

**To: Upper Dublin Board of Commissioners**

**From: UD Facilities Steering Committee**

**Date: March 13, 2018**

**Subject: Recommendations for UDT Properties at 801/805 Loch Alsh Avenue & 520 Virginia Drive**

### **Introduction and Mission**

The Upper Dublin Township Facilities Steering Committee, comprised of 12 residents, one Township Commissioner and the Library Director, was formed by appointment by the President of the BOC on January 9, 2018. The Committee was assigned the mission of contributing to a master plan for Township assets and facilities. Specifically, the Committee was charged with developing recommendations for the future use of Township properties at 520 Virginia Drive and 801/805 Loch Alsh Avenue to meet Township department and community needs. In pursuing its mission, the Committee toured both facilities. It listened to detailed presentations from Township Department Heads, staff, and external consultants to gather information about the Township's growing space needs. Additionally, it reviewed several concept designs, including cost estimates, to determine how best to maximize the use of the two facilities.

This Report states the Committee's recommendations for master planning and using these two Upper Dublin Township properties. We agree that the Virginia Drive facility will, over time, provide significant value to the entire Township community as it meets both immediate and long-term space needs for a variety of identified programmatic goals and future growth.

Among the many factors the Committee considered:

- The existing Township Building at 801/805 Loch Alsh Avenue is crowded throughout all departments. The building's redesign 15 years ago did not fully anticipate the growing demand for Township services. As identified in the 2016 Master Plan, there is a need for more and reconfigured workspaces, additional storage, and public meeting rooms.
- The use of the Township community rooms has dramatically increased. There has been a 50% increase since 2011, due to increased meeting demands, sales of other Township facilities formerly used for Parks & Recreation programming, and expansion of library programming. The rooms are fully occupied on most weeknights. Currently, Township programs are being cancelled to accommodate meetings with higher priority. The March 2016 Twining Valley Feasibility Study identified the need for additional meeting space as a priority for the community.
- The community's use of the Library is rapidly expanding and, based on the 2009 and 2016 facilities studies, requires between 20,000 – 25,000 more square feet to meet community demand. When the Library moved into its current location in 1992, its collections contained 45,186 materials; residents borrowed 97,905 items annually; 45,659 people visited the Library, and 544 people attended library programs. In stark contrast, today's library is packed with 114,643 items; lends 345,120 items annually, receives 169,540 visits through its doors, and sees 20,972 people attend library programs
- The daily working relationship between the Departments of Administration, Finance, Code Enforcement, Engineering, Parks & Recreation, and Public Works suggests that these Departments should remain co-located. The most feasible way to continue benefiting from the efficiencies of co-locating these departments is to keep them together on the Loch Alsh Avenue campus.
- The Public Works office space requires easy access to the garage and maintenance facilities and therefore is best located on the site of the garage facility.

- The Parks and Recreation Department regularly interfaces with the Public Works Department. These Departments share garage storage space and vehicle maintenance resources. Also, Parks & Recreation schedules, maintains, and uses the community rooms currently located at the Loch Alsh Avenue building for internal and external programming. It is most cost effective to maintain these facilities in their current location and to keep the Parks & Recreation Department in the same building.
- Although the Loch Alsh Avenue building may need upgrades and maintenance in the long-term, it was designed as a Police and Municipal Office facility and can continue to function as designed with minimal improvements.
- The Virginia Drive building offers the most likely and appropriate opportunity to generate revenue by renting space to select tenants.

### Recommendations

After reviewing past Township studies and the work of the administrative/consultant team, **the Committee recommends relocating the Library to 520 Virginia Drive for the following reasons:**

- The library's space would increase by approximately 20,000 square feet, providing opportunities to expand services to the community.
- The architectural elements of the building are conducive to a library use due to its existing 300+ seat auditorium, light-filled atrium, ample parking, and café.
- The building is centrally located within the Township.
- A library at this location is compatible with the vision for this area, which includes re-zoning for mixed use to attract future retail and housing to the Greater Fort Washington District.

In addition, **the Committee recommends that the renovation of 520 Virginia Drive and the re-purposing of spaces vacated by the Library for other Township needs at 801/805 Loch Alsh Avenue be performed in phases.** The establishment of a phased Master Plan for these facilities provides the most cost-effective and efficient approach to addressing the Township's needs for the coming decades. **The Committee finds that moving the library to 520 Virginia Drive is the only feasible first phase** because the space needs of the other Township departments cannot be addressed until the current Library space is vacated.

**The Committee agrees that the existing Township complex at 801/805 Loch Alsh Avenue should remain the governmental nexus** for Upper Dublin Township and that it requires continued reinvestment. This complex contains substantial community investments that cannot be easily relocated, such as the Police facility, Township garage and vehicle maintenance facilities, and refueling stations (including gasoline and diesel fuel tanks). Home to multiple Township departments, including Township administration, the Police Department, Code Enforcement, and Parks & Recreation, the Township building is more than 15 years old and needs to grow with the growing needs of our Township. The adjacent public works facilities are over 30 years old and do not provide adequate space for the quality of the services provided.

**Specifically, the Steering Committee recommends to the BOC the following:**

1. That a functionally excellent library at 520 Virginia Drive be designed, which prioritizes the best of library services today, but also looks to the future. We suggest that due to financial constraints, portions of the building be leased or deferred for future use to avoid incurring renovation costs now. Components of the design that may be desirable to grant-funding agencies or private donors should be identified. Design components that are not considered essential for maintaining our excellent library services should be deferred for later phases until funding can be secured.

2. That efforts be undertaken to identify and pursue grants, naming opportunities, and other sources of private funding to help defray costs. In that regard, we believe that the Library is more likely to attract outside funding than are other Township operations.
3. That to maximize the financial benefits, efforts be undertaken immediately to identify and pursue revenue-generating tenants for portions of 520 Virginia Drive not immediately needed for Township purposes. Design of the Library within the Virginia Drive building should be undertaken with a view to promoting attractiveness to potential tenants. Attention must be paid to security and compatibility with Township usage.
4. That improving the accessibility of 520 Virginia Drive to Township residents is highly desirable. We recommend that 520 be further integrated into the adjacent neighborhoods and the Camp Hill & Highland Athletic Complex (CHAC), and further connected with roadways and trails to ensure that all Township residents can safely and conveniently visit the new facility. Specifically, we recommend that a paved driveway and walkway be constructed on land already owned by the Township, connecting the 520 Parking Lot with Highland Avenue. While access is the priority, designs should consider how to limit cut through traffic from the Office Park to the adjacent neighborhoods.
5. That efforts be made to address at least some of the space needs of the other Township departments in the first phase at 801/805 Loch Alsh Avenue. Specifically, relieving overcrowding in the Police Department, Code Enforcement, and Parks & Recreation should be an immediate priority. At a minimum, providing direct access to the vacated Library space to the Police Department, allocating some of that space for storage, and providing space for large projects (such as event preparation), should occur promptly, even if a full renovation must be deferred due to budgetary restrictions.
6. That with the Library vacated, the Township should explore whether a driveway from 801/805 Loch Alsh Avenue out to Highland Avenue and Route 309 would enable more efficient Public Works and Police services.
7. That consideration be given to addressing a space for students to use after school hours either in 801/805 Loch Alsh Avenue, or by facilitating transportation to the new Library.
8. That opportunities for resource-sharing between Upper Dublin Township and Upper Dublin School District be explored, whether it be to support each entity's fleet of vehicles or acquiring/developing additional land to expand the public works facilities in the long-term as budget allows. While the two have separate missions, we firmly believe that a cooperative effort on all or some of these programmatic functions would have long-term cost savings for Upper Dublin's taxpayers.
9. That a complete analysis of the utility cost and energy efficiency of all reformed facilities be completed with an eye toward cost savings and prudent funding of upgrades, perhaps with state grants and financing.
10. That the BOC appoint a committee, including Township staff and community members, to address community communication regarding this project. To maintain community support for the project, there should be continuous visible progress at both locations.
11. That the Master Plan be reviewed annually and revised as appropriate by the BOC, Township staff, and community representatives to assure sensitivity to evolving needs, priorities and funding constraints.

The Committee acknowledges that it will take considerable time and money to fully implement the Master Plan. We recommend that the BOC work with the administrative staff to prioritize the master plan recommendations, implementing them strategically based on funding availability, grants, and energy savings opportunities, starting with the relocation of the library to 520 Virginia Drive. Phases of the project should be addressed as funding becomes available through several routes including: the Township's annual budget process, borrowing, one-time or single-incident revenue streams (e.g. – the real estate transfer tax), sponsorships and naming/dedication opportunities, tenant revenue, and other funding opportunities.

The Committee expresses its appreciation for the painstaking work of the Township Administrative Staff and Consultants, both before the formation of the Committee, and during our deliberations.

Respectfully submitted:

**Upper Dublin Township Facilities Steering Committee**

Steven Stone – Chairperson  
Commissioner Rebecca Gushue  
Library Director Cheri Fiory  
Rachel Goldsmith  
Peter Hahn  
Joseph M. Koenig  
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## Appendices

Appendix A: Master Plan History, Needs Assessment, Options for Township Facilities (January 25, 2018)

Appendix B: Draft Conceptual Designs for the Library at 520 Virginia Drive with Budget (February 15, 2018)

Appendix C: Draft Conceptual Design for 801/805 Loch Alsh with Budget (March 1, 2018)

In addition to the supporting documents appended here, the following documents are also essential reading to understand the recommendations contained in this document. These additional documents include:

*Upper Dublin Township Comprehensive Plan (2010)*

<https://www.upperdublin.net/information/plan/>

*Upper Dublin Township Municipal Campus Master Plan (2016)*

<https://www.upperdublin.net/master-plan-rfp-support-documents/>

*Inventing the Future of the Upper Dublin Public Library: A Space Planning Study (2009)*

<https://www.upperdublin.net/master-plan-rfp-support-documents/>

*Upper Dublin Township Open Space and Environmental Resource Protection Plan (2005)*

<https://www.upperdublin.net/wp->

[content/uploads/filebase/parks & recreation/open space/open space plan & inventory/2005-OSP-Complete-Text.pdf](https://www.upperdublin.net/wp-content/uploads/filebase/parks_&_recreation/open_space/open_space_plan_&_inventory/2005-OSP-Complete-Text.pdf)