

Chapter 9

Recommendations

Willow Grove Naval Air Station

Overview

The Comprehensive Plan has identified the former Willow Grove Naval Air Station as the largest and soon to be vacant property in the Township. The property of approximately 1,100 acres has been identified as being largely surplus land by the Navy. It is understood that approximately 200 acres of the Naval Air Station will be transferred to the Air Force and utilized by the Air National Guard – 111th Fighter Wing. The Comprehensive Plan Update outlines important land use elements that should be considered in the future disposition of the property. An aerial of the former Naval Air Station property follows this section.

Important road corridors have been identified that conceptually could traverse portions of the property in order to provide important connections to the existing road network which have for more than 50 years been cut off from being able to traverse the Township in more logical patterns to destination points. (For obvious reasons access of outside traffic has been precluded from the perimeter, which included vast stretches along Easton Road [Route 611], Maple Avenue, and Horsham Road.) A smaller section along Keith Valley Road has been determined also to be valuable given the recent extension of that road along Samuel Carpenter Park to provide a second potential access to Horsham Road and a viable alternate access to the north and County Line Road. The extension of Moreland Avenue, Norristown Road, Tournament Drive, Precision Road, Privet Road, and the realignment of Maple Avenue should be considered as part of the future planning of the Naval Air Station (NAS) property. Please note the aerial photographic map at page 9-4 which identifies: Area to be retained by the Air Force, surplus land area, and the conceptual alignments of new roadways through portions of the surplus land.

Recommendations

Given the close proximity to Hatboro-Horsham schools, municipal services such as police and fire protection, ample frontage along major roadways, and the general absence of natural environmental restrictions that could preclude development, the Comprehensive Plan Update 2011 recommends that the NAS property be considered as a unique opportunity for smart growth initiatives for mixed use development which may include:

- Future employment centers;

- Key recreation areas;
- Central location for limited retail and business services in the form of a traditional style town center;
- Provide a variety of housing choices that appeal to all age groups, family sizes and varied levels of affordability;
- Future school site(s) to support Township resident needs.

The overall future development master plan should also provide for a network of pedestrian and bicycle trails, which should interconnect the areas identified for future residential use and employment centers both internal and external to the NAS property. The mixed use development approach which consists of the opportunity to mix various land uses within an individual site or even within a single building should be encouraged, subject to the preparation and submission of an overall land development master plan that should be reviewed on a conditional use basis.

Actual permitted densities of future development will be a function of impact studies to be evaluated at the time of submission by Horsham Township, which will determine the sustainability of particular proposals such as:

- Suitability of circulation and traffic signalization plan;
- Preservation of future open space for active and passive recreation;
- Availability of public sewer and water; and
- Suitability of future stormwater management proposals to accommodate stormwater runoff impacts as may be regulated by the Neshaminy Creek and Pennypack Creek Watersheds.

The Comprehensive Plan Update recognizes that an independent committee will recommend re-use options for the surplus land. However, this plan's vision is that there shall be no flight operations of any kind in the Township's future.

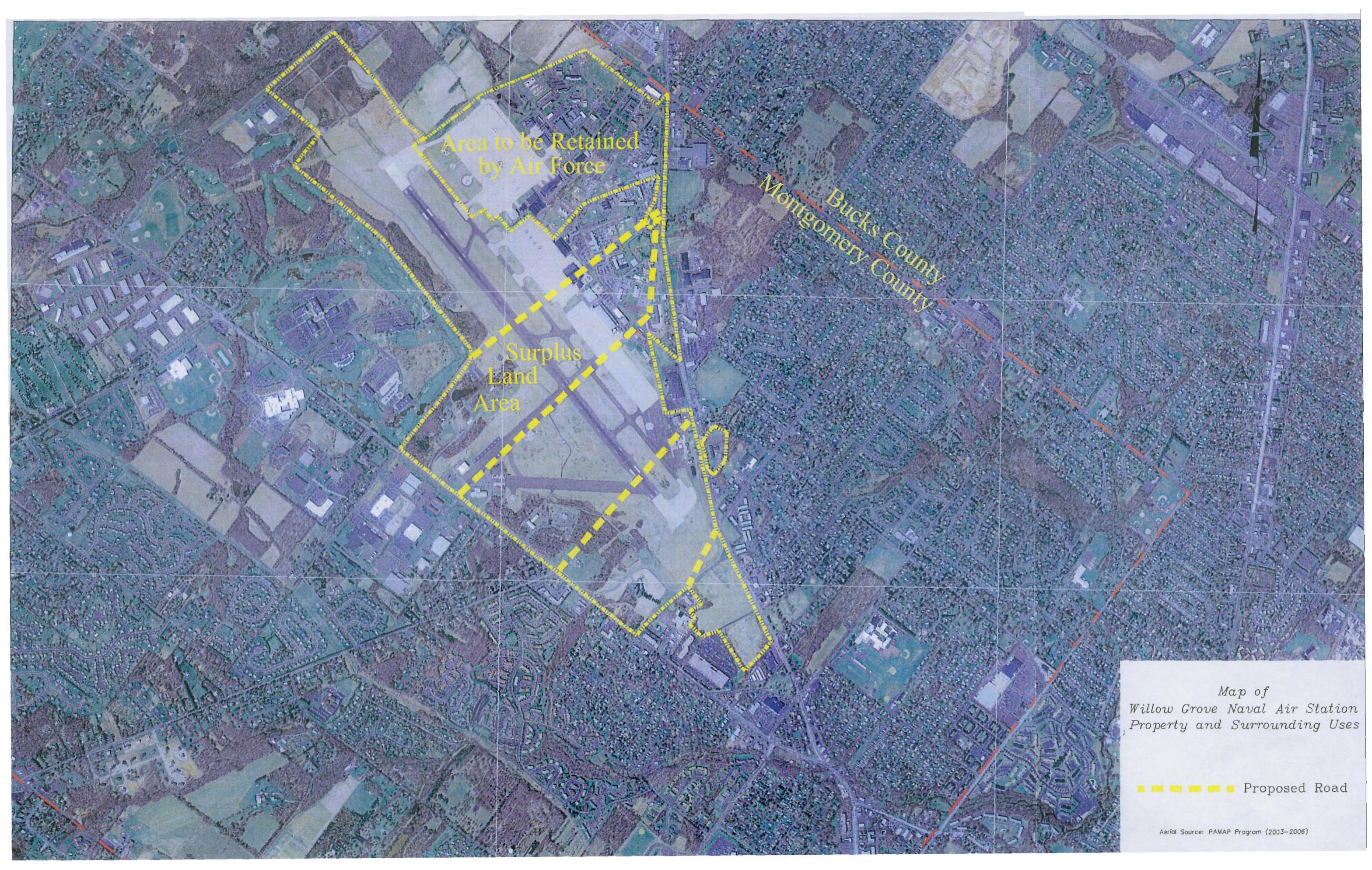
Brief History

In 1942 the Navy Department purchased Pitcairn Field together with adjacent farm land and expanded it from its original 130 acres to its present size of nearly 1,100 acres as the Willow Grove Naval Air Station. Since 1942 much of the everyday life has been affected by the

Willow Grove Naval Air Station. Because it occupies such a large area, the Air Station has been a major factor in Township growth. Flight patterns have limited housing densities in certain areas.¹ Here, many Navy pilots were trained for duty aboard aircraft carriers. The Naval Air Station, Willow Grove, as it is known, has been in continuous service as a Naval Reserve Training Center.² In the 1960s, the 111th Technical Air Support Group (at first a fighter group, then a transport unit) was relocated to the Naval Air Station. During the 1960s the unit flew cargo missions to Vietnam and other parts of the world. Until recently, reserve units from the Army, Navy, Marine Corp, and Air Force used the Naval Air Station. No part of the Township is immune to the noise of daily flight. Over the years, the Navy has established high noise and crash hazard areas at both ends of the runway which has the purpose of limiting intensive residential growth in those areas considered to be sensitive by the Navy.

¹ *Montgomery County, The Second Hundred Years, Volume 1*, copyright 1983, Montgomery County Federation of Historical Societies.

² *Montgomery County, The Second Hundred Years, Volume 2*, copyright 1983, Montgomery County Federation of Historical Societies.



Area to be Retained
by Air Force

Surplus
Land
Area

Bucks County
Montgomery County

Map of
Willow Grove Naval Air Station
Property and Surrounding Uses

Proposed Road

Aerial Source: PAMAP Program (2003-2006)

Easton Road - Route 611 Corridor

Easton Road – the Route 611 corridor extends for a length of nearly three miles through Horsham Township. Along its frontage is some of the oldest, least attractive commercial development in the Township. This is particularly true along the easterly side south of Maple Avenue to the Township boundary.

The 611 corridor presents both visual and functional problems. Poorly marked driveways, inadequate turning lanes, and lack of parking lot buffering/landscaping create both driving hazards and unappealing and poorly maintained streetscape.

Inventory of Existing Conditions

The traditional strip type retail development found along particularly the lower portions of the 611 corridor is frequently characterized by the following:

- Numerous free-standing pole signs close to or within the Route 611 right-of-way.
- Large areas of unlandscaped parking close to the edge of the roadway.
- Few pedestrian improvements.
- Above ground utilities.
- Lighting plans having little or no illuminance control.
- Numerous poorly delineated and closely spaced curb cuts.
- Inferior architectural standards.

Revitalization Goals

A survey and visual inspection of the 611 corridor indicates that numerous commercial conditions need to be improved. These goals are summarized below:

- Target vacant properties for reuse by commercial and business enterprises. Attract new commercial enterprises to older blighted properties.
- Improved traffic flow, including shared and marginal access driveways (greater variety of retailers), and more off-street parking in both convenient as well as aesthetically improved locations buffered from the 611 corridor are needed to improve conditions.

- New development should particularly target the area of Easton Road and a short section of Horsham Road all the way south to the Township boundary with Upper Moreland Township. There is a secondary need for some of the older centers along County Line Road to be revitalized and updated as well.
- Revitalization efforts are needed to improve overall conditions, including the reuse of old sites/buildings, create a greater variety of retailers, new traffic patterns, better design for parking, building facade and streetscape improvements.
- Primary pedestrian access, particularly new sidewalks, should be provided where practicable.



New restaurant revitalizes old site with upgrades to parking, landscaping and an attractive building exterior

Recommendations

An option to be considered could be the creation of a Business Improvement District which would permit the expenditure by property owners along Route 611 to improve road frontage. Tax credits could be provided to offset costs. It is hoped that a Business Improvement District would increase property values and encourage private/public partnership investment for the revitalization of under-utilized and poorly developed properties and thus improve both the image of Horsham Township and improve the appearance and popularity of businesses along the 611 corridor.

In addition, the Township could create a Revitalization Overlay Zoning District which would encourage the consolidation of small poorly planned properties into larger quality master plans. The ordinance would also encourage improved streetscapes, landscaped buffers, improved internal circulation while reducing or sharing curb cuts, and provide density incentives to those applicants who consolidate properties in order to create an overall master plan.

New developments should emulate the recent retail development such as the new Wawa near County Line Road and Horsham Gate at the corner of Blair Mill Road and Welsh Road which are excellent examples that have created both beautification (new streetscapes), improved parking conditions with attractive lighting, and access control along their frontage.

These developments are exemplary in their use of generous landscape buffers along major roads, ornamental lighting and landscaping, building of sidewalk links and dedication of ultimate right-of-way to allow additional turning lanes at intersections. The new Citizens Bank now under construction at Norristown Road and Welsh Road is another example of shifting old parking improvements away from the major street frontage(s) to allow room for significant road widening to improve travel conditions.



View of the new streetscape along the frontage of the new Wawa



View of the new streetscape along the frontage of the Horsham Gate Shopping Center



Before and after photos using enhanced imaging to illustrate how an existing blighted property could be transformed along Easton Road (Route 611)



Maple Glen and Prospectville

Horsham Township has two historic retail/business crossroad villages: Maple Glen and Prospectville. These crossroad retail village centers are not historic in the sense of valuable historic or even period correct buildings, but rather historic in that the crossroad villages are defined by roads that have been in place since the early days of Montgomery County. For example, Welsh Road which runs through the center of Maple Glen is said to have been laid out in the early 1700s and is said to be the oldest road in Horsham Township. Norristown Road was laid out in 1723 from Welsh Road to the Horsham Meetinghouse. Similarly, in connection with Prospectville, Horsham Road was laid out about 1735 and Limekiln Pike was reported to be the first road laid out in Upper Dublin Township south of Horsham in about 1693, became a toll road in 1849, and creates intersections in both Maple Glen and further north at Prospectville.

Maple Glen

Maple Glen obtained its name in 1892 when a Post Office was established there. Previously, the area was known as Pennville. The area has historically been the crossing of three important roadways which continue to this day. The crossroads village of Maple Glen straddles Welsh Road, which is the boundary between Horsham Township and Upper Dublin Township. The larger section of Maple Glen is situated in Upper Dublin Township. Basically, the Maple Glen retail village in Horsham is a single row of lots beginning just east of Norristown Road with the 810 Welsh Road Center (Dunkin' Donuts) retail building which has overflow parking to the rear. Thence, Maple Glen Village extends across two intersections to the now vacant westerly corner at Welsh Road and Limekiln Pike. In between are approximately eight retail buildings (with the former Sunoco corner currently under construction for a new Citizens Bank). Each building is generally attractive (some are much newer than others), have individual and controlled access out to Welsh Road or in the case of corner properties to Norristown Road or Limekiln Pike, many of the frontages have been recently improved and have generous front yard landscape buffers and building setbacks, and provide curbing and some sidewalks.

The Horsham side of Maple Glen Village consists of a variety of retail and personal service businesses that serve the nearby customer base. These include:

- Banking – Citizens Bank and First Niagara;
- Maple Glen Professional Center;
- Chiropractor, CPA, real estate and insurance services;
- Dining – Allegra Grill, La Vita Bella Restaurant, Golden Great Wall, Dunkin' Donuts;

- General business such as: cleaners, beer distributor, CVS, and tailor.

Maple Glen Action Plan

In November 2000 the Upper Dublin Township Board of Commissioners, the Horsham Township Council, and the Maple Glen Village Association jointly funded the preparation of the study to develop a new vision for the future of Maple Glen. It has become known as the *Maple Glen Action Plan*.

The following goals and objectives were established to serve as the basis for the plan of future development.

- **Create a center** for Maple Glen by enhancing and improving the streetscape image of the Village Center through roadway improvements, sidewalk improvement, landscaping, and building facade improvements.
- **Maintain the community scale** of the commercial center. It should remain compact in size and small in scale, serving the daily shopping and service needs of the surrounding community. The existing character of surrounding residential neighborhoods should be protected.
- **Improve pedestrian safety and convenience** in Maple Glen. Use design and density to encourage pedestrian activity, largely through development patterns that allow and encourage customers to park once and walk to multiple businesses. In addition, establish safe pedestrian and bicycle routes that link surrounding neighborhoods to the commercial crossroads.
- **Minimize automobile congestion and safety hazards** posed by high volume of traffic on Welsh Road, Limekiln Pike, and Norristown Road and the conflicting needs of travelers passing through Maple Glen and those making trips to local businesses.
- **Maintain and expand the variety of businesses** that serve the daily convenience and personal service needs of the surrounding community. Active community recruitment of new businesses should target restaurant, deli, bakery, and other store types with limited current presence in the Village Center.
- **Include green spaces and features** within the village center. Landscaped open space can include focal points, resting places for pedestrians, and gathering places. Shade trees and other landscaped areas provide a visual and environmental amenity and can support the image of Maple Glen.

- **Support and encourage regional efforts to provide public transportation opportunities** that would serve the community of Maple Glen.

Three heavily traveled arterial roads define the commercial center of Maple Glen. The study reports a number of factors result in poor vehicular circulation:

- Intersections are closely spaced.
- Access drives to parking lots are too numerous and too close to intersections.
- Signals are not interconnected.
- Turning lanes are absent or inadequate.
- Continuous curb cuts are present at some properties.
- Intersections with angles that vary significantly from 90 degrees.

With regard to pedestrian circulation, the study concluded “there are inadequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities in Maple Glen. Some properties include sidewalks, but most sidewalks are interrupted, so there is no continuous network linking the business of the commercial center to each other, to surrounding residential area, or to nearby regional recreation trails”.

Market Assessment

This study identifies Maple Glen Village Center as a small community-serving commercial district. It serves as a hub for convenience, retail and services to nearby residences, and also captures some limited business from the large volume of travelers passing through the area. In Horsham, the C-2 General Commercial District applies to the village center on the Horsham Township side of Welsh Road. It is observed that the Horsham Township development consists of generally small free-standing buildings providing financial, retail and office services. The buildings are newer than their Upper Dublin counterpart and are generally well positioned in terms of providing adequate parking and controlled access. The sites developed or redeveloped share access and the extension of circulation improvements such as sidewalk links.

Streetscape Improvements

There are coordinated streetscape improvements in Maple Glen. Sidewalks are present only intermittently along roadways. Very few street trees have been planted. Lighting installation is limited and has not been coordinated. For Horsham many of the newer developments have an attractive streetscape. In those areas lacking street trees, they should be added. In addition,

along the entire Horsham Village attractive stylized lighting should be provided as a unifying brand design for Maple Glen. A decorative luminaire detail has been selected for recent use in Upper Dublin and a unified application of this luminaire design is recommended as well for the Horsham side of Welsh Road.

Vision Recommendations

Large scale retail stores should be discouraged and a wider variety of small scale retail and personal service establishments should provide positive benefits.

Circulation

There are changes currently underway such as at the intersection of Norristown Road and Welsh Road which will add turning lanes and improve turning radius, which should help reduce congestion and allow traffic to flow more steadily through Maple Glen. Improved coordination of traffic signals and reducing the number of access points within the district will also be a benefit.

Along with traffic improvements – particularly at intersections - pedestrian linkage is important to connect businesses within the center and to nearby residential communities both in Horsham and Upper Dublin. Decorative crosswalks at major intersections would help refocus on the pedestrian aspect of the new design and road improvements.

The action plan also lists building design principles and suggested design of signs, awnings, and other features to help improve the character and attractiveness of Maple Glen.

It should be said that the properties and buildings in Horsham are generally attractive, positioned on well designed lots, and can be improved with the introduction of some cosmetic and walkability elements such as sidewalks. Uses on the Upper Dublin side tend to be more intense, suffer from buildings and paving positioned very close to the highway, and it would be fair to say are in need of a greater level of revitalization.

Recommendations

Two areas have been identified for possible limited expansion of the Maple Glen Village Center:

1. The first possibility is an area of approximately eight acres, having frontage along Norristown Road and extending behind the existing business properties which front out to Welsh Road or Limekiln Pike. This expansion area should be used in part to support the adjacent five existing buildings which occupy frontage lots. The remaining part of this expansion area should be used to establish a natural permanent buffer between the retail center of Maple Glen and the adjoining residential community.

2. The second possible area of expansion occurs west of Limekiln Pike for those additional two lots having frontage along the north side of Welsh Road, generally opposite the area in Upper Dublin that is proposed for mixed use expansion pursuant to the Maple Glen Revitalization Plan – a recommendation of the Upper Dublin Comprehensive Plan, 2010.

A common shortcoming to the Maple Glen area would be summarized as a lack of overall identity and walkability. Suggested design elements to set a unified theme would be:

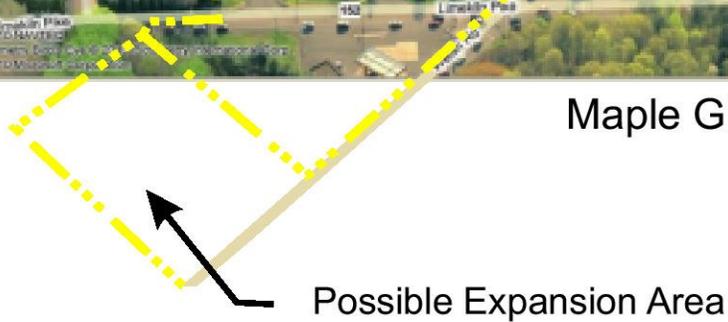
- Sidewalks along the frontage of each business set back a safe distance from the high volumes of traffic which traverse the immediate roadways.
- Streetscape improvements consisting of attractive period lighting, installation of street trees, and attractive gateway signage at each intersection.
- Where practicable, interconnected parallel access between buildings to assist the motorist.
- Create decorative pedestrian street crossings between Horsham Township properties and interconnections across Welsh Road to Upper Dublin Township.



View of CVS frontage along Welsh Road looking east toward Norristown Road with images of suggested ornamental street lamp prototypes added for illustrative purposes. Note that the balance of the streetscape includes landscape buffer along the parking lot, ample parking and driveway setback, attractive green space on both sides of the sidewalk, street trees, and a sidewalk link along the entire frontage. These are the characteristics that should be emulated throughout the Maple Glen Village Center. Perhaps some of the existing signs could be lowered in elevation in order to create more of a “monument style” in order to reduce the overall height and visual impact.



Maple Glen - Horsham Township Side in Yellow



Possible Expansion Area

Prospectville

Prospectville Village Center is formed by the intersection of Limekiln Pike and Horsham Road. Three of the four corners are occupied by businesses. The fourth is the Whitemarsh Memorial Park, a cemetery with chapel, mausoleum, and cemetery plots which occupies approximately 160 acres. McCauley's, a nursery retailer of hardscape and landscape items, occupies the southwest corner along with an attractive historic stone building. However, most of the Prospectville business community is situated east from Limekiln Pike. On the north side it extends to Park Avenue which terminates at the Prospectville United Methodist Church and on the south side starts with the new Wawa and extends eastwardly to the now vacant former Moon Tavern, which is the subject of a redevelopment application for a new restaurant with more than 200 parking spaces.

Prospectville Retail Village

Prospectville has generally experienced gradual modernization and infill over the last decade. Of the three largely underdeveloped properties remaining within the Prospectville area, the proposed Tonelli's Arena Restaurant will assemble a now vacant restaurant property along with an adjoining residential lot to create a unified master plan on approximately four acres. Across the street an older corner property (Tri-County Equipment) awaits redevelopment. At midblock along the south side of Horsham road east of the new Wawa are properties that together could be unified into an attractive retail village-like office/business experience.

Thus far, the frontage improvements associated with the Horsham Road widening and the streetscape have resulted in many of the properties being recently improved with attractive sidewalks, landscaping, controlled access, and a general upgrade in quality over the older original business occupants of Prospectville.

The images which follow illustrate some of the attractive street plans which presently exist along Horsham Road and in general are to be encouraged to continue when new lots are developed/redeveloped.

Much like the Maple Glen Action Plan, the future vision of Prospectville is as a high volume crossroad area within the township. However, the lots are generally small and are intended to accommodate smaller buildings of service, retail and office type uses which would serve the local community. The high volume of pass-by traffic would also frequent businesses in the area.

Possible small expansion areas adjacent to Prospectville include:

1. The retail nursery greenhouse property which occupies the first few lots west of Limekiln Pike opposite Whitemarsh Memorial Park are contributing resources within the Prospectville area. Subsequent reuse/redevelopment of the retail nursery area should emulate the character of the buildings and street frontage improvements which exist east of Limekiln Pike.
2. The conversion of three residential properties between the proposed Tonelli's Arena restaurant and the new Horsham Township Police Station to low density professional office use. These lots should have an attractive street frontage, small signs, controlled access and large buffers along the rear of the properties adjacent to residential neighbors.

Recommendations

Recent development in Prospectville exhibits both attractive streetscape and improved building character. The south side, with the exception of the aforementioned Wawa and Horsham car wash, needs to be upgraded in a manner similar to those recommended for Maple Glen. Suggested design elements to set a unified theme would be:

- Sidewalks along the frontage of each business set back a safe distance from the high volumes of traffic which traverse the immediate highways.
- Streetscape improvements consisting of attractive period lighting, installation of street trees, and attractive gateway signage at each intersection.
- Where practicable, interconnected vehicular access between properties to assist the motorist.



View looking east along Horsham Road at frontage of Horsham Road Retail Center. Most of the north side along Horsham Road in Prospectville has been transformed to an attractive streetscape. In this photo, the ornamental street lamps and banners are added to suggest how the village image could be enhanced. The sidewalk, two rail fence, and landscaping with street trees exist.



View of the new Wawa entrance along Limekiln Pike which exhibits sidewalk, controlled access drive, monument sign, and new street trees.



Prospectville Retail Village - Horsham Township