

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The preparation and evaluation of the Lower Providence Township Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update was a joint effort including the following municipal individuals and consultants:

Lower Providence Township Board of Supervisors

W. Douglas Hager
Craig M. Dininny
James E. Dougherty
Janice Kearney (appointed August 2005)
Piero A. Sassu
John P. Lomire (resigned August 2005)

Lower Providence Township Manager

Joseph Dunbar

Lower Providence Township Open Space Preservation Plan Committee

William D. Brooke
Tolson DeSa
Kelly Donohue
John Heyser
Janice Kearney
E. Van Rieker
Piero A. Sassu
Michael Siegel

Lower Providence Township Parks and Recreation Board

Thomas M. Heisner
Marty DellAngelo
Steve Wisniewski
William D. Brooke
Leslie R. Bass
Beth Ann Mazza

Lower Providence Township Planning Commission

Warren J. Schlack
Thomas Endlich
Janice Kearney
John Bodek
Frank M. Vibbert
Naomi C. Satterwhite
Marie Altieri

Consultants:

E. Van Rieker, AICP
Kathleen Fisher, Graphics

The following residents attended the regular Open Space Committee meetings:

Leslie Bass
Jeff Dillaha
Chris DiPaolo
Erin DiPaolo
Elizabeth Lang
Maura and Mike Powers
Lisa Sullivan
Susan Zampogra

Advertised meetings were held:

September 27, 2004
November 15, 2004
December 6, 2004
January 31, 2005
March 16, 2005
June 22, 2005
July 27, 2005
October 5, 2005

Presentation to the Montgomery County Open Space Preservation Board:

November 15, 2005

Public hearing held by the Lower Providence Township Board of Supervisors:

December 1, 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Photo: The Rock Run East of Grange Road Bridge

Introduction

Goals of the Program *Page xiii*

Chapter 1 Community Background

Regional Position *Page 1-1*

Existing Land Use *Page 1-2*

Analysis of Existing Land Use *Page 1-4*

Lower Providence Housing: Present Conditions *Page 1-7*

Housing Data *Page 1-8*

Employment *Page 1-9*

Resident Labor Force *Page 1-10*

Occupation Status *Page 1-10*

Chapter 2 Goals and Objectives

Growth Management *Page 2-1*

Active Recreation *Page 2-1*

Open Space and Natural Amenity Preservation *Page 2-2*

Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility *Page 2-2*

Natural Features *Page 2-2*

<i>Parkland and Recreation</i>	<i>Page 2-3</i>
<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Page 2-4</i>
<i>Evansburg Historic Village</i>	<i>Page 2-4</i>

Chapter 3 Existing Protected Lands

<i>Park Zone A</i>	<i>Page 3-1</i>
<i>Park Zone B</i>	<i>Page 3-1</i>
<i>Park Zone C</i>	<i>Page 3-1</i>
<i>Park Zone D</i>	<i>Page 3-2</i>
<i>Park Zone E</i>	<i>Page 3-2</i>

Chapter 4 Potentially Vulnerable Resources

<i>Geology</i>	<i>Page 4-1</i>
<i>Topography</i>	<i>Page 4-2</i>
<i>Steep Slopes</i>	<i>Page 4-2</i>
<i>Watershed and Drainage Areas</i>	<i>Page 4-6</i>
<i>Soils</i>	<i>Page 4-8</i>
<i>Prime and Important Agricultural Soils</i>	<i>Page 4-8</i>
<i>Hydric Soils</i>	<i>Page 4-9</i>
<i>Alluvial Soils</i>	<i>Page 4-9</i>
<i>Surface Waters and Hydrology</i>	<i>Page 4-11</i>
<i>Floodplain and Stream Corridors</i>	<i>Page 4-11</i>

<i>Hydrology</i>	<i>Page 4-14</i>
<i>Wetlands</i>	<i>Page 4-15</i>
<i>Vegetation and Woodlands</i>	<i>Page 4-17</i>
<i>Woodlands</i>	<i>Page 4-17</i>
<i>Historic Structures</i>	<i>Page 4-21</i>
<i>National Register and National Landmark Sites</i>	<i>Page 4-21</i>
<i>Community Historic Resources</i>	<i>Page 4-22</i>

Chapter 5 *Potential Open Space Linkages*

<i>Philadelphia to Valley Forge Bikeway</i>	<i>Page 5-1</i>
<i>Stream Valleys</i>	<i>Page 5-1</i>
<i>Utility Corridors</i>	<i>Page 5-2</i>
<i>Roads</i>	<i>Page 5-2</i>
<i>Trails and Sidewalk Connections</i>	<i>Page 5-3</i>
<i>Zone A</i>	<i>Page 5-3</i>
<i>Zone B</i>	<i>Page 5-4</i>
<i>Zone C</i>	<i>Page 5-4</i>
<i>Zone D</i>	<i>Page 5-5</i>
<i>Zone E</i>	<i>Page 5-5</i>

Chapter 6
Analysis of Unprotected Resources

Analysis of Unprotected Resources	Page 6-1
--	-----------------

Chapter 7
Evaluation of Growth Areas Needed for New Development Through 2025

Egypt Road Area	Page 7-1
Ridge Pike Corridor	Page 7-2
Far West End at Germantown Pike and Ridge Pike (Adjacent to Collegeville)	Page 7-2
Potential Build Out Analysis	Page 7-4

Chapter 8
Evaluation of Open Space Needs

Explanation of the Numbers Used in the Calculation	Page 8-1
Significance of the Needs Analysis Calculations	Page 8-1
Township Needs	Page 8-1
Neighborhood Needs	Page 8-2
Community Parkland	Page 8-2
Recreational Needs Analysis	Page 8-2
Recreation Needs	Page 8-5
Zone A	Page 8-6
Zone B	Page 8-7

<i>Zone C</i>	<i>Page 8-7</i>
<i>Zone D</i>	<i>Page 8-8</i>
<i>Zone E</i>	<i>Page 8-8</i>
<i>Community Parkland</i>	<i>Page 8-9</i>
<i>Prioritization of Parkland Acquisitions</i>	<i>Page 8-10</i>
<i>Additional Recommendations to Increase Recreational Opportunities</i>	<i>Page 8-11</i>
<i>Significant Open Space Areas and Parcels</i>	<i>Page 8-13</i>

Chapter 9 Recommendations and Implementation

<i>Previous Recommendations</i>	<i>Page 9-1</i>
<i>Current Recommendations</i>	<i>Page 9-2</i>
<i>Priority I - High Preservation Properties</i>	<i>Page 9-2</i>
<i>Priority II - Medium Preservation Properties</i>	<i>Page 9-3</i>
<i>Recommendations - Proposed Preservation Areas</i>	<i>Page 9-4</i>

Chapter 10 Comparison To County And Abutting Municipalities

<i>Comparison to County and Abutting Municipal Plans</i>	<i>Page 10-1</i>
<i>Montgomery County's Comprehensive Plan</i>	<i>Page 10-1</i>
<i>Skippack Township</i>	<i>Page 10-4</i>
<i>Upper Merion Township</i>	<i>Page 10-4</i>
<i>Upper Providence Township</i>	<i>Page 10-4</i>
<i>West Norriton Township</i>	<i>Page 10-5</i>
<i>Worcester Township</i>	<i>Page 10-5</i>

Chapter 11
Policies and Methods for Protecting
Open Space Other Than Through Acquisition

<i>Change Densities in Residential Zoning Districts</i>	<i>Page 11-1</i>
<i>Adopt Performance Zoning</i>	<i>Page 11-1</i>
<i>Reduce the Visual Impact of Rural Homes</i>	<i>Page 11-2</i>
<i>Cluster Homes</i>	<i>Page 11-3</i>
<i>Incentive Zoning</i>	<i>Page 11-3</i>
<i>Natural Resource Protection Ordinances</i>	<i>Page 11-4</i>
<i>Encourage Donations of Properties for Permanent Open Space</i>	<i>Page 11-6</i>
<i>Require Developments to Provide Open Space or a Fee in Lieu of Open Space</i>	<i>Page 11-6</i>
<i>Historic Preservation Ordinance</i>	<i>Page 11-7</i>
<i>Environmental Management</i>	<i>Page 11-8</i>
<i>Long Term Lease</i>	<i>Page 11-8</i>

Chapter 12
Implementation Process

<i>Parkland</i>	<i>Page 12-1</i>
------------------------	-------------------------

Appendix

<i>List of Act 319, 515 and 5319 Properties in Lower Providence Township</i>	<i>Page A-2</i>
---	------------------------

List of Charts

<i>Chart #1</i>	<i>Inventory of Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources- Park Zone A</i>	<i>Page 3-4</i>
<i>Chart #2</i>	<i>Inventory of Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources - Park Zone B</i>	<i>Page 3-6</i>
<i>Chart #3</i>	<i>Inventory of Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources - Park Zone C</i>	<i>Page 3-8</i>
<i>Chart #4</i>	<i>Inventory of Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources - Park Zone D</i>	<i>Page 3-10</i>
<i>Chart #5</i>	<i>Inventory of Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources - Park Zone E</i>	<i>Page 3-12</i>
<i>Chart #6</i>	<i>Neighborhood Parkland Needs Analysis</i>	<i>Page 8-4</i>

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1-1</i>	<i>Existing Land Use - June 2005</i>	<i>Page 1-3</i>
<i>Figure 1-2</i>	<i>Housing Units By Type</i>	<i>Page 1-8</i>
<i>Figure 1-3</i>	<i>Housing Growth, 1990-1999</i>	<i>Page 1-8</i>
<i>Figure 1-4</i>	<i>Age of Housing</i>	<i>Page 1-9</i>
<i>Figure 4-1</i>	<i>Geology</i>	<i>Page 4-4</i>
<i>Figure 4-2</i>	<i>Steep Slopes</i>	<i>Page 4-5</i>
<i>Figure 4-3</i>	<i>Watersheds</i>	<i>Page 4-7</i>
<i>Figure 4-4</i>	<i>Prime Agricultural Areas</i>	<i>Page 4-10</i>
<i>Figure 4-5</i>	<i>Floodplain</i>	<i>Page 4-13</i>
<i>Figure 4-6</i>	<i>Wetlands</i>	<i>Page 4-16</i>
<i>Figure 4-7</i>	<i>Woodlands</i>	<i>Page 4-19</i>
<i>Figure 4-8</i>	<i>Special Concern Species</i>	<i>Page 4-20</i>

Figure 4-9	National Register Sites	Page 4-24
Figure 4-10	Community Historic Resources	Page 4-25
Figure 5-1	Trail and Sidewalk Plan	Page 5-7
Figure 8-1	Proposed Land Acquisition	Page 8-15

List of Photographs

IBEW Picnic/Sports Complex Looking South From End of Driveway - Banquet Hall On Left	Page 6-4
IBEW Ballfield Looking West From Driveway/Parking Area	Page 6-4
IBEW Looking South From Rear Of Local 340 Union Building	Page 6-4
IBEW Property Along Both Sides Of Pechins Mill Road	Page 6-5
IBEW Property Along West Side Of Level Road	Page 6-5
Gorski Property - Picnic Grove To Left, End Of Yerkes Road Access Right Foreground, Edge Of Perkiomen Creek To Right	Page 6-6
View Of Cicchello From Smith Road Looking North	Page 6-7
View Of Cicchello From Smith Road Looking West	Page 6-7
View Of Heyser From Kriebel Mill Road Cul-De-Sac	Page 6-8
View of Heyser From Smith Road Curve At Potential Trail Extension - Looking Northeast	Page 6-8
Vew Of Heyser From Smith Road Curve At Potential Trail Extension - Looking Southeast	Page 6-8
View Of Mascaro Property, Smith Road Frontage From Sweetgum Lane - South Intersection	Page 6-9
View Of Mascaro Property Along Lower Elevation Of Smith Road	Page 6-9
Rear Of Eagleville Elementary And Eagleville Park - Far Left	Page 6-10

<i>Wooded Riparian Low Lands Along South Side Heyser Property (Center And Right)</i>	<i>Page 6-10</i>
<i>View Of HNB Property Looking North From Edge Of Eskie Park</i>	<i>Page 6-11</i>
<i>View Of Downes Property Looking North From Woodland Avenue Frontage</i>	<i>Page 6-12</i>
<i>View Of Heavy Woodland Movie Lots Area From Regency Drive</i>	<i>Page 6-12</i>
<i>Looking North From Grange Road Bridge</i>	<i>Page 6-13</i>
<i>View Of Skippack Pike Tributary To Evansburg Park Looking South From Grange Road Bridge</i>	<i>Page 6-13</i>

List of Maps

<i>Map #1</i>	<i>The Township's Five Park Zones</i>	<i>Page 3-3</i>
<i>Map #2</i>	<i>Existing Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources In Park Zone A</i>	<i>Page 3-5</i>
<i>Map #3</i>	<i>Existing Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources In Park Zone B</i>	<i>Page 3-7</i>
<i>Map #4</i>	<i>Existing Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources In Park Zone C</i>	<i>Page 3-9</i>
<i>Map #5</i>	<i>Existing Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources In Park Zone D</i>	<i>Page 3-11</i>
<i>Map #6</i>	<i>Existing Park, Recreation and Open Space Resources In Park Zone E</i>	<i>Page 3-13</i>
<i>Map #7</i>	<i>Community Park Services Area</i>	<i>Page 8-3</i>

List of Plans

Potential Build Out Analysis Plan

Page 7-5

Open Space Plan with Floodplain Overlay

Rear Pocket

Master Trail Plan

Rear Pocket

INTRODUCTION

This Open Space Preservation Plan is prepared as an update to the Open Space Preservation Plan adopted by the Township Board of Supervisors in March 1995. This report follows the program established in December 2003 by the Green Fields/Green Towns Open Space Task Force. The task force established a County goal of requiring municipalities to update their original municipal Open Space and Environmental Resource Protection Plan pursuant to the requirements of the Montgomery County Open Space Program, which establishes plan elements and guidelines to help the municipality and its Open Space Committee to thoroughly reevaluate the existing Open Space Plan.

Goals of the Program

Open space includes land and water areas that are undeveloped or predominantly undeveloped and permanently set aside or reserved in a natural state for public or private use and enjoyment. Preservation purposes include:

- Providing recreation opportunities including trails.
- Conserving natural features.
- Preserving historic or cultural landscapes.
- Maintaining scenic quality.
- Protecting water resources.
- Stimulating the revitalization of developed communities with green infrastructure.
- Shaping the form of land use and development.
- Preserving agricultural land.

The Township Open Space Committee with the assistance of Township staff and representatives from Montgomery County Planning Commission have met on a regular basis through the summer of 2005 at public meetings and discussed various preservation and recreation opportunities as well as receiving input from the public in attendance.

In addition, the Planning Consultant has coordinated with adjoining municipalities and their consultants in order to identify relationships and areas of mutual concern that should be included in the Plan. The maps appended in the rear pocket of this report identify the inventory of priority properties recommended for preservation and include a master plan for local and regional trails, including interconnections with adjacent municipalities.

The chapters that follow include information identified in the Green Fields/Green Towns recommendations as appropriate and necessary for the Open Space Preservation Plan Update.

CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

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 15.35 square miles and is bordered by the Townships of West Norriton, Skippack, Worcester, Upper Merion, Upper Providence 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 others being 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, being closer to Norristown and Philadelphia than the others, has experienced suburban development since 1950. However, during the 1990s the entire valley has been 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. By 2010, it is expected that most of the valley will be a highly developed suburban region.

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

Access to the Township is provided by several major Montgomery County roads, 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 a lot of traffic to find alternate routes through local neighborhoods. This congestion, its attendant problems, and ways to alleviate it has become a major policy issue for Lower Providence. Public transportation opportunities are currently limited in the Township to bus service on several major roads, although the Valley Forge Corporate Center, a major employment center, is served.

The Township has numerous recreational amenities. Along with the lands of Valley Forge and Evansburg Parks and property owned by Montgomery County, the Township has over 350 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 all of the Township's age groups.

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

Existing Land Use

While land use is not static and subject to constant change, such an analysis is useful for it gives a reasonably accurate assessment of the current development pattern in the Township.

Figure 1-1, which provides an inventory of Lower Providence's existing land use, updates the last land use inventory prepared in June 2000 as part of the Lower Providence Township Comprehensive Plan 2001.

<u>Land Use</u>		<u>Acreage</u>	<u>%</u>
-----------------	--	----------------	----------

Figure 1-1
Existing Land Use – June 2005
Lower Providence Township

<u>RESIDENTIAL</u>	County Residence	429.8	4.3%
	Single Family	3,295.5	32.9%
	Twin	58.4	0.6%
	Single Family	0.2	.01%
	Mobile Home	58.4	.60%
	Multifamily	83.0	.80%
	Continuing Care Residential.	<u>123.1</u>	<u>1.2%</u>
	TOTAL	4,048.4	40.41%
<u>COMMERCIAL</u>	Retail	143.5	1.4%
	Office	160.1	1.6%
	Mixed Use	<u>149.5</u>	<u>1.5%</u>
	TOTAL	453.1	4.5%
<u>INDUSTRIAL</u>		13.0	0.13%
<u>INSTITUTIONAL</u>		2,088.0	20.8%
<u>UTILITY</u>		74	0.74%
<u>OPEN SPACE</u>	Public	2,016.4	20.1%
	Private	445.8	4.4%
	TOTAL	2,462.2	24.5%
<u>VACANT LAND</u>		746.1	7.4%
<u>AGRICULTURE</u>		146.2	1.5%
TOTAL		10,031	100%

In the past five years, approximately 263 acres previously categorized as Vacant Land or Agriculture have been developed for varied purposes such as:

- Single family subdivisions with 50% private open space.
- Age restricted townhouses.
- Shannondell – a large continuing care residential community.
- Streamlight office/manufacturing facility.
- Commercial uses adjacent to Audubon Square Shopping Center, such as Wawa and Homewood Suites.

More recently, the Planning and Zoning Department reports that most of the submitted land development and subdivision plans were small, in-fill types of development (or redevelopment in the case of retail properties).

The Township has also secured more open space, 72 acres in 2004 alone. In addition, the Township has secured a 30 year lease of 31 acres on Pawlings Road from St. Gabriel's Protectorate which will make it possible to provide additional open space resources for use by Township residents.

Analysis of Existing Land Use

Residential

Residential uses account for the largest single land use in Lower Providence. Over forty percent of the Township is devoted to some type of housing. However, 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, they are now 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 Park.

Single-Family Detached Dwellings. Of all the residential land uses, single-family detached dwelling constitute the largest grouping. This is not surprising; even a cursory glance of the Township would indicate this. Over 80 percent of the Township's housing stock is comprised of this type. Located throughout the Township, they range from small cottages to bona fide mansions, such as Fatlands.

Twins or Single-Family Semi-Detached Dwellings. Comprising less than 1 percent of the Township's housing stock, many are located in the old villages and pre-date 1950.

Single-Family Attached. Commonly known as townhouses, most of this housing type is relatively new in Lower Providence. The majority of these 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 built in Evansburg. Just complete is the 70 unit Courtyard @ Collegeville, a community restricted to age 55 and older occupancy, located east of the IBEW properties.

Mobile Homes. Besides a handful of scattered site mobile homes, the Township has four mobile home parks—the oldest of which dates back to the 1950's. Three are located adjacent to each other in Trooper. They are: Trooper (96 units), Sunnside (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 are designed as garden apartments, although Mill Grove has several buildings that have townhouses attached as end units.

Continuing Care Residential. This form of residence provides occupancy to active elderly who live in an independent environment; as well as those needing assistance in some daily functions such as dressing, dining and bathing; and nursing or convalescent care for persons requiring temporary or permanent round-the-clock care. The new community of Shannondell along Egypt Road is now in Phase II and will ultimately provide housing for up to 2,000 dwelling units plus nursing care facilities.

Commercial

Accounting for less than 5 percent of the Township's total land use, this category 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, or in the Audubon area along Egypt Road.

Office. Located throughout the Township and 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, they are usually in converted older dwellings in or near the villages.

Industrial

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

Institutional

Accounting 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 at Eagleville. Besides the prison, township institutions with a regional recognition include Eagleville Hospital, founded in 1909 and St. Gabriel's Protectorate, founded in 1896.

Utility

The land 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 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 land is the private open space owned by homeowners associations.

Vacant Land

Classified vacant by the county is land that is privately owned land presently unused. Most of the Township land so designated is developable and zoned residential.

Agriculture

Once the dominant land use in Lower Providence, agriculturally used land now constitutes only 1.5 percent of the Township's total acreage.

Figure 1-1 delineates the existing land use in Lower Providence.

Lower Providence Housing: Present Conditions

Before describing the implementation process for the plan, it is useful to review the housing and relevant demographic data that was used to formulate it.

Demographic Data

The following is a summary of data from the 2000 Census.

The current population in the Township, according to the 2000 Census, is 22,390 residents. Of this figure, 16,573 residents are over 18. This is reflective of the Township's current high rate of empty nesters. However, given all of the new single-family houses being built and the inevitable turnover of the existing housing stock, the under 18 population is sure to rise.

- The population of the Township is estimated to grow to 28,680 by 2025. At buildout it should be around 33,000 residents.

The following is a summary from the 2000 Land Use Assumption report, a buildout study which projects trends:

- Of the projected 4,850.3 additional housing units that can be built in the Township, over half (2,500) will be the Shannondell Elderly Housing Complex . The construction of this complex is projected to occur during the next 15-20 years. If it gets built as proposed, it will be one of the largest complexes of its type in the nation. Obviously it will create a large elderly (over 55) population in the township. As for its relevance to this chapter, it should more than satisfy the township's demand for this type of housing.
- Ensure that infill development is compatible with existing residential development.
- The remaining buildable residential units in the township, 2,350.3 will all be single-family detached dwellings. Of the vacant residentially-zoned land, only this type of dwelling unit is permitted. Of course rezonings could alter this.
- Add new Open Space Preservation District.

Housing Data

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Township's housing stock is that it is diverse. Four mobile home parks, multifamily apartment complexes, and townhouse developments have given Lower Providence residents numerous housing choices. Furthermore, there are a wide range of single-family houses on lots ranging from 8,000 square feet to country residences on tracts over 5 acres. Figure 1-2 shows the Township's housing units by type as indicated in the 1990 Census, Figure 1-3 shows the Township's housing growth by type from 1990-1999.

Figure 1-2
HOUSING UNITS BY TYPE

Total Units	Housing Type	Amount	% of Total Units	County Rank
6,826	Single-Family Detached	4,586	67.9	20
	Single-Family Attached	615	9.1	(2)
	Multifamily (<i>Apartment Bldg. - 5 or more units</i>)	1,139	16.9	24
	Mobile Homes	419	6.2	4 (3)

Figure 1-3
1990-1999 (4)

Total Township Units	Units Built	Single-Family Detached	Single-Family Attached	Mobile Homes
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, reflective of the earlier starting date for the assumptions report and its estimated counts for some property that has since been recommended for rezoning or is no longer proposed for residential development.

(2) For townhouses, the township ranked 53rd, for 2-4 units structures it ranked 37th.¹

(3) Second 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.

Currently, Lower Providence's median year for housing construction was 1965. This is slightly newer than the County's current median year of 1959. The age of the Township housing stock by recent decades is shown in Figure 1-4.

Figure 1-4 – Age of Housing

Time Period	Amount Built
March 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

As Figure 1-4 indicates, the decade of 1960-1969 was the period of the greatest growth in housing. The 30-year period of 1950-1970 was when 63 percent of all of the township's existing houses were built. Additionally, 55 percent of the total current units are at least 30 years old, having been built prior to 1970.

Employment

The 2000 Census indicates there were 10,191 employees in Lower Providence Township. Employment projections indicate 12,296 employees by 2025, an increase of 2,105 or 20.7%.

In 2000, Lower Providence ranked 17th out of 62 municipalities in number of employees, and this rank is projected to remain unchanged in 2025. Lower Providence residents are a short distance from adjacent municipalities which are employment centers, with Norristown and Upper Merion being the most notable (total of 67,500 jobs) and East Norriton, West Norriton, and Upper Providence combining for over 23,000 jobs. Thus, Township residents are within a fifteen minute drive to over 101,000 jobs which is expected to increase by an additional 22,600 jobs by 2025.

Resident Labor Force

<u>Industrial Sector</u>	<u>Township</u>		<u>County</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Agriculture	17	0.2%	1,039	0.3%
Construction	551	5.0%	21,691	5.6%
Manufacturing	1,714	15.7%	57,831	15.0%
Wholesale	614	5.6%	15,069	3.9%
Retail	1,191	10.9%	43,445	11.3%
Transportation	491	4.5%	12,384	3.2%
Information	610	5.6%	13,412	3.5%
F.I.R.E.*	1,175	10.7%	38,494	10.0%
Services	4,233	38.7%	170,862	44.4%
Public Administration	339	3.1%	10,461	2.7%

*Finance, Insurance and Real Estate

The Resident Labor Force for Lower Providence Township generally follows the characteristics for Montgomery County. The most significant departures are in the areas of Wholesale and Information, where there is a *greater* percentage of the work force in Lower Providence Township in this sector and in Services, where there is a *smaller* percentage of the work force in Lower Providence Township in this sector

Occupation Status

<u>Occupation Status</u>	<u>Township</u>		<u>County</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
White Collar	8,181	74.8%	279,202	72.6%
Blue Collar	1,659	15.2%	64,385	16.7%
Other	1,095	10.0%	41,101	10.7%

With regard to Occupation Status, Lower Providence Township again generally parallels the County and has a slightly higher white collar percentage in the Township and a slightly lower blue collar. However, these differences are not statistically significant.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000.

CHAPTER 12

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The Township intends to adopt the techniques listed in Chapter 11 within the first phase of Plan implementation. In the case of Zoning Ordinance amendments (changing densities in residential districts, performance zoning, reducing the visual impact of rural homes, cluster provisions, incentive zoning, natural resource protection provisions, and some historic preservation provisions), the Township Planning Commission will prepare drafts of the ordinances in conjunction with Township staff. After public advertisement and public hearings, the Board of Supervisors will decide on each ordinance amendment.

These amendments will be part of a larger effort to codify and comprehensively update the Township Zoning Ordinance. The Township has as its goal the preparation of a land use plan which takes into account all the previous plans and studies (e.g., the Open Space Preservation Plan, Recreation Plan, Township-wide Traffic Study, Land Use Assumptions Report, etc.). The land use plan will be prepared within the first six months or so after the Open Space Preservation Plan is adopted. Once the Land Use Plan is completed, the Township will prepare a new Zoning Ordinance to implement the concepts in the Land Use Plan and other plans.

The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance amendments (specifically to require open space or fees in lieu of open space) have already been prepared, and are pending adoption. The Township Building Code amendment to require a public review prior to demolition of an historic building will be prepared by Township staff, and adopted by the Board of Supervisors. Finally, the Township will implement the policy of encouraging donations of properties for open space by having the Township staff prepare an information sheet listing the various organizations that accept such donations, and offering the sheet to interested citizens.

Parkland

To implement the parkland and natural resources policies found in Chapter Eight, Parkland and Natural Resources Plan.

A. Parkland Policies

1. As described in the 1993 Township Recreation Plan (updated in 2000) and documented in this plan, the Township will be deficient 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 Eight, beginning with the Township priority purchases recommended in that chapter.

2. Conduct a feasibility analysis to determine whether an indoor recreation facility is needed.
3. Create an Official Map that indicates the properties that the Township desires to purchase as parkland.
4. Implement a Mandatory Land Dedication or Fee-in-lieu of dedicated land ordinance for the Township.
5. Develop the trails and sidewalks connections described in Chapter 5 and delineated in Figure 5-1.
6. Amend the OSR (Open Space Residential) Cluster District to require open space designed for active recreation as a part of any development.

CHAPTER 2

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals are general statements of Lower Providence Township's overall development philosophy. The objectives are more focused action steps designed to achieve the goals. The goals listed below reflect the Goals and Objectives as originally stated in the 1995 Open Space Plan Preservation Plan and the 2001 Township Comprehensive Plan Update.

1. Growth Management

Lower Providence should do everything it can to retain the rural character of lands not yet developed. The Township should accept its legally required fair share of growth, but no more.

Objectives:

- Future growth should be directed toward the Ridge Pike corridor and Valley Forge Corporate Center area of Lower Providence. These areas can best accommodate future growth because they have better roads, public sewer and water systems, and suitable adjacent land uses. The Township should use zoning, utility system expansion and other tools to direct future development to these areas.
- The outlying areas of the Township, particularly land along the Perkiomen Creek and Evansburg State Park, should be preserved as much as possible for low intensity uses such as open space, agriculture, or low density residential development.

2. Active Recreation

The Township should provide public parks for a variety of active recreational opportunities, within a reasonable travel time for every Township resident and worker.

Objectives:

- Create a hierarchy of parks, ranging from neighborhood greens (small neighborhood oriented parks with tot-lots and fields, usually accessible by walking) to community-wide parks (larger parks serving the entire Township, with several fields and courts, and normally accessible by car).

- Provide sites for active recreation based on park type and facility needs of the geographic area to be served. Provision of park sites can be either by outright purchase or through the development process.

3. **Open Space and Natural Amenity Preservation**

- Preserve open space and natural amenities based on criteria that are specific to each part of the Township. In general, the objectives are to preserve the few remaining open tracts in areas of the Township that are heavily developed (such as Trooper and Audubon) for open space and active recreation; and to preserve tracts in the less developed areas of the Township (such as along the Skippack and Perkiomen Creeks and the Schuylkill River) for environmental preservation and passive recreation.
- Encourage cluster design for residential developments, which will allow for the preservation of environmental features on the site.

4. **Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility**

Improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility access for all Township residents from residential areas to parks, open space, commercial and employment centers.

Objectives:

- The Township should connect its parks using trails for multi-purpose recreation, including walking, bicycling, and cross-country skiing, and for personal mobility. The trails can be provided through purchase of fee simple title or easements, or through the development process.
- The Township should connect its residential areas, commercial and employment centers with pedestrian and bicycle facilities in addition to recreational trails. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities should be provided along roads as either sidewalks or wide, paved shoulders. A comprehensive sidewalk/trail system throughout the Township is considered a critical component of the Open Space Plan.
- The Township should establish bicycle facilities such as a system of bike routes and bike lanes on roadways.

5. **Natural Features:**

To promote the preservation and enhancement of significant natural features and cultural resources that define and distinguish 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 promote groundwater recharge.
- Require open space preservation for developments using the Alternative Development Option as permitted by the Open Space Residential Overlay District in the R-1 and R-2 Districts.
- Tighten up the steep slope ordinance to restrict excessive grading and lower the steep slope classification from a 25 percent grade to a 15 percent grade.

6. **Parkland and Recreation**

Goal:

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

Objectives:

- Enact the policies of the 2002 Update of the Township's Recreation Plan.
- Work with County on the establishment of the Schuylkill River Trail.
- Revise the existing OSR Open Space Residential District to require that a percentage of the designated open space be designed for active recreation.
- In the event Methacton School District should dispose of school sites, the Township should be granted first right to acquire park and recreation assets for permanent preservation.

7. **Agriculture**

The Township should strive to preserve agriculture, since it is part of the heritage of Lower Providence, adds to the rural charm of the area, and is a valuable resource that can be lost forever if farmland is developed.

Objectives:

- The Township should form an agricultural security area or become part of an existing area in a nearby municipality.
- Farmers within the agricultural security area should be encouraged to sell the development rights of their land to the State and County Farm Boards for permanent preservation.

8. **Evansburg Historic Village**

Protect historic resources and cultural landscapes in the Village and surrounding area.

The Village is on the National Register of Historic Places and extends into Skippack and Worcester Townships.

Objectives:

- Prioritize preservation of open space and preservation of the character of scenic roads in the Historic District area.
- Encourage Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to expand State Park boundaries in the vicinity of Evansburg Village to help preserve historic resources and open space.

CHAPTER 3

EXISTING PROTECTED LANDS

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 protected lands in the Township, which consist largely of park and recreation lands.

This chapter should be viewed as supplementing the 1993 and 2002 Selective Update of the Lower Providence Township Recreation Plan, the 1995 Lower Providence Township Open Space Preservation Plan, and elements of the 2001 Comprehensive Plan. Throughout the Comprehensive Plan, the goals of these documents have been incorporated when appropriate.

The five zones and their boundaries are as follows:

- **Park Zone A** – is approximately 2,700 acres in area and 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** – is approximately 1,400 acres in area and 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** – is approximately 2,000 acres in area and 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** – is approximately 1,400 acres in area and 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** – is approximately 2,300 acres in area and bounded by Egypt Road, Trooper Road, the Schuylkill River and the Perkiomen Creek. The zone includes the neighborhoods of Cassellberry 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 3-1 delineates these zones. Tables 3-2 through 3-6 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 3-7 through 3-11.

Currently as indicated in Table 3-6 totals, the Township currently has 197.5 acres of parkland. When significant open space parcels under Township ownership are included, this total rises to 350 acres.

CHAPTER 4

POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE RESOURCES

This chapter provides an inventory and description of the Township's natural features. Natural features range from below surface bedrock to the treetops of woodlands. For planning purposes, the most relevant 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 that 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, and as a result, its influence on natural features is not always acknowledged. However, the influence is both strong and pervasive, for bedrock geology is the foundation of an area. 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 gpm.

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 which stretches east from Chester County to Abington Township. Wissahickon Schist/ Granite Gneiss/Hornblende Gneiss, Chickies Quartzite, and Leger/Dolomite/ Elbrook/Conestoga Lime-stone, are the formation found in the Piedmont Upland. There are only three formations underlying Lower Providence Township, 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. The 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 which 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 Locktong 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.

Topography

Steep Slopes

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

The 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 decreases. 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 increase in public expenditure for flood control and stormwater management. Also, different species of plants and the associated wildlife that depends 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% and above) affect 7 percent of the entire Township. Steep slopes are located in all parts of the Township, but in general they 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 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 in Eagleville, near the Eagleville Hotel.

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 the major creeks. The Perkiomen Creek drains nearly all of the Township not drained directly by the Schuylkill River or the West Branch of the Stony Creek (see below). Within the Perkiomen Watershed are several smaller subwatersheds. The largest is the Skippack Creek, which runs through the 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. 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.

The Township's watersheds and drainage areas are shown in Figure 4-3.

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.

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. They are also influenced by the orientation of the land and the types of vegetation that grow in them. Conversely, the type of soil influences the vegetative cover of the land, which affects the quality and quantity of surface and ground water, 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 below.

Prime and Important Agricultural Soils

The agricultural capability of soil is measured based on fertility, depth to bedrock and groundwater, texture, erodibility, and slope. Soils are classified as prime farmland, farmland of statewide importance, and other land, based on these characteristics. 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 nonagrarian 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. Most of the remainder of the Township has soils considered to be farmland of statewide significance.

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.

Figure 4-4 shows the location of prime and important agricultural soils.

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, bottom lands, 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

Related to hydric soils, alluvial soils 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.

Surface Waters and Hydrology

Floodplain and Stream Corridors

The 100-year floodplain is a feature that will effect the health, safety, and welfare of Lower Providence residents. Much of the time, it is dry. During storms, however, the floodplain stores and conveys floodwater. Development within the floodplain reduces the carrying capacity and increases the height 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. If vegetation is preserved along the banks of feeder streams as well as the main stream, pollutant loads are greatly reduced. Wetlands that filter and impede stormwater and provide a habitat for aquatic lie are frequently found along the corridor. Unconsolidated gravel and stone deposits along the corridor allow for groundwater recharge. People benefit from stream corridors, as they also 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, and Myers Run, also along four unnamed tributaries of the major waterways—two of which drain into the Perkiomen Creek, while 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 of 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 has a floodplain conservation ordinance, adopted in 1973 and amended in 1979, 1988, and 1998. Floodplains in Lower Providence are shown in Figure 4-5.

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. That means that the streams are evaluated periodically to ensure that the water quality standards that are associated with the uses are met. The higher the standards, the higher the waterway's value for protection and propagation of aquatic life and hence the higher the stream quality.

Below is the federal government's list as it is used in Montgomery County, including 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 park or forests, or water that is used as a source of unfiltered potable water supply, or waters of wildlife refuges or state game lands, or 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 following waterways have been designated by the federal government:

Perkiomen Creek	TSF	Schuylkill River	WWF
Skipack Creek	TSF	Stony Creek	WWF
Mine Run	TSF	Unnamed tributary of Schuylkill	WWF
Unnamed tributary of Perkiomen	TSF		

Hydrology

Water is a valuable resource, 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.

Those 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, man-made source may also contribute to stream flow: effluent from sewage treatment plants, which tends to dampen the variation between high and low flow periods.

Groundwater behaves much like surface water, flowing 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 to 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 is 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 only to 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. The Environmental Protection Agency and the 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."

Depending on where they are located, wetlands may serve one or more beneficial functions. Almost all wetlands provide habitat for birds, amphibians and fish. These in turn support other wildlife. Wetlands also mitigate flooding, by holding back floodwater and slowing stream velocity. Wetlands improve water quality as well. 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. Wetlands located in depressions often encourage infiltration of stormwater, contributing to groundwater recharge.

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 plain and shore line wetlands. Some land alongside those waterbodies, 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 wetlands areas that are scattered across the Township and not associated with waterbodies 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 soils, 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, and in more recent times the rapid development of houses and commercial facilities, have reduced woodlands to a shadow of their former extent. The principal types of woodlands remaining in the County are:

- **Red Oak** - about 60% of all remaining woodlands. Northern Red Oak is predominant, but Black, Scarlet and Chestnut Oak are also abundant.
- **Ash/Maple/Elm** - about 19% of all woodlands. Local mixtures will vary, and include minor species, such as the Slippery Elm, Yellow Birch, Black Gum, Sycamore, and Poplar.
- **Eastern Red Cedar** - 18% of the county's wooded acres are covered with this species and associated species: Gray Birch, Red Maple, Sweet Birch, and Aspen.
- **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, provide buffers for creeks, and offer 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 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, 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.

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 Historic 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, 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. A site of this type is somewhat uncommon in the county and includes locally interesting native flora. These sites are delineated in Figure 4-8.

Historic Structures

Most of this plan is future oriented. Its emphasis is on ensuring neighborhood stability. However, the Township was first settled over 300 years ago and is blessed with a wealth of historic buildings, some of national importance, all of community significance. These are the structures that give the Township's built environment its *genus loci*—its sense of place. Therefore, an aspect of this plan is devoted to promoting their preservation, either through legislative mandate or allowing flexibility for their 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 most well known is Mill Grove, built in 1762 and later the residence of naturalist John James Audubon. Mill Grove has been listed on the National Register since 1972, and on the National Landmarks list since 1989. The Evansburg Historic District has also been listed on the National Register 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" over the Skippack Creek, built in 1792, has been listed on the National Register since 1970. Their location is shown in Figure 4-9.

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 the purposes of this report, the important sites are listed here and mapped. For a brief description and history of each site, please refer to these documents. Their approximate location is shown in Figure 4-9.

1. William Buckwalter House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built c. 1884.
2. George Coulter House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built prior to 1814.
3. Jacob Zollers House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built c. 1844.
4. Evansburg Methodist Church, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built c. 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, 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 c. 1803.
13. Edward Evans House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built 1806.
14. Samuel D. Patterson Jr. House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built c. 1856.
15. Keyser Store, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built c. 1867.
16. Evansburg Inn, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built c. 1803.
17. Weber House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built c. 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 c. 1844.
21. William Casselberry House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built c. 1872.
22. Isaac Casselberry House, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, date unknown.
23. Ann Casselberry House, Evansburg Road, Evansburg, built c. 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 c. 1792
26. St. James Church and Cemetery, Evansburg Road and Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built 1843.
27. Isaac Mester House, Evansburg Road, Evansburg, built c. 1869.
28. Samuel D. Shupe House, Evansburg Road, Evansburg, built c. 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.
33. Funkite Cemetery, Germantown Pike and Skippack Creek Road, Evansburg, founded c. 1815.
34. Keyser's Mill, Germantown Pike and Skippack Creek Road, Evansburg, built prior to 1835.
35. Peter Williams Tavern, Germantown Pike, Evansburg, built c. 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 c. 1820.
39. Letitia Penn House, Old Baptist Road, Evansburg, built c. 1813.
40. Funkite Houses (4), Germantown Pike and Grange Avenue, built prior to 1811.
41. Fry Family House, Grange Avenue, built c. 1877.
42. Samuel and Benjamin Nutter House, Grange Avenue, built c. 1834.
43. George Evans House, Grange Avenue, built prior to 1854.
44. Jacob Cope House, Grange Avenue, built c. 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 c. 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, 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 c. 1760s.
61. Pine Hill Farm, 121 Pinetown Road, Audubon, built c. 1761.
62. Emery's House, Pawlings Road, Audubon, built c. 1850.
63. St. Gabriel's Protectorate, Pawlings Road, Audubon, begun 1896.

CHAPTER 5

POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE LINKAGES

Lower Providence presently has some trails that serve to link open space areas. These and other potential linkages are shown on Figure 27, which is reprinted from an early draft of the Lower Providence Township Recreation Plan. Figure 27 shows only the potential linkages, linear features of the landscape that could conceivably support a trail; the actual recommendations for trails can be found in Chapter 9, below.

1. Philadelphia to Valley Forge Bikeway

The Philadelphia to Valley Forge Bikeway ends at the Betzwood Picnic Area in Valley Forge National Historic Park. When completed, the Bikeway will be an uninterrupted, grade separated route along the river all the way to the Philadelphia city line, where it then connects with the Manayunk Canal Tow Path and Fairmount Park along Kelly Drive. The Bikeway is proposed to be extended through Lower Providence, roughly parallel to the Pottstown Expressway. The present proposal has the Bikeway Crossing the Perkiomen Creek on the unused railroad bridge at Oaks. A trailhead parking area is proposed for Pawlings Road just south of the Pottstown Expressway.

2. Stream Valleys

Stream valleys can also serve to link open space areas and provide a linear park for active recreation. Lower Providence has many streams that would be suitable for this purpose, including the Perkiomen Creek, Skippack Creek, Rock Run, and French Run (see Chapter 4: Potentially Vulnerable Resources, above). In addition, the Township already owns smaller pieces of land along streams such as the Mine Run that could be developed with trails.

3. **Utility Corridors**

The Transcontinental Gas Pipeline Company owns a pipeline that runs southwest to northeast through Lower Providence Township. The pipeline crosses the Schuylkill River just south of the Pawlings Road bridge, then runs through the Valley Forge National Historic Park, through the edge of the Audubon residential area (near Thrush Lane), then through the Valley Forge Corporate Center, along the edge of the Forge Industrial Tract, and into West Norriton Township near the intersection of Egypt and Trooper Roads. Because of its location with respect to existing developments, the use of this corridor as a public trail is not recommended.

The PECO Energy Company owns a high voltage power line through the southern end of Lower Providence. The line originates at the Limerick Nuclear Power Plant and runs east along the southern bank of the Schuylkill River, then crosses the river at the confluence of the Perkiomen Creek and runs just south of the Pottstown Expressway. The line crosses into West Norriton Township at the intersection of Trooper Road and Audubon Road. This corridor is virtually parallel to the proposed extension of the Philadelphia to Valley Forge Bikeway.

4. **Roads**

The majority of the potential trails in Lower Providence that are shown on Figure 5-1 are along sidewalks and roadways (existing or proposed). Roads can serve as open space linkages in one of the following ways:

- The shoulders of the road can be widened to accommodate pedestrians or bicyclists. Low volume roadways can have wider travel lanes for both vehicles and pedestrians.
- Part of the paved surface of a road can be designated exclusively for pedestrians and bicyclists using pavement markings or a barrier such as a curb, guard rail, or low wall.
- Sidewalks and paths within road rights-of-way can be installed.

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. They were devised by the Township's Park and Recreation Board for the 2000 Recreation Plan Update. During the creation of this plan a few additional recommendations were made. 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 Ten of the 2001 Township Comprehensive Plan. 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. Then it would continue on township land to Hoy Park at the confluence of the Skippack and Perkiomen Creeks. Such a trail would provide residents access to various Zone A neighborhoods and one of the region's most significant parks.
- Sidewalks. To improve accessibility to Zone A parks, existing or proposed, and neighborhoods, the following sidewalks are recommended:
 - Along Cross Keys Road from Beth Road to its end at the Local 380 property. This would provide access for most of the neighborhoods surrounding Evansburg 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 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 a sidewalk 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 Redtail Park. It would run through dedicated open space. Also, a connection from Visitation Road to the proposed Evansburg State Park Trail should be made.
- **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 Redtail Park. This would provide safe access for much of this zone to the park.

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.** 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. This would provide an important connection from this proposed road 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). This 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 linkage between two important commercial areas in this zone and 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 which 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 provides 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 Schuylkill River Trail, and 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 5-1 entitled, "Trail and Sidewalk Plan." The entire network containing these recommendations and those of Chapter Ten, Comparison to County and Abutting Municipalities, is shown on the Master Trail Plan (in rear pocket of this report).

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS OF UNPROTECTED RESOURCES

Plan 1, Open Space with Floodplain Overlay (rear pocket of this report) illustrates primary existing undeveloped parcels along with permanently preserved open space areas, including:

- Federal and State lands;
- County and Township lands;
- Private permanent open space;

and lands which contain temporarily preserved open space, such as:

- Schools;
- Places of worship;
- Hospital.

Permanently preserved lands contiguous to Lower Providence in the adjoining municipalities of Skippack, Worcester, and West Norriton are also identified. These include:

- Evansburg State Park (Skippack Township);
- Methacton High School (nearly contiguous in Worcester Township);
- Jeffersonville Golf Club (West Norriton Township).

Temporarily vacant lands which are part of previously approved subdivisions such as Streamlight Business Campus and Audubon Corporate Park are shown but not identified as “undeveloped parcels”.

This Plan also identifies the 100 Year Floodplain (area of most likely flooding) and 500 Year Floodplain (area of likely sensitive riparian corridor).

In Lower Providence Township, significant floodplain protection has been achieved along the Schuylkill River, Perkiomen Creek, and Skippack Creek (and tributaries) by the virtue of Federal Lands Protection (Valley Forge National Park); County lands (Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary); County Park lands (along the Perkiomen Creek); and State lands (Evansburg State Park). Over ten linear miles of river frontage have been protected within the above properties.

Township open space links have achieved protection of local alluvial streams and creeks through open space dedication/protection at the time of subdivision. These are also identified on Plan 1.

Additional local tributaries remain unprotected, and these will rank as high priorities in the Recommendations Plan (see Chapter 9).

Chapter 4 identifies areas having concentrations of natural resource limitations such as steep slopes (15% and above) which affects 7% of the Township. These slopes are concentrated:

- Along the Skippack Creek (which are largely preserved as a part of the Evansburg State Park);
- Adjacent to Eagleview to Arcola Road (unprotected along the rear of oversized lots);
- Between Arcola Road and Featherbed Lane (which are largely preserved as a part of private homeowners' association open space affiliated with cluster subdivision).

The Open Space, Natural Features, and Cultural Resources Plan, an element of the Montgomery County Comprehensive Plan, Draft September 2004 identifies at Figure 13 significant natural features in Montgomery County. One of these, identified as a Natural Area Inventory site, is known as Pawling Pond. This is a site of state-wide significance, having a priority for protection, and is identified as follows:

“A good population of a rare plant and a poor population of a threatened animal occur within these seasonally flooded ponds surrounded by woods and fields. The site is an abandoned siltation basin that has reverted to a vegetative habitat. Located within Valley Forge National Historic Park, the site offers good opportunities for hiking, and bird and butterfly watching.”

The same publication indicates Eagleview Woods as a site of local significance and described as follows:

“A good stand of Beech and Red Oak exists at this site, located south of Germantown Pike east of Smith Road, adjacent to a Township park. This type of site is somewhat uncommon in the County and includes locally interesting flora. The existing forest cover should be maintained to prevent the spread of weedy species. Monitoring trail use, erosion and other impacts might be necessary if use of the site increases.”

This is an area situated along the Rock Run Creek, parts of which have been previously preserved utilizing the cluster development option and a significant portion of which is located on the Heyser tract identified as P-5 in the Recommendations Plan (see photographs). This area is located to the rear of Eagleville Park and adjacent to Eagleville Elementary School.

Other mature deciduous forests are situated along both sides of the Skippack Creek (and therefore are largely preserved); and the undeveloped properties of Heyser (P-5), Mascaro (P-6), and associated with the aforementioned steep slopes along the Skippack Creek tributary running parallel to Eagleville/Arcola Road and including the Camp Hideaway property. Other significant pockets of mature vegetation are preserved as a part of the Valley Forge National Park and areas situated between the 422 Expressway and the Schuylkill River.

The Township contains three National Register sites. One of these, Mill Grove, is of national significance and has been permanently preserved as a part of the Audubon Sanctuary property. The second is Evansburg Village, which has been preserved/regulated pursuant to an Historic Overlay District adopted by the Township; and a third is the Eight Arch Stone Bridge at Germantown Pike as it crosses the Skippack Creek which is now preserved by virtue of the adjoining Evansburg State Park property.

Figure 4-4 identifies prime agricultural areas based on Class I and Class II agricultural soils. Some of these areas have been previously developed. However, one large area remains and is permanently protected as a part of the Valley Forge National Park south and east of Pawlings Road and a large secondary area is attributed to St. Gabriel's Protectorate and Valley Forge National Park north of the Route 422 Expressway.

Appended to this report are the properties identified as having 319, 515 and 5319 land use code designations within the County Board of Assessment. These properties are included in the Open Space Plan Update and have been ranked on the Open Space Plan. Site photographs follow which provide a visual inventory of salient characteristics of Priority I and Priority II properties which are inventoried in Chapter 9 and identified on the Open Space Plan (rear pocket).

CHAPTER 7

EVALUATION OF GROWTH AREAS NEEDED FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT THROUGH 2025

The Vision Plan prepared by Montgomery County Planning Commission (adopted by the County Commissioners September 2004) identifies Lower Providence Township as a “suburban community”. Key land use concerns identified for a suburban community are:

- Preserve community open space.
- Revitalize and improve shopping areas.
- Encourage compatible development.

Lower Providence Township is a large township which has experienced very significant development from 1960 through the current day. The most buildable portions of the Township have been developed, largely for residential uses but also include non-residential uses such as major commercial centers along Ridge Pike and the Valley Forge Corporate Center between Audubon Road and Egypt Road in the eastern edge of the Township. Spacious open space properties such as Valley Forge National Park and Evansburg State Park, along with County and local open space, and institutional uses contribute to the large preserved open areas along the major rivers and creeks: Schuylkill River, Perkiomen Creek and Skippack Creek which traverse the Township.

Future in-fill growth areas are spatially separated into three distinct areas of the Township:

1. Egypt Road area

- Location of Shannondell, the large continuing care residential community which will add an additional 1,000 units to its already significant presence and upon completion contain approximately 2,000 retirement units plus 500 convalescent care and nursing care units.
- The development of the Audubon Corporate Park. The property along Egypt Road is still vacant. In the recent past the sections adjacent to West Norriton Township along Trooper Road have been developed, such as the Audubon Square Shopping Center, a new Homewood Suites hotel, and commercial pads along Trooper Road.
- There is also anticipated continued in-fill of the two vacant properties in the Valley Forge Corporate Center (which is largely built out at this time).

2. **Ridge Pike Corridor**

- A second in-fill growth area is expected to be along Ridge Pike, consisting of numerous old or functionally obsolete industrial/retail buildings that will likely be recycled for retail and/or medium density residential depending upon zoning decisions reached by the Township.
- In addition, there are underdeveloped lands zoned Residential immediately adjacent to Ridge Pike along Smith Road (Mascaro, which has been identified on the Open Space Preservation list) and two smaller properties along Grange Avenue just south of Ridge Pike.
- The vacant lots along the Streamlight Headquarters building (south side of Germantown Pike just west of Eagleville Road) are also expected to be developed for commercial or office purposes.

3. **Far west end at Germantown Pike and Ridge Pike (adjacent to Collegeville)**

A third in-fill growth area is expected to be in the westerly end of the Township in an area where Ridge Pike joins with Germantown Pike.

- Superior Tube occupies numerous developed properties and owns vacant properties along the northerly side of Germantown Pike between River Road and Cross Keys Road. In total, approximately 60 acres could be considered for redevelopment or new development, in all probability non-residential in nature.
- Smaller parcels adjacent to Germantown Pike and Ridge Pike will likely be the subject of proposals to either revitalize underdeveloped commercial properties or develop for medium density housing, such as townhouses in the range of 4 dwelling units per acre.
- Vacant or underutilized properties south of Ridge Pike along both sides of Pechin Mill Road, including the IBEW properties, are significantly restricted for development due to topographical or floodplain limitations. The Township Comprehensive Plan calls for low density residential or open space and the current open space recommendations are consistent with this long range land use goal.

The Vision Plan also identifies fifteen major development centers for Montgomery County, which are considered “a natural place for continued development, redevelopment, and revitalization through 2025”. Lower Providence is located near to three of these:

- Route 422 Corridor
- Norristown
- King of Prussia

However, Lower Providence is not identified as having a County focal point for a future major development center.

As indicated in Chapter 1, the following demographic and employment data summarize the potential future development of the Township:

- The population of the Township is estimated to grow to 28,680 by 2025. At build out, it should be around 33,000 residents.
- The 2000 Land Use Assumptions report projects that approximately 2,300 additional housing units can be built in the Township (some of these units are included in the approximate 2,500 that are already approved and a part of the Shannondell elderly housing complex currently being developed along Egypt Road). In addition, approximately 583 residential units have been approved and/or constructed between 2000 and 2005.
- The Land Use Assumptions report projects that, based on existing zoning, all of the remaining buildable residential units will be single family detached dwellings.
- An analysis of vacant land reveals that perhaps a maximum of 700 single family lots could be built pursuant to existing zoning, assuming availability of public sewer and water.
- Employment projections indicate 12,296 employees by the year 2025 for an increase of approximately 20.7% over the 2000 Census.
- The Land Use Assumptions report estimates approximately 700,000 square feet of additional office and limited industrial facilities could be constructed in and around the corporate center in the southeast section of the Township (consists of Valley Forge Corporate Center and Audubon Corporate Park).

Approximately 300,000 to 400,000 square feet of additional office and/or commercial floor area could be developed in the far westerly edge of the Township along Germantown Pike, particularly in the aforementioned Superior Tube industrial campus.

- The 52 acre Streamlight campus has the capability of approximately 220,000 square feet commercial development and additional industrial/office yield of between 100,000 to 200,000 square feet probably reserved for future Streamlight expansion needs.

Potential Build Out Analysis

This analysis illustrates the potential new dwelling units and non-residential development discussed previously in this Chapter. Areas in the Township that could be developed or redeveloped are mapped based on existing zoning. Even though this maximum build out scenario is unlikely, it does point out the need to focus on vacant land, or underutilized properties, and relate development potential to current growth policies, such as land use density and availability of public utility services such as sanitary sewer and water. Vacant land or temporary recreation and open space lands should not be taken for granted.

Methodology. The Lower Providence Township Zoning Ordinance was evaluated and development areas are generalized on the Potential Build Out Analysis Plan, which follows. Properties zoned R-1 and R-2 are assumed to be developed pursuant to the Township's Open Space Residential Overlay, which applies to tract sizes having a minimum of ten (10) acres. This Overlay requires the preservation of a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the tract as permanent open space.

Non-residential development consists largely of new commercial development, or infill development along the major highway corridors; industrial development on portions of Superior Tube property; and industrial park or corporate and business development along the Valley Forge Road (Route 363) corridor.

Natural resource restrictions that constrain development, such as steep slopes, wetlands, and floodplains, were subtracted from developable acreage.

The result is illustrated on the Potential Build Out Analysis Plan on page 7-5.

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 Parkland and Natural Features Plan. Fittingly, the 1993 Recreation Plan, and its 2000 update, provides a detailed analysis of the current and future recreation needs of the township's residents. Therefore, for this chapter, it is important to incorporate the recommendations of this plan.

Following nationally accepted standards, the plan utilizes two methods of determining how much parkland will be necessary to serve the future needs of Lower Providence's residents. The primary method uses a population to total parkland ratio 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. This ratio, when further refined for Lower Providence, states that for every 1,000 residents, 10.5 acres of parkland is needed. The second methodology, 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 centrally located and over 20 acres. 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.⁽¹⁾ Lower Providence currently has only one community park, Eagleville Park, which surrounds the Township Administration Building and Library. All other parks are classified as neighborhood parks. Also, as recommend by NRPA and DVRPC, only township-owned parkland with unrestricted access was studied. Therefore, parks such as the state-owned Evansburg 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. Then, by using these figures and an estimated average household size, it was determined that at buildout Lower Providence could have an estimated population of 32,966. ⁽²⁾

(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.*

However, 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 need: 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 Park in the vicinity of the Evansburg Crossing Open Space—which includes the township-owned Cassellberry 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 has 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 would exceed the zone's buildout deficiency if all of the land was obtained, 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 Need: 3.5.

To resolve this:

- Expand Eskie Park by adding a 15-acre vacant parcel that borders Worcester Township. Owned by the Markley family, it 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 Park to Eagleville Park, with access points at Grange and Smith Roads, and then 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 in this zone.

Zone C

Buildout acreage needed: 30.8.

To resolve this:

- Develop Redtail 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 need: 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 discussion with the Lower Providence Rod and Gun Club to obtain some or all of their site if they ever leave the Township. Given its close proximity to Zone C, it could provide a portion of that zone with convenient parkland.

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 needs: 34.4.

To resolve this:

- Begin discussions with St. Gabriel's to obtain some of their land. The vacant land east of Pawlings Road is wanted by the federal government to expand Valley Forge National Park, but west of Pawlings Road are two vacant parcels of 59 acres (south of 422) and 25 acres (north of 422).
- 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 that would alleviate the deficiencies in this zone

Figure 8-1 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 was 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 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 43.1 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 5-13). 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 also rectify some of the neighborhood park deficiencies in this area. Therefore, the update of the Recreation Plan recommends, similar to the recommendations for Zone E, that a large park be developed at the St. Gabriel's site which 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 in Zone E for neighborhood parkland and the overall buildout deficiency in community parkland. Given that much of their land is vacant and sections of it are also desired by the federal government to expand Valley Forge National 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 Park, it would seem reasonable to include them 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 purchasing all of the vacant land south of 422 and east of Pawlings Road and the County purchasing 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 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 the Township's fastest growing areas during the past decade. Most of this growth occurred in the form of small lot cluster development that 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 discussion with the Local 380 IBEW Union, Perkiomen Valley Sportsmen Association, Collegeville Inn, and various individuals who own vacant or under utilized land in this area to secure a site for the creation of a parkland that has playing fields to 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, Park and Recreation Board, and 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 eventually be secured.

Additional Recommendations to Increase Recreational Opportunities

Besides the purchasing of land for active recreation, the following are recommended to ensure that the Township will meet the future recreation needs of residents. All are from the 1993 Recreation Plan or its 2000 update. (1)

- School District Agreement. The Township should negotiate an agreement with the Methacton School District to secure permanent public access to their indoor and outdoor facilities. While reasonable restrictions on access are to be expected, such an agreement could address the stated need by residents for indoor recreation facilities. (2)

(1) 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. For a list of these recommendations, the reader should consult the update.

(2) In the most recent park and recreation survey (1998) conducted for township residents, over 75% expressed a desire for this type of facility.

- Indoor Recreation Facility. Notwithstanding the ability to use school facilities, the Township should conduct a feasibility study to see if such a center is warranted or if the school buildings will fulfill the need.
- Official Map. A useful planning tool that delineates on a map land that the Township wishes to purchase for public purposes. 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. Not legal unless the Township has an adopted comprehensive plan, it is recommended that the Township formulate and adopt such a map once the proposed comprehensive plan is completed.
- Mandatory Land Dedication. As was the intention in 1993, this 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 non-residential development.
- Amend Article VII of the Lower Providence Zoning Code, OSR Open Space Residential Overlay District to require at least 10 percent (1 acre in R-1 slightly less in R-2) of the required open space be usable (slope less than 3%, generally open and be accessible to all residents). It could be designed as one parcel or include several throughout the site.

Significant Open Space Areas and Parcels

The following areas or parcels have been identified as significant in Lower Providence Township. Those properties greater than ten (10) acres are areas that are recommended to be overlaid with OSR Open Space Residential cluster zoning to ensure that if they are developed that a significant percentage of the site would be preserved as open space.

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 the large property owners 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 preserving its open space. Most of the area is zoned R-2 Residential and borders the heavily developed Yerkes portion of the Township.

Eagleville Hospital Open Space (Block I 7A Unit 4). This 27-acre parcel, located east of Eagleville Road, contains woodlands, steep slopes, and a portion of the Eagleville Run. Adjacent to one of the Township's most heavily developed residential areas, the Eagle Stream Apartment Complex, the area is a playing 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 whose presence greatly adds 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 portion of the Township that is very developed. It is zoned R-2 Residential.

St. Gabriel's Protectorate. The Township's single largest developable parcel—253 acres. It is relatively flat, containing 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 for a park has already been described. It has the PFO Public Facilities Overlay District placed over R-2 zoning.

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

Fire Company Property. This 15-acre site, located at the intersection of East Mt. Kirk Avenue and Ridge Pike, has been owned by the Township Fire Company 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.

CHAPTER 9

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

This update includes a series of recommendations designed to alleviate the parkland deficiencies discussed in Chapter 8. It also includes recommended policy decisions designed to increase Township recreational opportunities, preserve open space and natural amenities, and ensure that future land developments contribute to Township park and recreation needs. Recommendations from the 1995 Open Space Plan are also included, where appropriate.

Previous Recommendations

Implementation is still desirable for several of the recommendations in the 1995 Plan. These recommendations are briefly described below.

- **School District Agreement.** The Township should negotiate an agreement with the Methacton School District to secure permanent public access to the District's indoor and outdoor facilities. While reasonable restrictions on access are to be expected, such an agreement could address the need for indoor recreation facilities, as expressed by residents in a recent survey. (1) School District properties contain valuable outdoor recreation facilities for organized sports and youth programs at numerous locations throughout the Township. These facilities should not be disposed of.
- **Indoor Recreation Facility.** Notwithstanding the ability to use school facilities, the Township should conduct a feasibility study to determine if an indoor recreation facility is warranted or if the school buildings will fulfill the need adequately. It should be noted the Township has finalized plans for the General Washington site which will feature an upgraded golf course, a swimming pool, pro shop, banquet hall and restaurant.
- **Official Map.** A useful planning tool that delineates on a map land that the Township wishes to purchase for public purposes. 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. Not legal unless the Township has an adopted comprehensive plan, it is recommended that the Township formulate and adopt an official map once the proposed comprehensive plan is completed.

(1) In the most recent park and recreation survey conducted for Township residents, over 75 percent expressed a desire for this type of facility.

- **Mandatory Land Dedication.** As was the intention in 1995, this 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 land developments. For this Update, the Township has hired a consultant to draft such an ordinance. While in 1995 it was recommended that this ordinance apply only to residential land developments, the Township has now decided to assess all land developments. By adopting this ordinance, the Township can make dramatic strides to address the parkland deficiencies documented in this update.

Current Recommendations

Vacant and agricultural lands have been identified and prioritized on the Proposed Preservation Areas chart which follows. The properties are identified on the Open Space Plan Update Recommendations (see rear pocket) and the major local and regional trails are also shown on the Master Trail Plan (see rear pocket).

For Lower Providence Township, properties/resources to be acquired or otherwise protected are grouped in two categories. Guidelines for priority preservation are summarized below based on the goals in Chapter 2:

Priority I - High Preservation Properties

- Properties that provide a vital link to complete a trail connection or serve as a necessary link in a future trail connection for pedestrian and bicycle mobility.
- Preservation of natural features and habitats that preserve vital natural areas including the following: rare old growth forests, areas considered to be the most important natural habitats in a region, places of large specimens of valued vegetation, such as Red Maple, Sweet Gum, Black Gum, Sweet Bay Magnolia, and American Holly. Places where rare and valued animals live and birds roost are also considered vital priorities, especially a high quality wildlife refuge.
- Preservation of historic or cultural landscapes, especially if identified on the National Register of Historic Places, such as Evansburg Historic Village. The Village is on the National Register of Historic Places and extends into Skippack and Worcester Townships.
- Properties that maintain scenic qualities, especially if identified in Township documents including the Comprehensive Plan or Open Spaces Plan as preserving a scenic viewscape.
- Properties that protect natural features, including water resources, especially floodplain areas, riparian buffers, streams, creeks, and waterways. These properties shall be especially significant if the preservation area serves as a current or future trail connection.

- Properties that preserve significant agricultural land that is threatened by development. It is part of the heritage of Lower Providence, adds to the rural charm of the area, and is a valuable resource that can be lost forever if farmland is developed. This is a vital growth management technique.
- Properties that are contiguous to existing private or public open space are vitally significant for both active and passive recreation.

Priority II - Medium Preservation Properties

- Properties that complete a trail or sidewalk connection or may complete a future connection.
- Preservation of natural features and habitats that preserve natural areas including the following: forests, areas of considerable vegetation, and places where animals congregate.
- Preservation of local historic or cultural landscapes as determined by the Township.
- Properties that maintain scenic qualities.
- Properties that protect water resources, especially floodplain areas, riparian buffers, streams, creeks, and waterways.
- Properties that serve as pocket parks or address recreational needs of a specific demographic area of the Township's residents. In general, the objectives are to preserve the few remaining open tracts in areas of the Township that are heavily developed (such as Trooper and Audubon) for open space and active recreation: and to preserve tracts in the less developed areas of the Township (such as along the Skippack and Perkiomen Creeks and the Schuylkill River) for environmental preservation and passive recreation.

Properties recommended for preservation are listed on the chart which follows, briefly described and prioritized. These properties, along with existing and proposed trails, are also identified on the Plans in the rear pocket of this report.

Recommendations
Lower Providence Township Open Space Plan Update
Proposed Preservation Areas

	<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame/Type of Action</u>
P1	Superior Tube Property, includes Perkiomen Creek floodplain and natural creek side. (Gift to Township)	Part of County Park Passive protection area	I	Now permanently preserved (implemented since inception of this Plan update).
P2	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Four properties between Level Road and Perkiomen Creek.	Possible trail link II from Evansburg State Park to Perkiomen Creek		Township to participate if decides to sell.
\$	Large central recreation fields/picnic area with natural area steep slopes along west and south edge = 39 acres.			Evaluate potential of existing recreation facilities to accommodate Township needs.
\$	Level Road property = 9.2 acres			
\$	Property adjacent to driveway - 5.5 acres			
\$	Natural area along Perkiomen Creek = 3.4 acres			
P3	Gorski property, largely floodplain with frontage along Perkiomen Creek at Yerkes section of Township. (Look at 2002 Plan) Potential boat ramp.	Neighborhood park - passive, natural resource protection - excellent river access potential	I	Year 2 - 5
\$	Partly wooded with picnic grove.			
P4	Cicchello property, 41.5 acres situate Smith Road, adjacent to Worcester Township.	Farmland preservation	II	As opportunity arises, Year 2-5. Recommend sale of development rights - preserve as private agricultural property.
P4A	Cicchello Portion in Worcester Township.	Possible joint preservation with Worcester Township.		

	<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame/Type of Action</u>
--	--------------------	-------------	-----------------	----------------------------------

P5	Heyser property, Smith Road, traversed by tributary of Skippack Creek. Contains stream valley riparian corridor and upland agricultural lands.	Farmland preservation	I	Immediate. Retire development rights. Acquire trail easements.
\$	Exhibits key location adjacent to Eagleville Elementary School (18.6 acres), Eagleville Park (63.6 acres) and access toward Evansburg State Park.	Trail links to Evansburg State Park and Worcester (Methacton High School)		Preserve areas along stream valley.
P6	Mascaro property, 31.7 acres - Largely wooded, strategically located.	Natural preservation Neighborhood park connection with adjoining subdivision	I	As opportunity arises, Year 2 - 5. Preserve low elevation along stream valley and heavily wooded areas.
P7	HNB property, 15.0 acres - adjacent to Eskie Memorial Park (10.8 acres). Gentle slopes 1-3%, generally open with hedgerows along boundaries; suitable for active and passive recreation.	Expand neighborhood park or create community park	I	Acquire in order to add to Park and Recreation facilities in Township, Year 1 - 5.
P7A	HNB property in Worcester Township, adjacent to P7 (above).	Joint opportunity with Worcester Township		Could utilize Open Space Residential Overlay to preserve 50% of site.
P8	Valley Crest Landscaping (portion of) - situate between Park Avenue and Trooper Road.	Natural open space area - join with existing open space	II	Year 2 - 5. Acquire as passive park.
P8A	Alker - Rear of parcel - heavily wooded, join with above. Older farmhouse residence adjacent to Trooper Road.	Natural area - Join with P8 above	II	Year 2 - 5

9-5

	<u>Description</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Time Frame/Type of Action</u>
P9	Trooper Road - 6 acres east of Sunnyside Avenue. Heavy woods - low area. (Movie lots.) Largely land locked. Consists of low	Natural open space Stormwater	I	Year 1 - 5

natural wooded area surrounded by single family lots.

management
opportunity

P10	Downes property. 37.4 acres with frontage along Woodland Road and Vine Street, not including existing residence. Consists of open vacant and farm land - very gentle 3% slope across property.	Community park	I	Year 1 - 5
P11	Shannondell property. 17 acres between Heatherwood Hill and Park Avenue. Includes some floodplain and wooded areas.	Neighborhood park	II	Year 2 - 5
P12	Nicolo property. 11 acres along Crawford Road, adjacent to to Audubon Elementary School.	Natural area - possible Audubon Elementary School play area	II	Year 2 - 5, if disposed of by current owners
P13	Lower Providence Rod & Gun Club; frontage along Egypt Road; includes floodplain plus Neilson surplus land.	Natural area	II	If disposed of, preserve area along stream valley
P14	St. Gabriel's Protectorate Currently farmed, Township will study for future recreation.	Open space	I	Lower Providence has obtained long term lease for area identified as Gabriel's Field.

9-6

Description

Type

Priority

Time Frame/Type of Action

Master Trail Plan

Regional Multi-Use Trails - Numerous regional trails exist (see Plan). The most recent is the construction of the Pawlings Road Trail which connects

Regional trail

I

Complete

Audubon Sanctuary to Gabriel's Field and then connects to the Schuylkill Valley Trail.

Proposed Audubon Loop Trail - Connects the above to Lower Perkiomen Valley Park via County open space and Egypt Road Bridge.

Inter-municipal trail I Year 1

Lower Providence Municipal Trails

\$ General Washington Golf Course via Crawford Road northwest to a natural greenway to Egypt Road and thence linking to the aforementioned proposed Audubon Loop Trail.

Local trail II Year 2 - 5

\$ Greenway trail using existing riparian corridor and open space along the Shannondell property which would connect the Downes property (P10) to Woodland Elementary School and then continuing northwesterly to link with the above mentioned trail at Crawford Road.

Local trail II Year 2 - 5

\$ Local trail and sidewalk link between Lower Providence Gun Club and Redtail Park.

Local trail II Year 2 - 5

\$ Redtail Park Trail via Arcola Intermediate School to Eagleville Road, thence along Eagleville Road to Grange Avenue and a connection with existing multi-use trail to Evansburg State Park.

Local trail II Year 2 - 5

\$ Trail from Downes property (P10) northwardly, using existing sidewalks where practicable, to connect to Arcola Intermediate School.

Local trail II Year 2 - 5

9-7

Description

Type

Priority

Time Frame/Type of Action

\$ Extension of Evansburg State Park multi-use trail southwestwardly along the Skippack Creek to Arcola Road, thence along Arcola Road to Upper Providence Township and along the Schuylkill River, connecting various residential neighborhoods north/northeastwardly ultimately to the County Park properties at Superior Tube.

Local trail I Year 2 - 5

\$	A general southeast to northwest local trail to connect numerous existing and proposed open space parcels and the Eskie Memorial Park for a distance of approximately 2½ miles, utilizing greenway segments between Heyser and Evansburg State Park. This trail also would provide connections northeastwardly into Worcester Township to both the Methacton High School and Worcester Township Park at Fairview Village; in addition, a municipal link eastwardly into West Norriton Township via Clark Hill Drive would provide a connection to medium to high density populations in the northwest area of West Norriton Township.	Local/ inter-municipal trail	I	Year 2 - 5
\$	Hoy Park to Neilson property along the Perkiomen Creek.	Local trail	II	Year 2 - 5
\$	General Washington Golf Course southwestwardly via Rittenhouse Road, thence along existing sidewalks and a new link south of Colony Arms Apartments to continue to the aforementioned proposed Audubon Loop Trail.	Local trail	II	Year 2 - 5
Links to West Norriton Township				
\$	Via Main Street or Woodland Avenue to Jeffersonville Golf Club.	Inter-municipal trail	II	Year 2 - 5
\$	Via Shannondell Boulevard to the Boulevard of the Generals.	Inter-municipal trail	II	Year 2 - 5
	Trail links from Evansburg State Park in a north and northwesterly direction to residential neighborhoods west of Evansburg State Park (see Master Trail Plan for various locations).	Local trail	II	Year 2 - 5

CHAPTER 10

COMPARISON TO COUNTY AND ABUTTING MUNICIPALITIES

Comparison to County and Abutting Municipal Plans

A municipality's open space plan, to be totally effective and implemented, should compare favorably with the County's comprehensive plan and should be compatible with abutting municipalities' open space plans. The Lower Providence Township Open Space Preservation Plan's main goals are aimed at achieving the Montgomery County's goals for land use, aesthetics, environmental sensitivity, and community identity.

Montgomery County's Comprehensive Plan

The *Montgomery County Vision Plan, Shaping Our Future, A Comprehensive Plan For Montgomery County 2004* was adopted by the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners on September 9, 2004 and represents an updated guide dealing with the growth of housing, transportation, economic development, community facilities, and natural and cultural resource management.

The Vision Plan does identify numerous significant local or rural features such as natural areas inventory sites and contiguous woodlands greater than one thousand acres in the Township.

Lower Providence is identified as an important employment center (in combination with West Norriton and Upper Merion Townships) and contributes to Montgomery County's status as the leader in the State of Pennsylvania in high-tech jobs (high-tech jobs include pharmaceuticals, computer and office equipment, electronic components, space vehicles, and laboratory apparatus, etc.)

The 2025 Growth and Preservation Plan identifies Eagleville Park, the General Washington Recreation Center, the Green Ribbon Corridor along the Schuylkill River Valley Watershed, and the Evansburg State Park as significant "existing preserved open space". Areas of "Proposed Open Space" generally coincide with recommendations and present preservation efforts.

Major land use concerns identified for Lower Providence Township as a suburban community are:

- Preserve community open space.
- Revitalize and improve shopping centers.
- Encourage compatible development.

Important proposed interconnected County-wide regional trail system is also identified and traverses Lower Providence Township in numerous locations which are identified on the Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update, particularly along the Schuylkill River and Skippack Creek.

The most important potential major road improvement identified for Lower Providence is the potential new bridge over the Perkiomen Creek near Collegeville.

The Open Space, Natural Features, and Cultural Resources Vision (Chapter 4 of the Vision Plan) identify numerous goals which are included in both the 1995 and current 2005 Open Space Preservation Plan Update for Lower Providence Township. These are briefly summarized below:

- Goal 11, Preserve large interconnected areas of significant open space.

Action: Lower Providence has pursued preservation and expansion of Eagleville Park municipal complex and preservation of tributaries that traverse the Township and connect to Evansburg State Park.

- Goal 12, Protect and manage wetlands, streams, steep slopes, woodlands and natural habitats.

Action: These characteristics are most notable in the aforementioned areas of open space which have been previously preserved and incorporated in permanent protected open space. Future residential development should preserve a minimum of 50% of each site (with focus on stream valleys, woodland and steep slopes) by utilizing the Open Space Residential Overlay Option.

- Goal 13, Create a greenway system along rivers, creeks and other sensitive and historic features.

Action: Lower Providence Township has recommended floodplain and riparian corridor preservation concepts to coordinate trail links along preserved riparian corridors through the central, southeasterly and westerly portions of the Township.

- Goal 14, Develop a County-wide network of interconnected trails.

Action: The 1995 and Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update embrace a comprehensive and detailed trail plan which represents regional and local interests and needs. It should be noted in working with Worcester Township the trails are committed to interconnecting with abutting municipalities.

- Goal 15, Provide park facilities to meet the public's recreation needs.

Action: The 1995 Open Space Plan and Open Space Preservation Plan and the 2005 Update provide a detailed inventory and analysis of existing and future recreation facilities to meet the public's recreation needs.

- Goal 16, Preserve farm land and farming.

Action: The Recommendations chart entitled "Proposed Preservation Areas" identifies the few remaining agricultural properties and recommends sale of development rights/purchase of agricultural easements by County and State Farmland Preservation Board.

- Goal 17, Protect scenic roads, vistas and viewsheds.

Action: The Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update includes important scenic roads and their vistas and viewsheds when considering the identification of Priority I and II properties.

- Goal 18, Protect historic resources and cultural landscapes.

Action: The Open Space Plans have identified important historic buildings and sites, and in addition the Township has identified the historic preservation and revitalization of Evansburg Village and assist in determination that a significant portion of the Village will receive a Determination of Eligibility for placement on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission.

Since 1978, the County has prepared an interim trail strategy. Two of these trails intersect in Lower Providence Township. The future Evansburg Park Regional Trail will link with the Schuylkill River Trail at the Arcola Road bridge.

Skippack Township

Land use and zoning along the Lower Providence/Skipack boundary are virtually identical and have been so for more than 50 years. The border with Skipack Township is largely country estates, moderate density single family lots, and the very significant presence of Evansburg State Park which extends from Lower Providence through to Skipack for many thousands of acres. The Park along the Skipack Township boundary has a width of approximately 4,000 linear feet. The Master Trail Plan identifies an interconnection of all-purpose regional trails which will ultimately provide a link from Arcola at the Schuylkill River and thence connecting with the Power Line Trail in Skipack/Towamencin Townships and extend in a northeasterly direction across the County, with an ultimate possible cross County link to Upper Moreland Township.

Upper Merion Township

Lower Providence has identified the need/desire for a trail/sidewalk connection over the proposed Betzwood Bridge to facilitate connection with Valley Forge Park at the south side of the Schuylkill River.

Upper Providence Township

At the time of this writing the Upper Providence Township Open Space Plan Update has not been finalized. However, two important trail links are identified:

1. The regional trails through Evansburg State Park would ultimately link to the Schuylkill River regional trail in the vicinity of the Arcola Road bridge over the Perkiomen Creek. This would facilitate a link to the Arcola section of Upper Providence Township.
2. The Audubon Loop Trail is proposed to facilitate a link from the Schuylkill River Trail, thence through the Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary and over the Egypt Road bridge at the Perkiomen Creek. The trail would then connect with local trails along the Perkiomen Creek in the Oaks section of Upper Providence Township.

West Norriton Township

At the time of this writing West Norriton Township has not completed an update of their Comprehensive Plan, but is in the process of updating their 1995 Open Space Plan. No joint acquisitions have been identified at this time. However, interconnections have been identified on the Master Trail Plan which include the following:

1. A connection in the direction of the Jeffersonville Golf Club via either a revitalized Main Street or Woodland Road.
2. A connection to the Boulevard of the Generals via Shannondell Boulevard through the Audubon Shopping Center.
3. A link over North Trooper Road which affords a link ultimately to Evansburg State Park.

Worcester Township

Worcester Township is currently updating their Open Space Plan and has been in consultation with Lower Providence Township. Worcester Township recommends a trail interconnection in two locations:

1. From Eagleville Elementary School in a northeasterly direction toward and through Methacton High School and thence by way of Worcester on road trail connections to Evansburg State Park. Worcester Township has indicated one of its trail link goals will be to hook up to Evansburg State Park via the new Rock Run Trail which is currently under negotiation in Lower Providence Township between the Eagleville Elementary School along the Heyser/Mascaro properties in a westerly direction to Grange Road.
2. A local trail from the vicinity of the Eskie Memorial Park in a easterly direction to the Township Community Hall in Fairview Village at Valley Forge Road. The proposed Lower Providence Open Space Preservation Plan 2005 Update identifies the two properties immediately adjacent to the Eskie Memorial Park as both under trustee ownership of the Harleysville National Bank. One parcel is situate in Lower Providence Township and the second at the intersection of Germantown Pike and Church Road/Quarry Hall Road in Worcester Township. The acquisition/preservation of these properties would provide an ideal opportunity for an active/passive community park.

CHAPTER 11

POLICIES AND METHODS FOR PROTECTING OPEN SPACE OTHER THAN THROUGH ACQUISITION

There are several zoning and other techniques that Lower Providence can use to preserve its vulnerable resources other than the fee simple purchase of land.

1. Change Densities in Residential Zoning Districts

Many townships have zoning which they consider agricultural or rural zoning, yet the minimum lot size might be as small as a half acre or one 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 1 or 2 acres — in a manner that satisfies the Pennsylvania courts.

The minimum lot sizes required by the Lower Providence Zoning Ordinance should be reexamined within the first phase of Plan implementation. 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.

2. Adopt 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 appearing 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 one 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, if the zoning district allows 2 acre lots and 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%, 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 which is constrained, then the resulting product is subtracted from the lot area to derive net lot area. For example, a 5 acre lot has 1 acre of floodplains and 1.6 acres of steep slopes, while the zoning ordinance uses a ratio of 100% for floodplains and 50% for steep slopes. The 1 acre of floodplain is multiplied by 100%, which yields 1 acre, and the 1.6 acres of steep slopes are multiplied by 50%, which yields 0.8 acre. The floodplain and steep slope constraints are added together, which totals 1.8 acres, and then subtracted from the lot area of 5 acres to yield a net lot area of 3.2 acres.

Lower Providence intends to adopt performance zoning standards to protect natural features during and after development. These zoning standards will be adopted within the first phase of Plan implementation.

3. Reduce the Visual Impact of Rural Homes

Lower Providence should reduce the visual impact of rural development that occurs 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 ridge lines. Also, homes that are located on existing rural roads should be required to have larger lot sizes, 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. These Zoning Ordinance amendments will be adopted within the first phase of Plan implementation.

4. Cluster Homes

Open space can be preserved within a proposed development by clustering the homes in one portion of the site while keeping the remainder open permanently. The overall density of the site remains approximately the same, but homes are put on smaller lots. The open space that is preserved might contain rural views, historic landscapes, farmland, woodlands, steep slopes, floodplain, wetlands or any other vulnerable resource. Or, the open space that remains may be dedicated to the Township for park land.

When homes are clustered on a site, significant portions of the site can be preserved. Some of this open space can be left in the developed portion of the site, so that homes face neighborhood open space. In addition to benefiting the community by preserving important vulnerable resources, clustering also benefits the developer by lowering the cost of infrastructure, usually by lessening the length of roads and utility lines.

Lower Providence has the OSR Open Space Residential Overlay Zoning District and associated Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance design provisions, adopted in late 1993. The OSR District requires a minimum of 40-50 percent open space, depending on the underlying zoning district and the tract size. Proposals have been submitted under the OSR provisions for three sites totaling 383 acres. These subdivisions will have about 370 single family homes while 162 acres will be permanently preserved open space. The open space includes steep slopes, stream valleys, and heavily wooded areas.

5. Incentive Zoning

Lower Providence should amend its Zoning Ordinance to add incentives to provide open space, recreation facilities, trails, and park land. 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 the incentives. These Zoning Ordinance amendments will be adopted within the first phase of Plan implementation.

6. Natural Resource Protection Ordinances

These ordinances protect specific natural features, such as floodplains, stream corridors, wetlands, groundwater, steep slopes, and woodlands. They can also be in the form of conservation easements.

Floodplains. Floodplain ordinances, which exist in all of Montgomery County's communities, restrict or prohibit all development within floodplains, especially development falling within the 100 year floodplain. There are three different levels of floodplain restrictions often seen in the County. Some floodplain ordinances, typically found in boroughs, allow development within the floodplain provided buildings are floodproofed. Many ordinances do not allow most types of development within the floodplain; this approach protects property from flood damage, protects the environment within the floodplain, and reduces the possibility of raising the flood level. Some ordinances not only restrict development within the floodplain but also require a minimum setback from the edge of the floodplain; this approach protects the floodplain and may protect, depending on its width, the unique wooded habitat, known as riparian woodlands, which is often located next to the floodplain. Lower Providence's Floodplain Conservation District, which prohibits most development in floodplain areas but does not require a minimum setback, should be amended to require a setback (see below).

Stream Corridors. Stream corridor protection ordinances go further than floodplain ordinances, which are primarily intended to limit property damage. The intent of stream protection ordinances is to protect the water quality of the stream, as well as plant and animal habitats. Typically, these ordinances impose a minimum setback from the bank of the stream in which no development may occur. A minimum setback, usually 50-100 feet measured from the bank of the stream, will stabilize the stream bank, control sediment that might reach the stream, remove nutrients that would pollute, control temperature increases of the water, and provide wildlife habitat. The area within the buffer should be left in its natural state, which will usually be a riparian woodland. Lower Providence intends to require a minimum setback from the banks of a stream as well as to pursue trail easements along stream corridors.

Wetlands. Wetlands are regulated by the federal and state governments; however, municipalities can apply further regulations on wetlands. The Township should prohibit development on wetlands as part of its Zoning Ordinance, and require wetlands to be shown on a subdivision plan as part of its Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. Sometimes, developers receive the federal and state permits, but build homes directly adjacent to wetland areas. Although this is permitted by the regulations, it can lead to wetlands destruction in the future if individual homeowners decide to fill in wet areas on their lots to increase the usable yards. The Township should reduce or eliminate this problem by requiring a minimum building setback from wetlands. In addition, federal and state regulations address only the filling of wetlands, not the destruction of vegetation within the wetlands. The Township intends to require the replacement of wetlands vegetation that is destroyed.

Groundwater. Groundwater quality can be protected with wellhead protection ordinances or aquifer recharge ordinances. Because aquifers are so large, wellhead protection ordinances are more common. These ordinances, which only protect public wells and not individual wells, regulate development in an area which could potentially contaminate the groundwater supplying that well. This wellhead protection area can be identified in a number of ways, although the most accurate method is to conduct a hydrogeologic survey. Development within the wellhead protection area should be regulated by restricting certain uses, such as gas stations; by limiting the intensity of development, such as limiting the density of single-family detached homes with individual septic systems; and/or by controlling how a land use activity occurs, such as farming with specific types of pesticides, herbicides, and other chemicals. In addition, the Township intends to impose design standards on new construction that might pollute the groundwater, including hazardous materials containment structures or areas, surface water runoff collection systems, and large impervious areas such as parking lots and buildings.

Steep Slopes. Steep slope ordinances restrict or prohibit development in steep slope areas, which are typically areas with slopes of 15% or more. Usually, on slopes of 15% to 25%, development is permitted if the minimum lot size is increased and/or the percent of the lot that is disturbed is limited. Some steep slope ordinances prohibit all development, although this prohibition does not apply unless the slopes are extremely steep, usually 25% or more. Lower Providence has adopted a steep slope conservation ordinance, pursuant to the recommendations of the 1995 Open Space Preservation Plan.

Woodlands. Woodland preservation ordinances are intended to protect existing trees and woodlands. The Township currently has an adopted Landscaping Ordinance, which requires the preservation of existing trees and woodlands during the development process, and also requires replacement trees for those trees that have been removed during construction.

Lower Providence intends to adopt these natural resource protection ordinances within the first phase of Plan implementation. Application of conservation easements over properties having the above characteristics and particularly the priority properties identified for preservation shall be considered as a viable option to fee simple acquisition.

7. Encourage Donations of Properties for Permanent Open Space

Sometimes, a landowner may wish to preserve land by donating the full title of the property or by donating the development rights to a non-profit land conservation group. Either of these approaches will permanently preserve land as open space. If a landowner donates his or her development rights, he or she receives tax benefits, but the land must be permanently restricted from future development. There are several land conservation groups operating in Montgomery County that would consider accepting these donations, including the Montgomery County Lands Trust, the Brandywine Conservancy, the Natural Lands Trust, the Nature Conservancy, the Conservancy of Montgomery County, and the various watershed associations.

Some land conservation groups can also help a local landowner develop part of a tract while keeping the majority open and deed restricted. With this approach, the land is developed in a very sensitive manner, so that the landowner receives some money, while the most important environmental amenities on the site are preserved.

Lower Providence intends to continue to encourage the donation of properties for permanent open space through all phases of Plan implementation.

8. Require Developments to Provide Open Space or Pay a Fee in Lieu of Open Space

Through the Zoning and/or Subdivision Ordinances, a municipality can require developers to provide open space. If this requirement is put into the Zoning Ordinance, it must be located in specific zoning districts, such as the high density residential district. For example, the R-4 Residential Zoning District in Lower Providence requires 20 percent of a site to be set aside as common open space.

According to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance can also require developers to provide open space. A Subdivision Ordinance requirement for open space can go much further than the Zoning Ordinance. The Subdivision Ordinance can require the land to be dedicated to the Township; if a developer does not want to provide land, the Ordinance can require the developer to pay fees in lieu of land. In order to have this type of requirement, the Township must have an adopted recreation plan (which it does), and the ordinance must follow specific standards in the Municipalities Code. Usually, unless a development includes an area that the community wants to use for park land, it is better for the Township to accept fees-in-lieu of open space, so that large, central parks can be provided rather than a number of small, inaccessible and limited park sites. Generally, requiring developments to provide open space allows the Township to meet the needs of new residents without building new municipal parks.

Lower Providence has amended its current ordinance to require dedication of park land or payment of fees in lieu of land. Such an amendment was originally proposed with the Recreation Plan and the 1995 Open Space Plan. However, it is now recommended that recreation facilities be installed by developers on open space properties offered for dedication.

9. Historic Preservation Ordinances

Although not directly related to open space preservation, saving historic properties does add to the character of an area. There are many techniques a community can use for historic preservation. First, the Township intends to amend the building codes to require a review before demolition permits are issued. This approach delays demolition and allows community input, but does not stop demolition or encourage the preservation of the building.

Second, the Township also intends to amend its Zoning Ordinance to encourage historic preservation. This could be done by creating a village ordinance which gives development bonuses for preserving buildings, or restricts the uses that can go into the district. Incompatible uses, such as gas stations, are not permitted in these districts. The Zoning Ordinance can also encourage historic preservation by allowing historic buildings to have more uses than normally permitted in a particular district. For example, apartments, bed and breakfast establishments, or offices might be permitted in historic homes located in a single-family detached residential district.

Lower Providence has determined that the following methods of protecting open space are not appropriate for the Township:

- Creating large, agricultural lots of 10 acres minimum.
- Establishing a suburban growth boundary.
- Limiting the expansion of sewer and water service growth areas.
- Establishing an agricultural security area and encouraging the sale of development rights from the area. Creating one or more historic districts that involve Historical and Architectural Review Boards.

Lower Providence wishes to explore further a transfer of development rights program. At this point, the Township can not make a commitment, but it is not willing to rule out a TDR program without further study.

10. **Environmental Management**

Lower Providence Township will encourage environmental policies that enhance the natural environment of the Township, especially along stream corridors. The Township will encourage owners to mow the stream corridor easements along the Perkiomen Creek on a less frequent basis to promote secondary ecological succession. Maintaining the riparian stream corridor in a state of secondary succession with natural vegetation will provide several benefits including increasing the diversity of wildlife and protecting stream water quality.

The Township will also consider a volunteer-oriented program of controlling invasive plant species in the open space areas of the Township.

11. **Long Term Lease**

Lower Providence will negotiate long term leases where purchase is not practicable or in the case of a public entity not warranted.

