

UPPER DUBLIN TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

TOWNSHIP INVESTMENT TO ANCHOR TRANSFORMATION OF FORMER PHARMA RESEARCH BUILDING AS FORT WASHINGTON REDEVELOPMENT SHIFTS INTO HIGH GEAR

Fort Washington, PA – Upper Dublin Township is excited to be playing a key role in the revitalization of one of the nation’s very first suburban office parks while also envisioning the future of Township services. Led by the Township’s Board of Commissioners, Upper Dublin just announced plans to purchase for municipal purposes (including the likely new home of its expanding public library) the vacant, two-story structure at 520 Virginia Drive – in the heart of what for more than a half century has been known as the Fort Washington business park.

Township Manager Paul Leonard, who negotiated the purchase on behalf of the Board, explained, “This is the ultimate win-win as we set the stage for the next major phase in taking Fort Washington forward as not just a thriving center of business, but also a modern mixed-use development with unlimited potential.” He added, “Everyone is excited at the prospect of our new, state-of-the-art public library serving as the redevelopment anchor in a centrally located, move-in condition building that once housed research space for a global company.” Further “every department at the 801 Loch Alsh Township building might well improve its service with additional space for better operations.”

Board President Ira S. Tackel, who introduced the resolution authorizing the purchase, stated, “This is a truly unique opportunity for the Township because the building helps us meet so many citizen-focused needs. The fact we can buy it without a Township tax increase – at a price (just over \$5 million) far below its previous selling price (\$7 million in 2007) – makes the overall transaction that much more attractive from a fiscal and long range planning perspective.” He noted that the Board of Commissioners and library officials will be collaborating, including with the Upper Dublin School District, to ensure widespread citizen interaction to help shape the future uses of the 520 Virginia Drive building.

Cheri Fiory, Library Director, commended the Township for its vision in identifying the building as ‘the best option we’ve seen in years to accommodate the needs of a growing library in a very well educated community that is passionate about information and lifelong learning.’” The heavily used library’s needs for more space, parking, and meeting rooms was established by the Township with participation from about 800 residents back in 2009. Fiory went on to say “520 Virginia in many respects is an incredible existing space – from abundant natural light to room for a spacious children’s area, and even a 300-seat auditorium - ideally suited to meet our operational needs for many years to come.”

Mr. Leonard said the acquisition is another example of the benefit of the recently completed storm water management program near the site (the geographic center of the Township) along Virginia Drive. The completion of two large flood control projects, three new bridges and the funding of a new access ramp from the Turnpike interchange are remarkable. “Flooding is no longer a concern there, which means that area is ripe for robust redevelopment consistent with the Township’s new Fort Washington master plan.” He said the recent opening of nearby Lifetime Fitness has also spurred keen interest in the 500-plus acre complex that in recent years has seen a burst in diversified development, including higher education and financial services.

“Site planners from varied sectors tell us this is one of the finest locations for mixed use anywhere in the Mid Atlantic region,” he explained. “Features that made the commercial park so popular starting in the 1950s – including close proximity to Center City, rail, highways and airports – are even more relevant today as a community within the Township emerges on this site. Our goal is to be the model when it comes to redevelopment accessibility, quality, diversity, and sustainability.”

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