

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 12, 2012

TO: UPT Planning Commission; Lee Milligan, Assistant Township Manager

FROM: Geoffrey Grace, AICP

SUBJECT: Discussion of Village Preservation District, Residential Component



Beginning with a bit of background, the current draft of the Village Preservation Plan has a recommendation to amend the existing Village Preservation (VP) District within Upper Providence Township's Zoning Ordinance to better protect character of the villages. This is to ensure that any infill development in a defined village area best reflects the existing character through controls of building massing and building materials, including the potential for village-centric commercial development.

Our next step in the development of the Village Preservation Plan is a specific discussion of the potential and limitations of zoning language for the residential component; discussion of the potential commercial provisions will take place once the residential language has been solidified.

The current VP District states that the intent of the district is to:

“...encourage the preservation of the existing character and residential life-styles of the Mont Clare portions of Upper Providence Township which exhibit a mixture of single family detached and two-family dwellings on smaller lot sizes...it is the intent of this district to guide the future development or redevelopment of these neighborhoods in the Township by providing strict control of conversions to multiple-family dwellings, home occupations and the incompatible uses or activities within the designated Village Preservation Districts in order to preserve and enhance their present character...”

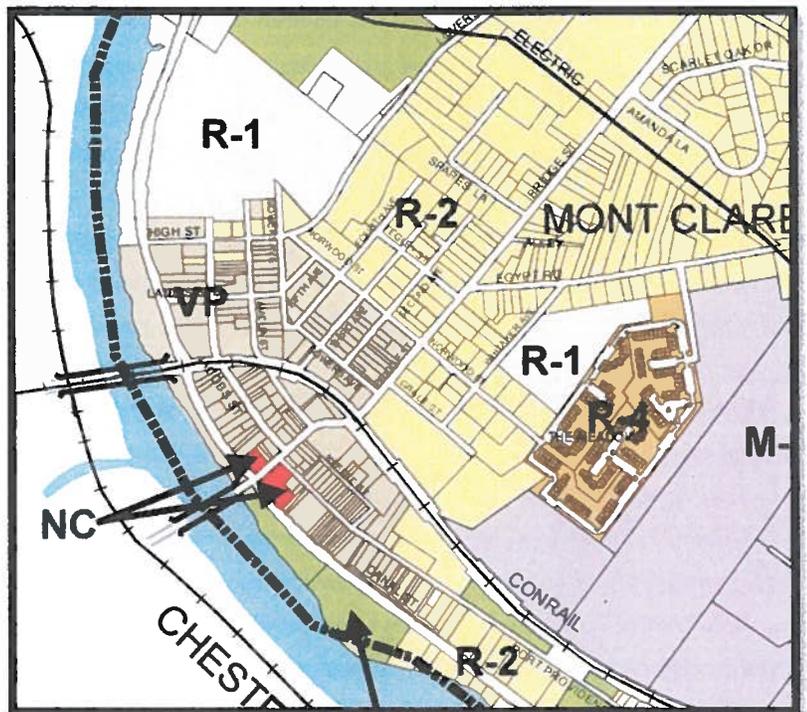


Exhibit 1: Current VP Zoning

The intent of the current VP District matches that goals of the Village Preservation Plan nearly to a tee; however, from a zoning compliance standpoint the existing VP District cannot be directly applied to those “new” villages as we have defined up to this point in the village plan development process. (Note: the VP District currently applies to a portion of Mont Clare, see Exhibit #1.) The majority of those areas within our defined village areas that is not zoned VP is zoned R-2 Residential. R-2 has vastly different

dimensional requirements, coverage requirements and permitted uses. Specifically, the differences are as follows¹:

Development Requirements	R-2 Zoning	VP Zoning		
		Single-Family Detached	Two-Family Dwellings (twin)	Duplex
Lot Area (sq. ft.)	15,000	6,000	3,000	3,000
Lot Width (ft.)	100	40	20	20
Building Coverage	20%	30%	40%	30%
Yards:				
Front (ft.)	30	20	20	20
Side (ft.)	15	15	8 (one side)	15
Rear (ft.)	40	40	40	40

Within the current draft of the Village Preservation Plan it was suggested that a “compromise” of a minimum lot area of 7,500 square feet could potentially be amended and applied as an all-encompassing lot area. However, as has been discussed throughout the entire Village Preservation Plan development, it is problematic to lump all of the village areas into one homogenous district. Just looking at lot area, the range of lot sizes between each area would create a non-conformity nightmare (reference: Exhibit 2a, 2b, 2c Lot Area Maps attached to the end of this memo).

This leaves two options:

Option #1: Creation of a Village Preservation Overlay Zone. This district would allow for the underlying R-2 and VP District to still control and limit the lot area, but control other dimensional and design aspects through the application of overlay requirements. This is context based zoning; specifically setbacks, building mass, building design, and building materials would all be based on those structures surrounding the proposed infill development (i.e. if the homes on a block have an average setback of 20-feet from the ultimate right of way, infill development on that block must comply with that setback, not 30-feet required by R-2 regulations). For infill development additional land development steps will be required as will additional review by the Township, and likely additional expense to a developer or land owner.

Option #2: Creation of a second Village Preservation Zoning District that applies to those areas that are currently R-2. While this will still require some separate requirements for each Village the original Village Preservation District would remain largely unchanged (minor edits are necessary). Even within the two R-2 areas, there is an individual identity and each will require a set of regulations within the zoning district to ensure that the individual identity is protected, but many of the regulations can overlap. Two approaches can be taken with this option, staying with a context based zoning as discussed above or developing regulations that work well for both areas and call out separate requirements when absolutely necessary.

Both options are viable and would ensure that the identity and character of the village areas would be preserved as has been judged as important through the Comprehensive Planning process, the Village Preservation Plan development, and even as identified within the existing Village Preservation District. However, each has potential pitfalls; each could be logistical and administrative difficulties could unduly burden the Township and a homeowner.

I look forward to discussing this further with the Planning Commission.

¹ The chart is based on the smallest lot allowance within the R-2 District, public water and sewer connections are required for this lot area.

Exhibit 2c: Oaks Lot Areas

