. First, since recreation needs were the criteria being addressed, not all of the parkland in each zone was deemed suitable for recreational uses. This land was excluded. Therefore, while Zone A currently (2001) has 25 acres of parkland, only 15 acres have been deemed usable for recreation. The following table shows the current differences between total parkland and usable parkland by zone.

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Usable</b>
Zone A	25.0	15.0
Zone B	80.8	32.0 <sup>(1)</sup>
Zone C	30.1	10.5
Zone D	57.4	0.0
Zone E	—	17.0 <sup>(2)</sup>
<b>Total Useable Acreage</b>		<b>74.5</b>

(1) Includes 20 acres of the Eagleville Community Park, which is counted as a neighborhood park, as per the Recreation Plan.

(2) All of this land is leased from Montgomery County

Looking at the current usable parkland and the township's buildout estimates for each zone, the following projected parkland deficiencies for each zone were determined. They are as follows:

Zone A .....	31.8
Zone B .....	3.5
Zone C .....	30.8
Zone D .....	91.4
Zone E .....	34.4
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>191.9</b>

This figure indicates that at buildout, the township should have at least 191.9 additional acres of neighborhood parkland to satisfy the recreational needs of residents.

All of these calculations lead to the most important issue: How does the township intend to satisfy these deficiencies? The following provides a list of recommendations to address the deficiencies, zone by zone.

## ***Zone A***

### **Buildout acreage needed: 31.8**

To resolve this:

The 1993 plan recommends a park for the area between Germantown Pike and Skippack Township. It is recommended that the township accept the 19 acres being offered by Superior Tube along the Perkiomen Creek for development as a park. While in a floodplain, much of the site is developable for active recreation. However, to provide a more centrally located park in this area, the township should work with the state to add some facilities in Evansburg State Park in the vicinity of the Evansburg Crossing open space, which includes the township-owned Casselberry House. When Evansburg Road is relocated, this house and much of the open space will be adjacent to the park.

Obtain the already recommended Orioles Park (12 acres) in Yerkes.

Continue efforts to lease 25 additional acres from the state for the proposed expansion of Evansburg Point Park. The 1993 Plan contains a development plan for the site. Also, consideration should be given to leasing all of the usable land between Lewis and Level Roads and Cedar Lane.

Begin discussions with the Local 380 IBEW Union, Perkiomen Valley Sportsman Association, Collegeville Inn, and several private parties about obtaining land to create a park with numerous playing fields and active recreation to mitigate the loss of the facilities at Superior Tube.

*Total Acreage – about 65 acres.*

While this amount of acreage, if obtained, would exceed the zone's buildout deficiency, this area, if developed to the level of the existing Superior Tube playing fields, could be leased out to numerous local leagues and generate revenue for the township.

While securing all of these recommended sites would exceed the needs of this zone, not all the sites—such as Orioles Park—are available for recreation. However, the potential development of the union's property and adjacent sites could provide easily accessible playing fields for all township residents.

## ***Zone B***

### **Buildout acreage needed: 3.5**

To resolve this:

Expand Eskie Park by adding a 15-acre vacant parcel that borders Worcester Township. Owned by the Markley family, this parcel is formally known as Block 2 Unit 68.

Improve access to Eagleville Park from the surrounding neighborhoods, specifically by installing a walking path along the Rock Run from Evansburg State Park to Eagleville Park, with access points at Grange and Smith Roads. Continue on the other side of the park by going through Eagleville School's property to the public sidewalk on Walker Lane.

Develop neighborhood tot lots at Brant Road and at the Windswept Lane site.

Securing the property adjacent to Eskie Park would create a large (25-acre) neighborhood park with significant recreation potential. Installing trails to Eagleville Park would make the existing facilities more accessible. Developing neighborhood tot lots would serve young families in areas of this zone.

## ***Zone C***

**Buildout acreage needed: 30.8**

To resolve this:

Develop Highley Road Park and obtain the adjacent 5-acre Tyrpin property to expand this park to 15 acres. Also, adjacent to these two sites is 11.30 acres of open space dedicated to the township as part of the Audubon Ridge Development. Extending from Highley Road to Sunnyside Avenue, its sloping terrain precludes its use for active recreation. However, it would be possible to develop a trail through the site that could connect both roads to the park, creating more access points to the park and increasing the recreational opportunities for pedestrians in this area.

Given the limited opportunities for other park purchases in this zone, securing an agreement with the school district to use the facilities at Arcola Intermediate School would, in particular, increase recreational opportunities in this zone.

See the Recommendations for Zone D.

While park opportunities are limited in this zone, an agreement with the school would help as would improving access to Zone D and Eagleville Park through trails and sidewalks.

## ***Zone D***

**Buildout acreage needed: 91.4**

To resolve this:

Obtain the recommended 28.5-acre Woodland Avenue site. The 1993 Plan has a development plan for the site.

In the vicinity of Barry Avenue and Fourth Street, numerous vacant movie lots could be combined to create a neighborhood park about 3 acres in size.

Begin discussions with the Lower Providence Rod and Gun Club to either obtain its entire site or a portion if the club should ever leave the township. Given its close proximity to Zone C, it could provide convenient parkland to a portion of that zone.

Obtaining the Woodland Avenue property would create a significant park with numerous recreational opportunities in a zone that has no parkland. Other recommendations would help to alleviate the overall park deficiencies in this zone.

## ***Zone E***

**Buildout acreage needed: 34.4**

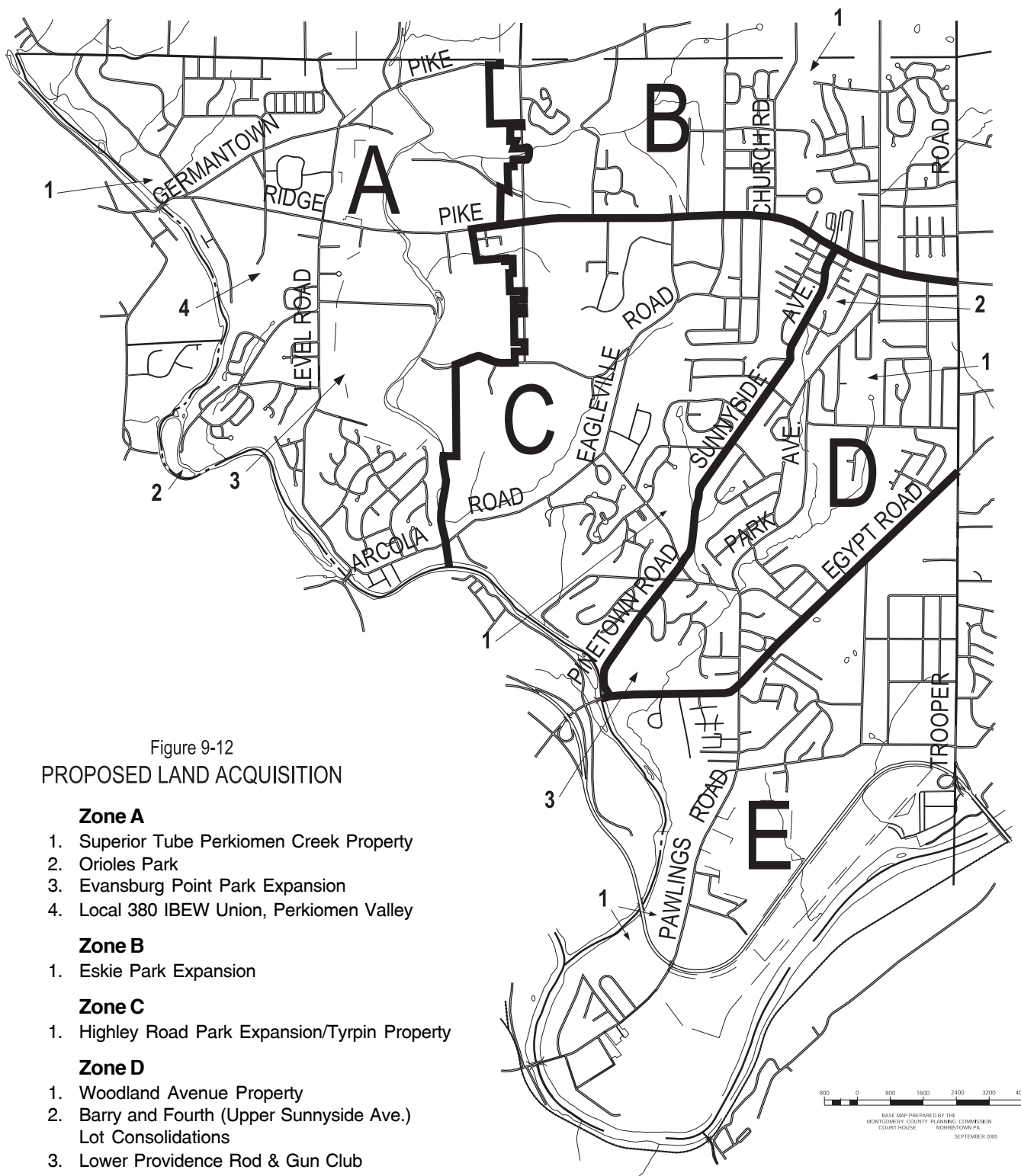
To resolve this:

Begin discussions with St. Gabriel's to obtain some of its land. There are two vacant parcels—a 59-acre parcel (south of 422) and a 25-acre parcel (north of 422) west of Pawlings Road. The federal government would like the vacant land east of Pawlings Road to expand Valley Forge National Historical Park.

As part of the redesign of the General Washington Recreation Complex, 4.2 acres are being set aside for unrestricted active recreation use.

While not counted as parkland because of its specialized use and restricted access, the General Washington Complex is a significant amenity in this district. Through working with St. Gabriel's, a significant park could be created to alleviate the deficiencies in this zone.

**Figure 9-12** delineates the location of these recommendations.



## ***Community Parkland***

Lower Providence has one community park, Eagleville Park, which also contains the township's administrative building, the township library, and an old farmhouse and barn. Because of these buildings and several large parking lots, only 30 acres of a 52-acre site were considered usable for recreational purposes in the 1993 Plan. Since that plan, the park has acquired slightly over 11 acres of adjacent land, which is currently being developed for active and passive recreation. Because of this, for the 2000 Recreation Plan update, 41 acres of the site are now considered available for recreation.

An analysis similar to the one performed for neighborhood park needs was done for community park needs. The analysis indicates that the township will be deficient 38.1 acres of community-oriented parkland at buildout. Since most of the land surrounding the existing park is either developed or not suitable for recreational activities, it is reasonable for the township to begin planning for another community park. The 1993 Plan recommended that the township's community park needs would be satisfied by purchasing land adjacent to Eagleville, while acknowledging that much of the township's southern portion was outside of the 2-mile service radius for a community park (see Figure 9-13). However, recent developments have made additional purchases no longer possible. Optimally, a new community park would be created and located in the southern portion of Lower Providence. It also should be large enough to alleviate some of the neighborhood park deficiencies in this area. Therefore, the update of the 1993 Recreation Plan recommends, similar to the recommendations for Zone E, the development of a large park at the St. Gabriel's site. This park could serve both neighborhood and community needs.

## ***Prioritization of Parkland Acquisitions***

While the eventual acquisition of all of the above-recommended land should be a primary goal of the township, it is important to prioritize the purchase of these lands in relation to their overall significance to the township and the needs of the specific park zones.

Therefore, it is recommended that the township begin to implement the purchase of the above-described land by initially concentrating on securing the following sites:

### **St. Gabriel's (Zone E)**

The purchase of some of this land has been recommended to alleviate both the deficiencies for neighborhood parkland in Zone E and the overall buildout deficiency in community parkland. Given that much of the land is vacant and sections of it are also desired by the federal government to expand Valley Forge National Historical Park, it is recommended that the township and representatives of the park and St. Gabriel's begin discussions regarding the purchase of much of the vacant land. Also, since one vacant parcel is adjacent to the county's Mill Grove site, it would seem reasonable to include the county in any discussions. A desirable scenario would have the township creating a significant park on the 59-acre parcel, south of 422 and west of Pawlings Road. The federal government would purchase all of the vacant land south of 422 and east of Pawlings Road, and the county would acquire any land adjacent to Mill Grove that is not wanted by St. Gabriel's.

### **Woodland Avenue Site (Zone D)**

As described in the parkland needs section for Zone D, the acquisition of this property would create a significant park in a zone that currently has no parkland. The township should begin discussions with the property owner immediately.



### ***Tyrpin Property (Zone C)***

Located adjacent to the proposed Highley Road Park, the eventual acquisition of this 5-acre tract would expand the park to 15 acres. Currently, this zone has very little parkland and was one of the township's fastest-growing areas during the past decade. Most of this growth occurred in the form of small-lot cluster development, which led to the preservation of open space but created no active recreation areas. Therefore, it is important that the township obtain this parcel to expand the park.

### **Creation of a New Park in Zone A (Zone A)**

As recommended above, the township should begin discussions with the Local 380 IBEW Union, Perkiomen Valley Sportsmen Association, Collegeville Inn, and various individuals who own vacant or underutilized land in this area to secure a site for the creation of a parkland with playing fields. This would mitigate the eventual loss of the fields at Superior Tube.

These are the immediate recommendations—sites that the township should immediately begin trying to obtain. It is also recommended that the board of supervisors, the park and recreation board, and the planning commission meet yearly to obtain a staff update on the status of these properties and to refine the priority list so other recommended properties or other important sites can also be secured eventually.

### ***Additional Recommendations to Increase Recreational Opportunities***

Besides purchasing land for active recreation, the following are recommended to ensure the township will meet future recreation needs of residents. All are from the 1993 Recreation Plan or its 2000 update.<sup>(2)</sup>

**School District Agreement.** The township should negotiate an agreement with the Methacton School District to secure permanent public access to the school district's indoor and outdoor facilities. While reasonable access restrictions are to be expected, such an agreement could address the need for indoor recreation facilities, as expressed by residents.<sup>(3)</sup>

**Indoor Recreation Facility.** Notwithstanding the ability to use school facilities, the township should conduct a feasibility study to see if an indoor recreation facility is warranted or if the school buildings will fulfill the need.

**Official Map.** An official map, which delineates land that the township wishes to purchase for public purposes, is a useful planning tool. Once adopted, the township can withhold building permits or sale agreements on designated land for one year, while arrangements are made for the township to acquire the land. The map is not legal unless the township has an adopted comprehensive plan. It is recommended that the township formulate and adopt an official map once the comprehensive plan is completed.

**Mandatory Land Dedication.** As was the intention in 1993, this 2000 update was formulated to provide the township with a legally defensible basis for amending the subdivision and land development ordinance to allow mandatory land dedication or fees-in-lieu-of dedicated land for all residential land developments. Currently, the township is working on such an ordinance. It is being expanded to include all nonresidential development.

**Amend Article VII of the Lower Providence Zoning Code, OSR Open Space Residential Overlay District.** This amendment would involve requiring that at least 10 percent (1 acre in R-1 and slightly less in R-2) of the required open space be usable (slope less than 3 percent and generally open and accessible to all residents). The amendment could be designed as one parcel or include several throughout the site.

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(2)The described recommendations are for those that have townshipwide significance. The 2000 update contains numerous recommendations for recreational facilities for individual parks within each zone. The update should be consulted for a list of these recommendations.

(3)In the most recent park and recreation survey (1998) conducted for township residents, over 75 percent

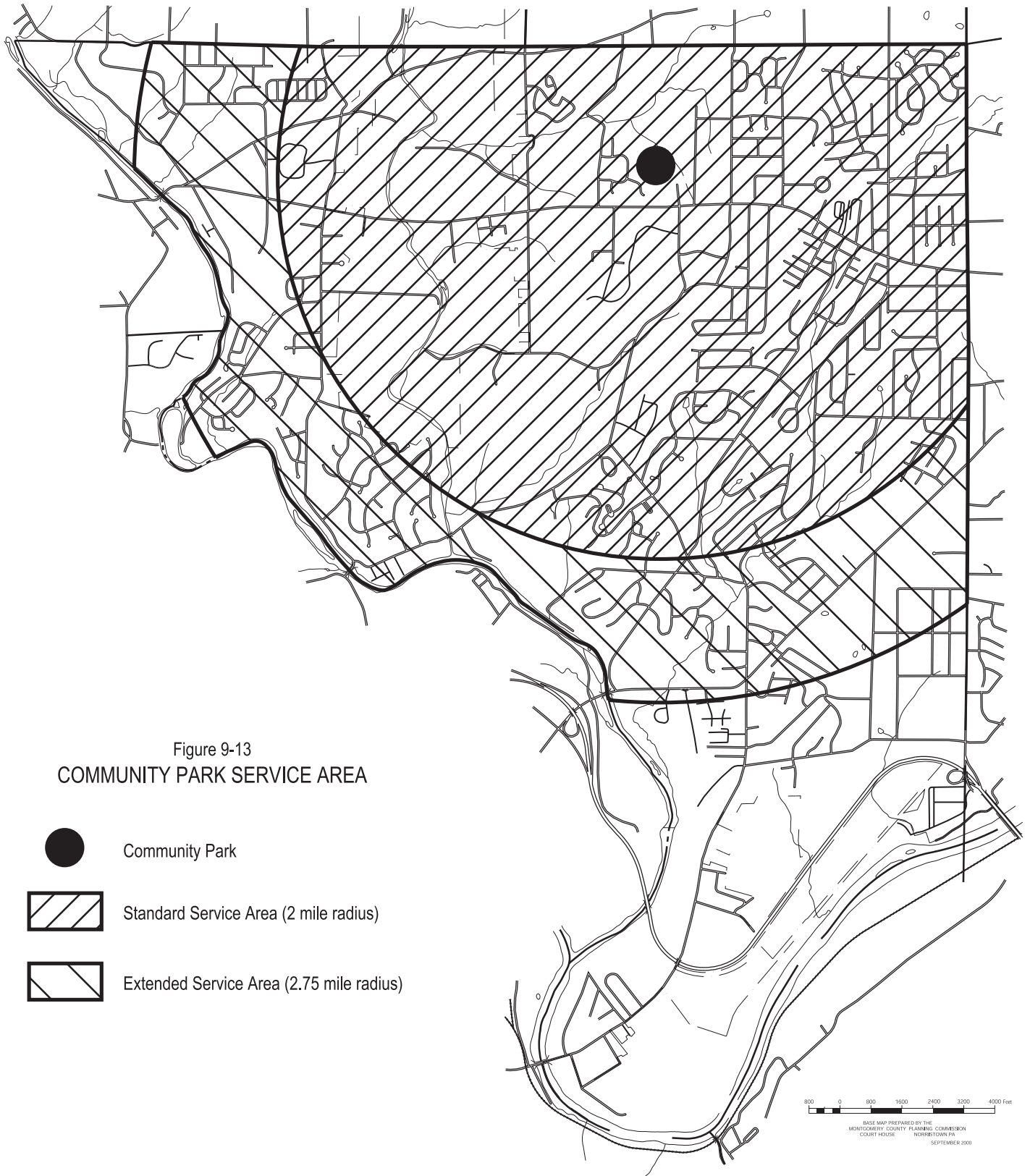



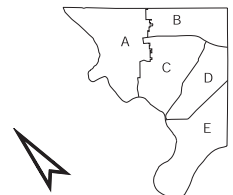


Figure 9-13  
COMMUNITY PARK SERVICE AREA

-  Community Park
-  Standard Service Area (2 mile radius)
-  Extended Service Area (2.75 mile radius)

800 0 800 1600 2400 3200 4000 Feet  
BASE MAP PREPARED BY THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION/COUNTY HOUSE  
SEPTEMBER 2000



## TRAILS AND SIDEWALK CONNECTIONS

A system of trails and interconnected sidewalks can provide recreational opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists, while also allowing safe access to parkland. The township's park and recreation board devised the system for the 2000 Recreation Plan Update. A few additional recommendations were made during the creation of the 2000 updated plan. The primary purpose of these trails and sidewalks is to provide residents with access to township, county, or state parks. Recommendations for additional sidewalks are in Chapter Eleven. These sidewalk recommendations are designed to provide safe access between neighborhoods and to schools or commercial areas. As would be expected, there is some overlap.

### ***Zone A***

**Trails.** For this zone, the most important recommendation is to work with the state to create a trail that would extend the length of Evansburg State Park from the proposed park in the Evansburg Crossing open space to the township land along the Skippack Creek in Arcola. Along this trail, connections would be provided to Evansburg Point Park and various neighborhoods that border the park. The trail would continue on township land to Hoy Park at the confluence of the Skippack and Perkiomen Creeks. The trail would provide residents access to various Zone A neighborhoods and one of the region's most significant parks.

**Sidewalks.** To improve accessibility to existing or proposed Zone A parks and to neighborhoods, the following sidewalks are recommended:

*Along Cross Keys Road from Beth Road to its end at the Local 380 property.* A sidewalk in this area would provide access for most of the neighborhoods surrounding Evansburg and access to the proposed park at the Local 380 property.

*Along Germantown Pike from Cross Keys Road to River Road to the proposed park along the Perkiomen Creek (Superior Tube property).* This connection would provide the Evansburg area access to the proposed park and the Perkiomen Creek. Consideration should also be given to a safe connection to the Perkiomen Creek Bridge.

*Connect Evansburg Point Park to the proposed Local 380 site.* Using Level Road, a sidewalk or improved shoulder could connect these two important parks.

### ***Zone B***

**Trail.** The Rock Run Trail, recommended in the 1995 Open Space Plan and in the above Neighborhood Parkland Needs Recommendations, should be implemented from Eagleville Park to Evansburg State Park. This would connect these two important parks. Most of this trail would run on preserved open space from the Wooded Glen and Howe-Holt developments.

**Sidewalks.** Although most of this zone is well connected by sidewalks, the following recommendations would fill in several notable gaps.

*Provide a sidewalk through the township open space between the Walker Lane cul-de-sac and the Village Green Lane cul-de-sac.* This would connect the Fairview section of the township with Walker Lane and via the sidewalk on Walker Lane with Eagleville School, Eagleville Park, and Evansburg Park.

*Install sidewalks along Church Road and East Mount Kirk Avenue.* Sidewalks along these important streets would provide connections for all of the zones to Eskie Park and the Eagleville Shopping Center.

## **Zone C**

**Trails.** A walking path connecting Highley Road and Sunnyside Avenue with Highley Park would run through dedicated open space. Also, a connection should be made from Visitation Road to the proposed Evansburg State Park Trail.

**Sidewalks.** The following are recommended:

*Connect all of the missing segments along Sunnyside Avenue to provide a connection, via Highley Road and Red Tail Road, to Highley Road Park. This would provide safe access to the park for much of this zone.*

*Install a sidewalk along Eagleville Road from Marilyn Avenue to the entrance of the Eagleville Park at the intersection of Parklane Drive and Ridge Pike. This would provide safe access from these neighborhoods to Eagleville Park.*

## **Zone D**

**Trail.** Create a walking path from the proposed extension of the Boulevard of the Generals to the proposed Woodland Avenue Park. This trail should be constructed on the property of the Woodland School. The trail would provide an important connection from this proposed extension to the most significant park proposed for this zone.

**Sidewalks.** The following are recommended:

*Connect the missing segments of sidewalks along Eagleville Road from Sunnyside Avenue to Park Avenue and along Crawford Avenue from Egypt Road to Park Avenue. (This should be done with the recommended intersection improvements of these two roads with Park Avenue). Sidewalks would provide a connection to General Washington Recreation Center from both Zones C and D.*

*Connect sidewalk segments (existing and proposed for recent developments) along Egypt Road from the Audubon Square Shopping Center to the Audubon Shopping Center. This would create a major connection between two important commercial areas in this zone and would link them both with the General Washington Recreation Center.*

## **Zone E**

**Trail.** None.

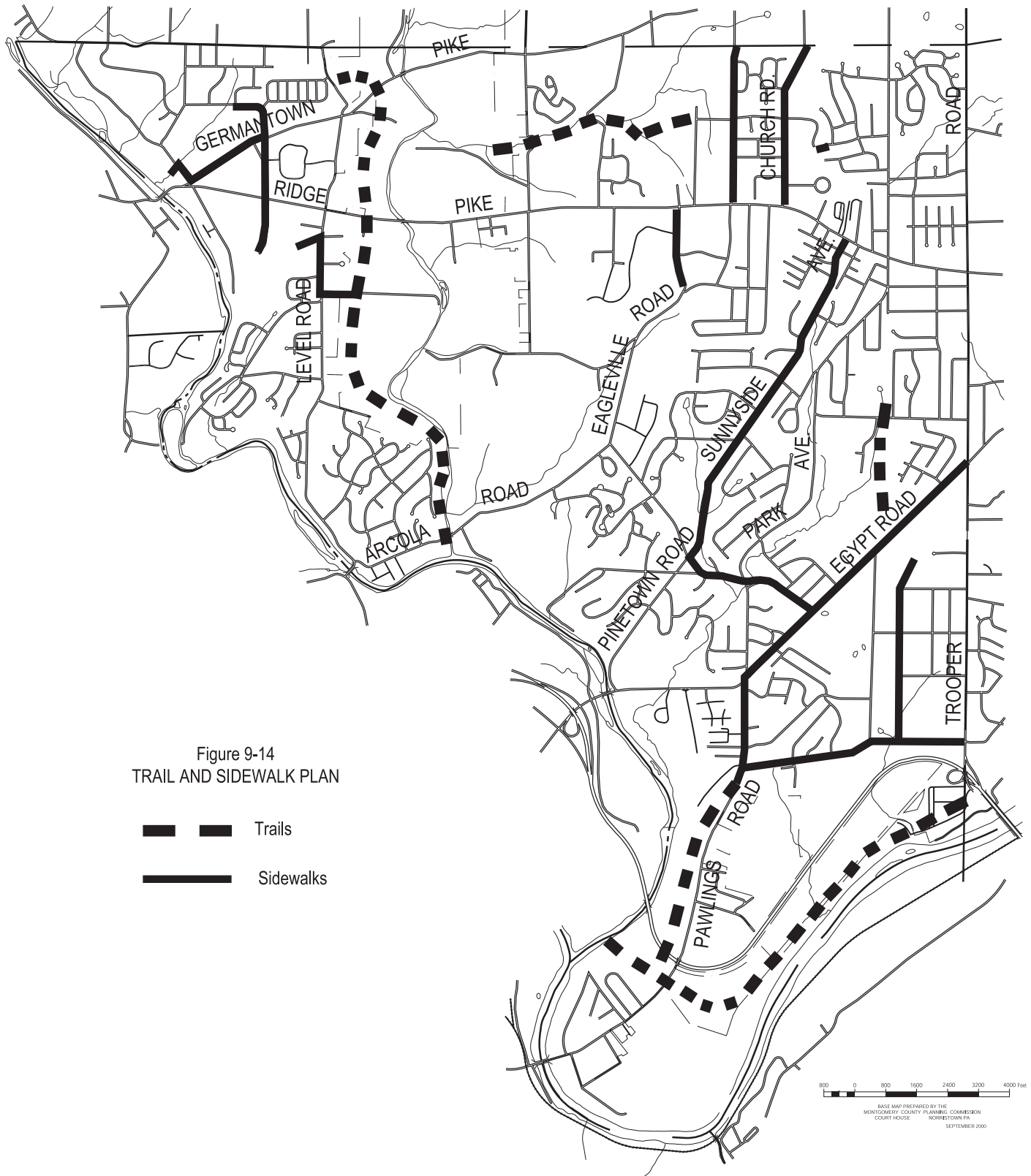
**Sidewalks.** The following are recommended:

*Provide a sidewalk or an improved shoulder along Pawlings Road from Audubon to the proposed county trail at Mill Grove. This would allow the village and much of the township access to a proposed county trail that will connect Mill Grove with the Schuylkill River Trail.*

*Expanding on the above idea, install a sidewalk or improved shoulder along all of Audubon Road. This would provide more neighborhoods in this zone with a connection to Mill Grove and the Schuylkill River Trail.*

*Expanding on the above idea, install a sidewalk along the existing and proposed extension of Adams Avenue. This would provide the Valley Forge Corporate Center with access to the shopping center and the Schuylkill River Trail. It also would create a connected loop for this zone with the sidewalks along Egypt, Pawlings, and Audubon Roads.*

These proposed trails and sidewalks are delineated in **Figure 9-14**. The entire network containing these recommendations and those of Chapter Eleven is shown in **Figure 11-4**.





## OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

Often the preservation of open space or natural resources results in saving both, especially in a mature township such as Lower Providence. During the township's initial growth in the 1950s-1970s, developers tended to concentrate on developing relatively flat parcels, unencumbered by natural resources such as steep slopes or wetlands. This earlier-developed land now contains mature neighborhoods or shopping centers. At this stage in the township's development, developers are turning their attention to undeveloped land that has one or more of these constraints—or amenities—depending upon one's perspective. Since land containing these resources is often the most picturesque and environmentally important in the community, its preservation is important for both the township's quality of life and sense of place.

Currently, slightly over 20 percent of the township's total land area is comprised of preserved open space. Ten percent of is attributed to the 1,000 acres of Evansburg State Park. However, another 10 percent remains vacant and developable. This percentage rises to almost 20 percent when land used for agricultural purposes or classified as underdeveloped country residences is taken into account.

The preservation of open space is clearly important to township residents. In the most recent survey (1998) conducted by the park and recreation board, the principal concern was the preservation of open space. (The survey had a 28 percent respondent rate—statistically quite significant.)

The township has long been active in creating parkland, but most efforts have been directed toward creating areas for active recreation. As important as these efforts are, it is equally important to preserve open space and natural resources. This is true not only because the development of these areas means the loss of these amenities but also because the disappearance of too many of these areas causes a community to lose its value and creates a disruption or disappearance of such important resources as groundwater. Given this, the Parkland and Natural Resources Plan identifies significant open space areas or parcels and describes methods to preserve them along with natural resources. Some of these preservation techniques are contained in Chapter Eleven, "Policies and Methods for Protecting Open Space Other Than Through Acquisition, of the 1995 Open Space Preservation Plan and the recommendation section of the 2000 Recreation Plan Update.

### ***Significant Open Space Areas and Parcels***

The following areas or parcels have been identified as significant in Lower Providence Township. Those marked with an asterisk (\*) are areas recommended to be overlaid with OSR Open Space Residential cluster zoning to ensure that a percentage of the site would be preserved as open space if developed.

**\*Providence Square Section** (bounded by Germantown Pike, Ridge Pike, East Mt. Kirk Avenue, and Evansburg State Park). This area contains one of the highest concentrations of open space parcels in the township. It also contains woodlands and the Rock Run. The area is zoned R-1 Residential.

**\*Pechins Mill Road Area.** While the recreation section of this chapter recommended beginning discussions with owners of large properties in this area, such as the Local 380 IBEW Union and Perkiomen Valley Sportsmen Association, about obtaining land to create playing fields, this area should also be studied for open space preservation. Most of the area is zoned R-2 Residential and borders the heavily developed Yerkes portion of the township.

**Eagleville Hospital Open Space** (Block 17A Unit 4). This 27-acre parcel is located east of Eagleville Road. It contains woodlands, steep slopes, and a portion of the Eagleville Run. This parcel is adjacent

to one of the township's most heavily developed residential areas—the Eagle Stream Apartment Complex—and is a play area for neighborhood children. It has the Institutional District zoning overlay placed on it. The underlying zoning is R-1.

**\*Park Avenue (between Woodland Avenue and Shannondell).** Along Park Avenue in Block 15, there are several farms that greatly add to the ambiance of this area. Surrounded by suburban development, they are zoned R-2.

**Arcola Road – Camp Hideaway.** A picturesque site adjacent to the Skippack Creek and Eagleville Run, a large portion of this site was proposed for development despite its proximity to the Moyer Landfill. The site also contains woodlands and steep slopes. It is zoned R-2 Residential.

**\*Lower Providence Rod and Gun Club.** This 47-acre site contains steep slopes, woodlands, and floodplains. However, it could also be developed under the OSR Cluster Regulations with approximately 70 houses. It is a significant open space parcel located in a very developed portion of the township. It is zoned R-2 Residential.

**St. Gabriel's Protectorate.** This is the township's single largest developable parcel—253 acres. The parcel is relatively flat and contains mostly old farm fields. If developed as a cluster development, some 292 units could be developed on the site without disturbing the existing buildings. A township landmark, its importance as a park has already been described. It has the PFO Public Facilities Overlay District placed over R-2 zoning.

**Heyser (now Omni) Landscaping Property.** This 21.8-acre site, currently used by a landscaping company, is located between Trooper Road and Park Avenue in the township's northeastern quadrant. It is the largest single parcel in this section of the township. The parcel is zoned R-2. Its current long-term use predates zones and is nonconforming.

**Fire Company Property.** The township fire company has owned this 15-acre site, located at the intersection of East Mt. Kirk Avenue and Ridge Pike, for the past 50 years. The property is largely vacant, although it does contain a fire hall, some radio towers, and various outbuildings. The tract is largely zoned R-2, although most of the Ridge Pike frontage is zoned PBO Professional Business Office, and the fire hall has the institutional overlay applied to it. The underlying zoning is R-2.

## NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION

To help preserve these valuable resources, the township will implement the following techniques and policies.

### *Performance Zoning*

With performance zoning, the minimum lot size in rural areas is directly related to the natural characteristics of a site. Through ratios put into the zoning ordinance, the lot size will depend on the type and extent of natural constraints on a property. When there are several natural constraints on a site, such as floodplains, steep slopes, wetlands, high water table soils, agricultural soils, etc., the minimum lot size must be larger. When there are no natural constraints, the minimum lot size will be relatively small, perhaps as small as 1 acre. This type of zoning has recently been upheld by the Pennsylvania courts as a viable means of controlling the impact of development on sensitive natural features.

The simplest performance zoning ordinances subtract certain environmental constraints, such as floodplains and wetlands, from the net area of each lot. The area that is not environmentally constrained must meet the zoning district's minimum lot size. For example, say the zoning district allows 2-acre lots. An applicant proposes a plan with a 2.5-acre lot, but this lot has 1 acre of floodplains. The lot would not be permitted because it has only 1.5 acres of net area after floodplains are subtracted.



More complicated performance zoning ordinances apply ratios, ranging from 1 to 100 percent, to a wide range of environmental constraints such as floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, soils, geology, woodlands, etc. The ratio is multiplied by the portion of the lot that is constrained. The resulting product is then subtracted from the lot area to derive net lot area. For example, the zoning ordinance uses a ratio of 100 percent for floodplains and 50 percent for steep slopes. A 5-acre lot has 1 acre of floodplains and 1.6 acres of steep slopes. The 1 acre of floodplains is multiplied by 100 percent, which yields 1 acre, and the 1.6 acres of steep slopes are multiplied by 50 percent, which yields 0.8 acres. The floodplain and steep slope constraints are added together for a total of 1.8 acres. This figure is then subtracted from the lot area of 5 acres to yield a net lot area of 3.2 acres.

The adoption of this ordinance would go a long way in preserving natural resources and would reduce the density of development in areas containing these constraints. This ordinance was recommended in the 1995 Open Space Plan.

### ***Change Densities in Residential Zoning Districts***

Many townships have zoning that they consider agricultural or rural zoning, yet the minimum lot size might be as small as one-half acre or 1 acre. This type of zoning does little to protect unique and vulnerable environmental characteristics of an area and does even less to protect the rural character of an area. Some communities may want to increase the size of lots, especially in environmentally sensitive areas. However, larger minimum lot sizes must be justified based on the soils, geology, water supply, and other characteristics of an area. Often, it is difficult to justify large minimum lot sizes—anything over 2 acres—in a manner that satisfies the Pennsylvania courts.

The minimum lot sizes required by the Lower Providence zoning ordinance in environmentally sensitive open space areas should be reexamined. In particular, the lot size in the Alternative Development Plan of the R-2 District should be revised. The 18,000-square foot minimum lot size is enough of a reduction from the standard size of 25,000 square feet (with public sewer and water service) to provide a strong incentive. However, the increase in density under the Alternative Development Plan is not fully justified, since the ordinance does not require any open space to be permanently preserved.

### ***Incentive Zoning***

Lower Providence should amend its zoning ordinance to add incentives to provide open space, recreation facilities, trails, and parkland. The incentives, which will vary according to the underlying zoning district, should include higher densities, smaller lot sizes, or waivers from some public improvement requirements. The ordinance must be designed so that the cost of providing the amenity does not exceed the benefit received from the incentive. Otherwise, developers will not take advantage of incentives. For example, the township should add regulations to the Office Park/Light Industrial District that would provide incentives to preserve significant natural features and promote walking paths and open space areas.

### ***Reduce the Visual Impact of Rural Homes***

Lower Providence should reduce the visual impact of development that occurs in rural areas by encouraging or requiring homes to be hidden from view. The zoning ordinance should be amended to allow smaller lot sizes if homes are located in wooded areas or behind ridgelines. Also, homes that are located on existing rural roads should be required to have bigger setbacks from the road or screen buffers between the road and the home. Furthermore, homes should be required to be built on internal roads and not stripped out along existing rural roads.

### ***Riparian Buffer Ordinance***

This recommended ordinance establishes setbacks from stream corridors and wetlands and is important in promoting surface water quality and protecting important aquifer recharge areas. It will also help

to preserve open space. This type of ordinance was also recommended for adoption in the 1995 Open Space Plan and would be incorporated in the Zoning Code.

### ***Best Management Practices for Stormwater Detention***

Best Management Practices involve a series of proposals regarding stormwater management. Drafted by the Commonwealth's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Best Management Practices promote cleaner streams and promote aquifer recharge. Working with the township engineer, these Best Management Practices would be tailored to the specifics of the township and would be included in the subdivision and land development ordinance. They would also include requirements for naturalized (landscaped) detention basins. This would promote wildlife, provide wooded buffers, and improve streetscapes.

Presently, the township is working with the county planning commission to landscape all township-owned basins. This project, once completed, would make Lower Providence a regional leader in the implementation of Best Management Practices.

### ***Dialogue***

The township intends to begin a dialogue with the landowners of all the previously described large parcels. Through the implementation of a meaningful dialogue, the township and landowners can address various interests, concerns, and desires. A part of these dialogues should focus on conservation or access easements and the right of first refusal if a property is to be sold. These dialogues also can be useful in addressing any concerns regarding the implementation of innovative zoning policies that could affect property rights.

The policies contained in this chapter, when implemented, will guarantee that Lower Providence has a park system and recreational facilities that adequately serve successive generations of township residents. They will also ensure that the picturesque natural features which define the township will be preserved for future generations.

## CHAPTER TEN

# COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### BACKGROUND

Community facilities refer to a variety of public and nonpublic uses and services that are or may be provided to residents of a community such as emergency services, schools, solid waste disposal, and sewer and water services. These are among the most important elements of a community because they have a direct impact on residents. As a result, their management is key to quality of life perceptions and community identity. This chapter examines the existing status and condition of each facility or service in Lower Providence. For the most part, the system of facilities and services is well established and is expected to continue meeting the needs of residents. For the purpose of this comprehensive plan, parkland and recreation—typically thought of as community facilities—are discussed separately in Chapter Nine.

#### ***Administrative Facilities***

The township administration building is located in the midst of Eagleville Park, a 63-acre township park located on Ridge Pike in the Eagleville section of the township. The building forms the nucleus of a municipal complex that contains a public library, active and passive recreational facilities, an old farmhouse and barn, and a recently acquired house, which is the only structure to actually front Ridge Pike. The administration building, a contemporary brick structure built in 1976-1977, contains staff offices, meeting rooms, and the police department. The library, nestled into the hillside and adjacent to the old barn and farmhouse, was designed in 1996 to evoke a dairy barn and complement the existing agricultural buildings. The township is studying reuse options for the farmhouse and another dwelling, which are both currently vacant.

#### ***Emergency Services***

Lower Providence has both a professional police department and a fire marshal who is the township liaison to the volunteer fire company. The Lower Providence Community Center, a civic association located on Hillside Avenue in Trooper, provides staff support and the crew for the township's ambulance service.

With a 9-1-1 emergency communications service in effect throughout Montgomery County, all emergency requests are routed through a central radio dispatch station. This station, located in the township's Eagleville section, is administered by the Montgomery County Emergency Management Agency.

#### **Fire Protection**

Until 1945, fire protection was provided by neighboring communities such as Collegeville and Norristown. In that year, the Lower Providence Volunteer Fire Company was formed. The following year, a ladies' auxiliary was established. In 1950, the company moved to what is now its Eagleville station at the northeast corner of East Mt. Kirk Avenue and Ridge Pike. In 1958, a second station was opened in Audubon. Presently, the Eagleville station has two engines and one ladder truck. It also has a service unit, which includes a cascade air operator. The Audubon station has one engine and one ladder truck. The fire company is a member of a mutual aid society, which primarily assists the county and the Oaks, Collegeville, and West Norriton fire companies. All members of the company are volunteers and most reside in the township.

The township's fire marshal, besides serving as the liaison to the fire company, investigates fires, performs inspections, and is involved in fire prevention efforts, chiefly through public education. The marshal has also worked with representatives of the fire company in its effort to build a third station in the Collegeville section of the township.

## **Police Protection**

The police department began in the mid-1950s with a part-time force. By 1957, John Culp was named the first police chief, and he had one other officer serving with him. Presently, the department has one precinct. It is located in the township building. Besides the chief, the department employs 44 people — 5 sergeants, 1 detective, 4 patrol supervisors, 27 sworn officers, 5 dispatchers, 1 clerk, and 1 secretary. They are also involved with a mutual aid society, providing assistance to the forces of surrounding communities.

## **Ambulance Service**

As described, the township's ambulance service is located in the Lower Providence Community Center. It presently consists of several paid paramedics. The rest of the crew, which includes several emergency medical technicians (EMT), are volunteers. The service has four ambulances, one of which is a mobile intensive care transport. Presently, the ambulance service is considering moving from its present location on Hillside Avenue to a 2-acre parcel near the county prison.

## **Medical Facilities**

In addition to the local clinics and medical office that serve basic needs, a broader range of services is provided by hospitals in the greater Lower Providence area. These hospitals include Montgomery Hospital in Norristown, Mercy Suburban General in East Norriton, and the Phoenixville and Pottstown Hospitals, located in their respective communities. The township also has one private hospital, Eagleville. Eagleville, formerly a tuberculosis sanitarium, is now a drug and alcohol treatment center. Founded in 1909, the present complex dates from 1927.

## ***Solid Waste Management***

Under the terms of the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling, and Waste Reduction Act (Act 101) adopted by the state in 1988, solid waste planning is the responsibility of counties rather than individual municipalities. The Montgomery County Municipal Waste Management Plan was subsequently developed in 1990 to address all management aspects (collection, transport, processing, disposal, and recycling). The Eastern, Northern, and Western Waste System Authorities were created to serve all municipalities, each with the responsibility of implementing selected disposal and recycling elements of the plan. Under the plan, all municipal waste collected in the township is disposed of at the Resource Recovery Facility in Plymouth Township.

Within this framework, the municipal role is limited to choosing an arrangement of collection—typically, either municipal collection, municipal contract collection, or individual homeowner service collection—and establishing a recycling program. Act 101 requires a municipality with a population of 5,000 or more and a population density greater than 300 people per square mile to establish a recycling program.

Lower Providence contracts for a three-year period with a private waste collection service to serve all residential dwellings in the township. This service also includes the recycling of glass, plastic, aluminum, and newspaper. Residents also can participate, at no charge, in Montgomery County's Annual Household Hazardous Waste Program. This program, held at various locations throughout the county, allows residents to drop off such household hazardous wastes as paint, herbicides, and automotive products. The township's public works department also provides leaf composting and Christmas tree collection services. The department also provides free mulch, primarily created from tree-clearing projects, for

residents at a location on Park Avenue. All nonresidential uses are responsible for their own solid waste disposal.

### ***Sewage Facilities***

Under the terms of the Pennsylvania Sewage Facilities Act (Act 537), each municipality is responsible for maintaining a sewage facilities plan. The rules and regulations governing the contents of the plan are contained in Chapter 71, Administration of the Sewage Facilities Planning Program (25 PA CH 71), administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP). Certain planning elements that are expected to affect the specific needs of the community must be addressed including:

- A description of the physical and demographic characteristics of the planning area (including area boundaries, surface water bodies, soils, geology, wetlands, and a description of potable water supplies).
- An evaluation of the existing sewage facilities (including a map of the lines and treatment facilities and a description of the different treatment methods involved), existing problem areas, and operation and maintenance needs.
- An evaluation of future sewage facilities needs based on existing problem areas, proposed development, and the community's zoning and land use plan. An analysis of alternatives for meeting these needs along with the preferred alternative and justification, a map of future service area(s), and a schedule for implementation.

### **Lower Providence Sewage Facilities**

Lower Providence Township is located in the service area of the Oaks Wastewater Treatment Plant. This wastewater facility serves six Montgomery County municipalities: Lower Providence, Perkiomen, Skippack, and Upper Providence Townships and Collegeville and Trappe Boroughs. It is owned by the Montgomery County Sewer Authority and is operated, via lease agreement, by the Lower Perkiomen Valley Regional Sewer Authority. The plant is located on Brower Avenue in Upper Providence Township near the confluence of the Perkiomen Creek and the Schuylkill River.

The plant is currently rated at 9.5 MGD, its maximum design capacity. Each municipality served by this plant is allotted a finite amount of capacity (EDUs). Presently, Lower Providence Township has the largest amount of available capacity.

A regional Act 537 plan update to study expansion of this plant has begun, and a draft report has been written. The report proposes to expand the plant to a design capacity of 12.8 MGD. Due to numerous unresolved legal issues surrounding future ownership, operation, and maintenance of this plant, it is unclear when such an expansion may take place. However, the draft plan indicates that Lower Providence has no foreseeable capacity problems.

All public wastewater collection and conveyance facilities within the township, except for the Perkiomen Creek Interceptor, are owned and operated by the Lower Providence Township Sewer Authority. The Montgomery County Sewer Authority owns the Perkiomen Creek Interceptor. Most of the township is served by or accessible to the authority's wastewater collection and conveyance facilities. However, there are a few areas within the township that are serviced by on-lot sewage facilities. These areas include the Pawlings Road area, which the authority is planning to service with sanitary sewers in the southeastern section of the township, Evansburg State Park, the county correctional facility, and the region of Arcola.

### ***Water Service***

Lower Providence Township residents are provided with public water service by two different purveyors—Pennsylvania-American Water Company (PAWC) and Audubon Water Company. The two systems are interconnected in the vicinity of Cedar Lane and Level Road and Egypt and Trooper Roads, which improves the reliability of service. In addition to public water service, the following

West of Level Road, between Ridge Pike to the north and the Perkiomen Creek to the south.

North and south of Arcola Road, between Visitation Road and Featherbead Lane.

North of Ridge Pike, between Grange Avenue and Smith Road.

South of Audubon Road, east and west of Pawlings Road to the Schuylkill River.

The line dividing the service areas for the two water companies bisects the township east to west along a line south of Evansburg State Park, the Montgomery County Correctional Facility, and Woodland Avenue. PAWC services the portion of Lower Providence Township to the north of this area, and Audubon Water Company serves areas to the south. PAWC expanded its service area within the township in 1988 by purchasing the water system owned by Evansburg Water Company. The PAWC's purchase of this system allowed the discontinuance of several contaminated and low-yielding wells, providing a safer and more reliable water supply to this area.

Beyond Lower Providence Township, the service area for PAWC extends into nine neighboring towns including: Worcester, Perkiomen, and East and West Norriton Townships, serving approximately 85,143 residents. PAWC provides water to approximately 27,193 service connections within the nine communities. The majority of these connections are for domestic use (24,914). However, there are 1,838 commercial connections, 91 industrial connections, and 120 institutional connections. There is no breakdown of service by municipality. To meet the demands of its consumers, PAWC withdrawals nearly 9 million gallons of water per day out of the Schuylkill River, which is treated at the company's newly upgraded and expanded Norristown filtration plant. PAWC also operates seven treated water storage facilities, having a combined capacity of 7.7 million gallons.

In contrast to PAWC, Audubon Water Company relies completely upon groundwater, except for water purchased through interconnection, to serve its customers. Audubon currently operates ten wells, withdrawing 1.2 million gallons per day, and storage facilities with a capacity of 1.54 million gallons. In addition, the water system serves a population of approximately 7,850 through 1,828 domestic connections and 135 commercial connections.

The Public Utility Commission (PUC) regulates both PAWC and Audubon Water Company. While private wells are currently unregulated from a water quality perspective, new wells for private use are required to obtain permits from the county health department. All wells in the township that withdraw more than 10,000 gallons per day (gpd) are regulated by the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), due to the township's location in the DRBC's groundwater protection area. The township also recognizes that the water usage of any commercial agriculture or extraction industry is regulated under specific guidelines enacted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

## ***Libraries***

Prior to 1985, township residents could obtain books from either the Evansburg Library, founded in 1930 and located in a small historic building in the village, or from the Methacton School District Library. The Lower Providence Library was founded in 1985. It has the delegated authority from the township board of supervisors to provide library service, which includes educational, informational, and recreational library materials in various formats for residents of all ages.

The library is open seven days a week during the regular school year. It is administered by the board of trustees and is operated by a director. Currently, the director heads a staff of 20 part-time employees and 10 volunteers who cover the library's 60 hours of operation. Besides financial support from the township, the Friends of the Library organization provides significant financial and program support. Generally, the organization raises about 25 percent of the annual budget.



Currently, the library has over 39,000 items in its collection. Over 13,000 library cardholders borrowed 138,000 items from the library in 2000. The library has public Internet access and is connected to the state's library system, Access PA and Montgomery County Library and Information Network Consortium, (MCLINC).

The library provides many programs for township residents, especially children. There is story hour at the library for preschoolers and at local preschools. The library also has a Masters of the Millennium program for elementary school children. In summer 2000, the National Science Foundation and SmithKline held their annual Week of Science summary at the library.

## ***Education***

The township's first public school was Jack's School, built in 1807 just off of Pawlings Road. It was replaced in 1873 by the Audubon School, which still stands adjacent to the Audubon Shopping Center. The township's oldest standing school building is in Evansburg on Germantown Pike. It was built prior to 1827 and operated until 1916. It is now a private residence.

In 1959, Lower Providence merged with Worcester Township to create a joint school district. Its present name of Methacton was chosen in 1969. Currently, the school district operates four elementary schools, all of which are in Lower Providence—Arrowhead, Audubon, Eagleville, and Woodland. Audubon is the oldest school in the district, having been built in 1928. It was remodeled extensively in 1964. Eagleville is scheduled to be razed during the present year (2001) and replaced with a new building at its current location. The intermediate and senior high schools are located in Worcester.

Current Enrollment is:

<b>Grade</b>	
Elementary (K-5) .....	2,315
Intermediate (6-8) .....	1,085
Senior (9-12) .....	1,285
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,685<sup>(1)</sup></b>

Presently, 84 percent of all graduates continue onto institutions of higher learning.

The school district has been recognized as superior, both regionally and nationally. In 1989, the senior high school received a National Secondary Schools Recognition Award from the U.S. Department of Education. The two middle schools, Arcola and Arrowhead, also have received national recognition.

### **Much of the information in this chapter came from the following sources:**

- William Wilfong — Township Fire Marshal
- David Schaffer — Township Public Works Director
- Methacton School Web Site
- The Second Hundred Years: Montgomery County, Lower Providence Section, 1982, Xenil R. Felton
- Deborah Ahrens — Director of the Lower Providence Library



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### TRANSPORTATION

Broadly defined, the transportation plan is a plan for the efficient movement of people and goods throughout the township. Broadly defined, the Transportation chapter involves the efficient movement of people and goods throughout Lower Providence Township. More specifically, it documents the township's roadway classifications and hierarchy, while providing recommendations and policies to mitigate congestion and safety problems. It also examines alternative transportation modes such as public transit, sidewalks, and bicycle pathways. The degree to which the recommendations of this chapter are implemented will not only allow for the continued efficient flow of people and goods but will also help to maintain and enhance the quality of life currently enjoyed in the township.

This chapter is comprised of two main sections: Roadways and Alternative Transportation Modes. Each section contains its own specific set of recommendations.

#### ROADWAYS

The township's current road network is a reflection of its development pattern and capricious topography. The earliest roads connected farms to mills or churches. As a regional network commenced, the township found itself connected to such destinations as Norristown, Reading, and ultimately Philadelphia. Substantial developments grew around major intersections such as the Village of Audubon at Egypt Road and Park Avenue/Pawlings Road. As new roads developed, they invariably led to these settlements.

Road development was also constrained by the township's topography. The Skippack Creek, nestled at the bottom of a valley, cuts a width swath north-south through Lower Providence, making it difficult to construct east-west roads. Also, steep slopes along much of Park Avenue have retarded the construction of similar roads in Lower Providence, while the Perkiomen Creek, which defines the township's western border, has made connections to neighboring municipalities difficult. This has resulted in forcing most of the east-west traffic onto either Ridge or Germantown Pikes, causing a lot of congestion. Similar topography near Audubon has created a situation where most southbound traffic in the central part of the township is directed onto Park Avenue immediately above the village and then channeled into the constrained intersection at Park Avenue and Egypt Road.

Recent developments have not improved upon these past problems. Since the 1980s, the township has had a major regional expressway bisecting it, however, its one interchange has only an eastbound ramp. To go west, drivers must travel through Lower Providence into Upper Providence to get to a westbound ramp. This has created an almost intolerable level of traffic congestion on the sole road entering Upper Providence—Egypt Road. It has also led to a lot of cut-through traffic as motorists pass through neighborhoods near this road to avoid as much of this congestion as possible.

The purpose of this chapter is to rectify these problems as best as possible. Opportunities are present even though the township's physical and built environment preclude expansive road building. These opportunities give motorists options, and options are one of the most effective ways to lessen congestion.

Before examining these opportunities and the tools available to implement them, it is important to examine the township's roads and their functional classification.

## ***Lower Providence Roads***

### **Functional Classification and Hierarchy: Overview**

**Functional Classification System.** The Functional Classification System, developed as a tool for comprehensive transportation planning, groups roads into a hierarchy by the service and function they provide. Based on standards established by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), it is used by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and Montgomery County for appropriate design guidelines. The Functional Classification System is also used to coordinate road functions and highway improvements among neighboring municipalities, the county, the region, and the state. By using this system, a logical and efficient roadway network can be established.

**Road Hierarchy.** The hierarchy of roads includes expressways and other limited access highways, arterials, collectors, and local roads. These can be further divided, such as into principal and minor arterials or major and minor collectors, according to the urban and rural character of an area.

Two major considerations in classifying roads are accessibility and mobility. Accessibility refers to the level of control over traffic entering or exiting a roadway to or from adjacent properties. Mobility refers to the ability of a road to move traffic. For example, expressways emphasize a high degree of mobility but have virtually no access to abutting properties. Local roads, on the other hand, primarily provide access to abutting properties while discouraging the mobility of through traffic.

Another criterion used to classify a highway is volume of traffic. The most common way to gauge traffic on a particular road is by measuring its Average Daily Traffic (ADT). Due to the diversity of Montgomery County, from highly urbanized areas to very rural areas, a range of ADT is considered within each category of functional classification. For example, a principal arterial in eastern Montgomery County may carry a significantly higher volume of traffic than a road with the same classification in the western part of the county because of the density of development and concentration of activity centers. (Traffic counts for township roads are discussed later in this section but are not used here for classification purposes.)

**Expressway.** The highest level of road classification is the expressway—a multilane highway with fully controlled access usually provided only at grade-separated interchanges. Expressways are used in corridors that need to move high volumes of traffic at high speeds while providing high levels of safety and efficiency. They usually traverse and connect metropolitan areas.

**Arterial.** An arterial provides a high degree of mobility to better serve longer trips. Since access to abutting property is not a major function, access controls are desirable to enhance mobility. Arterials include state numbered routes, such as PA-73 (Skippack Pike), and other important roads such as Germantown Pike. Arterials are divided into two subclasses:

1. **Principal Arterial** – A principal arterial is any major highway that is not an expressway. Generally, it provides between two and four through lanes of travel depending on traffic volumes and land use intensity. Principal arterials serve major activity centers and carry a high proportion of cross-county traffic.
2. **Minor Arterial** – Minor arterials interconnect with and augment principal arterials. They typically accommodate trips between 3 and 5 miles in length. They are spaced at intervals

consistent with population density and carry traffic within or between several municipalities of the county. Further, they link other areas not connected by principal arterials and provide key connections between roads of higher classification.

**Collectors.** Collectors provide a mix of accessibility and mobility. They typically serve trips up to 4 miles in length and channel or distribute traffic to or from a road of a higher classification. Collectors are also divided into two subclasses:

1. **Urban/Rural Major Collector** – A major collector provides a combination of mobility and access with a priority on mobility. Ideally, access is partially controlled with preference given to through traffic. Access is permitted with at-grade intersections and major access driveways of selected land uses such as a retail or employment centers. They accommodate trips within and between neighboring municipalities. Further, they serve as a major road through large industrial or office parks or provide key connections between roads.
2. **Rural Minor Collector** – A minor collector provides a combination of mobility and access with a priority on access. It allows access to abutting property with little or no restriction. Generally, minor collectors accommodate shorter trips within a municipality. They are spaced to collect traffic from local roads and neighborhoods and channel it to major collectors and arterials.

**Local Roads.** Local roads and streets have relatively short trip lengths, generally not exceeding one mile. Because property access is the main function, there is little need for mobility or high speeds. This function is reflected by use of a lower posted speed, between 20 and 30 miles per hour. Local roads provide a link between property access and the collector road network. Through traffic is discouraged from using local roads.

**Figure 11-1** Indicates how PennDOT and Montgomery County classify the roads in Lower Providence Township.

**Figure 11-1  
ROAD HIERARCHY  
LOWER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP**

Classification	Road	Jurisdiction of Road
Expressway: Right-of-Way – 120'-130'	Route 422	PennDOT
Arterial – Principal: Right-of-Way – 80'-100'	Egypt Road Trooper Road (south of Ridge Pike) Ridge Pike Park Avenue (north of Ridge Pike) Germantown Pike	PennDOT PennDOT PennDOT PennDOT County
Arterial – Minor: Right-of-Way – 80'-100'	Park Avenue (south of Ridge Pike) Pawlins Road Trooper Road (north of Ridge Pike)	PennDOT PennDOT PennDOT
Collector–Urban/Rural Major: Right-of-Way – 60'-80'	Evansburg Road Level Road Arcola Road Eagleville Road Audubon Road Pinetown Road	PennDOT PennDOT PennDOT PennDOT PennDOT Township

All other roads are classified as local roads and are under the township's jurisdiction. Right-of-way: 50'

In 1985, the township similarly classified its major roads when it adopted an Ultimate Rights-of-Way Ordinance. A comparison of the two indicates that while much of the terminology has changed, the ultimate rights-of-way are quite similar. There are, however, some discrepancies. Since any projects funded through PennDOT or the county must use these agencies' standards and system of names, these discrepancies are not desirable. Therefore, all of these problems should be resolved as part of the implementation of the comprehensive plan. Recommendations are found later in this chapter.

### ***Current Road and Traffic Planning***

In recent years, the township has been busy trying to resolve many of its congestion problems. The recently approved Shannondell Elderly Residential Community received approval with the stipulation that Boulevard of the Generals, an east-west service road that runs between Trooper and Egypt Roads, would be extended as a full road westward to Park Avenue and then improved as such between Egypt and Trooper Roads. The completion of this project would create another opportunity for motorists to avoid the congested intersection of Park Avenue and Egypt Road while making their way to the east-bound ramp of Route 422. The project should also remove much of the cut-through traffic that is disrupting several neighborhoods in Audubon. Another related project is the proposal to extend Adams Avenue from the Valley Forge Corporate Center to Boulevard of the Generals at the Audubon Square Shopping center. This extension would supplant Rittenhouse Road as the main roadway in this area by providing a connection between Egypt Road (a principal arterial) and Audubon Road (a major collector road). Adams Avenue is wider and more fully improved than Rittenhouse Road, which is a narrow country road with numerous dwellings along it. As a road within the corporate center, Adams Avenue has no houses along it.

More importantly, the township has begun discussions with the county to rectify the lack of a full interchange at Route 422 in the township. Presently, the proposal is to add a westbound ramp at the existing Trooper Road. However, discussions are ongoing and the township has not chosen a specific scenario. Other ideas have been to extend Rittenhouse Road to Route 422 to provide a westbound ramp or to provide a full interchange at Pawlings Road and Route 422.

To help implement similar improvements throughout Lower Providence, the township is undergoing the necessary steps to enact a Traffic Impact Fee Ordinance under Pennsylvania Act 209. Under this act, a municipality can impose a fee on a developer to make recommended improvements to roads or intersections throughout a designated area. Currently, the township can only require such improvements along the frontage of a particular development. Once adopted, the act allows any obtained fees to be used for improvements throughout the area, provided these improvements are documented in a Capital Improvement Plan. Lower Providence has completed most of the background steps required for the adoption of such an ordinance. The township is presently reviewing drafts of the Roadway Sufficiency Analysis and Transportation Capital Improvement Plan. Once these are deemed acceptable and formally

approved, the township can enact the ordinance.

### ***Roadway and Traffic Policies***

The implementation of the following policies is recommended to help improve traffic flow, increase roadway efficiency, and promote safety throughout the township.

- **Capacity Improvements**

Capacity-increasing improvements will be focused on arterial roads and, to a lesser extent, on collector roads to ensure that traffic moves efficiently and safely and is not inclined to take shortcuts through residential neighborhoods. Initially, the township will focus on Ridge Pike. An extensive study of this important township arterial will be conducted. Not only will right-of-way recommendations and roadway improvements be studied but also streetscape enhancements and pedestrian safety. Future attention will be directed toward the recommended improvements for arterial and collector roads contained in the Capital Improvement Plan.

- **Plan for the Villages**

One of the land use objectives recommended in Chapter Six is the creation of a series of plans for the preservation and enhancement of the township's historical villages: Evansburg, Audubon, Eagleville, and Trooper. These plans should promote the retention of the historical streetscape, where it still survives, and should be balanced by the need for safe pedestrian movements. Therefore, the installation of sidewalks should be an aspect of these plans. Also, regulations that promote shared parking, common driveways, and the limitation of curb cuts—all techniques that promote traffic flow and safety by limiting turning movements along roads—should be incorporated into any policy document for the villages. In implementing these regulations, special consideration should be given to Eagleville and Trooper, which have lost most of their historical fabric and have been transformed into commercial centers. In addition, a design study will be conducted for the entire Ridge Pike Corridor that will develop a consistent theme for the area. This study will identify destination nodes throughout the township, such as Eagleville and Trooper, highlighting specific improvements to these areas.

- **Cul-de-Sacs.**

In the township and throughout Montgomery County, there is a trend to develop houses on cul-de-sacs with direct access to a main road. This has resulted in increased congestion as all residents must exit onto one road. To forestall the continuation of this trend, the township will, except when it can be demonstrated that there is no other feasible option, only allow cul-de-sacs that take access from internal roads in a subdivision containing at least two access points to external roads. Similarly, the township will also mandate the connection to stub streets, when possible, for any land development.

- **Ultimate Right-of-Way Map**

As described above, there are conflicts between the township's 1985 map and the recent functional classification of township roads by PennDOT and the county. To ensure that township roads are properly classified, especially for funding purposes, the township will update its map. As part of this update, Lower Providence will petition the county to add Sunnyside Avenue to its list of major township collector roads. Inexplicably, the county omitted this important road from its map. Sunnyside Road should be included, especially since Pinetown Road is similarly classified.

- **Regional Coordination**

Similar to a recommendation found in Chapter Ten, the township will begin discussions with neighboring communities, the county, and such regional agencies as Valley Forge National Historical Park to discuss transportation concerns and improvements. The township is already a member of the Valley Forge Transportation Management Association and supports the efforts of this group to increase the participation of other communities along the 422 corridor.

## **Scenic Roads**

While this chapter has focused primarily on road improvements, the township does contain certain roads with rural amenities that add to the traditional character of Whitemarsh. While the township's 1995 Open Space Plan identified numerous roads, many have lost their charm because of recent developments. Therefore, the following is a revised list of scenic township roads:

- Pawlings Road, south of Audubon Road
- Eagleville Road, between Marilyn Avenue and Arcola School
- Visitation Road
- Level Road, between Stoughton Road and Arcola Road
- Pechins Mill Road
- River Road, between Skippack Road and Township Line Road
- Smith Road, where it crosses the Rock Run only
- Grange Road, where it crosses the Rock Run only
- All roads within the Skippack Creek Valley of Evansburg State Park – Germantown and Ridge Pikes, Evansburg Road, Old Baptist Road, Skippack Creek Road, and Cedar Lane

The township recognizes that certain improvements will have to be made to some of these roads for safety reasons. However, to preserve the character of these roads, they should be exempt from such suburban improvements as curbs and extensive widenings. To ensure their preservation, the township will encourage conservation easements along these roads and will promote preservation through innovative zoning techniques.

## ***ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES***

Besides making improvements to facilitate the movement of automobiles, it is desirable to examine alternative methods of transportation such as public transit, pedestrian pathways, or bicycle pathways. To the extent that these options can be utilized, road congestion resulting from reliance on the automobile can be lessened.

### ***Public Transportation***

The only public transportation available in Lower Providence consists of four bus lines operated by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA). These lines primarily run on the township's major arterials and provide the following services:

- **Route 91** – This bus operates on Ridge Pike and provides service between the Norristown Transportation Center and Graterford in Perkiomen Township.
- **Route 93** – This bus also operates on Ridge Pike and provides service between Norristown and Pottstown.
- **Route 99** – This bus operates between Norristown and Pottstown, via Route 422, with a stop in Oaks. It runs on Egypt Road in the township.
- **Route 131** – This bus provides service to Valley Forge Corporate Center from the Norristown Transportation Center.

To promote bus service in Lower Providence, the township will take an active role in having bus



pads, shelters, and benches installed during the land development process. The township also will ensure that stops are conveniently connected to sidewalks.

The township is aware of regional efforts to expand the current SEPTA R6 Rail Line beyond Norristown to Reading. Known as the Schuylkill Valley Metro, the line will be upgraded to a Metro Line, which is a hybrid of a regional rail and light rail line.

While no stations are proposed for Lower Providence, nearby stops are proposed in Oaks and Port Kennedy. The township supports the efforts to implement the Schuylkill Valley Metro. Once the line is operational, the township will work with its residents and employers to encourage ridership.

### ***Bike Pathways***

To promote safe bicycling along township roads, the township is supportive of Montgomery County's Bicycle Mobility Program, a program for the design and construction of on-road bicycle lanes. This program, DVRPC was the result of a joint effort by the county planning commission and PennDOT. As part of this program, the county identified various township roads that could accommodate bike lanes. **Figure 11-2** delineates these roads and categorizes them regarding their suitability for basic or advanced bikes. Roads designed for primary bicycle routes include major arterials that provide connections between significant destinations. These roads will eventually be designed to accommodate bike lanes. Secondary bicycle routes are collector roads which, based on their physical characteristics, may or may not have bike lanes. They were chiefly chosen to serve more experienced bikers.

### ***Pedestrian Pathways (Sidewalks or Hard-Surface Paths)***

Specifically, the township's primary planning decision regarding pedestrian pathways involves not granting waivers from their installation during the land development process, unless the site contains significant natural, scenic, or historical amenities. While this is an important step, it will not provide connections in developed areas that currently lack sidewalks. Since many of these areas contain the township's population centers, commercial areas, and schools, the township will consider designating certain areas or road segments as sidewalk priority areas—areas where the installation of sidewalks is of the utmost importance. The following areas were chosen:

Ridge Pike (entire length)

Germantown Pike (from Ridge Pike to Methacton School)

Evansburg Road (from Germantown Pike to Ridge Pike)

Level Road (from Ridge Pike to Stoughton Road)

Park Avenue (north of Ridge Pike and between Jode Road and the extension of the Boulevard of the Generals)

Trooper Road (entire length)

Egypt Road (entire length)

Eagleville Road (from Ridge Pike to Arcola School)

The network of sidewalks will be constructed of concrete. To further promote pedestrian movements and safety, all traffic signals should be timed for pedestrians and, where appropriate, walk signs should be installed. These primary recommendations will augment the existing sidewalk system by completing connections to neighborhoods, schools, and commercial centers. They are delineated in **Figure 11-3**. Connections to parks are discussed in Chapter Nine.



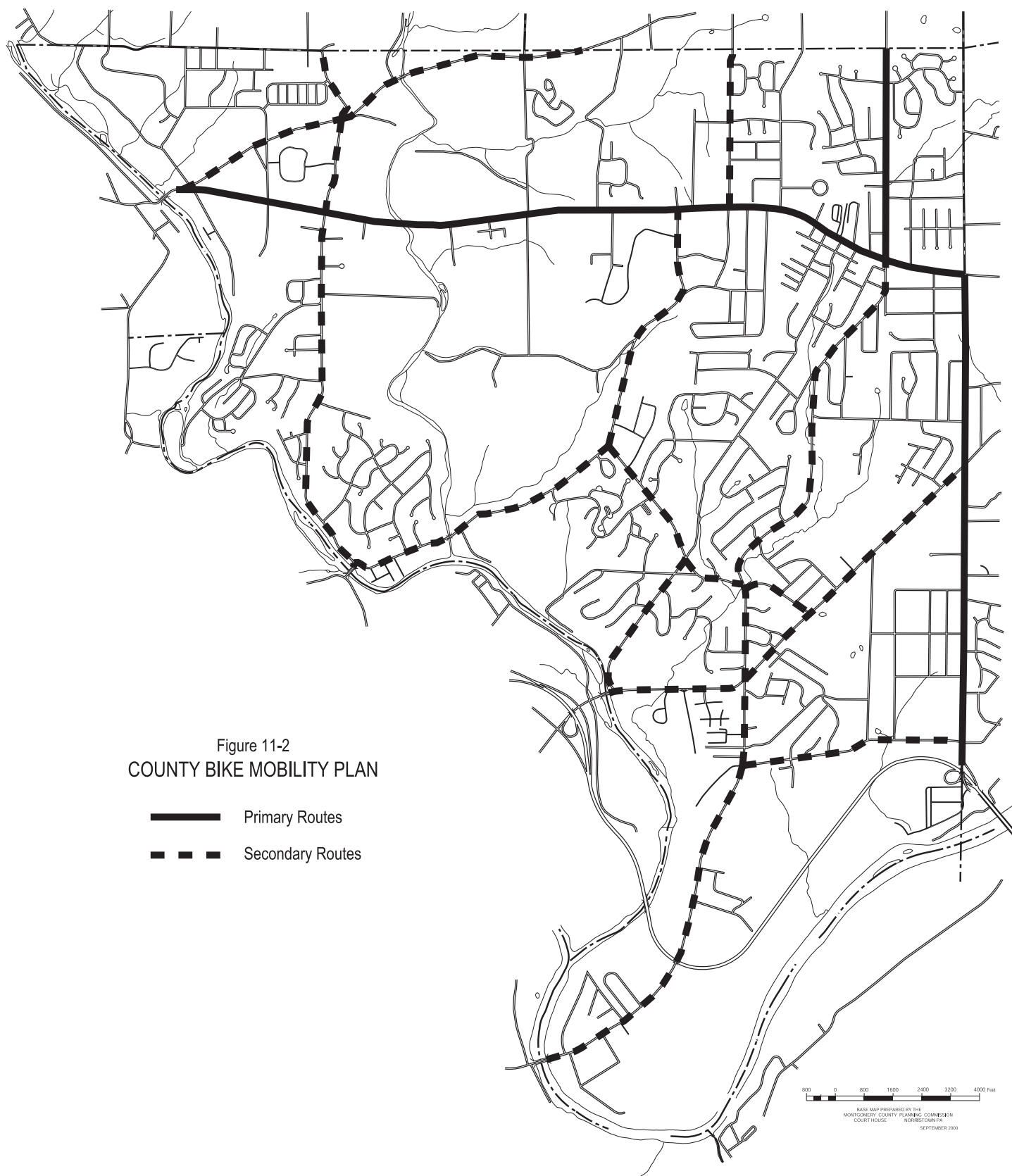
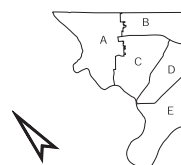


Figure 11-2  
COUNTY BIKE MOBILITY PLAN

- Primary Routes
- - - Secondary Routes

800 0 800 1600 2400 3200 4000 Feet

BASE MAP PREPARED BY THE  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION  
COURT HOUSE  
NOTRE DAME PA  
SEPTEMBER 2000



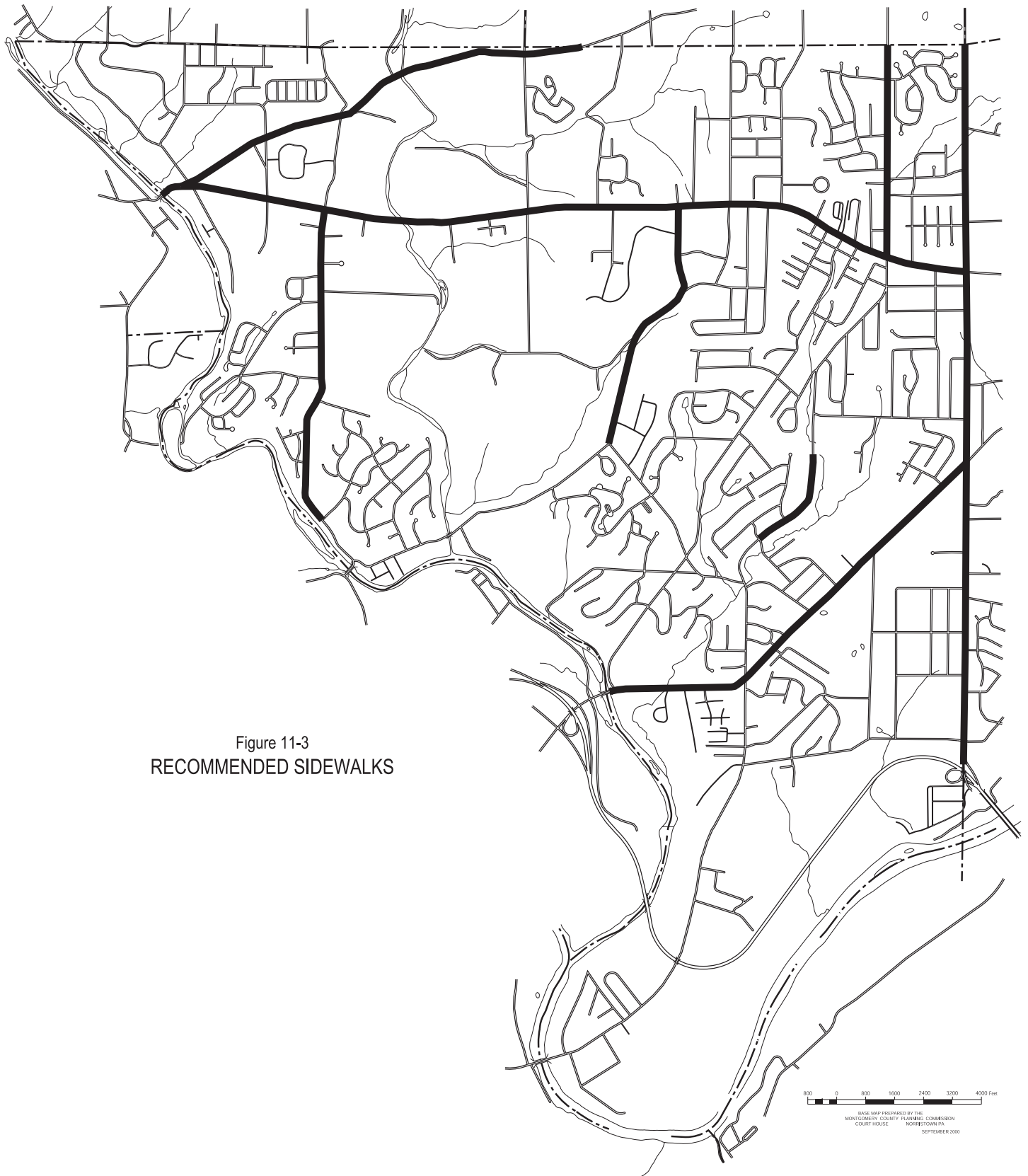


Figure 11-3  
RECOMMENDED SIDEWALKS

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND CORRELATION

This concluding chapter documents how the township intends to implement the policies recommended in this comprehensive plan and describes how this plan relates to the comprehensive plans and other pertinent documents or policies of adjacent communities.

## IMPLEMENTATION

This section is divided into four basic subsections: Land Use, Transportation, Parkland and Natural Resources, and Housing and Historic Preservation.

### ***Land Use***

To implement the land use policies contained in this plan, the following actions or policy decisions will be made by the township.

- A. Implement the policy actions proposed by the Strategic Plan in Chapter Seven – Proposed Land Use Plan. These include the following:

#### **1. Rezoning:**

- Change the VC Village Commercial Zoning along Egypt Road at Pinetown Road to PBO Professional Business Office.
- Change the zoning discrepancies in the area between the intersections of Trooper and Audubon Roads and Rittenhouse and Audubon Roads. The zoning will be changed to better reflect the existing uses and what has been determined as the appropriate future development pattern for the area.

Between Cross Keys Road and Ridge Pike on Germantown Pike, change most of the GC

- General Commercial Zoning to LI Light Industrial to promote industrial development and prevent strip commercial development along this section of the pike.

Remove the institutional overlay zoning for the Collegeville Inn.

- Rezone the properties zoned HC Highway Commercial at the intersection of Germantown Pike and Grange Avenue to a less intensive commercial zoning to prevent intrusive
- commercial development at this site. A new zoning district that promotes neighborhood commercial uses at an appropriate scale will be drafted for this area.

Similar to the above, much of the GC General Commercial Zoning was considered too intense

- for the Ridge Pike corridor between Level Road and Germantown Pike. Therefore, the new neighborhood commercial zoning will be applied to this corridor. Also, several commercial parcels on the south side of the corridor that are zoned PBO Professional Office Business or R-2 Residential will have this new zoning designation applied to them.

#### **2. Policies:**

- Promote the retention and character of the historical villages in the township by establishing clear boundaries and zoning that enforce the distinct characteristics of the villages while allowing for appropriate new development
- Establish a dialogue with neighboring municipalities regarding land use, zoning, and development issues.
- Establish a dialogue with governmental bodies and institutional properties owners with large landholdings in the township to discuss future intentions and planning.

## ***Transportation***

To implement the transportation policies described in this comprehensive plan, the following actions and policy decisions will be made by the township:

- A. Implement the roadway recommendations found in Chapter Eleven. These include the following:
  - 1. Direct capacity improvements to arterial and collector roads.
  - 2. Develop a corridor study for the township's major commercial arteries that emphasize streetscape enhancement and community identity. In particular, recognize Ridge Pike between Trooper and Eagleville as "downtown" Lower Providence and develop policies to enhance this important township gateway.
  - 3. Develop streetscape enhancement plans for the villages of Evansburg, Audubon, Eagleville, and Trooper.
  - 4. Limit the construction of cul-de-sacs.
  - 5. Update the ultimate rights-of-way ordinance to reflect current terminology and standards.
  - 6. Begin coordination efforts with neighboring communities, the county, and other significant local agencies to discuss transportation improvements and issues.
  - 7. Implement policies to preserve the scenic roads designated in the township's 1995 Open Space Plan and updated for this plan.
- B. Alternative Transportation Modes:
  - 1. Implement the following policies, which are designed to lessen dependence on the automobile:
    - Promote bus service in the township by requiring, when appropriate, bus shelters, benches, and parks. Sidewalks will conveniently serve all stops.
    - Support the county's bicycle mobility program, delineated in Figure 11-2.
    - Install the sidewalk connections recommended in Chapter Eleven and shown on Figure 11-3.

## ***Parkland***

To implement the parkland and natural resources policies found in Chapter Nine – Parkland and Natural Resources.

- A. Parkland Policies
  - 1. As described in the 1993 Township Recreation Plan (updated in 2000) and documented in this comprehensive plan, the township will have a deficiency of 176 acres of neighborhood parkland and 38 acres of community parkland at buildout. To rectify this, the township will work to implement the land purchases described in Chapter Nine, beginning with the township priority purchases recommended in that chapter.
  - 2. Work with the school district to secure an agreement that guarantees permanent public access for residents to use school district facilities, both outdoors and indoors.
  - 3. Conduct a feasibility analysis to determine whether an indoor recreation facility is needed.
  - 4. Create an official map that indicates the properties the township desires to purchase as parkland.
  - 5. Implement a Mandatory Land Dedication or Fee-in-lieu of dedicated land ordinance for the township.

6. Develop the trails and sidewalk connections described in Chapter Eleven and delineated in Figure 11-3.
7. Amend the OSR (Open Space Residential) Cluster District to require that open space be designed for active recreation as a part of any development.

### ***Natural Resources***

- A. Revise the institutional overlay district to better preserve open space and streetscapes for large institutional landholdings.
- B. Adopt performance zoning that subtracts natural features such as wetlands and steep slopes from the net lot area.
- C. Develop incentive zoning that provides for open space preservation, trails, parkland, etc.
- D. Develop a Riparian Buffer Ordinance that establishes set backs from water bodies, wetlands, and stream corridors.
- E. Continue to implement Best Management Practices for stormwater detention.
- F. Develop incentives to screen houses on scenic roads or in the remaining rural areas from the view along a road.

### ***Housing and Historic Preservation***

To implement the policies developed for this comprehensive plan, the following actions and policy decision-making will be done by the township:

- A. Continue to provide a varied housing stock that addresses the needs of all residents.
  1. Consider rezonings or zoning overlay requests when it is determined that they address a real housing need.

Conduct a land use study for the Norristown park section of Trooper to examine issues regarding redevelopment, in-fill housing, and the problem of the 1920s era movie lots. Specific attention will be paid to preserving open space and natural features, along with developing a workable road network. This study would also make zoning recommendations that reflect the existing development pattern.

- B. Update and revise the zoning regulations that apply to residential uses and districts and develop regulations that allow the sensitive reuse of old structures.
  1. Update accessory use and structure regulations.
  2. Revise the regulations for bed-and-breakfast facilities.
  3. Revise the regulations for residential conversions.
  4. Draft regulations to implement the village enhancements described in the above transportation section.
  5. Develop a local historic district and architectural review board for Evansburg, and create an Historic Overlay District for significant structures in the township.
  6. Create zoning regulations that provide developers with incentives to preserve, rather than demolish, old structures.
  7. Update the Nonconforming Use Ordinance to ensure these uses do not have a negative impact on residential areas or other uses.
- C. Ensure that the existing housing stock remains desirable.
  1. Implement the Strategic Plan recommend in Chapter Seven – Proposed Land Use Plan.

D. Ensure that residential infill development is compatible with existing houses.

1. Develop landscape standards to buffer existing houses from new development.
2. Develop standards to require new houses to be properly oriented to existing houses (e.g., rear yards face other rear yards).
3. Oppose variance requests that increase the density of infill development.



## CORRELATION

This section examines the comprehensive plans and any other relevant policies of the communities adjacent to Lower Providence to ensure that the township's comprehensive plan does not create any problems or conflicts along common borders.

### ***Worcester Township***

Worcester Township adopted a revised comprehensive plan in 1995, which completely updates the earlier 1971 plan. The main objective of the 1971 plan was to preserve the rural and agricultural character of Worcester and direct growth to Fairview and Center Point Villages as well as the Forrest Corner and Cold Spring areas. Worcester Township's 1995 comprehensive plan indicates high-density (4 or more dwelling units per acre) residential along most of the common border with Lower Providence. While this is not entirely compatible with Lower Providence's proposal to designate most of this land as low- or medium-density residential, much of these development patterns have been in place the past decade. Lower Providence's proposal to decrease the intensity of the commercial zoning at Providence Square from highway-oriented uses to neighborhood uses will lessen any potential land use conflicts with the low-density residential designation in Worcester. These communities share a common school district and should work together to promote tax-generating uses and to preserve open space from residential development.

### ***Skippack Township***

Skippack Township is currently updating its comprehensive plan. This will essentially update the proposed 1971 plan, which apparently was never adopted. However, Skippack adopted a land use plan for the township in 1991. It designates 1 dwelling unit per acre or less for the land along Lower Providence Township. It appears the updated comprehensive plan will not propose changes for land along the common border. Similarly, Lower Providence proposes no changes along this border. While the predominant zoning is R-2 Residential, which allows development at 1.7 dwelling units per acre, this is simply reflective of the existing neighborhoods, some of which were developed in the late 1950s or early 1960s. Skippack Township will participate in a regional planning effort with the other communities that comprise of the Perkiomen Valley School District.

### ***Collegeville Borough***

Collegeville Borough's existing comprehensive plan was adopted in 1971. Along its common border with Lower Providence, the land use plan designates a Perkiomen Creek greenway with limited commercial zoning only where Ridge Pike enters the borough. Over the years, the borough has been successful in implementing this greenway. Lower Providence also intends to create a greenway along the creek, either through parkland purchases or through a Riparian Buffer Ordinance. Lower Providence proposes no zoning changes along the common border. Shared issues between the two communities are largely transportation oriented, especially the proposal to construct a new bridge across the creek, south of the existing historic bridge. This bridge would supplement the existing bridge to help move traffic through the area. Collegeville Borough will be participating in a regional planning effort with the other communities in the Perkiomen Valley School District. The borough also intends to update its comprehensive plan during the next several years.

### ***West Norriton Township***

West Norriton Township proposed a comprehensive plan in 1963, which was never adopted. Land use is regulated by the zoning ordinance. This map has remained largely unchanged since the mid-1980s, with the exception of a tract along Trooper Road at Schrack's corner. This tract was rezoned from residential to commercial. This change is not in conflict with the developed land across the border in Lower Providence, which largely contains the Audubon Square Shopping Center. The only land use conflicts date from the 1950s, such as the Valley Forge Corporate Center being located across the road from a residential neighborhood. The proposed rezoning at Audubon and Trooper Roads are only to properly designated existing uses. These changes will not create any conflicts.



### ***Upper Merion Township***

All of the Upper Merion Township Land that abuts Lower Providence is owned by Valley Forge National Historical Park. Therefore, it is more important to examine the park's land use policies rather than the those of Upper Merion Township. Presently, all of the abutting land has been left in its natural state, with the exception of some nature trails, limited access roads for maintenance, small parking areas near public roads, and a corridor in Lower Providence for an extension of the county's Schuylkill River Trail. These changes are amenities rather than intrusions. They have made the parkland more accessible to the public. It is the park's policy to leave the rest of the land untouched and in a state that would be familiar to General Washington and his troops. The park is under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior and is subject to the philosophies of the person who holds this cabinet post.

### ***Upper Providence Township***

In 1994, Upper Providence Township adopted a selected update of its 1983 comprehensive plan. This update included a proposed land use plan. This plan proposes that a swath of land along the Perkiomen Creek be designated as an open space area. This is not inconsistent with Lower Providence's proposal to create a riparian corridor and to acquire various parklands along the creek. Outside of this area, most of the land in both townships is designated low-density residential. Notable exceptions include the Yerkes area in Lower Providence and the borderlands with Collegeville along the creek in Upper Providence. These areas are zoned for high-density development and are not consistent with the land policy on the opposite side of the creek. However, these areas are separated by the creek and its wooded banks and are largely invisible from each other. An issue common to both townships is the eventual replacement of the Arcola Road Bridge. Any new bridge should include sidewalks and bike lanes, especially given the nearby location of the proposed Perkiomen Trail in Upper Providence.

### ***County of Montgomery***

Broadly drawn, most of the county comprehensive plan is consistent with Lower Providence's proposed land use plan, although some inconsistencies exist. Most of these inconsistencies have resulted from rezonings or development that has extended public sewer and water into areas where these services were not planned for in 1977. Given that the new Lower Providence comprehensive plan represents the township's current development pattern and that the proposed land use was formulated to provide for logical growth from it, any proposed update to the county's comprehensive plan should reflect this.

### ***Schuylkill Township, Chester County***

Schuylkill Township is the only municipality outside of Montgomery County that abuts the township. The abutting lands are separated by the Schuylkill River. This Chester County community adopted its most recent comprehensive plan in 1991 and an open space plan in 1992. Both plans establish a protected zone along the bank of the Schuylkill River. This area is also protected by a floodplain ordinance. Therefore, while all the land that borders Lower Providence is zoned industrial, the immediate areas are protected from development. This policy is consistent with Lower Providence's intention to establish a protected riparian corridor along its streams and the river.