

UPPER PROVIDENCE TOWNSHIP  
VILLAGE PRESERVATION PLAN

JANUARY 25, 2011

## **INTRODUCTION: VILLAGES WITHIN UPPER PROVIDENCE.**

As part of an expansion on the 2009 Comprehensive Plan Update, Upper Providence has undertaken a study to understand the physical, automotive, and aesthetic pressures being exerted on the village areas. This Plan strives to understand how those pressures are affecting the health, safety, welfare, character, and the overall standard of living within the villages. As the ultimate goal of this plan, Upper Providence Township will have a “handbook” that provides multi-faceted approach of planning techniques, land use controls, preservation techniques, and circulation management in guiding the future of all village areas.

## **WHAT VILLAGES ARE.**

To define villages in a basic sense, that definition must generalize character and land use within a specific, delineated area. In the most general sense, a village is an area of human settlement without formal legal status; however, even those areas without “legal status” more than likely to have a legal definition. In Pennsylvania, that is contained within the Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). As written within the MPC, villages are formally defined as:

“...an unincorporated settlement that is part of a township, where residential and mixed use densities of one unit to the acre or more exist or are permitted and commercial, industrial, or institutional uses exist or are permitted.”

As a formal definition the MPC’s language is sufficient in the most general sense. However, it lacks important defining characteristics that will separate village areas from those typical, and modern suburban developments that also characterize portions of Upper Providence Township. Therefore, a better working definition for our purposes would state that villages are:

...those areas of relatively high density that can be defined by an edge, have an identifiable central core and/or corridor, have a consistent, though not identical architectural style, and include a mixture of housing types and other neighborhood-centric land uses (i.e. retail and other personal services).

While already understood by residents of the Township and more specifically those residents of village areas, using the above as a “working definition” it becomes apparent that there are multiple villages within Upper Providence Township. Those areas are mapped in the subsequent section. Following that, this plan will detail pressures on each village area, goals and objectives, and specific recommendations regarding the preservation of village character, land uses, zoning, circulation network, and natural environment preservation.

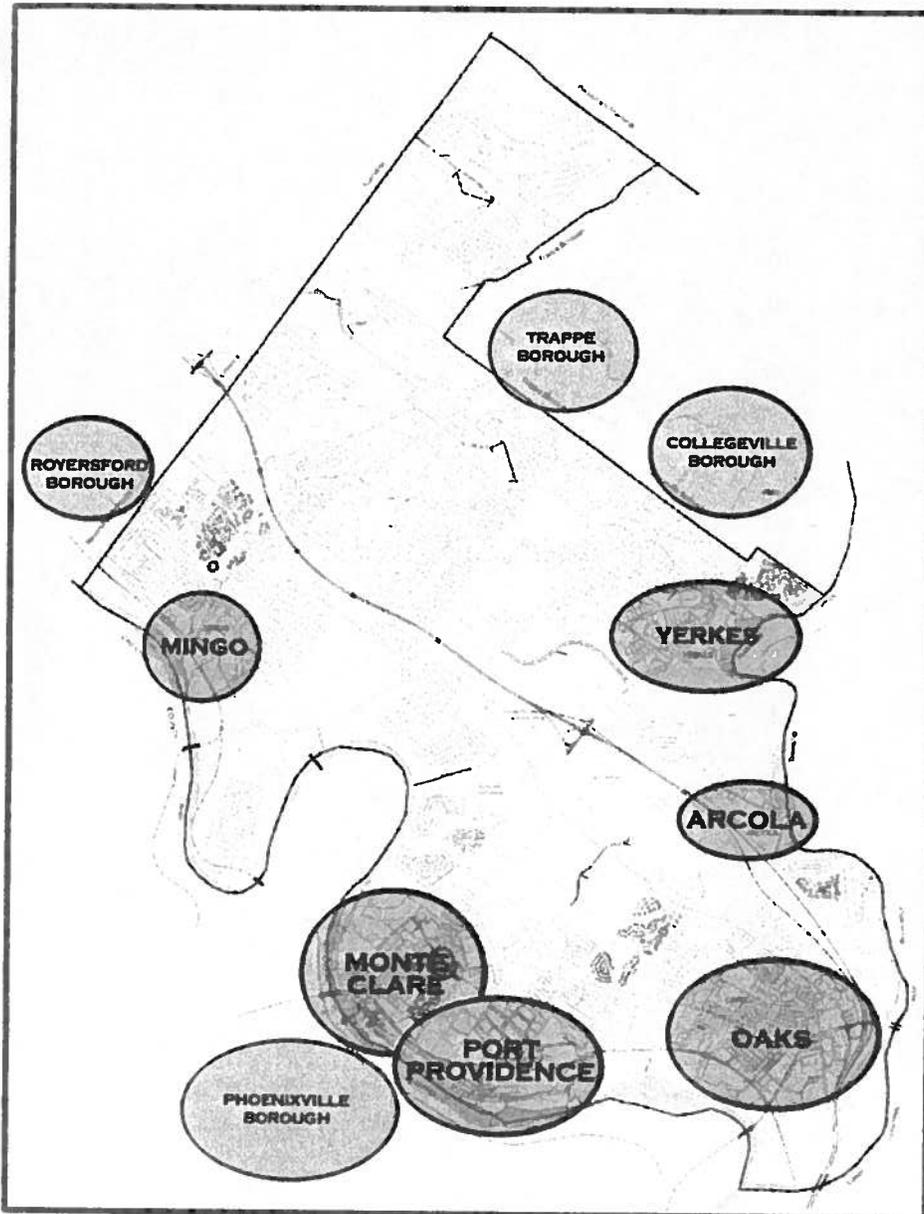
## **MAP AND PLACE-NAMES: WHERE VILLAGES ARE.**

To the frustration of some Township residents, Township Supervisors and staff, Upper Providence Township is rarely characterized by the actual Township name (and when it is it is often confused for the same-named Township, but in a different County). Upper Providence is known by those areas called Oaks, Mont Clare, Port Providence, Arcola, Yerkes, and Mingo. Or even by the adjacent boroughs of Collegeville, Trappe, Royersford, and most prominently Phoenixville. The adjacent map shows the general locations of these places in the context of Upper Providence Township.

Revisiting the working definition for village discussed in the previous section, some of these place names can be eliminated as villages that warrant further study.

Unlike the area adjacent to Royersford Borough, Trappe and Collegeville Borough's do not have the "spill-over" of density and housing type that is typical of a Borough (and village), and would thus eliminate these areas as potential villages. As for the area adjacent to Royersford, the

density is akin to that within the adjacent borough (and expected in a village), but the area is primarily single-family residential; lacking the housing diversity as required within the working definition.



Place-name areas such as Mingo, Yerkes, and Arcola also lack the overall density and diversity of housing and land uses to be considered villages by the definition herein. Port Providence, while not a very dense housing area, has a diversity of land uses and neighborhood amenities that Mingo, Yerkes, and Arcola lack.

The final place-names, Mont Clare and Oaks embody the definition as established within this document. The housing density and diversity is unmatched throughout the Township, they have a clearly defined edge, generally consistent

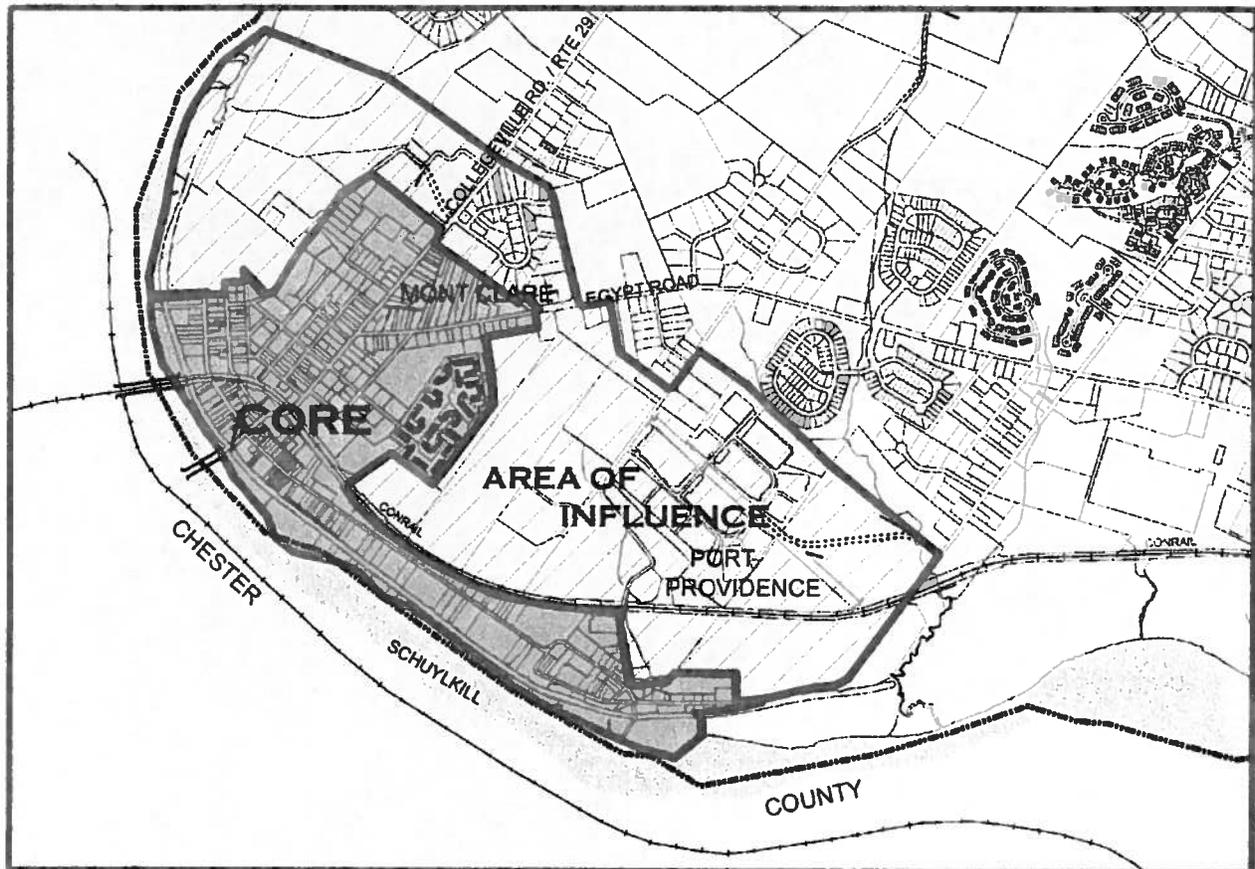
architectural styles and yet still show enough variance of style to represent development over a period of time (as opposed to pre-planned residential development), and have a diversity of land uses (both internally and supporting the village areas).

Therefore, going forward this report will create a planning handbook that will protect and enhance the individual character of the three primary villages within Upper Providence

Township, Port Providence, Mont Clare and Oaks. It should be noted that for the purposes of mapping, demographics and other baseline information, Port Providence and Mont Clare will be combined; these villages are separate, yet complimentary, areas and will be treated as such within the recommendations and action items section of the document.

**BORDERS: MAPPING EDGES AND INFLUENCES.**

***Mont Clare / Port Providence***

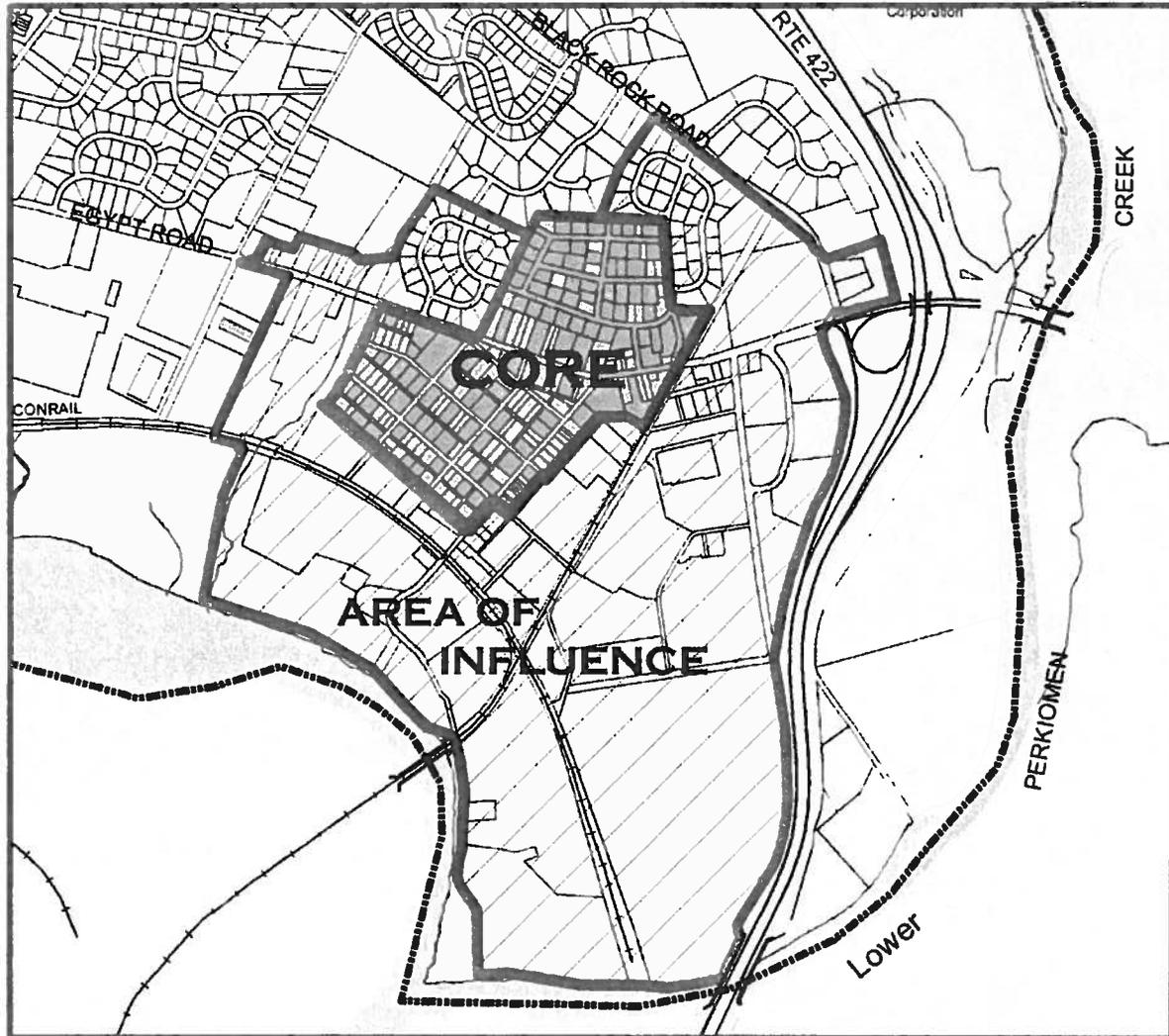


Bordered on the south and west by the Schuylkill River the Port Providence and Mont Clare village area is best defined by those parcels which front or have direct access to one of the two main corridors; Collegeville Road (Route 29) and Port Providence Road. Discussed in greater detail late within this document, the main areas influencing Mont Clare and Port Providence include industrial areas to the north east and St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church, the largest landowner in the area, to the west.

***Oaks***

The Oaks area does not have the “hard” edge of the Schuylkill River, it is primarily a residential area set within a retail and industrial/flex space area. While the main transportation corridor within Oaks is Egypt Road, other transportation routes also help define the area. Highland and

Brower Avenues are main corridors (albeit in a negative way as will be discussed) as well as Montgomery Avenue and Gumbes Road providing cut-through traffic (again, not necessarily a positive). Discussed in greater detail following this section, the area surrounding the majority of the core village area is a retail and industrial/flex space; however, there is an area of Township owned open space and newer single family detached homes.



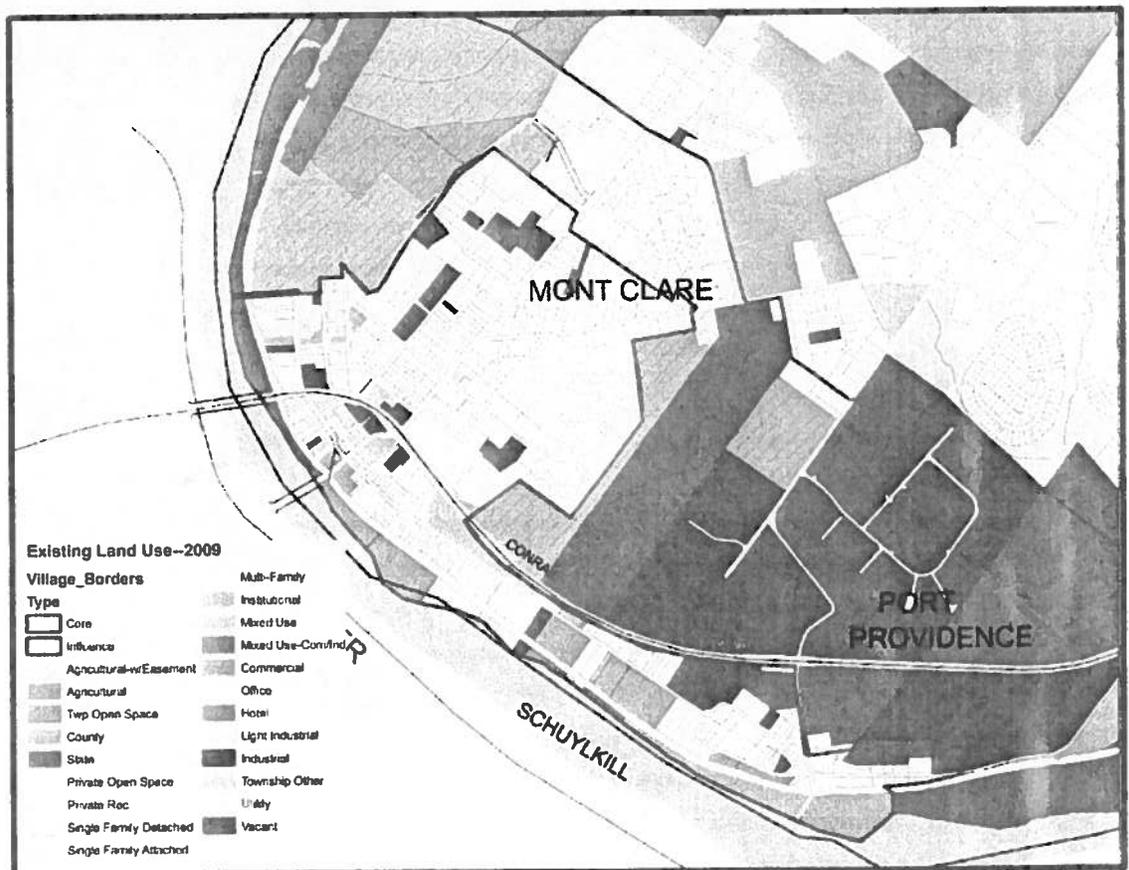
**DEMOGRAPHICS: UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES UP THE VILLAGES.**

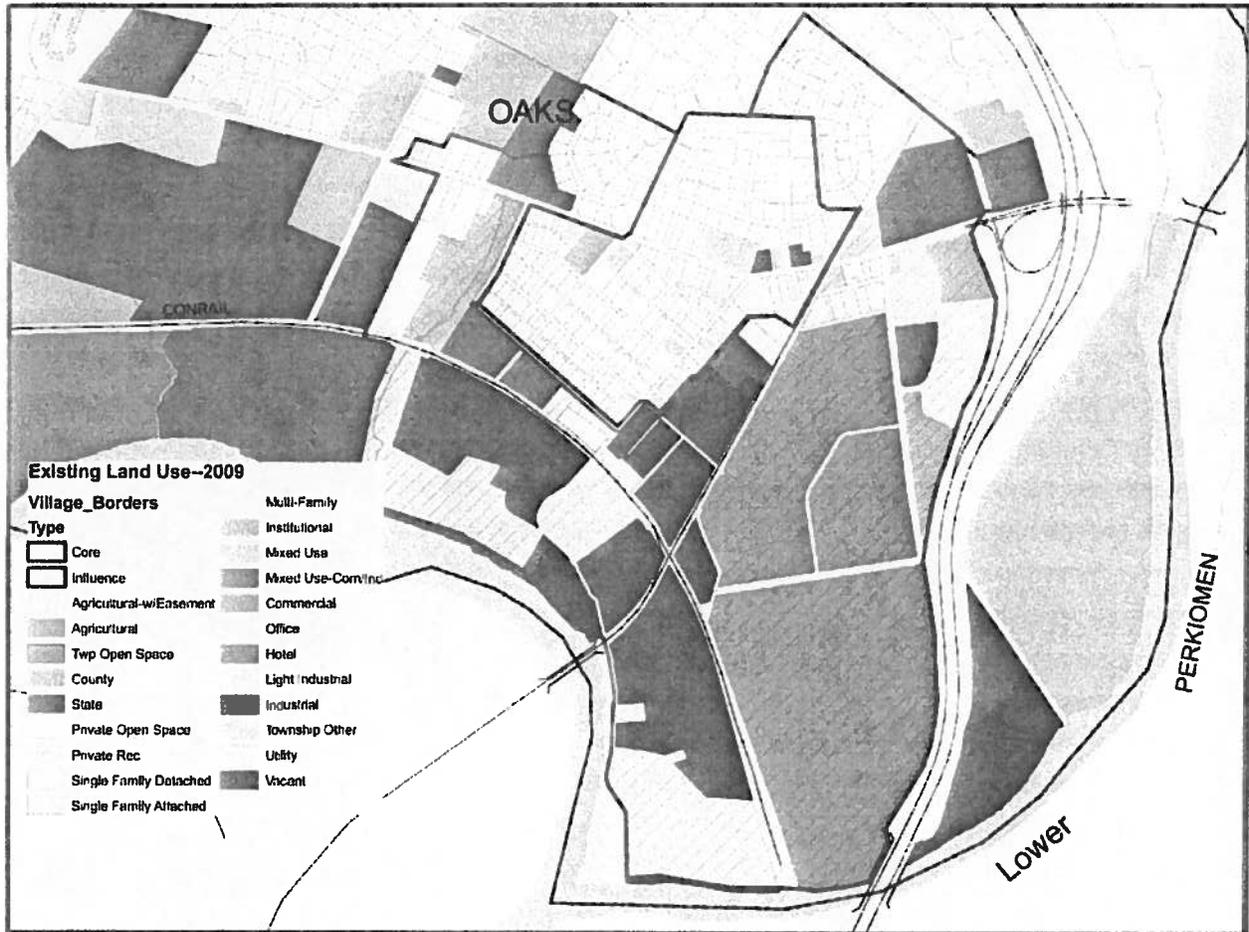
As of the 2010 Census tabulation, Upper Providence was home to 21,219 residents, making it the Township with the twelfth highest population in Montgomery (out of 62 municipalities); the population increased more than 37% from the 2000 Census tabulation. The villages of Mont Clare and Port Providence account for 7.7% of the total Township population (1,625 persons), while Oaks accounts for 4.9% of the total Township population (1,031 persons). In terms of land area, the Village of Oaks encompasses 2.3% of the total Township area (the core area mapped previously). Similarly, the core area Mont Clare and Port Providence represents 2.0% of the total land area in the Township.

In terms of housing, Port Providence and Mont Clare account for 10.7% of the Township's over 7,500 housing units (811 units), whereas the 380 housing units in Oaks represents 5% of the total housing units in the Township. The core area of the Oaks village is slightly more than 165 acres, with 61% of that area dedicated to single family housing and additional 2.6% for multifamily or single family attached housing. Vacant land represents 19.3% of the remaining core area, with the final 17.37% divided between office, institutional and commercial land uses.

Core areas of Port Providence and Mont Clare have 56.2% of the land area as single family detached, 6.53% of the land area as single family attached, and 2.37% as multi-family housing. Under 10% of the land in these villages is vacant (9.52%); 5.67% is owned by a Homeowners Association, and 6.18% is permanently protected open space (Township, state or county owned). The remaining 20.06% of the land area is a wide variety of uses, including office, industrial, institutional, utility, commercial, light industrial, and mixed uses. *{Note: land uses are established by Montgomery County's Board of Assessment data and have been spot checked for accuracy during this plan development process.}*

The following two maps detail each land use for each parcel within the core area and the area that influences the villages.





**PRESSURES: ISSUES FACING THE VILLAGE AREAS.**

Pressure, for use in this village study is meant to be those forces that affect the physical, aesthetic, health, safety and welfare of residents and business owners in the village areas. In the most global sense those pressures can be boiled down to the following: having the proper traffic on the proper streets, overall congestion, proximity of incompatible land uses, complementary designs and massing for construction or rehabilitation, and finally, pressure on those existing natural features that mark the uniqueness of the village areas.

**Port Providence**

While it is the smallest of the village areas, Port Providence has some of the largest pressure from the natural environment with the proximity of the Schuylkill Canal and Schuylkill River. Port Providence is a riverside community that is in immediate proximity to the Schuylkill River and the FEMA designated 100-year Flood Plain. This has had a profound effect upon development within the village; not much has changed in the actual building footprint within the village over the years other than when buildings come down they are not readily rebuilt due to the Township’s flood plain ordinances and restrictions.

Due to the development uphill and on various sides surrounding Port Providence the delicate balance between managed stormwater and the flooding of Port Providence has been affected. Most of the immediate areas uphill from the village are zoned light industrial/office complex causing concern if/when all the present day properties were fully developed. Storm water discharge will be directed to basins that will drain to the Schuylkill Canal and River watershed. This will create an increase in the volume of water to already overburdened stream beds potentially creating a greater chance of flooding depending on the storm events. Storm water management will need to be monitored and appropriately designed to allow natural ground water recharge to address the potential loss of the current pervious surfaces yet developed.

In terms of traffic, the village roads are used as a pass-thru; drivers use Port Providence Road as an alternative route to get to Mont Clare or Phoenixville instead of taking Egypt Road. While it has not been recently monitored by Upper Providence Police, the local residents feel that drivers consistently do not keep to the speed limit of 25 miles/hour and travel through Port Providence at a high rate of speed without concern for its residents, especially the children; this is a dangerous situation. Adding to the traffic problem is the increased use of the roads in Port Providence by bicyclists. According to residents in the village, bike traffic has taken over the roads on the weekends and has the potential of becoming a severe safety issue as both increased vehicular use and bikes interact. This is a problem that extends all the way into Mont Clare to the Rt. 29 Bridge where the Schuylkill River Trail goes into Phoenixville. Originally, it was believed the towpath restoration would alleviate a good portion of that traffic but it is now believed by the residents that less than 50% of bicyclists will use the towpath.

### ***Mont Clare***

When asked, residents summarized the issues and concerns in Mont Clare as dealing mostly with the bottle neck of traffic within the Village Preservation area and diversity of downtown Mont Clare. Specifically, the following:

- The traffic bottle neck at Jacobs & Walnuts St. caused by the dog-legged intersection. Traffic backups caused by left hand turns from Rt. 29 onto either Jacobs and/or Walnut Streets.
- Non-conforming use or incompatible use of properties. Those parcels that are too small for the extreme amount of traffic into a parking lot without appropriate space and extreme/erratic traffic flow causing backups.
- Large delivery trucks regularly block Rt. 29 as they back into the already crowded parking lot causing temporary traffic stoppage north & south of the area. Use of parking area across Rt. 29 as overflow parking does create an unsafe situation due to the illegal crossing of the major highway, Rt. 29.
- Canal Bar development plans, as proposed, have the potential to create an adverse effect on the adjoining properties and neighbors on Jacobs Street with an awkward proposed traffic flow. Utilizing the entrance to the parking area from Jacobs St., will bring much more traffic onto Jacobs St. potentially causing a greater chance of a bottle neck at the already overburdened dog-legged intersection
- The blind curve on Rt. 29 right at the railroad underpass to the center of town is dangerous and tends to an area of accidents and near-miss accidents, especially with tractor trailers

- The Mont Clare Fire Co. is a focal point in downtown Mont Clare and when there is an emergency, response is warranted causing the blockage of Rt. 29 as the fire company personnel enter and exit the station.

### **Oaks**

As coined by residents of the Village of Oaks, Egypt Road is the “main street” of Oaks, but it is also a high-speed, high-volume road serving as a regional transportation corridor to a large portion of Upper Providence Township’s industrial and office land uses, residential areas, commercial development, and the Township’s most significant natural feature. While it is impossible to state that Egypt Road is the cause of all physical and aesthetic pressures, management and treatment of the traffic and development pressures brought by the proximity of Egypt Road (and the associated interchange with Route 422) will begin to ease many of the pressures within the area.

Because this predominately residential village is nearly surrounded by incompatible land uses, and those land uses only have direct access to Egypt Road through the village, the greatest issue facing Oaks is having the proper traffic on the proper street. Brower Avenue is the primary access point for trash haulers and other large truck traffic; in addition it is the primary route for weekend traffic to the Center Sports Ice Area. Gumbes Road is a cut-through for all types of vehicular traffic looking to avoid the intersection of Black Rock Road and Egypt Road, or as a short cut to and from the retail area with Target, Lowe’s, and BJ’s. Montgomery Avenue has become an east/west alternative to portions of Egypt Road.

However, not all pressures are transportation oriented. Development pressure from growing retail areas primarily affect those residential units on the periphery by creating the potential to have retail stores/loading docks/drive through facility in ones back yard. (This is not to say that all residents are free from pressure from the new and existing retail development, but those properties abutting any non-residential use have added pressure.)

As of now, much of the development of Oaks has not reflected the overall aesthetic of Oaks. While no discernible “Oaks” style can be identified, the character of residential development is not reflected in the more recent retail development. In addition, the pressure of development has threatened many of the structures that help define the area of Oaks.

As with the Mont Clare area, many of the residents summarized the issues facing the Village of Oaks through the following:

- The lack of clear connections, both pedestrian and vehicular, to the Schuylkill River and Perkiomen Creek and other natural areas.
- Preservation of structures with historical significance, such as the Lock 61 locktender’s house, the demolition by neglect of potentially historic residences, and the outright demolition of potentially historic homes.
- Overall lack of a pedestrian network within and in/out of the Village area; no pedestrian connections to large scale land uses and entertainment destinations.

- New development does not reflect the character of traditional neighborhood development and is not buffered adequately from existing homes or other development.
- The natural environment is being eroded by development; protections within the zoning ordinance are not adequate.
- There is no gateway or other identifying characteristic showing when a person “arrives” in Oaks.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

As developed in consultation with residents of the Villages and reflection of the issues identified above, the following Goals and Objectives will guide future planning within the Village areas.

**OVERALL GOAL:** Protect and enhance the individual character of villages within Upper Providence Township through a multi-faceted approach of planning techniques, land use controls, preservation techniques, and circulation management.

### **Community Character**

**GOAL:** Promote and preserve the character of the village areas.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Create a strategy for approaching historic preservation that benefits / enhances village areas
- Develop design guidelines for new residential construction within the village area; review commercial design guidelines to ensure compatibility with village character.
- Develop context based village zoning district focused on infill development and character retention.
- Develop a strategy for identifying and promoting village history and historic sites.
- Create or enhance existing village gateways, other identifying markers (signage, etc.), and streetscapes.

### **Circulation**

**GOAL:** Implement a framework to provide a safe and efficient vehicular and pedestrian network within the individual village areas.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Put appropriate traffic on appropriate streets
- Develop a signage system guiding trail users to adjacent “destinations” and others to the trail.
- Strive for a circulation network that has distinct separation between automotive and pedestrian traffic.
- Develop standards for installation of “share the road” and other safety signage.
- Continue the development of trails as identified on the Trail Master Plan (review Trail Master Plan for applicability).
- Develop a comprehensive traffic calming program for village streets.
- Develop a way-finding sign package that guides automotive traffic appropriately within and through village areas.

### **Natural Environment**

**GOAL:** Protect those critical natural features and natural resources within and bordering the villages from impact of development within and surrounding the village areas.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop a strategy for approaching riparian buffer standards with minimal impact residential properties outside of the village areas.
- Continue to review and identify parcels along the Schuylkill River that have potential for Township acquisition or other environmental remediation (ref: 2010 Comprehensive Plan Update).
- Review Best Management Practices within the Township Ordinances to ensure that village areas are continually protected from excessive run-off and pollutants from adjacent development.
- Investigate “out-of-the-box” stormwater reduction techniques for development both within and adjacent to village areas.

### **Land Use**

**GOAL:** Mitigate the impact from non-compatible land uses that do not preserve the existing character of the village areas; promote the development of uses that complement the villages.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Actively review existing development within and surrounding village areas to determine measures to mitigate non-compatible land uses.
- Focus non-residential land uses to river-centric uses that promote environmental conservation and recreational uses.
- Mitigate impact of incompatible future land uses that do not preserve the character of the villages
- Promote a diversity of housing.
- Review adjacent zoning district land use provisions to ensure that permitted land uses are not detrimental to village land uses.
- Review zoning of adjacent zoning districts to ensure that buffering standards adequately protect the villages.

### **CHARACTER: SAMPLE ZONING AND SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE PROTECTIONS**

Character of the village areas cannot be defined by one single thing. The Schuylkill Canal is ultimately important to those residents of Port Providence and Mont Clare. While it defines one edge, places like Fitzwater Station and the now empty school building are also integral elements to the character of Port Providence. Mont Clare has a rich inventory of older buildings with potential historic significance and destinations that show the history of Upper Providence Township. Oaks Village also has some potential historic structures, a strong residential base of single family detached homes and a “main street” area that could potentially become a gateway for Upper Providence Township.

However, those things representing the character of an area are not necessarily positive. From the resident’s discussion on problem areas within their villages, the traffic around Walnut and Jacobs Streets characterizes Mont Clare as does the disrepair of the Canal Bar, both in a negative way. The same holds true for Oaks, the negative nature of the traffic congestion currently

defines the character of that village. The challenge then is to define and accentuate those aggregate features that make for good character in the village areas.

### ***Historic Preservation and Infill Development***

One such positive would be to enhance and protect the historic nature of the village areas. However, this is not without challenges. In 2004 Upper Providence Township undertook a Survey of Historic Structures, in summary the research found that potentially as a historic district, Port Providence and Mont Clare had potential historic significance, but that the structures within those areas were not individually significant, as defined by the National Register of Historic Places. Specifically, that survey stated that:

“...many of the historic resources included in the potential district boundary are not individually eligible for the Nation Register but would be considered “contributing resources” in the historic district.”

As for the Oaks village, it was also concluded that historic district designation was not likely to be eligible, although for a different reason, the resources were not dense enough to establish a district per the national and state standards. Specifically, the survey states:

“...Oaks does not have the integrity necessary to be listed on the National Register...a number of historic resources along Egypt Road remain, the resources south of the road are rather scattered.”

While it is recommended that more investigation into the feasibility of creating a Port Providence Mont Clare historic district is undertaken, any national or commonwealth standards for historic preservation may not rely on those regulatory provisions. As stated, protecting the historic character of the villages within Upper Providence becomes is challenging, but not impossible. Three aspects of development will need to be targeted, demolition, infill and rehabilitation.

The following sample language should be considered for inclusion within the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance or Zoning Ordinance:

#### ***Demolition within Village Areas:***

- A. Demolition permit. No structure shall be demolished, in whole or in part, including the indiscriminate removal or stripping of any significant interior or exterior architectural features, unless a permit is obtained from the Zoning Officer of Upper Providence Township in accordance with the procedures and requirements of this section and other applicable standards and procedures of the Township Building and Fire Codes.
- B. Proposed demolition of historic resources. All applications for demolitions received by the Zoning Officer will be reviewed against the Historic Resources Map. If the application concerns a Historic Resource as identified in the Historic Resource Map, the Zoning Officer

will advise the applicant that he must comply with the following procedures and requirements, as applicable.

- (1) The applicant must provide the Zoning Officer with the following information, in addition to any information required by the Township's permit procedures.
  - (a) Owner of record.
  - (b) Site plan showing all buildings and structures on the property.
  - (c) Recent photographs of the resource proposed for demolition.
  - (d) Reasons for the demolition.
  - (e) Method of demolition.
  - (f) Future uses of the site and of the materials from the demolished resource.
  - (g) A report prepared by a licensed Engineer, Architect, or related professional detailing the current structural status of the building. The report shall include cross sections and detailed drawings of the existing structure.
- (2) The Zoning Officer will have ninety (90) days from application date to present the demolition permit to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation on the issuance of any demolition permit approvals or denials. Any appeal of a demolition permit denial will be presented to the Upper Providence Township Zoning Hearing Board, at the applicant's expense.

*Infill Development within Village Areas:*

Where new homes or major renovations are proposed on a block with existing homes the following standards shall apply.

- A. Applicability - The following activities shall conform to the standards of Infill Development Standards contained below
  - (1) All new construction whether on a vacant lot or the result of demolition of an existing building.
  - (2) Additions to an existing residential dwelling visible on the front façade of the building, such as a second story addition.
  - (3) Major renovations to the front façade of buildings which may include but are not limited to a change in exterior surface materials, new porches, enclosing porches, changes in the ratio of openings to wall, rooflines, etc.
- B. Exceptions - Design standards for infill development shall not be enforced for the repainting, repair, restoration, or reconstruction of existing features where such work maintains the outer dimensions and surface relationships of the existing structure. Changes in paint color are exempt from review. Design review is also not required for the replacement of doors.

windows, or other transparent surfaces, provided that they are replaced with similar looking materials that do not substantially alter the front façade of the building.

C. Standards of Infill Development

1) Building Mass and Proportion

- a) New buildings and additions shall be consistent with the pattern of size, mass, and footprint, as viewed from the street, with other homes on the block.
- b) The proportion of height and width of buildings viewed from the street shall be consistent with the pattern established by other homes on the block.
- c) Proposed additions or new buildings that are unlike the pattern of size or ratio of height to width established by existing homes on the block are permitted.
- d) New buildings shall conform to a pattern of heights of floor levels, where one exists on a block, with changes between floors occurring at the same height.

2) Roof

- a) Roofs of new buildings and additions shall be consistent with regard to the style of roof and pitch, as viewed from the street, with other homes on the block.
- b) Roofs shall not be evaluated with regard to the type (shingles, slate, metal, flat roof coatings, etc) or color of roofing material to be installed.

3) Windows and Doors

- a) All buildings shall have one primary entrance in the front façade oriented toward the street of the property's mailing address. Additional entrances to structures with more than one dwelling unit shall be separated by at least 20 feet and be likewise oriented towards the street of the property's mailing address.
- b) Windows of new buildings and additions shall be arranged to be consistent with the pattern of windows on homes on the block with regard to size, proportion of height to width, and location as viewed from the street.
- c) Windows and doors shall not be evaluated with regard to color or materials (wood, vinyl, aluminum, steel, fiberglass, etc.).
- d) Blank walls shall not be permitted along any exterior wall facing a street. The window pattern from the front or rear walls should be continued to side walls.

4) Porches and Porticos

- a) On a block where there is a pattern of front porches and or porticos for existing homes, new homes shall have a front porch or portico. On entirely new blocks, front porches or porticos shall be required pursuant to the standards below.
- b) Porches must be at least eight feet deep and may extend across the entire façade, half of the façade, or wrap around the sides of buildings.
- c) Porticos must be at least five feet deep and five feet wide.
- d) Porches and porticos may be enclosed provided that the ratio of windows to wall remains similar to the ratio of windows to wall that existed prior to enclosing the porch or portico. A pattern of porch enclosures need not be present on the block to permit a porch enclosure.

5) Surface Material

- a) Where a pattern of surface material on the front façade of homes is present on the block (brick, stucco, stone, clapboard, or shingles, etc), new buildings shall employ materials that appear consistent with existing homes.
  - b) Where additions are proposed and visible from the street, the surface materials of the façade of the home being renovated (and in the case of semidetached twins, the adjoining dwelling unit) shall take precedence over the pattern on the block.
  - c) Whether an addition or a new home, the front façade of buildings shall not mix more than two types of surface materials (excepting exposed foundation walls). Any change in materials shall be along a horizontal line corresponding to the change in levels of the home viewed from the street.
- 6) Vehicle Access and Garages
- a) Where alleys exist physically, new dwellings shall take access from the alley with parking spaces at the rear of the property regardless of the prevailing pattern of access of homes on the block. Where an alley exists only as a right of way or is only partially constructed, the applicant shall complete the applicant's portion of the alley from side lot line to opposite side lot line, provided that upon completion such
  - b) Where alleys do not exist either physically or as a right of way or a combination of both, or the completion of the applicant's portion of the alley will not result in vehicle access to the rear of the property, new dwelling units shall provide for vehicle access and parking consistent with the prevailing means of access and location of garages on the block. In new neighborhoods, the preference for vehicle access applies in the following order: 1) rear facing garages, 2) side facing garages, and 3) front facing garages.
  - c) Where rear facing garages are proposed, they shall be set back from the rear lot line within a range of five feet from the prevailing pattern of rear garage setbacks on the block. If a prevailing pattern of rear garage setbacks does not exist, then the requirements of the Village Preservation District shall apply.
  - d) Where front facing garages are proposed, they shall be set back a minimum of ten feet from the closest point to the street line of the front façade of the home.
  - e) Where front facing garages are proposed, all driveways shall be at least twenty feet long as measured from the edge of the sidewalk to accommodate parked vehicles and keep sidewalks clear of obstructions.
  - f) Detached or semidetached garages shall be architecturally similar to the proposed or existing home with regard to roof style and pitch, cladding, and windows (if any).
- 7) Additions
- a) Additions should be constructed to the rear of dwellings and not be visible from the street.
  - b) Additions visible from the street, such as second floor additions, extensions into side yards, or large additions are permitted provided that one of the techniques described in the Manual are used to mitigate the impacts.

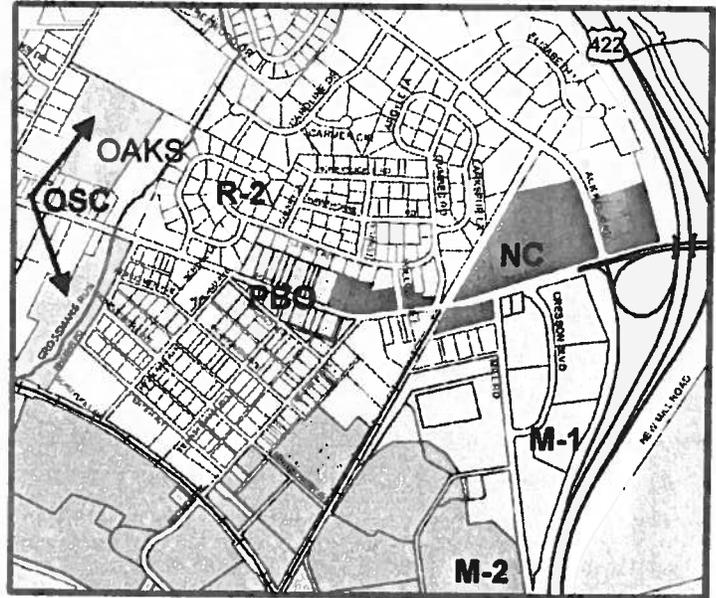
*Structure Rehabilitation within Village Areas:*

Since rehabilitation assumes that the existing building is kept in mostly intact, at least in terms of location, access, etc., the only regulatory requirement should be as a cross-reference within any new or amended village preservation ordinance for compliance with the infill design requirements (as proposed above).

**Land Use and Zoning:**

As written in the definition established within the beginnings of this plan, villages have “a mixture of housing types and other neighborhood-centric land uses.” This is not to say that every village must have the mom & pop store on the corner to be considered a village, but restrictions of residential only do not meet the spirit of village zoning or the existing land use pattern of the villages in Upper Providence. The mix of uses certainly favors residential development and should continue to do so, but any changes to permitted land uses should promote a responsible mix of neighborhood oriented uses in appropriate areas.

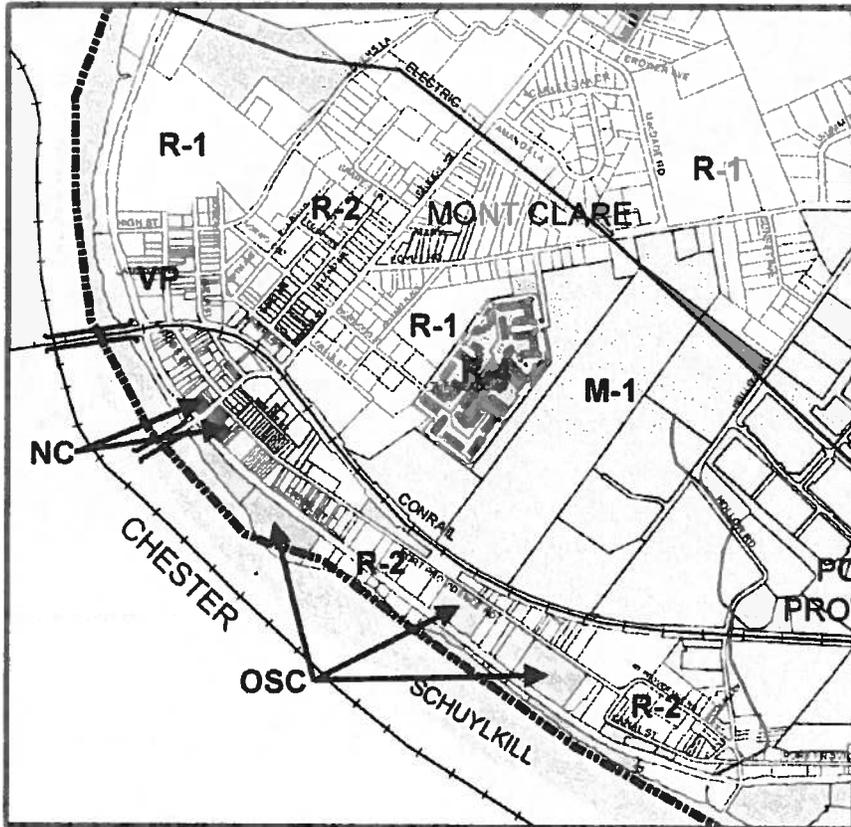
The Village of Oaks is predominately zoned R-2 Residential which permits only residential uses, with lot sizes in square feet ranging from 43,560 (no public water and sewer) to 15,000 (with both public water and sewer). Along Egypt Road, two other zoning districts front onto Egypt Road, Professional and Business Office (PBO) and Neighborhood Convenience Commercial (NC). Industrial Zones, M-1 and M-2 border the eastern edge; this industrial land also has Community and Regional Shopping Center (CRSC) overlay zoning.



PBO, while allowing single family and two family dwellings is geared towards small scale professional offices for doctors, dentists, other “licensed practitioner of the healing arts” and other business offices providing localized services. Land uses permitted in the NC District are highly dependent on the lot area of a given lot. On a small lot (½ acre) uses are similar to that of the PBO, professional offices, with allowances for small personal services (barber, dry cleaners, etc.). Larger lots (1 acre) allow for larger offices, retail sales (in an individual store), some restaurant uses, and a combination of uses on a single lot. The largest land use permitted in NC requires a 3 acre minimum and permits a combination of the uses listed within the smaller lot developments (limited by impervious and building coverage).

Mont Clare and Port Providence have a portion of the village area zoned as R-2, permitting the same type of housing permitted in the Oaks area. However, a significant portion of Mont Clare

is also the only part of the Township in the Village Preservation (VP) Zoning District. VP permits the single family detached and two family (twin or duplex) dwelling types on a minimum lot area of 6,000 (single) or 3,000 (double) square feet.



Also in the Mont Clare and Port Providence Villages there a small section of the NC District, at the point of Collegeville Road/Route 29 before leaving the Township (to go to Phoenixville); essentially this NC is the site of Produce Junction and the Canal Bar as discussed previously in this document. It should also be

noted that portions of land along the Schuylkill River and Canal are zoned Open Space Conservation (OSC). This is a zoning district reserved for open space preservation through minimal land use options (agriculture, municipal uses—on less than 5% of the property, etc.)

*Land Use and Zoning Recommendations:*

While it can be stated that the R-2 and VP zones have been adequate to meet the development needs of the village areas the case can be made that the current R-2 zoning is geared toward new subdivision developments, not infill and redevelopment (the most likely development in the identified village areas). In addition, the additional zoning districts (NC and PBO) that sit squarely within the villages contribute to the lack of coordination between development types.

Specifically, PBO and NC do not have adequate buffering requirements when addressing the neighboring residential areas. While the allowable uses within PBO can be complementary and have minimal impact on residents, many of the NC uses are too intense and can have a highly negative impact on existing homes.

Therefore, the language within the existing VP District should be amended to better address the existing minimum lot sizes in each village area, uses should be limited to those that compliment,

not impede, the existing residential character. This will also require a portion of Mont Clare and Port Providence to be rezoned (all of the R-2 area identified) as well as the Oaks Village (as shown with the borders herein). **{Note: OSC zoning should not be changed.}**

Changes to the language within the existing VP District should include the following:

- Enlarging the minimum lot area within the VP District to better address the entirety of the new area. (i.e. increasing the minimum lot area to 7,500 square feet minimum lot area for Single Family Detached from 6,000 square feet.)
- Revising setback requirements to better reflect the traditional neighborhood development that already exists within village areas
- Better control and limit the conversion of Single-Family Detached houses into multi-family units.
- Explore the option (as conditional use or special exception) of second floor residential/first floor office uses for select properties on major roads.
- Revise building standards (i.e. building height) to better reflect that which current is sited in the village areas.

Although the language previously presented for demolition permits and infill design guidelines can be amending into the Township Code independently of these changes to the VP District, inclusion with these revisions is a logical inclusion in the implementation of this portion of the plan and for the protection of the village areas.

To better address the muddle that the intervening PBO and NC Zoning Districts potentially create, it is recommended that as part of the VP revisions a sub-district, Village Commercial, be developed.

#### *Village Commercial Option*

For those properties within the villages that front on to streets classified as collector or higher, a possible option for development should be to develop in a commercial manner. The purpose of this potential option within the VP District would be to acknowledge that portions of village areas are not likely to be primarily residentially used and to ensure that those non-residential uses on major corridors adequately buffer and complement the village in which they exist. Uses could typically be those businesses which are principally geared to residents of the villages, such as (but not limited to):

- A. Land Uses
  - (1) Business or professional office, cultural studio, and insurance agencies or Medical/Dental office
  - (2) Music, dance, art or martial arts studio or school of similar uses.

- (3) Restaurant, tearoom, café, confectionary, bakery, or similar establishment producing and serving food and beverages to be sold at retail on the premises. (Outdoor dining to be as an additional conditional use, per typical Township procedure.)
- (4) Specialty Retail, limited to 8,000 square feet maximum building size and limited to those uses described in NC.
- (5) Personal service shops, dealing directly with retail customers: barber shop, beauty parlor, cleaner (provided that no flammable liquids are used), spa, tailor, or upholstery shop.
- (6) Bank or financial institution. (without drive through facilities)
- (7) Live/work units for artisans, professionals and service providers, provided the office area does not exceed 50% of the gross floor area of the dwelling unit.
- (8) Mixed-use structures, with second floor residential units (maximum of three), with office uses on the first floor.

In addition, this option within the VP District would have the following stipulations:

- Village Commercial developments will be a conditional use, requiring compliance with all related zoning requirements (Reference: **Section 182-199**).
- Walkability provisions, sidewalk and path implementation from the village cores will be required as part of the land development process
- Changes in use for an existing structure (i.e. from residential to office use) also require conditional use approval.
- Changes in use to a retail use, even within a vacant land or an existing structure will require the completion of traffic and market research studies similar to what is required when properties are rezoned to NC.
- Shared parking and entrances will be encouraged between VC properties. {Note: development of regulations requiring access via rear alley should be discussed further, once a more complete draft ordinance is developed.}
- Parking in front yard areas will be discouraged.
- Retention of existing structures will be encouraged and incentivized within the VC uses.
- Design guidelines that reflect the residential scale of the villages will be developed and made a zoning requirement.
- Buffers and setback requirements will be revised to adequately protect residential uses from VC uses.

In sum, the VC option will consolidate and clarify development options within village areas while providing options that complement village character, uses, architecture, and those core

ideas, such as walkability and local services and businesses, expressed in traditional neighborhood design.

**ADDITIONAL VILLAGE PRESERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The following action items/recommendations pertain to areas not necessarily within the identified village areas, or to items specific to an identified problem (i.e. signage needs, ordinance changes, etc.)

***Design Guidelines, Buffer Guidelines, and other Ordinance revisions:***

For any land development on parcels that abut a village area or zoning district more stringent design guidelines and buffer requirements should be implemented. Specifically, within the NC District the following should be considered for amendment into that zoning district:

- Buffer areas shall increase in depth based on the number of uses on the property. The more intense use of a property will require a greater buffer between commercial and residential property.
- Drive through facilities shall not be permitted immediately adjacent to residential properties or uses, with the exception of mixed use (residential and other use) properties.
- All structures proposed adjacent to a village area must be residential in character as a zoning requirement (currently in the Township's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance).
- Minimal driveway entrances shall be implemented, and in no case shall access be primarily through adjacent streets.
- Trash and loading areas should not be immediately adjacent to residential or village areas.
- Signage and lighting on the buildings shall be complementary and as minimal as possible.

Specifically, within the PBO District the following should be considered for amendment into that zoning district:

- Buffer areas shall increase in depth base on the number of uses on the property. The more intense use of a property will require a greater buffer between PBO uses and residential property.
- Parking areas shall not be immediately adjacent to residential uses, unless parking or other drive aisle are immediately adjacent. Buffers between parking areas and residential uses should require a minimum of a Type 2 buffer as described within the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.
- Trash and loading areas should not be immediately adjacent to residential or village areas.
- Signage and lighting on the buildings shall be complementary and as minimal as possible.
- Access to PBO uses should be shared with adjacent uses as much as possible, and all access must be onto the

M-1 and M-2 Districts should have the following amendments considered:

- Buffer areas shall increase in depth base on the number of uses on the property. For Industrial uses, the amount of truck traffic generated, and timing of that traffic should be considered when looking at buffers requirements.
- Parking areas shall not be immediately adjacent to residential uses, unless parking or other drive aisle are immediately adjacent. Buffers between parking areas and residential uses should require a minimum of a Type 3 buffer as described within the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.
- Trash and loading areas should not be immediately adjacent to residential or village areas.
- Signage and lighting on the buildings shall be complementary and as minimal as possible.

### ***Natural Environment***

Throughout the process of plan development the concern for the preservation of the natural environment has been paramount. Specifically, there are two main areas of focus stormwater management and riparian buffer ordinance development. Actions include:

- While it has been determined that the majority of riparian buffer regulations are currently covered by other regulations within Upper Providence's Code, there is a lack of tree and other vegetation replacement requirements along stream banks. Tree replacement rates typically require that for every 2.25 square feet of stream bank a replacement tree be planted; this should be included in the land development regulations. In addition, language should be adopted that requires the removal of invasive species along riparian areas.
- Continue to review and identify parcels along the Schuylkill River that have potential for Township acquisition or other environmental remediation (ref: 2010 Comprehensive Plan Update). In addition and in conjunction with land owners, continue to procure funds to acquire flood prone properties or to complete other flood mitigation construction.
- Review Best Management Practices within the Township Ordinances to ensure that village areas are continually protected from excessive run-off and pollutants from adjacent development.

### ***Circulation***

While the majority of circulation matters will be handled on a case-by-case basis through the Township's Traffic Calming Policy and Procedure, there are other non-automotive circulation elements that should be further developed:

- Develop a way-finding sign package that guides automotive traffic appropriately within and through village areas. Specifically, create an overall sign master plan for the direction of traffic in the Oaks area; signage should be focused on directing the traffic for Expo or other recreational uses off of local residential streets and onto those streets with the proper capacity for that traffic. This should include signage that discourages non-local and truck traffic from using the local residential streets as a by-pass from high traffic areas.

- Locate and create gateway markers/monuments for village areas that both express the location and character of the respective village and the Township as a whole.
- Investigate funding for the installation of sidewalks in all village areas, along all streets.
- Develop a signage system guiding trail users to adjacent “destinations” and others to the trail.
- Strive for a circulation network that has distinct separation between automotive and pedestrian traffic.
- Develop standards for installation of “share the road” and other safety signage.
- Continue the development of trails as identified on the Trail Master Plan (review Trail Master Plan for applicability).