



Holdrum House in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

# **MUNICIPAL MASTER PLAN AND PERIODIC REEXAMINATION REPORT**

## **TOWNSHIP OF RIVER VALE BERGEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

Prepared For:  
**The Township of River Vale Planning Board**

Prepared By:  
**Hakim Associates**  
**Landscape Architecture, Professional Planning,**  
**& Natural Resource Consulting**  
**68 Dean Street**  
**Harrington Park, New Jersey 07640**

In Association with:  
**Stuart Turner & Associates**  
**Planning and Development Consultants**  
**2 Executive Blvd., Suite 401**  
**Suffern, New York 10901**

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ADOPTED July 5, 2005 (Resolution memorialized July 18, 2005)

The original document was appropriately signed and sealed on July 21, 2005 in accordance with Chapter 41 of Title 13 of the State Board of Professional Planners.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND PERIODIC REEXAMINATION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Township of River Vale is located in Bergen County, New Jersey (see Figure 1), in the state's northeastern corner. Within Bergen County, River Vale is located at its northern extremity, in the County's northeastern quadrant (see Figure 2).

The Municipal Land Use Law (Chapter 291, Laws of New Jersey, 1975, as amended, hereinafter known as "MLUL") establishes the legal framework for municipal planning, land development and zoning functions throughout the State and provides that local zoning regulations be consistent with an adopted land use element. This statute recognizes the importance of planning as an on going, continuing function of local government by mandating the periodic reexamination of municipal master plans and development regulations. Specifically, Section 89 of the Law, as most recently amended, states as follows:

*"89. Periodic Reexamination. The governing body shall, at least every six years, provide for a general reexamination of its master plan and development regulations by the Planning Board which shall prepare and adopt by resolution a report on the findings of such reexamination, a copy of which report and resolution shall be sent to the County Planning Board and the municipal clerk of each adjoining municipality. The first such reexamination shall have been completed by August 1, 1982. The next reexamination shall be completed by August 1, 1988. Thereafter, a reexamination shall be completed at least once every six years from the previous reexamination."*

*"The reexamination report shall state:*

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.*
- b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.*
- c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.*
- d. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.*
- e. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L.1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality."*

To the best of our knowledge, River Vale first began to develop a Master Plan in 1961, culminating in its adoption in 1964. This document was prepared in accordance with the then effective N.J. Municipal

# New Jersey



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Source:  
Bergen County Geographic Information Systems  
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Map Prepared March 2005 by ST&A

A north arrow pointing upwards and a scale bar showing 0, 15, and 15 miles. Below the scale bar, it reads "1 inch = 15 miles".

NJ County Boundaries  
 Bergen County

**Figure 1 - Location Map**

**River Vale Master Plan**  
**Township of River Vale, NJ**



Planning Act of 1953. Then, in 1972, the Township commenced an assessment of the original master plan, and published its new master plan in 1975. This master plan was prepared to be in compliance with N.J. Municipal Land Use Law, as were the timeliness of its periodic reexaminations that were prepared in 1978, 1982, 1988, 1994, and 2000. The substance of these reexaminations was not all in compliance, however. The 2000 Master Plan Reexamination recommended that a new comprehensive master plan be prepared. Throughout this period of time, an array of relevant planning documents have been prepared as individual documents, and these have been not been consolidated into a comprehensive document that expresses the varying land use objectives of the Township. Including the original MLUL master plan, these documents include such topics as:

1. 1975 River Vale and the Region
2. 1975 Existing Land Use and Zoning
3. 1975 Population
4. 1975 Fiscal Conditions
5. 1975 Planning Goals and Policies
6. 1975 Residential Development
7. 1975 Business Development
8. 1975 Open Space and Recreation
9. 1975 Traffic Circulation
10. 1975 Public Facilities and Utilities
11. 1975 Community Character and Appearance
12. 1975 Plan Implementation
13. 1978 recommended rezoning of the River Vale Country Club
14. 1978 recommended repeal of conservation development, residential cluster, and multi-family housing recommendations for the Brookside Avenue – Rivervale Road Triangle.
15. 1978 recommended repeal of conservation development as an acceptable concept or planning technique for implementation and inclusion in River Vale's Zoning Ordinance.
16. 1982 recommended repeal of 1978 River Vale Country Club rezoning recommendation.
17. 1982 recommendation for single family zoning for the Brookside Avenue – Rivervale Road Triangle.
18. 1982 miscellaneous rezoning and improvement recommendations in the Four Corners area.
19. 1988 Housing Element and Fair Share Housing Plan
20. 1988 Recycling Plan
21. 1988 Addendum to Reexamination designating the Mesker's site for Affordable Senior Citizens Housing.
22. 1995 Petition for Substantive Certification from COAH, and revisions to River Vale's Fair Share Housing Plan
23. 2000 Periodic Reexamination Report of the Master Plan with various general recommendations.

Up until 2004, River Vale did not participate in the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) Cross Examination process. In this, the SDRP's third round, the township has appointed a Cross Acceptance Representative and has been actively participating, thereby increasing the extent to which it can control its own land use destiny. To date there have been two SDRP Preliminary Cross Acceptance reports. No Natural Resource Inventory or Open Space Preservation Strategies Report been prepared. There have, however, been Fair Share Housing Plan modifications, and environmental protection ordinances, and a successful N.J. Green Acres open space acquisition grant request, among others. Ordinance examples include the enactment of both an Environmental Impact Study Ordinance and a Tree Preservation and Removal Ordinance. Other ordinances under consideration include building height modifications, the establishment of a tree bank, and the establishment of a sidewalk bank. The township has also embarked on a conceptual central business district aesthetic improvement plan. These documents together will mold future land use and development within the township, and will establish a revised framework for future land

use planning efforts. In terms of public participation, River Vale Township has established a Historic Preservation Commission, a Facilities Planning Committee, an Advisory Shade Tree Committee, and an Open Space Advisory Committee. To date, no Environmental Commission has been created.

This current effort attempts to create one contemporary and comprehensive document that fully expresses the Township's Land Use positions at the present time in a variety of arenas. Other Elements are possible, however, and the Township may pursue these at some future date.

The primary objectives in preparing this document include:

1. A reexamination of the development factors and pressures that have changed since 2000, recognizing that River Vale serves as one of the primary steward communities of the watershed for most of Bergen County and beyond;
2. An assessment of current planning policies in terms of these changes;
3. A reaffirmation, expansion, and (in a few cases) a redirection of the Township's planning and development objectives; and
4. The substantiation of actions taken in recent years by the Township to protect its natural resources and environmentally sensitive lands.

This Master Plan report is the product of a collaborative effort of the Planning Board, the Mayor and Council, the Township's major stakeholders, civic groups, service and volunteer organizations, key members of various Township departments, the Board of Adjustment, the general public, and other Township consultants. It has been subjected to public scrutiny on several occasions that included an initial public input and visioning session, and public session progress reporting, among others. As a result, the land use visions expressed in this document have broad based community support. This report is also intended to satisfy the Township's legislative mandate under the Municipal Land Use Law.

## **1.2 PERIODIC REEXAMINATION**

*1.2.1 The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.*

In 2000, another Consultant assisted the River Vale Planning Board with the preparation of its most recent Master Plan reexamination. In all, ten problems and objectives were identified. They were:

1. The Township should continue to pursue satisfying their affordable housing obligations under COAH.
2. The Township does not have an approved Land Use map or plan, and this should be prepared and its compatibility with zoning achieved.
3. The Township should continue to pursue the acquisition of the few remaining developable properties.
4. The Township should prepare an inventory of all remaining undeveloped parcels for their suitability to serve open space and/or recreation needs. Funding feasibility should be addressed, as well as alternative mechanisms for open space preservation.
5. School facilities should be reviewed to determine if they are adequate to serve the increase in school enrollment that is projected through 2009.
6. The Township is facing increasing pressure to accept incompatible infill developments. Bulk standards should be reviewed and revised to provide the controls necessary to render these developments more compatible with their neighborhoods.

7. The redevelopment of the nursing home site on Westwood Avenue should be examined with the objective of providing for an assisted care/independent living use.
8. An effort should be made to create a more cohesive downtown environment in the Four Corners. This should include an inventory of available space and businesses so that a variety of new businesses can be attracted. This should also include a cohesive streetscape design for aesthetic improvement.
9. A new municipal Master Plan should be prepared, complete with a revised and updated set of Goals and Objectives. The Plan should be consistent with the State Plan.
10. The Township should take advantage of its Historic Preservation Commission and include a Historic Preservation Element in its new Master Plan.

*1.2.2 The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.*

1. Affordable housing... This problem has been reduced by the construction of the Pine Lake Village multifamily housing development that provides the Township with twelve credits of affordable housing units. This problem has increased as well, unfortunately, since in 2001 the Township purchased 18.1 acres of COAH-approved affordable housing land for open space purposes. This land is included on the Township's COAH Substantive Certification inventory.
2. Land Use map or plan... The Township now has a Land Use/Land Cover map with 1995 data, as prepared by NJDEP. This is no substitute for an existing land use map, however. The Township is in the process of preparing a proposed land use map.
3. Acquire the few remaining developable properties... This problem has been reduced as the Township is pursuing a few of these properties. Two such properties have already been purchased along the south side of Poplar Road.
4. Inventory remaining undeveloped parcels for open space and/or recreation needs... This problem has been reduced as the Township has prepared an Open Space and Recreation Plan in compliance with N.J. Green Acres standards.
5. Review school facilities... The facilities and capacities available in River Vale's three public schools were evaluated, a referendum was passed, and an expansion and improvement project has almost been completed.
6. Bulk standards for infill development... These bulk standards have been reviewed as part of the first new master plan effort since 1975.
7. Promote an assisted care/independent living use for the redevelopment of the Westwood Avenue nursing home site... This site has been approved for the redevelopment of a Jewish Home for the Aged.
8. Create a more cohesive downtown environment... Redevelopment and infill development is underway in the Four Corners central business district of River Vale, and this is a positive sign for the Township's business community. In addition, some initial planning for streetscape improvements has taken place. Guidelines for additional redevelopment are also being formulated. The missing piece of the puzzle is that the mix of businesses is still undesirable, and higher quality businesses of a more diverse nature still need to be attracted to the Township.
9. Prepare a new municipal Master Plan... This document is the Township's positive response to that recommendation.
10. Historic Preservation Element... A Historic Preservation Element is included in this new master plan. The Township's Historic Preservation Commission was helpful in gathering the information contained therein.

*1.2.3 The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.*

Chapter 2 “Goals and Objectives” of this Master Plan fully expresses the current vision of the Township in a manner that amends the Goals and Objectives as expressed in the 1975 Township of River Vale Master Plan. A summary of the most significant changes is as follows:

1. The Township wishes to stabilize its housing development by reinforcing the single family residential character of the community as a whole.
2. The Township wishes to promote the protection of neighborhoods with buffers, by avoiding the incompatible land uses, by encouraging their maintenance and care, and by discouraging traffic through residential neighborhoods.
3. The Township wishes to support the N.J. State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
4. The Township wishes to promote historic conservation, preservation and adaptive reuse.
5. The Township wishes to support the continuation of the Township’s three golf courses.
6. The Township wishes to provide for the appropriate collection, retention and disposal of surface runoff.
7. The Township wishes to promote ease and convenience of non-motorized transportation.
8. The Township wishes to provide, monitor and enforce the Township’s land use regulations.
9. The Township wishes to discourage the development of new small roadways.
10. The Township wishes to encourage the sharing and regionalization of services, while honoring the tradition of home rule.
11. The Township wishes to encourage the implementation and use of a central electronic database, including a GIS system.
12. The Township wishes to place limits on the ever-increasing size of structures on lots.

*1.2.4 The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.*

The specific changes recommended for the master plan are enumerated in Chapters 1 and 2 of this master plan, and within the “planning” sections of each master plan element. Larger scale development regulation changes have already been implemented (e.g. Conservation District, Tree Preservation and Removal ordinance, Environmental Impact Statement ordinance, Stormwater Regulations ordinance), and this document serves to support those enactments by verifying their consistency with Township goals and objectives. Once this document has been adopted and implemented, subsequent Township master plan studies should consist of new elements as necessary or desired, amendments as may arise, and periodic reexaminations and updates in accordance with the requirements of the NJ Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL).

*1.2.5 The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L.1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality."*

The satisfaction of this periodic reexamination requirement can be found in section 13.5 of this Master Plan.

## 2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Municipal Land Use Law for the State of New Jersey (MLUL) provides that one of the required components of a municipal Master Plan shall be "A statement of objectives, principles, assumptions, policies and standards upon which the constituent proposals for the physical, economic and social development of the municipality are based" (hereinafter the "Statement").

River Vale's Planning Objectives that were defined in the 1975 Master Plan were based on various background studies and investigations relating to the physical, social and economic characteristics of the Township at that time, as well as on several opportunities for public input. These included the broad topics of balanced growth and opportunity for choice, land use and support facilities, community centers, open space and natural resource preservation, community character and appearance, and public awareness and participation. While these all remain valid categories, today's master plan goals and objectives need to reach beyond the limitations of a municipality's boundaries. Therefore, in addition to restating those 1975 goals and objectives that still have merit in 2005 terms, this master plan's goals and objectives also include such considerations as regional development trends, community desires and aspirations, and higher authority statutory requirements.

Since 1975, only the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination specifically addressed the Township's goals and objectives, reaffirming all of them at that time with the statement that they all "...remain in effect." Each of River Vale's other Master Plan Updates (1978, 1982, 1994 and 2000) have been silent on the Township's goals and objectives, and by their silence effectively reaffirmed the statement of 1975. Based on the status of the Township's development, and its character and characteristics that we desire to retain and enhance, the Planning Board has determined that it is now time that they be revisited. In addition, the Goals and Objectives have, for the first time, been located in the front of the Master Plan document. This is most appropriate, since they establish a philosophy for the Elements of the Master Plan that follow.

The goals and objectives of River Vale's Master Plan for this year 2005 include the following:

1. To Preserve the Natural Environment including the preservation of wetlands and their transition areas, river and stream corridors, flood plains, surface waters including reservoirs, steep slopes, sensitive soils, natural areas, remaining open spaces, forested lands, wildlife habitat, and vistas. For the purpose of this goal, "to preserve" shall mean to protect against both the actual disturbance of sites that contain these features, and activities on nearby sites that could adversely affect their natural quality.
2. To Stabilize the Township's Housing Development, recognizing that River Vale has provided the opportunity for extensive variety of housing opportunities in the recent past, including the fulfillment of its affordable housing obligations, and now desires to reinforce the single family residential character of the community as a whole.
3. To Provide Facilities for Senior Citizens, Youth, and other Community Members, to the extent they have become deficient and the former indoor facility obsolete. These may include provisions of facilities for recreation and congregation, transportation, and their health and welfare. Potential sites should be identified and secured.
4. To Promote the Protection of Neighborhoods, by establishing and enforcing sufficient buffer areas between residential and non-residential land uses, by avoiding the introduction of incompatible adjacent land uses, by encouraging the maintenance and care of the residences, environment and properties, and by discouraging traffic through residential neighborhoods.
5. To Support the N.J. State Development and Redevelopment Plan, by participating in the Cross Acceptance process and striving to bring land use policies and local ordinances into consistency with the State Plan.

6. To Promote Historic Conservation, Preservation and Adaptive Reuse Where Appropriate.
7. To Provide for the Quantity, Quality and Availability of Parks and Open Space, to include adding, improving, and assuring proper distribution and accessibility for active and passive recreational facilities, neighborhood parks, and open space to protect environmentally sensitive areas. This also includes making better use of all parks, and seeking a site for a municipal swimming pool.
8. To Support the Continuation of the Township's Three Golf Courses, to the extent that they provide semi-public, private, and potentially public recreation opportunities and vast open spaces.
9. To Provide Community Services, adequate in their nature, extent, and land allocation, and equitably available throughout the Township, to include the addition of new services where a clear deficiency becomes identified.
10. To Provide for Appropriate Collection, Retention and Disposal of Surface Runoff, in a manner that will minimize the hazards of flooding, erosion, and water quality degradation, and comply with the new N.J. Storm Water Regulations.
11. To Promote the Compatibility of Land Development, so that new development and redevelopment is located in areas, and configured in fashions, that serve to lessen the cost of servicing development and encourage the efficient expenditure of public funds.
12. To Encourage Quality of Design in the Landscape and the Maintenance of Established Community Character, to protect established neighborhoods, instill quality into new land uses, preserve existing trees and other natural features in new land uses, avoid repetitious or inappropriate development, and encourage the introduction of high quality focal points within the community.
13. To Promote the Continued Maintenance and Rehabilitation of the Township's housing stock, support facilities and utilities. This includes the Township's desire to place limits on the ever-increasing size of structures on lots, both in new development and re-development.
14. To Recognize and Protect the Watershed Lands, and the drainage basins of the reservoir lands within the Township. In cooperation with neighboring towns, recognize (a) their status as the region's primary source of potable water, and (b) their strategic regional location within one of the last remaining contiguous blocks of open space, providing locally rare high quality wildlife habitat.
15. To Promote Ease and Convenience of Non-Motorized Transportation, including the expanded provisions of sidewalks, walking paths, bicycle paths, lanes and routes, to interconnect residential neighborhoods with public facilities, and to meet the needs of Township residents.
16. To Provide, Monitor and Enforce the Township's Land Use Regulations, in order to promote compatibility with and implement River Vale's land use plan element.
17. To Provide Support and Reinforcement for the Central Business District, known locally as Four Corners, to encourage its continued viability and full occupancy, to attract high quality retail and office establishments, to encourage the coordinated commercial redevelopment of remnant residential sites within the district with neighboring sites, to promote its patronage by local area shoppers, and to enable affordable dwelling units as a secondary land use and a creative partial solution to meeting the township's affordable housing obligation, all while at the same time confining its geographic boundaries to their approximate current limits.
18. To Continue Pursuing our Central Business District Aesthetic and Pedestrian Enhancement Program, one that will make shopping downtown more pleasant and convenient, and will support the efforts of our business community and encourage continued private investment in downtown improvements.
19. To Promote Safety within Roadway Rights-of-Way, by identifying deficiencies in the local roadway network, its connections to the regional road and transit systems, key intersections, and by controlling vehicular speeds and movements through the implementation of contemporary traffic calming techniques.
20. To Discourage the Development of New Small Roadways, particularly short culs-de-sac, whose purposes are limited to meeting zoning requirements, yet provide service to very few properties.
21. To Encourage the Sharing of Services, promoting the regionalization of services with other towns when they provide benefits to River Vale.

22. To Maintain the Township's Infrastructure so it continues to provide the services and capabilities intended for each of them including the facilities and structures, roadways, parks, recreation facilities, sewer system, sidewalks, walkways and paths, and bridges.
23. To Encourage the Implementation and Use of a Central Electronic Database for the Township's files and records using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) where applicable. The many Departments, Commissions, Boards and Committees are to be encouraged to avail themselves of the same common services and systems.
24. To Support Higher Levels of Public Participation and Awareness, by supporting the use and expansion of the Township's website, and to promote public participation on Township boards, commissions and committees, and in Township affairs.

In their broad perspective, these objectives as modified continue to be valid and the Township continues to pursue them. These goals and objectives form the basis for the land use, housing, urban design, circulation, community facilities, parks and recreation, conservation, open space and recreation, and historic preservation elements of the Master Plan.

### 3. LAND USE PLAN ELEMENT

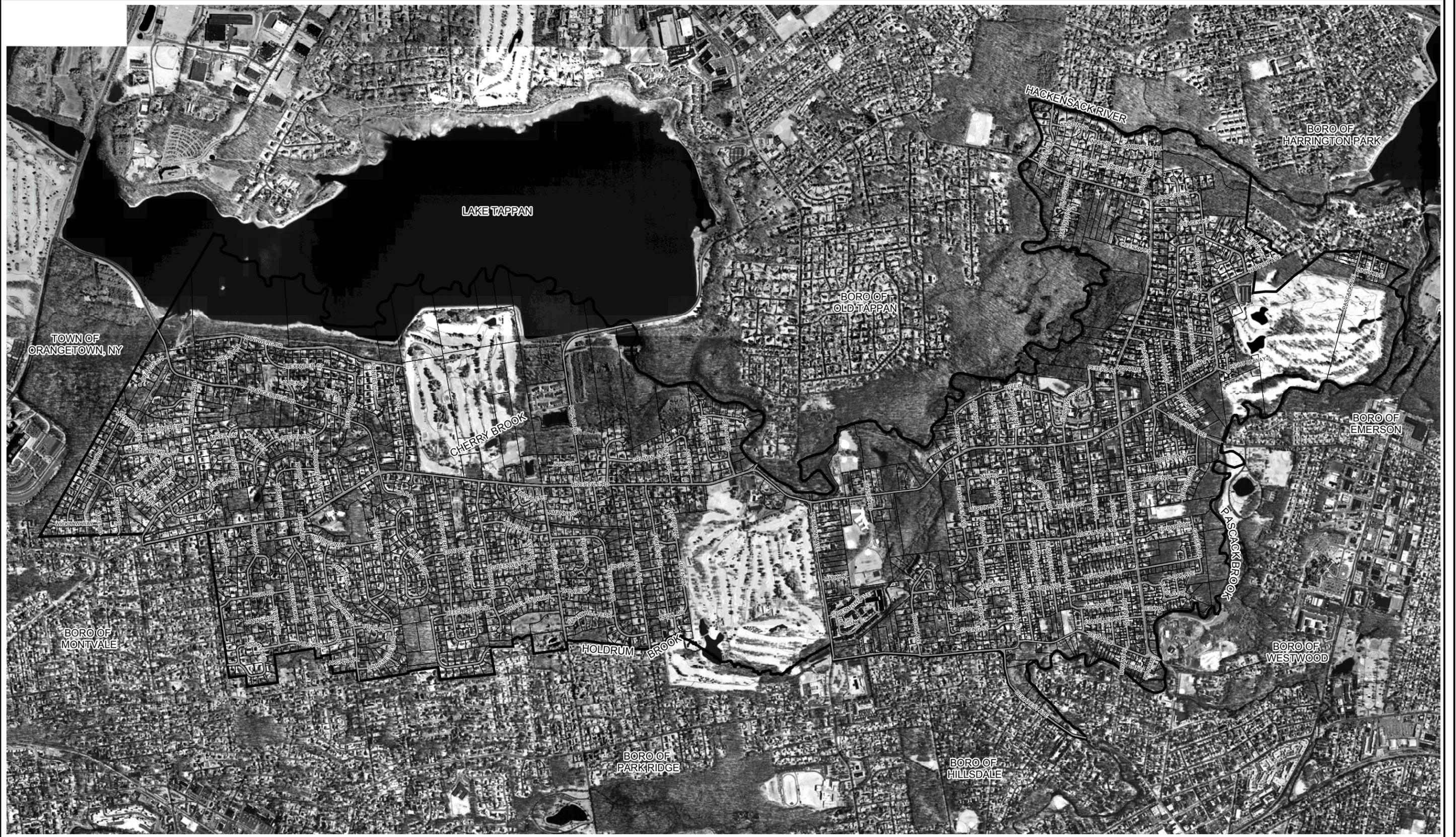
#### 3.1. BACKGROUND

##### 3.1.1 Existing Land Use

Based upon several field reconnaissances, and discussions with Planning Board members and other Township officials, it has been confirmed that a few land use changes have occurred since the adoption of the 2000 Periodic Reexamination. While there has been a moderate quantity of land use changes since 2000, only a few have been significant and have altered the land use pattern of River Vale to some noticeable degree. Despite these few developments of significance, the general pattern of land use has not changed appreciably, as new developments have followed established land use patterns. The following is a description of the types and quantities of the various land uses as they currently exist within the Township. It should be noted that the percentages of each land use may exceed 100%, and the acreages may exceed River Vale's 2,764 acres. This is because certain land uses fall into two or more of the categories that are described herein. Existing land use patterns can be discerned by viewing Figure 3 Aerial Photograph.

**3.1.1.1 Residential** – River Vale has been, and remains today, a residential community dominated by single-family lots, the great majority of which range in size from 10,000 to 18,000 square feet. New locations of much less area of the Township have been zoned for lots of approximately 40,000 square feet in size. These newer single-family development areas in the Township are located adjacent to Lake Tappan and the Hackensack River, and are characterized by property that is more highly encumbered for development by extensive natural resources. If unencumbered land within these areas is proposed for development, the Township envisions larger homes on large lots (one acre and larger each). This lower density represents the recognition of the environmental sensitivity of the lands, and the desire to offer a wider variety of housing options, and they exist within the "A-1" Residential building zone. Only a few lots have been developed in this fashion on these lands to date. All together, residential land uses comprise approximately 1,492 acres or 54% of River Vale's land area (see also "Housing Element").

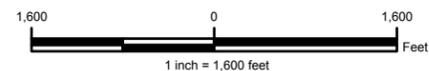
Some newer residential development has taken place within the low to moderate density "A" Residence building zones, which is the dominant township building zone. These low to moderate density residences are the predominant land use throughout the northern half of the township, throughout the central narrow



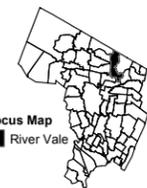
**HAKIM ASSOCIATES**  
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 68 Dean Street, Harrington Park, NJ 07640  
 In Association With

**STUART TURNER & ASSOCIATES**  
 Planning and Development Consultants  
 2 Executive Blvd., Suite 401, Suffern, NY 10901

Source:  
 Bergen County Geographic Information Systems  
 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
 Map Prepared March 2005 by ST&A



-  Parcels
-  Roads



Locus Map

■ River Vale

**Figure 3 - Aerial Photograph**  
 River Vale Master Plan

Township of River Vale, New Jersey

neck of the township north of the commercial district, surrounding the eastern end of the Westwood Avenue corridor, and nearby the Pascack Brook corridor. The oldest residential neighborhoods are located in the southwestern portion of the Township, surrounding the western end of the Westwood Avenue corridor. Modestly sized houses generally characterize these older neighborhoods on moderate and low to moderate density lots (10,000 to 18,000 square feet each), and exist primarily within the “B” and “A” Residence districts. These observations have been substantiated by data from the most recent 2000 U.S. Census, information gathered during the recent 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan Reexamination Report (SDRP), discussions with township officials, and our windshield surveys.

Other single-family residential developments are either under construction, or they were recently approved with construction about to commence. Significant new subdivisions and residential developments include Abbe Court along the east side of Orangeburgh Road, the extension of Handwerg Drive to the south, Sunrise Court along the west side of Handwerg Drive, a development along the east side of Rivervale Road between Red Oak Drive and Aster Lane, a subdivision along the north side of Prospect Avenue near the border of Park Ridge Borough, and Ellen Lane Court along the east side of Coopers Lane.

According to the 2000 U.S. census, approximately 86% of the 3,275 dwelling units in River Vale are single-family homes on individual lots (see “Housing Plan Element”). The remaining dwelling units are comprised of attached single-family homes, two-family houses, three and four family houses, and multifamily houses of five or more dwelling units each. This includes the sixty multi-family housing units constructed in 1999 in the Pine Lake Village development along the north side of Poplar Road. These represent the most significant land use changes since the 1990 U.S. Census in residential patterns within the Township. In 1990, only 84% of River Vale’s 3,132 dwelling units were in single-family homes on individual lots. This means that River Vale permitted multifamily residences to be developed in the 1980’s when the demand first surfaced, and since that time developers have predominantly pursued single-family developments on individual lots.

Two-family and one family attached dwelling units amount to fewer than 200 units in River Vale. There are over 40 three and four family dwelling units in the township, and approximately 280 multifamily dwellings in buildings of five or more each. Three of these larger multi-family residential developments exist within the Township, all of which were in place at the time of the 2000 Master Plan Reexamination. The first of these is situated along Collignon Way and River Drive, on the northeast side of the central business district. The second is known as Holiday Farms, and is situated south of Piermont Avenue and east of Cedar Lane. The third is known as Pine Lake Village, and this development consists of 60 dwelling units along the northern side of Poplar Road east of the Cherry Brook. Two other multi-family developments are currently proposed and being reviewed by the Planning Board. Both are known as Cherry Wood, and are also situated along the north side of Poplar Road. Between them, 78 multifamily dwelling units are proposed. Pine Lake Village and the two Cherry Wood sites would support most of River Vale’s affordable housing obligation as prescribed by the N.J. Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). The Township received other credits for their Spectrum for Living development for the disabled. As a result of these and other designated sites, River Vale was granted Substantive Certification status (see “Housing Element” within this document).

Home Businesses (occupations). One significant change that has been occurring within River Vale, as it has in many other area communities, has been the proliferation of home offices. This phenomenon was precipitated by a number of factors. For example, during the recession that occurred in the early 1990’s, and again in year 2000, many white-collar office workers lost their jobs with few prospects for new employment opportunities. These skilled individuals soon discovered that small home-based businesses were a viable method of earning an income. The availability and advanced state of personal computers, the internet, fax machines and other technological improvements supported such ventures. Neither River Vale residents nor its officials have expressed opposition to these businesses, provided that the residential character of the

neighborhoods within which they are situated are not altered or adversely impacted. To this end, River Vale has recognized and permitted these businesses to exist within residential zones, provided they are on a County road and adhere to local controls to ensure compatibility. These controls govern the limiting of employees, signage, and the nature of the business. They also prohibit outdoor storage, exterior display, and the sale of goods.

The State of New Jersey has legislation addressing home-based businesses, which supports their existence with reasonable controls. The Township should review whether or not their county road frontage requirement is consistent with state law. The Township should also consider regulating deliveries, lighting, noise, as well as hazardous materials for home based businesses.

**3.1.1.2 Senior Citizens and Developmentally Disabled Residential and Healthcare** – There are three facilities within River Vale that fall into this category, and are specifically targeted to address various needs of these people. The oldest is the Jewish Home nursing home, located along the eastern end of Westwood Avenue, which offers full-time nursing care and medical care to the most needy senior citizens. Their old facility was recently demolished and an updated new facility is currently under construction. It is recommended that its use be continued. The second is the Spectrum for Living facility along the south side of Rivervale Road, just west of the intersection of Ivy Lane. This facility offers modified independent living for the developmentally disabled. The third facility is known as New Concepts for Living, and it is located along the west side of Rivervale Road, north of Thurnau Drive, across from the Bergen Hills Golf Course. This facility serves the developmentally disabled. These represent less than one percent of River Vale’s total land area.

**3.1.1.3 Commercial (Retail)** - Commercial retail development is located primarily in the central area of the township, locally known as the Four Corners, and is principally confined to within the “C” Commercial building zone. This district extends in all four directions from the intersection of Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue. The principal retail community shopping location is the shopping plaza in the northwest quadrant of Four Corners, one lot to the west. This facility is currently undergoing renovation and aesthetic upgrades. A large drug store has replaced half of the former supermarket, leaving the township without any supermarket for the first time in recent history. New infill redevelopment is currently taking place throughout the rest of this district, bringing with it a revitalizing spirit to River Vale’s downtown. This redevelopment is generally replacing the few remaining residential land uses that exist within the commercial zone, and is consistent with township objectives. A couple of additional “general” retail uses exist along Rivervale Road in the vicinity of the Bergen Hills Golf Course (e.g. country store, plant nursery). One non-conforming commercial use in the form of a catering hall and banquet facility is situated south on Rivervale Road, across from Turbell Parkway, north of the Valley Brook Country Club, and west of the Spectrum for Living facility. This facility has also recently undergone extensive rehabilitation, expansion and upgrading. Based on our observations, commercial parking needs appear to have been adequately addressed, with each retail establishment providing adequate parking provisions. Commercially developed retail sites represent approximately 55 acres or 2% of River Vale’s total land area.

**3.1.1.4 Commercial (Office)** - Office development is limited, and occurs exclusively within the Four Corners “C” commercial district. These facilities are well established, and contribute to the quality of life within the township. According to discussions with township officials, they cause little in the way of adverse impacts. The opportunity for office development also exists at the southeast corner of Cedar Lane and Piermont Avenue. Commercially developed office sites represent less than 1% of River Vale’s total land area.

**3.1.1.5 Industrial** – Industrial land use conventionally refers to manufacturing (heavy and light) and warehousing (or storage of materials). There are no conventional industrial land uses that still occur within River Vale. Additionally, storage facilities and other operations that are conventionally considered to be

industrial in nature are not permitted in the “C” Commercial district, the “PO” Professional Office district, or the “EO” Executive Office district. The one former industrial use, the Premier Products Building, was formerly located along the east side of River Vale Road near the intersection with Prospect Avenue, ceased its operations many years ago.

**3.1.1.6 Churches and Cemeteries** – Two religious facilities exist within River Vale. They include the Cornerstone Bible Church at the intersection of Rivervale Road and Sargent Road, and the Community Evangelical Free Church at the intersection of Rivervale Road and New Street. The seven one time township cemetery uses now number five, and these five have not changed since 2000. According to the kakiak patent, the remains from the other two: the former Blauvelt-Haring and Flierboom Family cemeteries, were exhumed and relocated out of the Township, so these cemeteries no longer exist despite their inclusion on the Bergen County inventory. Some cemeteries have not been reported in recent master plans. This is because several of the more historic cemeteries no longer have any surface markings, making them difficult to locate. They were identified in the Bergen County Historic Sites Survey and Cemetery Inventory (see also “Historic Preservation Element”). The Blauvelt-Haring cemetery was situated in the northeast corner of the Edgewood Country Club, across Rivervale Road from Aster Lane. The Flierboom Family cemetery was situated along Rivervale Road near Town Hall. The St. Andrews cemetery is situated along Cedar Lane just north of Cedar Place. The Haring Farm cemetery is situated at the end of Haring Farm Court. The Holdrum family cemetery is reportedly situated in the northwest corner of the Edgewood Country Club. The Perry Family cemetery is situated near Handweg Drive, south of Debchar Court. And last but not least, the Baylor Massacre Burial Site County Historic Site is situated along Rivervale Road between Old Tappan Road and Red Oak Drive. Together these represent about 1% of River Vale’s total land area.

**3.1.1.7 Historic Sites** – These are discussed in the Historic Preservation Element of this Master Plan.

**3.1.1.8 Lake Tappan Reservoir and Watershed Lands** – (See also “Conservation Plan Element”). Since all lands within River Vale township drain into waterways that feed either the Lake Tappan Reservoir or the Oradell Reservoir, the entire township could be considered “watershed” since it is all technically within the lands scientifically defined as watershed. Watershed lands include all properties owned long-term by the water company for the purpose of watershed protection that were not a part of the lawsuit described herein. In contemporary terminology, “watershed lands” also include those lands that fall within the second two of the three categories of land resulting from the settlement agreement of a lawsuit brought by the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and Bergen Save the Watershed Action Network (SWAN) against the Hackensack Water Company. The first (or predominantly excluded) category includes those lands that were made available for development as a result of the settlement agreement, that could be transferred and/or sold, and that were no longer considered crucial for water quality protection. Except for the areas of these latter sites that fall within the C-1 water quality anti-degradation setbacks of the NJDEP 2004 Stormwater Regulations, these lands are no longer considered to be watershed lands in contemporary terminology.

The second category includes those lands that surround the Lake Tappan Reservoir, the Hackensack River downstream of the reservoir, the Pascack Brook, the Cherry Brook, the Musquapsink Brook, and the Holdrum Brook. These lands are considered crucial for water quality protection, and were ordered returned to the water company (now United Water Resources) to hold as “forever green”, protected by deed restrictions that run with the land against any use other than watershed use. The third and final category of land was the golf courses on land owned by the water company. It was determined that these properties should remain forever golf course, never to be developed and also protected by deed restrictions, and as such are rightfully considered watershed lands. These township lands include only the Valley Brook Golf Course. It is important to note that while the eastern extremity of the Bergen Hills Golf Course that is leased from United Water Company enjoys some protections, it is not protected by deed restriction, as is the Valley Brook Golf Course.

The aerial extent of the reservoir within the Township is approximately 122 acres or only 4 percent of River Vale's land area. Since the overwhelming majority of the reservoir is situated in neighboring Old Tappan Borough, it represents only a minor land use within River Vale while its overall impact on the Township is significantly greater. The watershed lands as defined above amount to another 812 acres (29%), so that between them they comprise fully one-third (33 percent) of River Vale's land area. The C-1 waters provision of the N.J. Stormwater Regulations adopted in February 2004 currently protect the Township's watershed lands for distances up to 300 feet from NJDEP C-1 designated surface waters.

The Lake Tappan Reservoir is a part of a larger water supply system associated with the Hackensack River. United Water Resources (UWR) of Harrington Park, a water supply company that was purchased by a French water company in recent years, wholly owns all of the following reservoirs:

- The Oradell Reservoir (the terminal reservoir of the system)
- The Lake Tappan Reservoir
- The Woodcliff Lake Reservoir, and
- The Lake Deforest Reservoir

The Oradell Reservoir (into which Lake Tappan drains) has a watershed drainage basin that encompasses approximately 113 square miles, and extends as far south as the headwaters of the Tenakill Brook in Tenafly, as far north as the headwaters of the Hackensack River in Haverstraw, as far east as the Palisades ridge from Alpine to Upper Nyack, and as far west as a ridge which runs from Paramus to Pomona and Mt. Ivy. The water from this system serves 60 communities in most of Bergen County and parts of Hudson County, New Jersey. The population of this service area exceeds 750,000 people. Another 250,000 people are served within Rockland County, New York. In addition to these resident customers, business and industry also depend on a clean and stable supply of potable water. The average demand is in excess of 100 million gallons per day, with the peak daily demand exceeding 160 million gallons.

**3.1.1.9 Public Facilities** – Public facilities (including parks, Township facilities and schools) comprise approximately 145 acres or about 5 percent of the land area within River Vale. The parks are discussed in the Recreation Plan Element, the Conservation Plan Element, and the Green Acres Open Space and Recreation Plan Element of this Master Plan. The Township facilities and schools are discussed in the Community Facilities Plan Element.

**3.1.1.10 Utility Properties** – Lands dedicated strictly for local and regional utility purposes (e.g. Gas and Electric Companies, sanitary sewerage facilities, Tenneco Gas Transmission sites) amount to only about 12 acres, or less than one half of one percent of River Vale's total land area.

**3.1.1.11 Agricultural Lands** – Despite River Vale's past history of abundant agriculture, no agricultural lands remain in the Township.

**3.1.1.12 Vacant Lands** – There are several vacant parcels remaining in River Vale that are larger than a couple of single family lots. Some are not likely to be developed due to the presence of environmental constraints. Development can be expected on several of the others in the foreseeable future. Still other parcels are utility company-owned, and either there are no known plans for their development, or they are protected by State statute or deed restriction. The larger Township-owned parcels have not been included in this list because the Township has committed to not disposing of its property for economic development by others. The following is a brief synopsis of these lands, which are located on the Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces figure:

1. Parcels not likely to be developed due to environmental constraints (total approximately 31 acres):
  - a. West of Orangeburgh Road, north and east of Loretta Drive, and south of Blue Hill Road. Together these parcels are approximately 10 acres in size, and are constrained by regulated wetlands.
  - b. South side of Holdrum School on Rivervale Road. This almost 5 acre parcel is constrained by wetlands and a flood plain.
  - c. North side of west end of Prospect Avenue. This 4-1/2 acre site has one house, and is dominated by a large lake along the mainline of Holdrum Brook. The site also contains wetlands.
  - d. West side of Cedar Lane opposite Cedar Place. This almost 3 acre parcel supports one house and is environmentally constrained against more intensive development.
  - e. West side of Rivervale Road south of Tiffany Avenue. This 6-1/2 acre site is dominated by wetlands, and supports a stream and flood plain and is not likely to be developed.
  - f. Southeast side of Brookside Avenue and abutting the Borough of Westwood. This is a 2+ acre site that is dominated by wetlands, and supports a stream and flood plain and is not likely to be developed.
  
2. Parcels that could expect development in the foreseeable future (total approximately 305 acres):
  - a. West end of Graney Drive, east of Rivervale Road. This parcel is approximately 2 acres in size, and is only marginally constrained by freshwater wetlands.
  - b. South side of Woodside School on Rivervale Road. These two parcels measure approximately 4 acres in size, and are unconstrained by regulated natural resources. One house exists.
  - c. Demarest Avenue west of Cedar Lane. These two partially developed parcels measure approximately 5 acres in size, and are constrained in their rear by a pond, the Pascack Brook, a flood plain, and wetlands.
  - d. Bergen Hills Golf Course on the east side of Rivervale Road and south of James Lane. This is a 99 acre parcel that is threatened by development interests, even though it is partially constrained by a variety of natural resources.
  - e. Edgewood Country Club on the west side of Rivervale Road and north of Piermont Avenue. This is a 157-1/2 acre parcel that is constrained by very few natural resources. This site, or portions of this site, could be readily developed.
  - f. East side of Rivervale Road near Prospect Avenue. This 3-1/2 acre former industrial site is prime for development.
  - g. North side of Poplar Road east of John Street. This 5 acre site is currently the subject of a development proposal. About one-half of the property is constrained for development.
  - h. North side of Poplar Road west of reservoir. This 10 acre site is currently the subject of a development proposal. About one-quarter of the property is constrained for development.
  - i. East end of Stanley Place. This 10-1/2 acre parcel is currently the subject of a development proposal. About one-third of the property is constrained for development.
  - j. Southwest corner of Demarest Avenue and Cedar Lane. This 4 acre parcel with one house is prime for more intensive development. Its rear portion is environmentally constrained.
  - k. West side of Westwood Ave, south of Blauvelt Street. This is a 5 acre site with few environmental constraints, except for its western end near the Hackensack River.
  
3. Utility Company owned vacant lands with no known plans for development (total approximately 460 acres):
  - a. Lands along and including the Lake Tappan Reservoir that are owned by United Water and protected from development. These lands form almost the entire eastern boundary of the

Township, and they amount to approximately 315 acres. The Bergen Hills Golf Course currently uses approximately 33.3 of those acres for golf purposes.

- b. Lands along the Pascack Brook that are owned by United Water and protected from development. Except for the County parklands in this area, these lands form almost the entire southern boundary of the Township, and they amount to approximately 138 acres. The Valley Brook Golf Course currently uses approximately 130 of those acres for golf purposes.
- c. Along the north side of Echo Glen Avenue and west of Rivervale Road. This parcel is approximately 5 acres in size, is owned by United Water and is protected by deed restriction.
- d. Along the east side of High Road north of Whitenack Road. This 1-1/2 acre parcel supports a water tank owned by United Water Resources.

**3.1.1.13 Constructed (or under construction) New Developments Since 2000** – Aside from single-family residential major subdivisions, the most significant new developments that have taken place (or are under construction) since the Master Plan Reexamination of 2000 have been redevelopments and expansions. These include such projects as:

- Pine Lake Village multifamily residential development along Poplar Road that replaced a long-standing cabin/camp facility;
- Florentine Gardens expansion along Rivervale Road;
- Valley National Bank, as a downtown central business district (“Four Corners”) revitalizing redevelopment on the northeast corner of Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue;
- Jewish Home nursing home, a redevelopment along the eastern end of Westwood Avenue;
- Lee retail stores, as a downtown central business district (“Four Corners”) revitalizing redevelopment in the southwest quadrant of Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue; and
- Baseline Associates retail stores, as a downtown central business district (“Four Corners”) revitalizing redevelopment in the southwest quadrant of Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue.

Several new single-family residential subdivisions have been constructed on formerly underdeveloped property. These latter subdivisions are situated in several different locations:

- Sunrise subdivision (Sunrise Court) off Handweg Drive;
- Haring Farm Court subdivision off Rivervale Road;
- Cedar Place subdivision off Cedar Lane;
- Peterson Farms subdivision off Prospect Avenue;
- Blue Hill Estates off Orangeburg Road;
- Heck subdivision off Roberge Drive;
- Birch Estates off Cleveland Avenue; and
- Latz subdivision off Coopers Lane.

### **3.1.2 Existing Zoning**

**3.1.2.1 Conflicts with Land Use** – River Vale is fortunate in that there exist very few non-conforming land uses. This is despite the fact that the township’s zoning contains a few strange anomalies among an otherwise relatively uniform pattern of consolidated districts. Intrusions are infrequent, and most district boundaries have been long established. This has led to a scarcity of zoning conflicts. Those that do exist predate River Vale’s zoning ordinance, and have become assimilated into their neighborhoods and generally accepted by Township residents. For example, a few commercial facilities are situated along Rivervale Road within the A Residence District. To mitigate such conflicts, heavily landscaped buffer strips are required along all common lot lines that separate incompatible adjacent land uses.

**3.1.2.2 Zoning Districts** - There are thirteen (13) Zoning Districts within River Vale. Of these, ten (10) are suitably sizeable with enough range of land use activity and planning objectives to be warranted and justifiable. For all thirteen, their permitted uses and significant dimensional limitations and geographic boundaries will be discussed in the Proposed Land Use Plan section of this document. For the other three small districts, recommendations for their incorporation into more substantial existing districts will also be discussed in the Proposed Land Use Plan. The 2000 Reexamination Report recommended the determination of bulk and design standards that could protect the Township's neighborhoods from incompatible development. This has not been accomplished, although the Township has recently embarked on addressing this issue in the area of limiting maximum building heights. The following is a summary of the existing districts' locations, their basic regulations, and the recommendations from 2000 that have not yet been acted upon:

**3.1.2.2.1 A Residence District.** With a few exceptions, this zone encompasses the great majority of the northern half of the township, principally north of the Edgewood Country Club. It also encompasses the majority of property south of the Edgewood Country Club, north of Westwood Avenue, and west of the Hackensack River. The final large block of the "A" Residence Zone surrounds the eastern end of the Westwood Avenue corridor as it approaches the Borough of Old Tappan. A smaller district of "A" zone is situated at the southern end of Richard Drive and Bergen Place. This is the largest residential zoning category within the township. This zone requires a minimum residential lot size of 18,000 square feet. There have been no changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

**3.1.2.2.2 A-1 Residence District.** This zone is limited to locations adjacent to Lake Tappan and the Hackensack River, and their major tributaries to the west. It is also the zoning category that would govern any redevelopment of the Valley Brook Golf Club and the Edgewood Country Club. This zone requires a minimum residential lot size of 40,000 square feet. There have been no changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

**3.1.2.2.3 B Residence District.** A very small piece of this zone exists at the terminus of Pascack Avenue and is only accessible through the Borough of Harrington Park. This bulk of this zone is confined to two neighborhoods and the corridor that connects them. The Pascack Brook, and Cleveland, Rockland and Westwood Avenues encircle the first neighborhood. The Pascack Brook Golf Course, Terbell Parkway, Westwood Avenue and Dorette Street are the approximate boundaries of the second neighborhood. More of this zone connects the two neighborhoods along the south side of Westwood Avenue. A minimum residential lot size of 10,000 square feet is required within this district. Uniquely among the township's residential districts, the regulations require minimum acceptable building sizes. There have been no changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

**3.1.2.2.4 MF 20 Residence District.** This small zone is limited to the Hollywood Farms development along the south side of Piermont Avenue and east of the Holdrum Brook. It permits multi-family dwellings at a density not to exceed twenty (20) units per acre, on sites no smaller than twenty acres. Other limitations also govern this zone, with minimum dwelling unit size among them. There have been no changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

**3.1.2.2.5 PRD Planned Residential District.** This zone is confined to one area of the township, and is situated northeast of the central business district along Collignon Way and River Drive. This small residential zoning category requires a minimum lot size of five (5) acres. Single-family detached houses, townhouses, senior citizen housing, and multi-family dwellings are all permitted in this district. Numerous other dimensional limitations govern this district, including minimum

unit sizes and provisions for open space and recreation. There have been no changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

3.1.2.2.6 SH Senior Housing District. This zone is one of the two smallest residential zones within the Township, and is situated along the east side of Rivervale Road at the intersection of Prospect Avenue. The district requires a minimum lot size of three (3) acres, and a density not to exceed fifteen (15) units per acre. Housing for senior citizens is the primary permitted use. Golf courses are also permitted. Conditional uses include assisted living, assisted senior housing, adult retirement communities, congregate care apartment housing, continuing care and nursing homes. Other dimensional limitations govern this zone. There is also an affordable housing requirement that would assist the Township in meeting its COAH obligations. There have been no changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

3.1.2.2.7 HDD Housing District for the Disabled. This zone is the other of the two smallest residential zones within the Township, and is situated along the south side of Rivervale Road east of Terbell Parkway. The district requires a minimum lot size of 1.25 acres, and a density not to exceed fifteen (15) units per acre. Housing for the disabled is the only permitted use, and there are no permissible Conditional uses. Other dimensional limitations govern this zone. There is a low and moderate income requirement that should assist the Township in meeting its COAH obligations. There have been no changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

3.1.2.2.8 SFAH Single-Family Affordable Housing District. This zoning district is generally situated south of Westwood Avenue, west of Richard Drive, north of Geiger Drive and east of the Pascack Brook. A minimum residential lot size of 6,000 square feet is required within this district. There is a low and moderate income requirement that assists the Township in meeting its COAH obligations. There have been no changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

3.1.2.2.9 MFAH Multifamily Affordable Housing District. This zoning district is located along the Poplar Road corridor, both to the north and south of the roadway. Those district properties to the south of Poplar Road were purchased by the Township for open space purposes in 2002, and as such now carry this zoning district designation inappropriately. The effective MFAH sites are north of Poplar Road, between John Street and the Lake Tappan Reservoir. This residential zoning category requires a minimum tract size of five (5) acres; except that parcels two acres and larger are permissible if they are non-contiguous and under the same ownership. Internal minimum lot sizes are prescribed for specific allowable development types. Single-family semidetached houses, single family detached houses, multifamily townhouses, multifamily multiplex buildings, and recreation facilities are all permitted in this district. Numerous dimensional and buffer limitations govern this district, including provisions for open space and recreation. There is a low and moderate income requirement that assists the Township in meeting its COAH obligations. There have been a few changes since 2000 within this zone, all of which were modified in 2002. One is the permissibility of providing for recreation facilities off site by means of a monetary payment into a Township recreation fund. Another was the low and moderate income dwelling unit set aside requirements, and the permissibility of entering into a regional contribution agreement with a receiving community for up to half of the required set aside. A third was the removal of detention basin construction from the required mean high-water level setback.

3.1.2.2.10 C Commercial District. River Vale's Commercial District encompasses all four corners the central business district at the intersection of Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue. Hence the familiar local term "Four Corners". Permissible land uses include retail establishments of many types, schools, catering establishments, limited office use, personal service establishments, studios, restaurants, tradesman shops, agencies, clubs, houses of worship, community facility buildings, and

water supply use. No minimum lot size is prescribed. The 2000 Reexamination Report recommended the preparation of a downtown plan for this zoning district. A CBD revitalization program is currently being designed and prepared. There have been no other changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

3.1.2.2.11 EO Executive Office District. This zone is confined to one area of the township, and is situated east of Rivervale Road on the site currently occupied by the Bergen Hills Golf Club. Permissible land uses include office buildings, country clubs, golf courses, watershed and reservoir areas, municipal facilities, and research facilities that are subsidiary to office uses. Each lot must contain a minimum of 25 acres. Other dimensional limitations also apply. While it did not specifically mention this almost 100-acre site, the 2000 reexamination recommended the preservation of open space as a Township priority, and this site has long been a prime target for acquisition. Talks are currently underway. The only changes since 2000 was the sale of this golf facility to a new owner.

3.1.2.2.12 PO Professional Office District. This zone is the smallest non-residential zone in the Township, and is situated in the southeast corner of the intersection of Cedar Lane and Piermont Avenue. The district requires a minimum lot size of 1.5 acres. Building height, number of stories, building coverage and other dimensional limitations apply. There have been no changes of significance since 2000 within this zone.

3.1.2.2.13 CN Conservation District. This zoning district occurs in one consolidated area surrounding Poplar Road in the vicinity of the Lake Tappan Reservoir. It also occurs on two other small parcels: one at Beechcrest Park, and the other south of Prospect Avenue abutting the Holdrum Brook. Through its permitted land uses, the Conservation District conserves natural resources. The CN permits only conservation uses, including limited passive recreation facilities. Under special circumstances, water quality management facilities may be permitted.

## **3.2 PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN**

### **3.2.1 Introduction**

The land use plan element is the most tangible and visible element of the Master Plan. This element should not stand alone, however, as it relies on each of the other Master Plan Elements to form a cohesive, complimentary and complete guide for future development within the Township. The land use plan element is the element which provides the basis for changes to the municipal zoning and subdivision regulations, and which can have the most far-reaching impacts upon the residents of the community. In view of this importance, and the fact that River Vale is an almost fully developed community, recommended changes to the Land Use Plan Element are few, and each is very carefully thought out.

Past land use policies within River Vale have served the community well. River Vale has a desirable mix of land uses, and for the most part they are located in reasonably consolidated districts, thereby minimizing incidents of incompatibility and conflicts between adjoining land uses. River Vale's past land use policies have helped to shape a desirable and attractive community, while at the same time satisfying the Township's legally required statutory requirements. One of the most recognizable results of these policies is that River Vale's property values are rising rapidly, and demand is high. This condition has caused deficiencies in certain land use categories that serve to support and sustain the high quality of life that Township's residents have come to enjoy. In some cases, these deficiencies are caused simply by the increase in population's strain on finite resources. In other cases, there is little available land to accommodate some of the new and

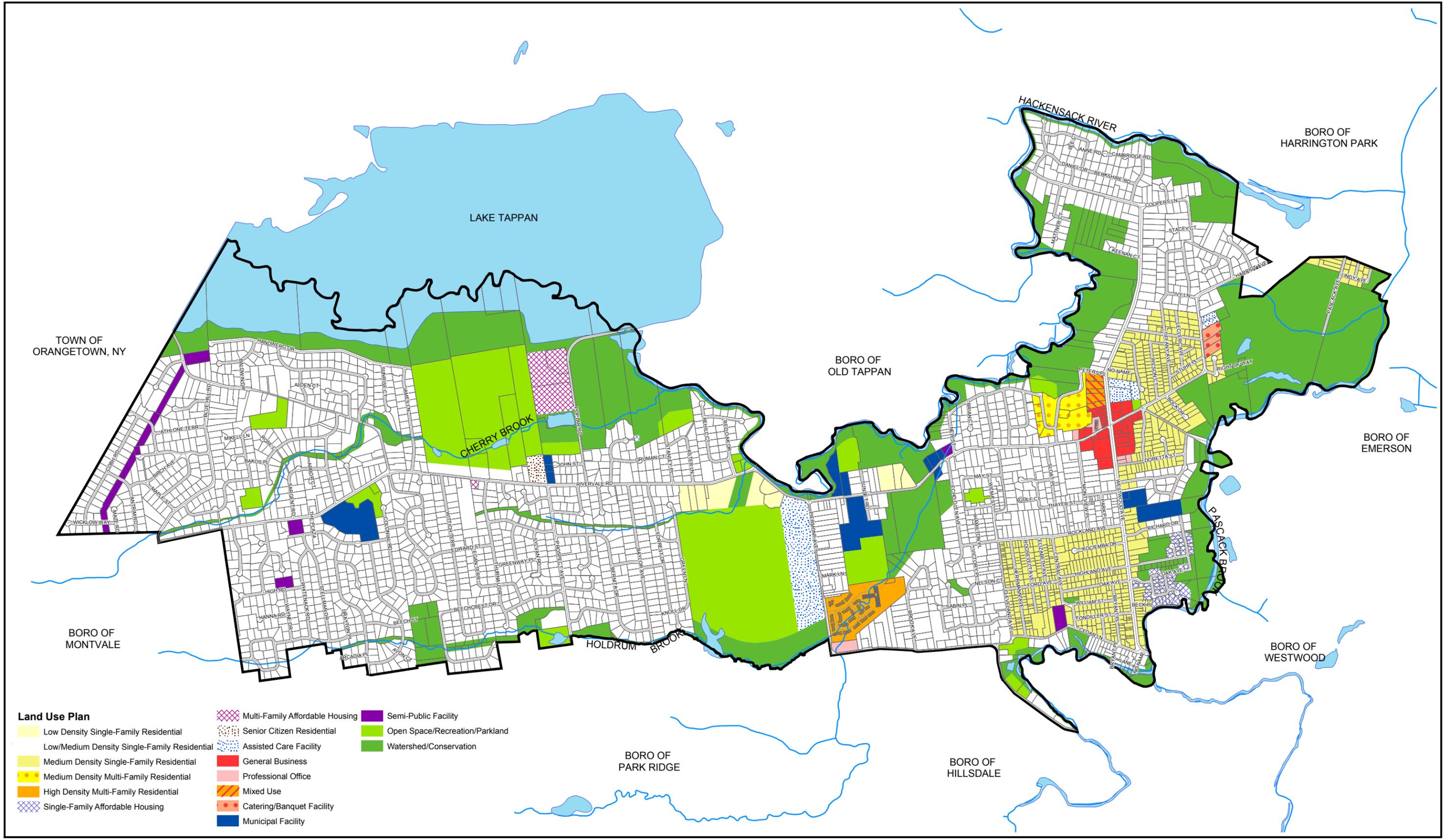
contemporary land uses that were previously considered to be unimportant but have become desirable in recent years. Therefore:

**The primary purpose in preparing this new Master Plan is to recognize these deficiencies and newly emerging community desires, and plan for satisfying them while opportunities still exist, before candidate properties become otherwise developed or committed. Nowhere is this purpose more apparent than in the Proposed Land Use Plan.**

The Proposed Land Use Plan graphic can be found as figure 4.

### 3.2.2 River Vale Land Use in General

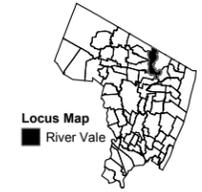
- 3.2.2.1 It is the Township's desire to enhance and enforce its property maintenance code that requires property owners to maintain their properties in accordance with accepted and reasonable community standards. These standards could include items such as landscape maintenance and building façade maintenance, among other items. Without proper maintenance, the most well planned community will exhibit undesirable appearances.
- 3.2.2.2 The Township should monitor its new maximum building height limitations for its appropriateness within each building zone, to ensure that it is in the public interest. The Township should also rectify the conflicting building height definitions that are presently in the land use code.
- 3.2.2.3 The Plan recommends the elimination of the EO Executive Office Building Zone from River Vale's Land Use Code. As originally intended, this building zone envisioned the development of a large-scale suburban corporate business park, with large office and flex buildings on large lots of 25 acres or more with sprawling landscapes. This was a land use model that was deemed appropriate in 1976 when it was first established, and its regulations have undergone only minor modifications since that time. It is no longer desirable in the contemporary land use climate, for several reasons. First, the one property so designated is situated along the west side of the Lake Tappan Reservoir, and is crossed in numerous areas by NJDEP-designated highest-level C-1 anti-degradation classified surface waters. Also present are freshwater wetlands and possible flood plains. The environmental encumbrances of this site would likely prohibit the introduction of a conforming development. Secondly, Rivervale Road is the site's only access roadway, and it is only one lane in each direction. It would require major roadway improvements with their attendant property acquisitions to service such a development. Roadway improvements such as these would change the character of the Township. Lastly, in the almost 30 years since this zone was enacted, no serious development proposals have been entertained by the Township. This is a clear indication that the EO zone is and has been unresponsive to market forces. Similar development models exist in neighboring Montvale and Orangetown, N.Y., and additional demand for this land use type has not been demonstrated over all these years.
- 3.2.2.4 An examination of recent Board of Adjustment records of variance requests and actions by the Board confirmed that no specific modifications to yard setback requirements are warranted in any of the Township's building zones. The Township was able to produce records from four of the past six years, which is representative of recent activity. Over those four years, 75 variance requests were made (a few were multiple requests of the same application), for an average of 19 requests per year. This represents only one half of one percent of River Vale's homes per year, leading us to conclude that these requirements are not onerous due to the low frequency of requests. Of these requests from 0.5% of River Vale's homes, 0.2% were for front yard relief, 0.2% were for side yard relief, and 0.1% were for rear yard relief. Of those 75 requests, 71 (or 95%) were approved. Since about five percent of requests were withdrawn, which are often due to expected denials, a more accurate approval rate would be about



**Land Use Plan**

Low Density Single-Family Residential	Multi-Family Affordable Housing	Semi-Public Facility
Low/Medium Density Single-Family Residential	Senior Citizen Residential	Open Space/Recreation/Parkland
Medium Density Single-Family Residential	Assisted Care Facility	Watershed/Conservation
Medium Density Multi-Family Residential	General Business	
High Density Multi-Family Residential	Professional Office	
Single-Family Affordable Housing	Mixed Use	
	Catering/Banquet Facility	
	Municipal Facility	

- Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Streams
- Roads



Source:  
Bergen County Geographic Information Systems  
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Map Prepared March 2005 by ST&A

**HAKIM ASSOCIATES**  
Professional Planning / Landscape Architecture  
68 Dean Street, Harrington Park, NJ 07640  
In Association With

**STUART TURNER & ASSOCIATES**  
Planning and Development Consultants  
2 Executive Blvd., Suite 401, Suffern, NY 10901

**Figure 4 - Proposed Land Use Plan**  
River Vale Master Plan

Township of River Vale, New Jersey

90%. This is an exceptionally high rate, and indicates that River Vale's dimensional limitations work well for the community.

3.2.2.5 The following more detailed land use plan discussions refer to the existing zoning district map and its subsequent modifications by governing body resolutions for general geographic locations of each of the proposed land uses. The locations of these zoning districts are more fully described in the Existing Zoning discussion of the Background Section of this Land Use Plan Element. The locations of existing land use patterns are more fully described in the Existing Land Use discussion of the Background Section of this Land Use Plan Element. For more specific geographic delineations of these proposed land uses, refer to the Proposed Land Use Plan included as figure 4.

In several cases, the proposed land use designations do not coincide with their current zoning category, and this was done for one of two reasons. In certain of the cases, the pattern of existing development does not reflect the zoning provisions within the zoning district. In these cases, the recommended change of land use category is intended to minimize the number of non-conforming uses, thereby encouraging revisions to the zoning code that would bring it into closer land use harmony with the land uses of those districts. Examples of such cases include the golf courses, sensitive natural resource areas, and certain residential neighborhoods. In other cases, the existing pattern of development does not reflect the Township's land use vision for its future, and the proposed designations reflect the Township's long-range objective for land use in those locations.

### **3.2.3 Residential Development**

#### **3.2.3.1 New Jersey Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS)**

On December 5, 1996 these rules were adopted by the State of N.J. Department of Community Affairs, and became operative on June 3, 1997. The RSIS was last revised December 16, 2002. The RSIS rules were promulgated by the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs pursuant to the authority of P.L.1993, c. 32 (N.J.S.A.40:55D-40.1 et seq.). They apply only to residential development, and their intent and purpose as set forth in 1996 and reaffirmed in 2002 are paraphrased as follows:

- (1) To standardize public improvements within residential developments, so that an economy of housing costs can be realized;
- (2) To avoid unnecessary construction costs;
- (3) To ensure predictability in site improvement standards;
- (4) To encourage development reviews based on sound objective site improvement standards, avoiding discretionary design standards;
- (5) To streamline the development approval process and improve the efficiency of the application process;
- (6) To provide design freedom and promote diversity through performance oriented standards;
- and
- (7) To separate the policy-making aspects of development review from technical determinations.

These rules attempt to standardize public right-of-way site improvements in the areas of streets, parking facilities, water supply, sanitary sewers, and stormwater management. The rules reaffirm local jurisdiction over the application and review procedures, however, as set forth in the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq. and in municipal ordinances adopted pursuant to the MLUL. They also set forth a series of exceptions, waivers, and special area standards. The impacts of these standards should have an effect on some of River Vale's residential zoning standards. In order for River Vale to achieve consistency,

they should be addressed in a zoning code review of residential limiting standards that should follow the Update of this Master Plan, and amendments made where necessary.

### 3.2.3.2 General Comments and Recommendations for all Residential Districts

The Land Use Plan includes a range of residential development types with the following maximum densities. Each of the residential development types are now included in the River Vale Zoning Code. As indicated on the Proposed Land Use Plan (Fig. 4), these include single-family houses on lots ranging from one to three-and-one-half units per acre (10,000 to 40,000 square foot minimum lot sizes), and affordable single-family houses at approximately six units per acre (6,000 square foot minimum lot sizes). They include market rate multifamily housing ranging from 8.75 to 20 dwelling units per acre. They include multifamily housing inclusive of affordable dwelling units (townhouses and multiplex units at seven units per acre). Finally, they include senior citizens housing at 15 units per acre. Within these districts as noted, provisions for affordable housing have been either constructed or committed, and the Township has received Round 2 Substantive Certification status from the N.J. Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). A new mixed-use land use category has been created to provide for any future shortfall the Township may experience in meeting their affordable housing obligations. This is discussed in the Commercial Development subsection below.

(1) With respect to the recent proliferation of home offices that have been established within residential districts, to the extent that adverse impacts are not being generated and the residential character of the neighborhoods within which they are situated are not being altered or adversely impacted, the Plan believes this use should be recognized and permitted within residential zones, with controls to ensure compatibility (see the "Home Businesses (occupations)" subsection of the "Residential" discussion under "Existing Land Use" within the "Background" section of this Land Use Plan Element). River Vale's regulations applicable to home occupations should be revisited and updated to ensure limitations are placed on lighting, vehicle parking, deliveries and noise; and prohibitions are placed on smoke, dust, odors, heat, glare, emissions, and the use of hazardous materials. As previously discussed, the State of New Jersey encourages home-based businesses within limitations. The Township should both review whether or not their county road frontage within residential zones requirement is consistent with state law; but moreover the Township should revisit the necessity of this strict limitation in any event.

(2) Given the shortage of recreation and open space lands within the Township, the Plan recommends that the provision for payment in lieu of recreation within the Multi-Family Housing Zones, at the Applicant's discretion, be revisited. It would benefit the Township to grant that discretion to the Township instead. Such an approach to residential development, even with the small amount of remaining developable land, could result in the establishment of small neighborhood recreation areas, thereby offsetting the demand identified in the Recreation Element and the Green Acres Open Space and Recreation Element of this Master Plan.

(3) The Township should develop and enact Floor Area Ratio (FAR) ordinance provisions. In conjunction with other dimensional limitations, the intent of such provisions would be to avert the undesirable area-wide phenomenon of houses being constructed that are too large for their lots and out of scale with their neighborhood.

(4) Develop other zoning ordinance provisions to help assure that the scale and size of homes built in established residential neighborhoods are consistent with other development within their neighborhoods. With this objective of limiting the overbuilding and excessive imperviousness of residential lots, the Township should develop and enact Improved Lot Coverage limitations (i.e. all improvements other than planted areas) within residential zones, among other limitations.

- 3.2.3.3 Low Density Single-Family Residential. With a few exceptions, this land use category corresponds to the A-1 Residential Building Zone only, which requires a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet. This corresponds to single-family detached dwellings at a density of approximately one per acre. Other than a few scattered lots that could be developed, no substantial undeveloped land is available for future development. The only specific change that is recommended for this district is to remove this zoning designation from inappropriate areas. Such areas include environmentally sensitive lands and golf courses. These areas have been so removed on the Proposed Land Use Plan.
- 3.2.3.4 Low Medium Density Single-Family Residential. With a few exceptions, this land use category corresponds to the A Residential Building Zone only, which requires minimum lot sizes of 18,000 square feet. This corresponds to single-family detached dwellings at a density of approximately two per acre. Other than a few scattered over-sized lots that could be further subdivided, no developable land of any significance is available for future development. This zoning designation should be removed from public facilities. Undersized lots characterize a few neighborhoods in this category, and on balance it is beneficial to accept their status as non-conforming. Such neighborhoods exist east of Rockland Avenue and north of Westwood Avenue. This zoning designation should also be added to the one neighborhood that is characterized by more environmental sensitivity than is appropriate for its B Residential Zoning designation. This neighborhood is west of Cedar Lane at the southern end of the Township. These areas have been so revised on the Proposed Land Use Plan.
- 3.2.3.5 Medium Density Single-Family Residential. With a few exceptions, this land use category corresponds to the B Residential Building Zone only, which requires a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet. This corresponds to single-family detached dwellings at a density of approximately 3.5 to 4 per acre. Other than a few scattered over-sized lots that could be further subdivided, no developable land of any significance is available for future development. As mentioned in the Low Medium Density discussion above, and for the reasons discussed, this zoning designation should be removed from the neighborhood west of Cedar Lane at the southern end of the Township. This area has been so revised on the Proposed Land Use Plan.
- 3.2.3.6 Medium Density Multifamily Residential. This land use category corresponds to the Planned Residential District (PRD) only. Several different residential housing types are permitted within this zone, including multi-family, single family, and senior citizens housing. The zone also requires set-asides for recreation and open space. There is no available undeveloped land within this zoning district, and the Proposed Land Use Plan confines it to its present location. Based on the success of its limited area within the Township, it might be considered for limited areas elsewhere in River Vale provided it is determined to be in the public interest to do so. The Proposed Land Use Plan confines it to its present location.
- 3.2.3.7 High Density Multi-Family Residential. This land use category corresponds to the MF-20 Residence District only, and all of its land has been developed. The District permits multifamily residential development at up to 20 dwelling units per acre, permitting both low and mid-rise buildings. The Township has no desire to extend this district into any other areas, and the Plan affirms that desire.
- 3.2.3.8 Senior Citizen Residential. This land use category corresponds to the SH Senior Housing District only. This single site was formerly developed but is currently vacant. The District permits single and multi-family housing for the aged and accessory uses, and requires an affordable housing set-aside. The density cannot exceed 15 dwelling units per acre, and the buildings are limited to 35 feet in height. Provided the site exceeds five acres, certain supportive conditional uses would be permitted. The current minimum site size of three acres precludes the introduction of smaller senior citizens residential facilities within residential districts. The Plan recommends that the Township consider permitting senior

citizen residential land uses of various types and levels of care as conditional land uses within all zoning districts, provided they adhere to specific controls that do not negatively alter the character of residential neighborhoods. In this manner, these facilities would be treated as substantial and desirable land uses. Such an approach should be perceived as recognition and acknowledgement that, as our population ages due to the aging of the large “Baby Boom” generation, demand for these facilities will only increase.

3.2.3.9 Single Family Affordable Housing. This land use category corresponds to the SFAH Single-Family Affordable Housing District only, and all of its non-environmentally constrained land has been developed in compliance with the regulations. As its name indicates, the District permits single-family homes on 6,000 square foot lots, or approximately six dwelling units per acre. The Township has no desire to extend this district into any other areas, and the Plan affirms that desire.

3.2.3.10 Multi-Family Affordable Housing. This land use category corresponds to a reduced portion of the MFAH Multifamily Affordable Housing District only. The Plan recommends reducing the size of this district for the few valid public purposes that follow. First, the entire area within this district south of Poplar Road was purchase in 2002 by the Township for open space, with the assistance of public open space grant monies. Second, the Township desires to acquire the westernmost parcel within the district that is situated along the northern side of Poplar Road as an open space link between much two larger open spaces to the north and south. These two larger properties border the western side of the Lake Tappan Reservoir and provide it with significant buffer protections. Much of this western parcel is encumbered against development by the C-1 provisions of the N.J. Stormwater Regulations promulgated by NJDEP, is categorized as the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area #5 by the N.J. State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and is restricted from development by higher authority statutes. The subject parcel also abuts an established single-family residential neighborhood, thereby improving compatibility as contrasted against a site developed in conformance with MFAH regulations. Immediately to the east of the subject site is Pine Lake, which is a part of the Cherry Brook system, and currently belongs to the occupied MFAH Pine Lake Village development. Pine Lake would make a valued addition to this link. Lastly, the MFAH building zone was created at a time when “Builder’s Remedy” developments (20% affordable housing set-aside, subsidized by higher density on-site market rate development) was the conventional method for communities to satisfy their affordable housing obligations. Today, several more creative and flexible methods are available to New Jersey’s communities, and as a result these large blocks of affordable housing building zones are no longer necessary.

Even if these reductions to the MFAH building zone were to be enacted, one large ten-acre site immediately east of Pine Lake Village would remain undeveloped and available for a conforming development. The district permits single-family, semi-detached, townhouse and multiplex dwelling units at densities not to exceed seven dwelling units per acre, and building heights not to exceed 35 feet. Developments within this district are required to provide 20% of their units as COAH-certified affordable housing.

### **3.2.4 Commercial Development**

3.2.4.1 General Business. This land use category corresponds to a reduced portion of the C Commercial District. The Plan recommends reducing the size of this district for the few valid public purposes that follow. First, since retail commercial uses and office commercial uses generate very different impacts, it is recommended that the time has come in River Vale for them to be separated into two different categories, whereas in the past they were both included in the C District. The Plan recommends that from this point forward, the C zoning district be reduced in size to conform with the General Business land use district shown on Figure 4, and that it be restricted to retail uses on the ground floors.

Acceptable uses for their second floors are discussed below. Second, since River Vale has been experiencing retail vacancies in limited portions of its central business district in recent years, the reduction of available retail space will increase demand and improve the quality of the retail uses that inhabit the reduced space. This is further desirable because of the lack of variety of River Vale's current retail uses. Further to this end, the Plan recommends the Township review the permitted uses in the business zone to see if they can be expanded to increase the variety of Township businesses. Third, the imposition of a stricter and more definitive eastern edge to the Township's retail zone would accomplish two goals. It would acknowledge the impending development of the new Jewish Home for the Aged on the south side of Westwood Avenue, and it would provide a consolidated area within the Four Corners for a mixed use development that could consist of first floor office uses and second floor affordable housing (discussed below under "Mixed Use").

It should be noted that the past business area development patterns within River Vale have resulted in the intermixing of office uses with other commercial uses, and this has been beneficial to both development types since they are somewhat dependent on one another. Since they are predominantly contiguous to one another, the identification of specific areas for each of these uses is not an attempt to segregate these facilities from each other, since there is no apparent benefit to do so. Rather, it is an attempt to provide the Township with a balance of land uses, and also to provide some transitions via office uses from the active retail uses to the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Acceptable uses for the second floors of retail buildings could include rental apartments, particularly COAH-certifiable affordable rentals, within certain limitations. The Plan recommends that these second floor uses only be permitted in those areas of the General Business district that are approximately 300 or more feet distant from single family residences. Permitting this use would provide more affordable housing in close proximity to the central business district and mass transit services. An acceptable secondary use of these second floors would be small office uses that would not be subject to the same distance from single-family residences restriction. Permitting this use would serve to replace some of the office provisions lost by the elimination of the EO Executive Office District discussed later within this section.

3.2.4.2 Professional Office. This land use category corresponds to the PO Professional Office District, and to those C Commercial District parcels that have been removed from the General Business land use category. The increase in professional office land availability in this category, as well as its acceptability as a partial use in other land use categories (i.e. General Business, Mixed Use), serves to further offset the recommended elimination of the EO Executive Office District discussed later within this section. The Plan recommends that the dimensional limitations of the PO district be significantly revised to enable this use as infill development within River Vale's central business district.

3.2.4.3 Mixed Use. This land use category corresponds to the eastern end of the Township's central business district, more specifically along the northern side of Westwood Avenue. This location is currently dedicated for commercial use for its western half, and single-family residential use for its eastern half. This land use category would require a new zoning district category that permits first floor office uses and second floor rental affordable housing uses. It would represent a reasonable transition use between the adjacent retail and single-family residential land uses. It would also be compatible with the new Jewish Home for the Aged across Westwood Avenue, as well as the Medium Density Multifamily Residential uses that abut it to its north. It would provide more affordable housing in anticipation of Round 3 COAH obligations in close proximity to the central business district and mass transit services. It would also further replace some of the office provisions lost by the elimination of the EO Executive Office District discussed earlier within this section.

3.2.4.4 Catering/Banquet Facility. This land use category corresponds to the site of the Florentine Gardens Banquet facility, currently situated in an A Residence Zone in the southern portion of the Township along Rivervale Road. The provision of this category recognizes the facility's existence and long-term standing, and further acknowledges the major private investment that was made to modernize and significantly enlarge the facility. The Plan recommends that this category be limited to this lone site and not be made available elsewhere within the Township. The Plan also recommends that no further expansions be permitted for this facility.

### 3.2.5 Community Service Land Uses

3.2.5.1 Watershed/Conservation. This land use category applies to the Lake Tappan Reservoir, and to numerous other undeveloped environmentally sensitive Township lands. These lands are currently within a variety of zoning districts, and should all be included within River Vale's CN Conservation District. With one exception, no changes are recommended to the regulations for this district. The one exception is the inclusion of the Valley Brook Golf Course within this category when golf courses are not a permitted use. This recommended inclusion recognizes the deed restriction placed on this golf course that prohibits any further economic development on the property. It also recognizes the property's strategic location within the region's water supply watershed.

3.2.5.2 Open Space, Recreation, Parkland. The lands within this land use category are present within several building zones in the Township, and we believe this is appropriate. Due to their generally accepted compatibility with land uses of all types, parks, playgrounds and other public outdoor recreation facilities (including passive lands) should not be limited to any one building zone. These are desirable facilities that have a legitimate and compatible place almost anywhere in the community. The Plan, therefore, recommends that such uses be permitted in all building zones of the Township. Nor should these land uses have their own zone that might serve to inhibit the introduction of new lands into this land use category. As an example, it is conceivable that a situation could arise wherein a property owner offers to dedicate property to the Township for park purposes. Under the Township's current zoning requirements, a change of building zone would likely be required to legally effectuate such a plan, since (except for properties within the CN zone) other Township building zones do not specifically permit recreation land uses.

All of the existing Township-owned lands dedicated for this use have been included within this land use category. Also included are many of the privately owned properties identified as desirable for acquisition by the Green Acres Open Space and Recreation Plan (see Chapter 11 of this Master Plan). Other lands included within this land use category include publicly owned lands that have recreation potential. Finally, the majority of privately owned lands held for recreation purposes (i.e. Bergen Hills Golf Club and Edgewood Country Club) have also been included.

3.2.5.3 Municipal Facility. This land use designation is used for all properties owned by the Township (also includes the Ambulance Corps site which is owned by the Corps) that are dedicated for functions other than open space, recreation and drainage uses. These sites include the Town Hall, the library and monument site, the North Firehouse and Community Center site, the main Firehouse, Police Station and DPW site, and the Ambulance Corps site. Also included in this designation are the Board of Education sites, including the Roberge, Holdrum and Woodside schools. No specific changes are recommended for this land use category at this time. However, one or more of the alternatives for resolving the Township's municipal facility land shortage, as discussed in the Community Facilities Plan Element of this master plan, would require the acquisition of at least one more Township site.

- 3.2.5.4 Semi-Public Facility. This land use designation is reserved for houses of worship, utility-owned properties, and major cemeteries. No changes are proposed for this land use category.
- 3.2.5.5 Assisted Care Facility. The primary uses that either exist or are envisioned for this land use category include the existing Spectrum for Living home for the disabled, the Jewish Home for the Aged which is under construction, and a consolidated band of property approximately 400 feet deep along the northern side of Piermont Avenue. A portion of the Edgewood Country Club currently occupies this latter property. Land uses envisioned for this property include such facilities as assisted living, congregate care, skilled nursing, long-term medical care, and senior housing. The Plan recommends that the HDD Housing District for the Disabled regulations be revised to accommodate and enable all of these uses, and that it be assigned to govern land use in these three locations. The HDD zone currently only governs the Spectrum for Living site. The Plan for these properties also designates open space, recreation, and parkland as legitimate secondary uses for the underlying land use and building zone, and as such considers this category as having an ORP Overlay designation.

## 4. COMMUNITY PROFILE ELEMENT

### 4.1 BACKGROUND

The size and characteristics of the Township's population, including anticipated growth and change, are important bases for planning land uses and community services and facilities. This section analyzes current trends and offers some explanation of those trends, as well as attempts to project the results of the future trends if they are not changed naturally or as a result of public policy.

Most information used in this report was obtained from the 2000 U.S. decennial Census, the New Jersey Department of Labor, and the Bergen County Department Planning and Economic Development. Projections prepared by the State Planning office (Office of Smart Growth) were also considered.

### 4.2 RIVER VALE DEMOGRAPHICS

River Vale is located in the Pascaack Valley Region of Bergen County, which also includes Emerson, Hillsdale, Montvale, Park Ridge, Washington Township, Westwood and Woodcliff Lake (see Figure 1). River Vale has experienced tremendous changes since its incorporation into Bergen County in 1906. The Township began with 266 people and has blossomed into a community of close to 9,500. The greatest increase occurred between 1950 and 1970 when the population grew by more than 800%. This exponential spurt of growth in the Township coincided with those of the Region and County, as well as with the nationwide population increases during the "Baby Boom" era. This growth is credited in part to the prosperity brought on by the post World War II economy. Another factor that may have fueled the growth was the addition of a piece of territory that was acquired from the Borough of Montvale.

Afterwards, the population growth slowed, but it continued to increase with a slight dip in the 1980-1990 decade. This slight dip in the Township population may have been caused by the migration of jobs to the Sunbelt Cities, which also reflected a changeover from a manufacturing to a services oriented economy.

Another factor that may have contributed to the dip was the natural decrease in births due to the trend at that time of smaller families, and the increased use of birth control. The halting of growth in River Vale during the 1980-1990 decade coincided with a similar trend in the Region and County. The Region and County actually lost population in the two decades between 1970-1990. The Township's population continued to climb after 1990, and the 2000 Census shows a population of 9,449, which is a slight increase from the 1990 Census with 9,410 persons. This increase corresponds with a significant amount of residential building permits (77) being authorized in the year 2000 alone. 2000 is the year with the highest number of authorized building permits, as contrasted with only six such permits in 1990. Table 1 below illustrates the population changes of the Township, Region and County.

Table 1: Historic Population 1940-2010

Year	River Vale	% Change	Pascack Valley	% Change	Bergen County	% Change
1940	1112	-	21,516	-	409,646	-
1950	1699	52.8	26,872	24.9	539,139	31.6
1960	5616	230.5	54,951	104.5	780,255	44.7
1970	8883	58.2	75,108	36.7	897,148	15.0
1980	9489	6.8	71,803	-4.4	845,385	-5.8
1990	9410	-0.8	68,335	-4.8	825,380	-2.4
2000	9449	0.4	70,056	2.5	884,118	7.1
2005*	9063	-4.1	66,717	-4.8	895,040	1.2
2010*	8629	-4.8	66,112	-0.9	891,599	-0.4

\* Denotes projections from NJTPA

Source: US Census

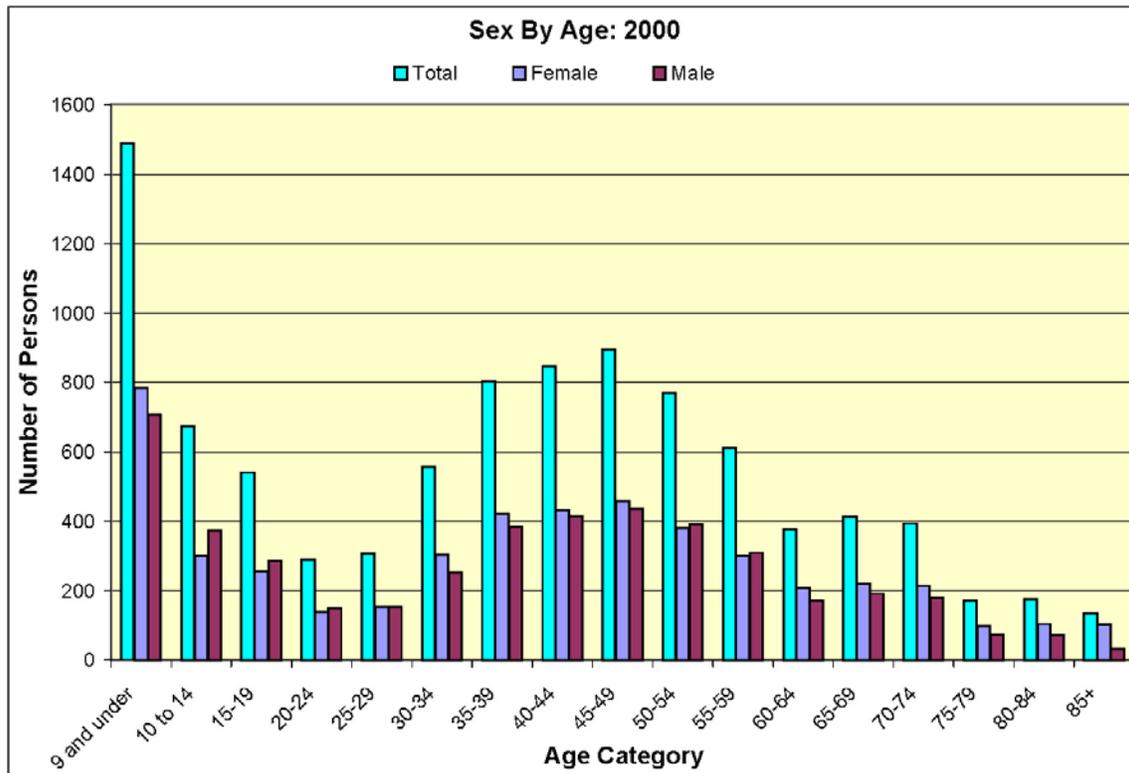
According to The New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) projection for 2005, the Township's population will decrease to 9063; and for 2010 it is expected to fall further to 8629. Peter Kortright (the Division Director for Master Planning for the Bergen County Department of Planning and Economic Development) however, disagrees with these projections. He states the projections are a statistical anomaly and do not reflect reality, based on the number of building permits the county has been recording for the Township. One of the factors he reasoned which may contribute to the projected decline in the future population is the gradual aging of the Baby Boomers. But otherwise, the Township is expected to have an increase in its population.

Regardless of the trends in population growth the Township takes, future population will be determined largely as a result of the capacity of land in River Vale and Township development policies as expressed in the Plan.

### 4.3 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Certain population characteristics, such as age and gender, may help forecast the needs to better accommodate the residents of the Township. For example, a large young population may indicate a need to expand school facilities while an aging population may indicate a need to add senior housing and senior-oriented recreational activities. The following chart shows the age characteristics by sex in the Township.

Chart 1



Source: US. Census

In year 2000, the largest age group in the Township was 9 years and under with a total of 1490 people. However, the age group with the highest increase between 1990 through 2000 was 35-39 with a 30% increase over this 10-year period. It is natural to assume a proportional increase in the age groups of 35 to 39 and 40 to 44 to be the corresponding parents. The increase in age group 35 to 39 supports this assumption, while the 40 to 44 age group decreased which may imply that families are leaving upon reaching their children's adolescent years. Another factor that may explain the increase of the under 9 year old age group may be the new trend of career-focused individuals or families who are giving birth at later stages in their lives. If this factor were indeed true, then it would also explain the decline of age groups 20 to 34 in the Township. These declining age groups may be the upwardly mobile professionals who are looking for ideal opportunities in areas or environments outside the Township and who cannot yet afford to live in River Vale.

Although the age groups 20 through 34 and 60 through 64 declined, there has been an overall increase in the age groups of 45 through 59 and 65 through 85 and over. The increase also shows the female population outnumbering the male from 60 years of age onwards, which is not unusual as the nationwide sex ratio of people of 65 years and over is 0.71 male per female. These trends in population age are also reflected in a slight decline in household size from 3.0 to 2.8 between 1990 through 2000.

Thus, from the data gathered, the largest group is children under the age of 9, followed by the age group of people 60 and over, with some decline in young adults reflecting children being born later in life. This could indicate a need to:

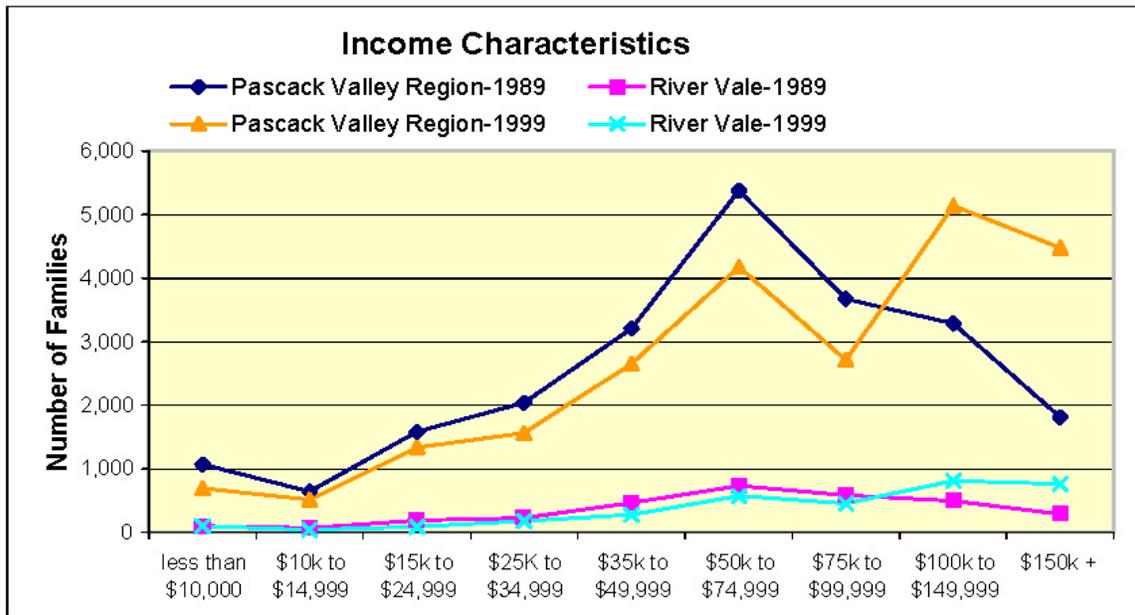
- a. expand school capacity (recently completed in River Vale);
- b. expand senior housing and senior oriented services and activities, including recreation;

- c. provide affordable housing for young families; and
- d. consider a need for smaller housing units as household sizes decrease.

**4.4 EMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY INCOME**

The 2000 Census data provides the family income base for 1999, and the following chart illustrates the family income (by income range). The median family income in 1999 was \$105,919. The data also indicates that 66 families are below the poverty level, and of those families 39 receive supplemental security income and/or public assistance. The chart below shows the comparison between the Region and the Township’s income levels.

**Chart 2**



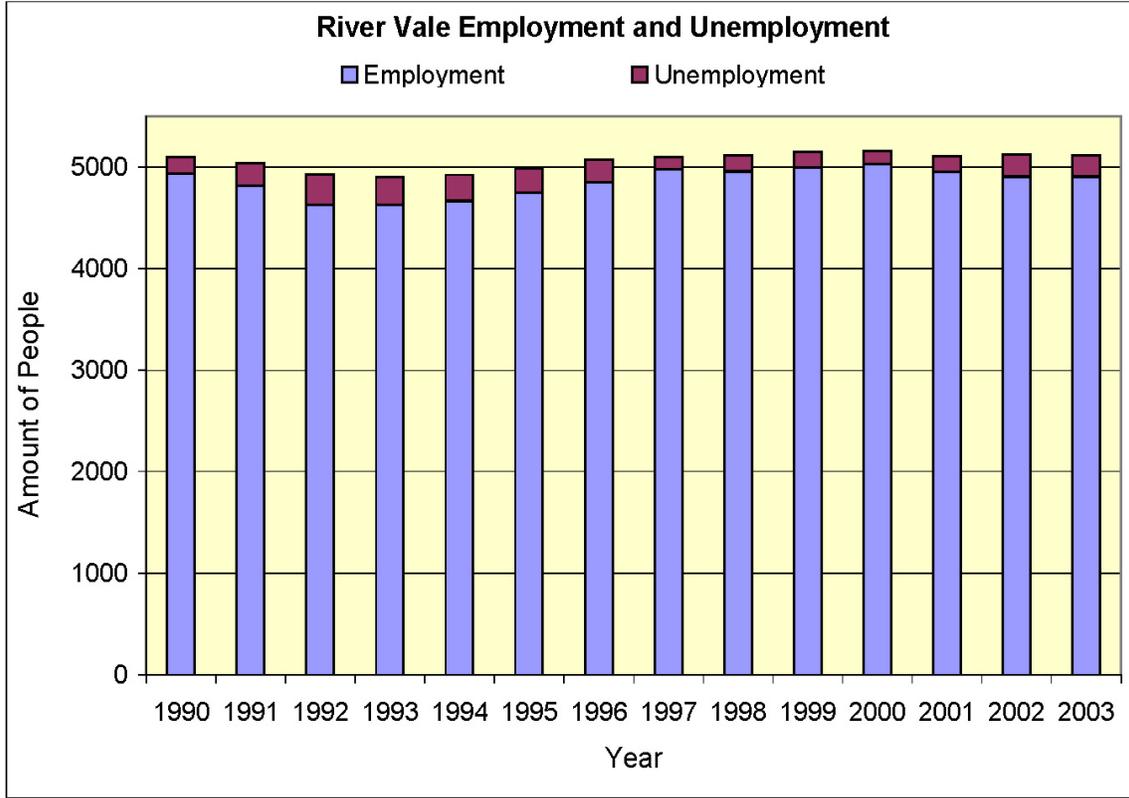
Source: US. Census

For the Township, the range of residents with incomes from \$10,000 to \$99,999 has decreased from 1989 to 1999, whereas the last two highest income ranges of \$100,000 and more have increased. This suggests that there is an increase in higher income households in the Township. The Region and County also seem to be following the same trend of having fewer residents earning between \$10,000 to \$74,999, and more residents earning in the three highest income ranges of \$75,999 and more. The \$105,919 median family income of River Vale is high compared to that of Bergen County, which is \$78,079.

**4.5 UNEMPLOYMENT**

The employment data obtained from the New Jersey Department of Labor indicates a steady decrease in unemployment since 1992, with a recent increase from 2000 to 2002; however, unemployment from 2002 to 2003 slowly decreased. The following chart shows the statistics of both employment and unemployment in the Township.

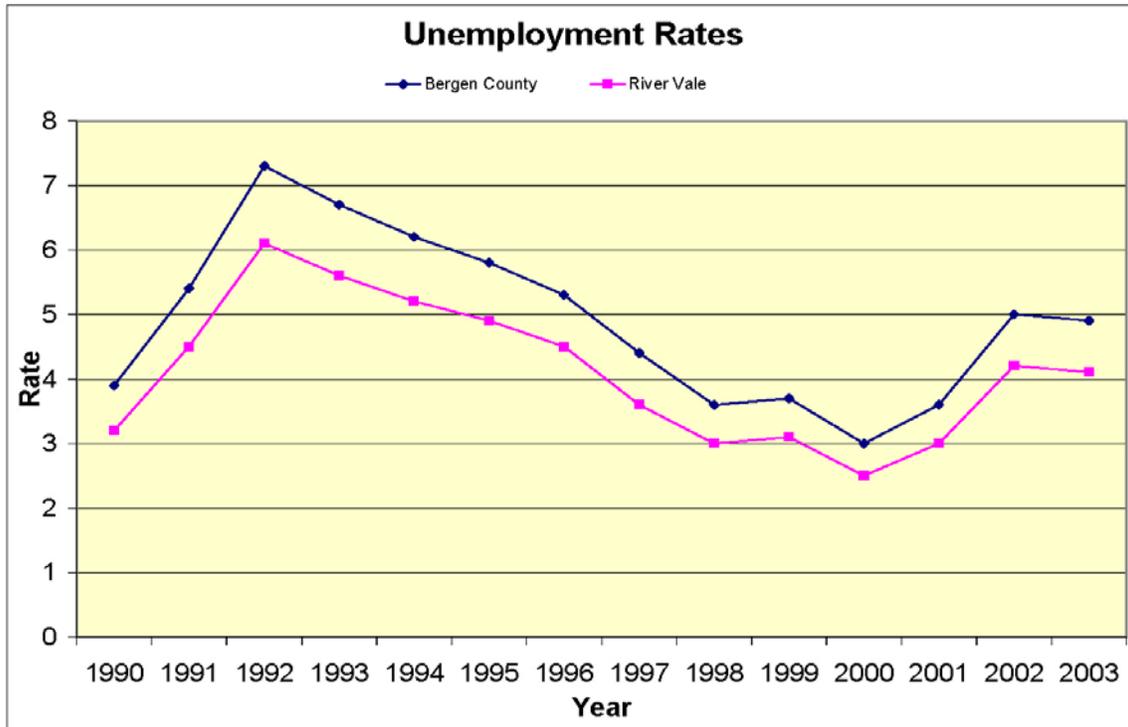
Chart 3



Source: NJ State Department of Labor

The following chart shows the Township’s unemployment rate as compared to the County’s for the past 13 years. Unemployment steadily declined since 1992 and up until year 2000, then suddenly increased from 2001 to 2002. One cause for the sudden jump may have been the post September 11, 2001 business reaction to the terrorist attacks. From 2002 onwards, however, employment of Township residents appears to be recovering slowly.

Chart 4



Source: NJ State Department of Labor

**4.6 EMPLOYMENT IN RIVER VALE**

A review of the private sector employment data does not show sufficient information to determine if a trend exists. As the following table indicates, information obtained from the Bergen County Department of Planning and Economic Development shows a decrease in private and government employment and a decrease in the self-employed, for both the Township and the Region. The results may indicate that there are fewer jobs available in the Township and the immediate Region, hence the decrease in the types of employment. This is not a surprising circumstance since the Township and its environs are predominantly residential.

Table 2 Type of employment	1990	River Vale	2000	River Vale
	Pascack Valley Region		Pascack Valley Region	
Private wage, salary workers	29,480	4,021	27,748	3,575
Government worker	5,715	790	3,661	434
Self-employed	2,295	359	2,277	357

Source: US Census

The types of industries listed in the 2000 Census are inconsistent with the 1990 Census categories, so direct comparison beyond general categories are not possible; therefore, trends by industries are not clearly identifiable.

## 5. HOUSING PLAN ELEMENT

### 5.1 BACKGROUND

The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law requires the inclusion of a Housing Plan Element in municipal Master Plans. The law went into effect August 1, 1988. The Housing Plan Element serves to address the low and moderate income needs of the municipality, and to maintain a healthy and diverse housing mix to accommodate a growing and changing population. If a Housing Plan Element is not included in the Master Plan, the Township's zoning ordinances could be at risk. In such situations, developers may sue the non-complying municipalities with a process commonly known as the "builder's remedy". This process allows developers to seek to overturn local zoning, increase permitted densities, and build mostly market-rate unit developments that include (and partially subsidize) modest quantities of affordable housing. The Housing Plan Element traditionally forms the basis for Fair Share Housing Plans to be prepared and proposed in accordance with guidelines established by the N.J. Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). Communities may choose to combine these two separate documents into one, however in the case of River Vale, the Fair Share Housing Plan will follow as a separate document later this year.

The N.J. Council on Affordable Housing (COAH), which was created by the Fair Housing Act of 1985, was the response to the Mt. Laurel court decisions that obligates all the municipalities of the State to provide a realistic opportunity of having a fair amount of low and moderate income housing available. COAH is empowered to:

- Define housing regions;
- Estimate low and moderate income housing needs;
- Set criteria and guidelines for municipalities to determine and address their own fair share numbers; and then
- Review and approve housing elements/fair share plans and regional contribution agreements (RCA's) for municipalities.

COAH has been through two rounds of rules before arriving at its current round: the Third Round. The first round (First Round) was the basis for plans implemented from 1987 to 1993. In succession, the second round (Second Round) was implemented from 1993 to 1999. Its most current set (Third Round), which took effect in 2004, will last until 2015.

While the second round plans provided the basis for municipal certification that are currently in effect, each municipality (including River Vale) must adopt the new Third Round fair share housing plans. River Vale is currently governed under extended second round certification (see below).

#### 5.1.1 Background Data for Housing Element

The 2000 US Census provides statistics on existing housing characteristics. Several important characteristics are listed below in Table 3. The 2000 Census confirms that housing in the Township of River Vale continues to be predominately owner occupied (91.0%), which represents an increase of 5.8% between 1990 through 2000. Consequently, renter occupancy decreased from 10% to 8.9% between 1990 through 2000. The statistics also show an increase (22.1%) in dwelling units within structures with 10 or more housing units each. This reflects the increase in multiple dwellings in larger developments built before 2000 such as a part of Pine Lake Village; however, there was a decline in the number of units in small multiple dwellings (structures with 2 to 4 and 5 to 9 housing units). While multiple dwellings showed some increase, the

number of renters declined, reflecting an increase in home ownership in single-family houses, detached houses, and condominiums.

Table 3: Housing Units by Units in Structure for County and Town

1990	Bergen County		River Vale	2000	Bergen County		River Vale	% change in River Vale
	Total Housing Units	Vacant			Total Housing Units	Vacant		
Total Housing Units	324,817	15,937	3,208	Total Housing Units	339,820	9,003	3,312	3.20%
Vacant	308,880	308,880	3,132	Vacant	330,817	330,817	3,275	4.60%
Occupied units	209,876	209,876	2,818	Occupied units	222,273	222,273	2,982	5.80%
Owner occupied	99,004	99,004	314	Owner occupied	108,544	108,544	293	-6.68%
Renter occupied	182,107	182,107	2,713	Renter occupied	188,108	188,108	2,837	4.57%
One unit, detached	9,151	9,151	103	One unit, detached	13,335	13,335	104	0.97%
One unit, attached	66,134	66,134	105	2 to 4 units	68,811	68,811	93	-11.40%
2 to 4 units	9,666	9,666	45	5 to 9 units	10,550	10,550	24	-46.66%
5 to 9 units	52,297	52,297	208	10 or more units	57,983	57,983	254	22.10%
10 or more units	5,462	5,462	34	mobile and other	1,123	1,123	0	-100.00%
mobile and other				Mobile home				

Source: US Census

According to the 2000 Census, there was an increase in the occupied housing units in River Vale as well as its neighboring communities in the Pascack Valley Region (see Table 4 below). The four other communities have somewhat similar housing trends. The municipality that experienced the highest percentage increase was the Borough of Emerson (7.0%), and the community experiencing the lowest percentage increase was the Township of Washington (4.1%). The Township of River Vale (4.5%) was the second lowest compared to the neighboring communities.

Table 4: Total Housing Units in River Vale and Neighboring Pascack Valley Communities

Occupied Housing Units			
	FY1990	FY2000	% change
River Vale	3132	3275	4.56%
Emerson	2217	2373	7.03%
Montvale	2377	2509	5.55%
Park Ridge	2933	3136	6.92%
Washington	3091	3219	4.14%

Source: US Census

The household size of neighboring Pascack Valley communities were also reviewed, and the statistics show a slight decrease in the household size which refers back to a greater increase in housing units than in population (see Community Profile). One-person households within the Township of River Vale seem to comprise a significant percent (19.7%) of the occupied housing units (see Table 5). This trend likely reflects the increase in multi-family units within the Township, particularly housing occupied by senior citizens.

Table 5: Household Size for River Vale and Neighboring Pascaack Valley Communities

Household Sizes					
	1990			2000	
	1 person	2 and more persons		1 person	2 and more persons
River Vale	420	2712		503	2772
Emerson	257	1960		344	2029
Montvale	345	2032		437	2072
Park Ridge	527	2460		673	2488
Washington	331	2760		468	2751

With respect to their household incomes, 47.7% of the total River Vale households in 2000 earned over \$100,000 compared to 25.0% in 1990, which further corresponds to the trend toward larger households (refer to Community Profile – Employment and Family Income). Additionally, River Vale’s median household income of \$66,477 in 1989 increased to \$95,129 in 1999, further indicating that an increasing number of residents occupy the higher income level range.

### 5.1.2 COAH Certification and Housing Plan

In order to be in compliance with the Council of Affordable Housing and to assure protection of River Vale’s zoning powers, the Township must be certified by COAH. The first step towards certification is the submission of a Housing Element (which is required by the Municipal Land Use Law as part of a municipality’s master plan), and a Fair Share Plan to establish realistic opportunities to provide a predetermined amount of units available to low and moderate income households. The new Fair Share Plan (to be developed) will affect the sum of three components included in the new Third Round (also known as “Growth Share methodology”) rules. These components are:

- Rehabilitation share – the number of deficient housing units occupied by low and moderate income household within a municipality and established in accordance with the provisions listed in N.J. A. C 5:94-2.1(b).
- Remaining Prior Round Obligations – the obligation that was previously assigned by COAH for the 1987 through 1999 cumulative period and not fully addressed by the municipality.
- Growth share – the ratio of one affordable housing unit for every eight market rate housing units constructed, plus one affordable housing unit for every 25 newly created jobs, as measured by new or expanded non residential construction within the municipality in accordance with the methodology. The obligation is generated in each municipality by both residential and non-residential development for the period from 2004 through 2014.

Within two years of submitting the Housing Element and the Fair Share Plan, the Township must petition COAH for substantive certification of its plans in order to remain under COAH’s jurisdiction. During the period that the petition is under review, the Township is protected from lawsuits by potential or existing developers. However, while under review, the Township must be prepared to submit additional plans or revisions should such requests for same be made prior to the granting or denial of substantive certification. Once the certification is granted, it becomes valid for ten years and may be withdrawn at anytime if COAH finds that the Township fails to assure the continuation of providing a realistic opportunity to implement its fair share housing obligation.

In compliance with COAH, the Township submitted a petition for Extended Second Round Substantive Certification in December 2004 and is currently awaiting the results. While the Township is being reviewed for re-certification, the Township should develop a new “Fair Share” plan for affordable housing units that observes the current Third Round rules. Should COAH grant the Second Round extension, the Township’s Third Round Fair Share plan will be due December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005. If the Second Round extension is denied, then the Township must submit their Fair Share plan in accordance with the Third Round Rules immediately. There is no appeal or alternative extension process.

The Township’s current certified Fair Housing Plan includes 121 affordable housing units. Most of these units are in place; however as indicated in Table 6 below, which is an update of an earlier submission to COAH, there is a current shortfall of five units. The Projects identified as #2 and #3 are currently under review, and Project #8 (the Jewish Home) is under construction.

Table 6: Current Status of Affordable Housing Sites

PROJECT #	SITE	ZONE	STATUS	TOTAL UNITS	AFFORD-ABLE UNITS ON SITE	EQUIVALENT UNITS FROM CONTRI-BUTION	TOTAL AFFORD-ABLE UNITS
1	Spectrum for Living	HDD	Complete	30	30	0	60*
2	3, 3A, 4, 4A	MFAH	**	78	8	8	16
3	6 (I-7C)	A	****	11	0	2	2
4	9, 11, 12	SFAH	Complete	47	0	9 (RCA)	9
5	10	SFAH	Complete	6	2	0	2
6	Blk 813 Lot 11	A	Complete	5	0	5	10***
7	Pine Lake	MFAH	Complete	60	8	7	15
8	Blk 2101 Lots 2 & 3 (Jewish Home)	HDD	Complete	0	2	0	2
<b>TOTAL</b>							<b>116</b>

\* 30 units rental bonus

\*\* 18 acres (4 & 4A) acquired for open space; originally 47 affordable housing units assigned to this site; now 16 units; development being reviewed on 3 and 3A

\*\*\* 5 Alternate living units plus 5 units rental bonus

\*\*\*\* development being reviewed

## 5.2 PROPOSED HOUSING PLAN

The capacity for new market rate and/or low and moderate income housing in the Township is limited and reflected in the residential component of the Land Use Plan Element of this Master Plan.

This Master Plan includes several proposals to accommodate additional affordable housing.

1. The parcels recommended for continuing inclusion within River Vale’s MFAH building zone should support several new affordable housing units.
2. The Mesker site (Block 701 Lot 18) is proposed for senior citizen housing. This site is in the Senior Citizen Housing Building Zone, which has an affordable housing component requirement.
3. As part of the Land Use Plan Element update, the Township’s business center (“Four Corners” located at the intersection of Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue) will include an affordable

housing component, which will be reflected in proposals to include second story apartments over businesses (see Land Use Plan Element Section 3.2).

4. Also as part of the Land Use Plan Element update, the Township's business center will also include a substantial area for mixed-use developments with affordable housing components at the east end of the business area (see section 3.2).

While there are other potentially developable parcels within the Township, none of these are considered appropriate for inclusion as part of the Township's Fair Share Housing Plan. Included among them are United Water Resources holdings, and the northern two golf courses. These parcels currently support viable and regionally valuable land uses, but could potentially be proposed as candidates for residential redevelopment. Additionally, several scattered and undeveloped parcels remain within the SFAH Zone in the Township's southwest corner. While these might appear to be candidate sites for affordable housing, they are all either encumbered by regulated natural resources, or they are deed restricted against future development. Since more appropriate affordable housing opportunities are available as described above, none of these other parcels will be incorporated into the Township's next Fair Share Housing Plan.

Given the established land use pattern in the Township, its future population and job growth will be limited due to (a) the desire to assure that development infill is in scale with current development patterns, (b) the limited availability of developable vacant residential acreage, and (c) the limited opportunities for more non-residential growth. Once the Township determines its new Third Round Fair Housing obligation quantity, it will be clear how many new affordable housing units will be required as part of the Township's future residential development.

More detailed analysis of the Township's specific housing objective will be included in the Township's future 2005 Fair Share Housing Plan.

## 6. COMMUNITY DESIGN ELEMENT

### 6.1 BACKGROUND

When the desire emerges in a local community to encourage good site, landscape architectural and/or architectural design in both new development and redevelopment, a municipality may choose to prepare an optional Community Design Element that addresses any combination, or all, of these features.

The Township of River Vale has never before had a Community Design Element. Rather, River Vale has attempted to influence and positively affect design in the built environment through a few disconnected ordinance provisions. Among others, these include:

- a. Site design standards for communications facilities on municipal property;
- b. Off-street parking and loading design standards;
- c. Design of drives, parking and circulation;
- d. Building design and layout, including site arrangements, visual relationships, lighting, buffering, landscaping, and signs, among others;
- e. General site plan design review;
- f. General subdivision design review;

- g. Architectural review within very limited parameters;
- h. Landscaping standards and requirements;
- i. Tree preservation and removal ordinance;
- j. Concept plan reviews; and
- k. Fence design

In addition to these ordinances, more recently River Vale has worked with NJIT School of Architecture students and the Regional Plan Association to develop conceptual designs for two major community facility areas. The first is the Four Corners, where design concepts have been developed to revitalize the central business district's public rights-of-way. The second is for a new Community Center/Public Safety Complex that could be constructed on the site of the now obsolete existing community center and North Firehouse. Neither of these projects has progressed beyond concepts.

Beyond these specific provisions, River Vale desires to establish policies and take actions to improve the built environment within the Township. These should include many of the sub-topics discussed below, both in and adjacent to the public rights-of-way.

## **6.2 PROPOSED COMMUNITY DESIGN PLAN**

The Township desires to establish standards for elements of design, primarily within its non-residential landscape but also to a lesser degree within residential neighborhoods. To this end, this Community Design Element was prepared in accordance with the guidelines of MLUL. The Township's desire is to encourage good site, landscape architectural and architectural design in both new developments and redevelopments. This desire is consistent with the revised recommendations contained in the N.J. State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). It is envisioned that this objective can be accomplished by introducing certain Township-wide unifying elements into site design, in an attempt to establish a River Vale design vernacular of the highest quality. At the same time, it is not the desire of the Township to inhibit individualism or stifle creativity. Rather, the goal of this effort is to create a thread of continuity of design elements throughout the Township.

This Element should form the basis for the subsequent development of design standards in the municipal land development ordinances, with the objective being to promote a built environment that is both visually pleasing and well planned. Its objectives include the creation of a sense of place from both functional and visual standpoints, for both private and community facility development. Its intent is to emphasize and promote harmony of new design with its surroundings. Physical items for consideration include street lighting, signage, sidewalks, public area landscaping, and architectural treatments, among others.

In some communities, the Community Design Element also addresses the design and practical aspects of creating an integrated Town Center, thereby tying community facilities together in a pleasing, convenient and safe manner. In the case of River Vale, until such time as a satisfactory site is identified that is situated in a setting dominated by community facilities, and that the community is committed to, there will be too many variables to seriously consider specific design features. At this point in time, the most logical location would be the government center that includes Town Hall, the Library, park and recreation facilities, the community monuments, and the future amphitheater. The downside to this location is that it is separate from the police, ambulance and fire departments, and the commercial district.

The most important accomplishment of a community design plan within the context of a municipal master plan is the establishment of criteria that is considered important in such a program. The specific regulations and guidelines can then be developed from these criteria.

### **6.2.1 Concept Plan Reviews**

River Vale would be well served to expand its sketch plat submission provisions for subdivisions to include conceptual site plan submissions. Such a requirement would permit and promote interaction, discussion and alternatives exploration between the review board and the applicant, prior to the expenditure of significant resources for the preparation of detailed design plans. In this manner, solutions that serve the interests of the applicants, the Township, and the general health, safety and welfare of the public can be addressed schematically prior to the making of any serious commitments or soft cost investments.

### **6.2.2 Establishment of a Community Design Vernacular**

The establishment of a community-wide design vernacular can help to create or emphasize the unique character of a community as compared to its neighboring communities. Its objectives should include the creation of a sense of place from both functional and visual standpoints, for both private and community facility development, emphasizing harmony of new design with its surroundings. This process began with the attempt to recognize any such themes or any municipal-wide unifying element that may already have been established, and to identify the most significant visual elements. We searched in an effort to establish the best examples as community standards of the highest quality. In River Vale, no prevailing design standards other than in the Four Corners district were discovered to exist at the present time, either as positive or negative stimuli. The only community-wide standards we observed included bituminous concrete roadway pavements, concrete curbs, absence of street lighting on residential streets, and the presence of sidewalks only on major roadways. All other public right-of-way features were random. As a result, such standards or guidelines should be established and introduced. This Element could then form the basis for design standards in the municipal land development ordinances, with the objective being to promote a built environment that is both visually pleasing and well planned. The sub-elements below all contribute to these standards. In the case of the Four Corners, the Township has embarked on establishing central business district design standards that have been supported by the Planning Board.

### **6.2.3 Preservation of Existing Site Features**

The objective of this item is to attempt to seamlessly blend new and redevelopments into the fabrics of the existing neighborhoods, thereby avoiding the starkness, vivid newness and contrast that is often found to be objectionable in new developments. One of the most effective means of accomplishing this is to identify and locate the most valuable existing site features, including vegetation, topography, and water features among others, and incorporate them into finished site and subdivision plan proposals. This represents planning and design that works with the land and is sympathetic to its character, as opposed to imposing new development on sites without regard for their existing features. This is particularly important when those features are recognizable elements of the streetscape.

River Vale has at least two provisions in its zoning code that address this goal. Both provisions are qualitative, however, and as such are difficult to enforce. Beyond that, since they are qualitative, it is equally as difficult to determine when and if variances are required for specific development proposals. To be effective, these proposals would benefit from having standards that are more easily measurable. Contrary to convention, however, they do not have to be as quantitative as traditional zoning provisions that spell out dimensional limitations. Regulations based on performance standards work equally as well if they exhibit clear enough objectives for the understanding of both applicants and reviewing agents. One overriding such objective should be to maintain and enhance site features that are valued and recognizable from the public right-of-way.

### **6.2.4 Streetscapes**

Streetscapes are important in both residential and commercial areas. They are most controllable in the latter, however. In residential neighborhoods, appropriate streetscapes include those with mature street trees and few tree vacancies, sidewalks where pedestrian safety is an issue, attractive front yard landscaping, tasteful architectural facades, and neat appearances that are free of utilitarian functions, clutter and debris.

In commercial neighborhoods, desirable streetscapes can vary from traditional pedestrian-oriented downtown configurations to more suburban vehicular-oriented configurations. A classic example of the former is the central business district of neighboring Westwood Borough. This desirable type of streetscape includes on-street parking, decorative and pedestrian scale lighting, sidewalks adjacent to curbs and leading directly into building entries, concealed off-street parking, controlled-size street trees within the sidewalks, and trash receptacles. They often also include other amenities such as benches, tables, public art, vest pocket sitting areas, banners and flags. In these settings, visitors generally arrive by vehicle and tend to all of their activities on foot, without the need to use transit from one stop to the next. In traditional pedestrian-oriented downtowns, building facades are also important. Considerations include materials, window displays, canopies, signage, lighting, and color schemes. An organization known as “Downtown New Jersey” assists communities in establishing design vernacular for central business districts. They can also assist in finding low interest loan programs for building owners within these districts to improve their storefronts. The Land Use Plan Element of this Master Plan also discusses the virtues of permitting residences and offices on floors above the first floor retail businesses. Mixed uses within downtowns add life, livelihood and vibrancy to downtowns. They also add more customers to patronize the retail businesses, thereby improving the health of the downtown. These mixed uses also enjoy symbiotic relationships, since they each benefit the others.

In more typical suburban environments, acceptable vehicular-oriented commercial streetscapes can include decorated front yard parking lots, sidewalks separated from streets and curbs by grass verges and tree lawns, higher elevation yet decorative lighting, larger street trees, and trash receptacles. They can also include other amenities such as benches, tables, public art, sitting areas of various sizes, banners and flags. In these settings, visitors generally arrive by vehicle and tend to their activities by driving from one stop to the next. If distances are limited, pedestrian circulation can also be common.

River Vale is best set up to enhance the pedestrian-oriented configurations along Westwood Avenue from Rivervale Road east to Peter’s Place; and along Rivervale Road from Westwood Avenue south to Caruso Lane. River Vale’s commercial streetscape is best set up to enhance the suburban vehicular-oriented configurations throughout its remaining area. This includes Westwood Avenue from Rivervale Road west to Doretta Street, and Rivervale Road from Westwood Avenue north to Montview Place.

One program that has assisted N.J. municipalities in preserving, enhancing and establishing the street tree presence in all districts is the Community Forestry Management Plan. This Plan inventories trees within the public rights-of-way. It identifies tree species, locations, sizes, health and vacancies, and creates a plan that manages their maintenance, replacements, and new plantings. It can also be extended to other publicly owned properties that are not within rights-of-ways. Many communities take on a project such as this over several years. One reason is its cost, which communities wish to amortize. But as importantly, this is an effort whose costs can be reduced by volunteer efforts, provided the volunteers are properly trained. Since volunteers aren’t generally plentiful, and since River Vale has many streets to inventory, a plan that divides the Township into districts and addresses them systematically can be feasible and cost effective.

### **6.2.5 Infill Development in Residential Neighborhoods**

Infill development within residential neighborhoods is inevitable, given the increasingly high values of residential properties. These values will spur teardowns of smaller houses on larger lots, and the

redevelopment of those lots with new larger homes. They will also spur subdivisions of oversized lots into two or more lots, and the construction of new large homes. If improperly conceived and/or executed, these activities can generate detrimental impacts on established neighborhoods. Controls need to contain dimensional limitations as well as character requirements. Character controls can be much like the performance controls described in 6.2.3 above, and also include a requirement to mimic existing neighborhood architectural styles. The dimensional limitations, or bulk standards, should include controls that mimic the prevailing development patterns of each existing and unique neighborhood. Such controls can include floor area ratio, impervious surface lot coverage, building footprint coverage, building height, height-to-setback ratios, etc. Collectively, these controls should effectively limit over-building and inappropriate redevelopment while still permitting reasonable building proposals.

### **6.2.6 Off-Street Parking Lots**

Off-street parking lots should be designed to be attractive, functional, and with easily understood circulation patterns. The parked vehicles and pavement surfaces should be de-emphasized. Vegetative screening should be required around their periphery, especially when adjacent to incompatible land uses and the public right-of-way. In locations with front yard parking lots where the facades of buildings need to be seen from the street, low hedges that screen the vehicles and higher canopy trees can be utilized, the former to screen the lower views of the vehicles and the latter to soften views of the higher building elevations. This treatment permits mid-level views to be directed to the building in the background. In addition, planted islands with trees, shrubs and groundcovers should be required at the ends of all rows of parking stalls, to improve aesthetics and to protect vehicles. Care should be taken to maintain sight lines. In larger parking lots, mid-lot planted parking islands should also be required to interrupt large expanses of unattractive pavement.

### **6.2.7 Signage**

In general, signage needs to be tasteful. Most signage occurs in commercial districts. Signage requirements are also needed for multifamily residential districts, because River Vale currently does not have such regulations. In vehicular-oriented commercial districts, primary signage should be freestanding structures nearby (but not within) the public rights-of-way. They should be low rise, wider than high, use materials that are sympathetic to the building designs that it advertises, simply and subtly colored, with subtle graphics and simply understood information. Lighting should be external, and the light source should be concealed. They should be limited to one sign per primary site entry point. Any building mounted signage should be secondary to the freestanding signage, and should only be permitted in cases where further information beyond that provided by the entry signage is required (e.g. more than one business shares a building). On-site directional signage should be small, freestanding, and adjacent to site drives.

In pedestrian-oriented downtown districts, signage should have a uniformity that ties neighboring signage together with a common design theme. Threads of continuity are the operative principles, and are not meant to limit creativity or individuality. Signs should be mounted on building frontages at consistent and easily readable heights above grade. Only one sign per establishment should be permitted. Temporary “specials” signage may be permissible under certain conditions and within prescribed time limits. Consistency in sign style, color palette, lettering fonts, and method of illumination is desirable. Once again, external and concealed lighting sources are preferable to internal or neon signage.

### **6.2.8 Circulation Systems**

To the extent practicable, vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle circulation systems should be separate from one another. Unfortunately, this goal cannot be readily accomplished within the confines of near fully developed communities. River Vale’s roadway system is logical and follows generally accepted guidelines for street hierarchies (see Circulation Plan Element). The great majority of River Vale’s residential access streets are

not used as shortcuts to bypass the traffic controls and/or congestion of major collector roads. This leads to better safety within residential neighborhoods and higher quality of living standards. The Township's major streets are in need of streetscape improvements as described in 6.2.4 above. Many of the street trees of the Township's streets are in need of attention. Many need horticultural care, many need replacement, and many other streets are in need of supplemental plantings. This can be accomplished by either following the guidelines of the Arbor Day Foundation's "Tree City USA" guidelines, or even more desirably by applying for municipal Tree City status from the Foundation.

Pedestrian walks are generally limited to major streets within the Township. Much of Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue have sidewalks, as do a few of the other collector roads. A sidewalk is being added along Poplar Road. Still other collector roads are in need of sidewalks, and it would benefit the Township to promote their construction. To the extent possible, there should be some level of physical separation between sidewalks and streets, except within traditional pedestrian-oriented downtown districts. With the lone exception of a walkway to Woodside School from the west, there do not appear to be any publicly accessible off road pedestrian ways. These can be particularly valuable in and around public schools, to connect residential neighborhoods that are characterized by numerous culs-de-sac, and within and through passive recreation areas. While sidewalks along streets are most desirably constructed of hard surface pavements such as decorative concrete paving stones or poured concrete, off road walks can be of lower impact construction that is more consistent with their residential or natural surroundings.

Bicycle paths are scarcely available in River Vale. A bicycle route along several public streets traverses the township from northern neighborhoods to southern neighborhoods with a few short sections of dedicated paths. Given the absence of opportunity within River Vale for dedicated bicycle paths, it would be desirable for the bicycle routes that share the road with vehicles to be enhanced. This can be accomplished by expanding their network into residential neighborhoods and to the borders of adjacent municipalities, thereby promoting their usage and utility. This can also be accomplished by means of better markings, e.g. dedicated painted lanes, share the road signage, parking facilities, etc.

### **6.2.9 Site Plan Standards**

River Vale's site plan standards can be improved in a number of areas. Aesthetic improvements and site development features and configurations for pedestrian comfort could be emphasized, and would be justified by the value added to both the site owners and community as a whole. Parking facilities and utilitarian functions should be better concealed. Site lighting should be decorative, and sensitive to neighboring properties. The preservation of natural features, including areas of topographic interest, should be encouraged. Landscaping should be tasteful and plentiful, and ornamental landscaping and other site ornamentation should not be garish or overly exotic. Site signage and circulation systems should place an emphasis on organization and understated appearance. Creative grading and earthwork should be encouraged. Finally, paved surfaces should be minimized to include only those pavements that are required for proper and safe site function.

### **6.2.10 Lighting Standards**

As previously mentioned, site lighting should be decorative and sensitive to neighboring properties in terms of light spillage. Lighting should be set at the minimum levels necessary to permit the site to function safely and efficiently. The most desirable light sources should be decided upon, and they should become the municipal standard. Different light sources cast different shades of light, from white to yellow to amber to blue. Acceptable light pole heights should be considered. While light poles up to 25 or more feet in height might be appropriate for commercial parking lots, poles of up to only about 15 feet in height provide the pedestrian scale necessary for more intimate spaces. Glare should be minimized, particularly at property

lines. Headlight directionality should be considered in site planning so that adverse impacts upon neighboring properties can be minimized.

The decorative nature of lighting fixtures should be considered as well. While there is nothing objectionable about having different light fixtures adorning different sites and public thoroughfares, areas that can and should carry out a consistent public design theme should use consistent styles and colors. Also in this regard, since the conventional cobra head fixture is so commonly associated with transportation facilities, they should be prohibited in this suburban setting. River Vale maintains street lighting along its major roadways. The Township has consistently eschewed street lighting on minor residential streets. The Township should revisit this policy to determine if low lighting levels would be preferable to no lighting for the purpose of public safety.

### **6.2.11 Landscaping Standards**

As previously discussed, to the extent practicable natural features (including areas of topographic interest, geological features, valuable vegetation) should be preserved and incorporated into the finished site landscape design. Once again, landscaping should be tasteful and plentiful, and ornamental landscaping and other site ornamentation should not be garish or overly exotic. Existing trees, especially mature trees, should be preserved to help create a sense of place and to project an appearance of longer term establishment. Natural (or native) vegetation should be utilized wherever the opportunity presents itself. This is particularly important on site fringes that abut natural areas. Finally, the use of intrusively exotic plants and invasive species as identified by the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection in planting plans should be either banned or strongly discouraged.

Plant materials and arrangements for planting designs should accomplish multiple objectives. Among others, such objectives should include aesthetic enhancement, environmental control, natural resource protection, screening, buffering, climate control, energy efficiency, circulation control and definition, and spatial enclosure.

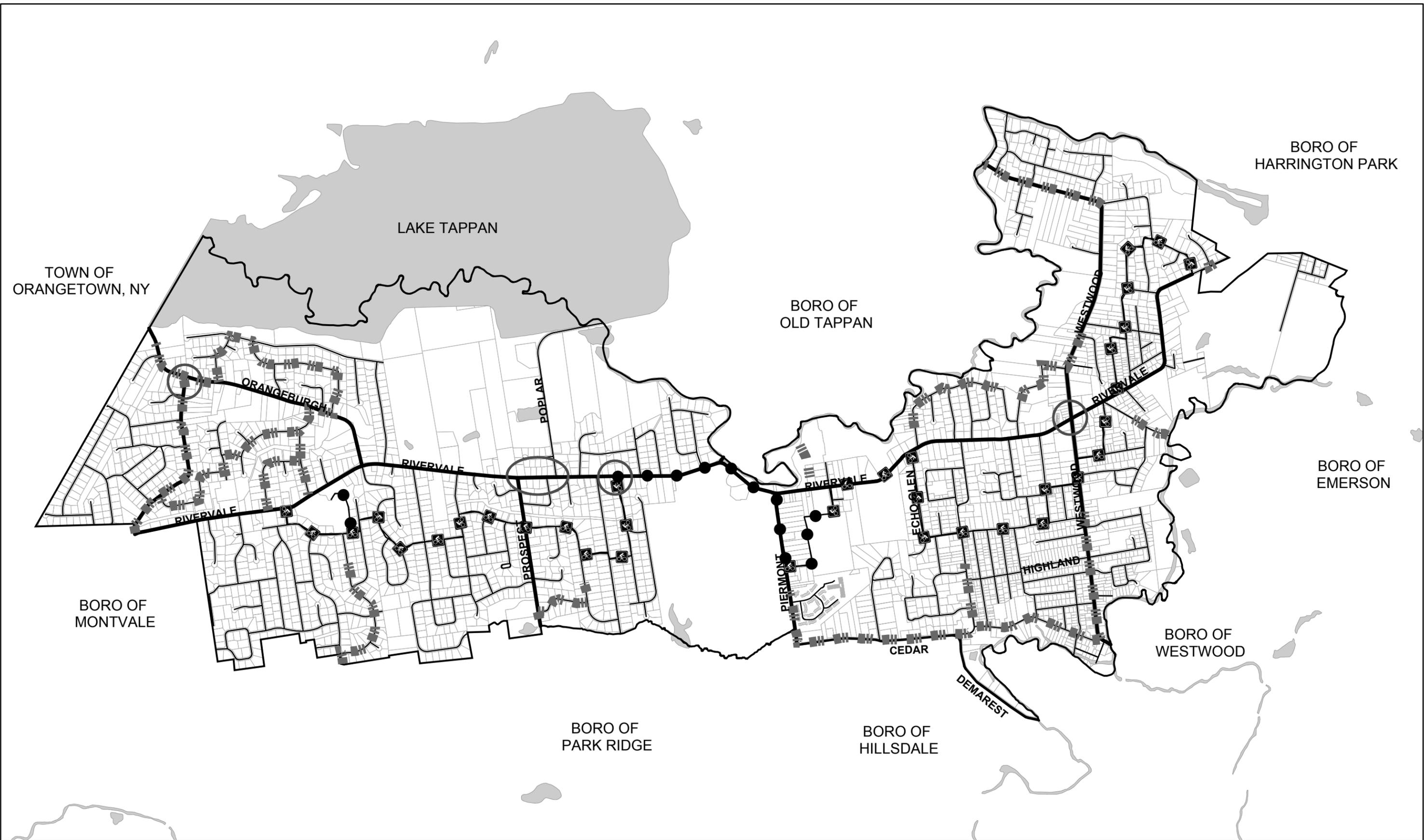
## **7. CIRCULATION PLAN ELEMENT**

### **7.1 BACKGROUND**

The Township's development has been, and will continue to be, influenced by the internal and regional transportation system. Access is an important factor in determining land use type and intensity.

In addition to safety and convenience, traffic planning takes into account the need to preserve the character of the community, particularly a predominantly residential Township like River Vale. The street system should be designed to meet the needs of both through and local traffic in such a way as to enhance the attractive character of the community. New roads or extensions should be designed to be sensitive to topography, natural resources and open spaces. Transportation planning must strike a balance between the regional and local aspects of the system if it is to be successful.

As part of a metropolitan region, a substantial amount of traffic to and from neighboring communities can be expected and needs to be accommodated. However, the major transportation corridors in the region, including the Garden State Parkway, the Palisades Interstate Parkway and the commuter Railroad, all by-pass the Township. River Vale's relationship to the region is shown on Figure 2. The major routes of public transportation within River Vale are shown on Figure 5.



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Source:  
 Bergen County Geographic Information Systems  
 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
 Map Prepared March 2005 by ST&A

1,600 0 1,600  
 Feet  
 1 inch = 1,600 feet

- Existing Bike Path
- Existing Bike Route
- Proposed bike path extension
- Collector Roads
- Local Roads
- Intersections to be studied



Figure 5 - Circulation Plan  
 River Vale Master Plan

Township of River Vale, New Jersey

### 7.1.1 Existing Street System

Although the basic structure of River Vale's road system has long been established, improvements and repairs to existing roads will be necessary over the years and a few new road connections and intersection improvements will have to be planned as future development occurs. Since the Township's pattern of development is well established, and new development (as noted in this plan) is largely a matter of infill, major new roads are not likely to occur. At present, there are approximately 80 miles of County and municipal roads in the Township.

The adequacy of the existing road system and its components is largely determined by the following factors:

1. Physical characteristics of the road – pavement, intersections, curvature, width, grades, sight distance, and other conditions affecting safety and capacity
2. Road utilization – type and amount of traffic flow
3. Type of service which the road provides – functional classification: through or local traffic
4. The existing and potential land use in the vicinity of the roadway

The master plan consultant's traffic engineer performed an initial reconnaissance of the circulation system.

#### 7.1.1.1 Functional Classification of Streets

Traffic planning distinguishes between the functions of traffic movement and that of access to property. It is difficult for traffic to move through an area or street efficiently if vehicles seeking access to properties continually obstruct it. Conversely, the access function should be divorced from important arteries because there may be adverse effect of traffic using these arteries upon adjacent residential use. While the latter is an important planning criterion, the built out pattern of the Township precludes major changes in property access.

Limited access roadways such as the Garden State Parkway and the Palisades Interstate Parkway serve the entire region and alleviate forced flow conditions through local streets. There is no direct access to these parkways from River Vale, however indirect access is relatively convenient.

#### 1. Arterial Roadway

Kinderkamack Road to the west, Old Hook Road south of River Vale, Schraalenburgh Road to the east, and Veterans Memorial Highway north of the Township in Rockland County, serve as the major or arterial roadway system in the area. Access to any of these roads can be made from the various collector streets in River Vale.

#### 2. Collector Roads

This type of road is important to Township-wide travel. It is intended primarily to collect traffic from local streets and feed it to the arterial roadway system. In most cases, these roads interconnect various sections of the Township and are the principal means of circulation in and around residential areas.

Collector roads should present a minimum design problem to the driver and should offer the most direct possible route between local streets and the major road network. They should have sufficient width to permit the passage of at least one lane of traffic in each direction without interference from parked or standing vehicles. Where possible, abutting residential properties should derive access from intersecting local roads,

rather than directly from collector roads. There should be a sufficient shoulder provided for disabled vehicles and for transient parking in higher density areas. A right-of-way width of 60 feet to 80 feet is the normally accepted standard to meet these requirements.

Collector Roads in River Vale include:

- a. Rivervale Road, a County road, is probably the most significant collector road in terms of the number of access opportunities to all parts of the Township. It connects into two arterial roads: Veteran's Memorial Highway to the north, and Old Hook Road to the south. It is the only north-south thoroughfare traversing the Township and acts as the Township's transportation spine. Rivervale Road is somewhat narrow and winding in places for the functions it must serve. Because of the existing and potential traffic generation by surrounding land uses and connector streets, the Township should give priority to improving the alignment, grades, width and intersections of this road. Earlier plans gave particular emphasis to the realignment of the road at the intersections of Old Tappan Road (see b. below). Past volume figures indicate that Piermont Avenue, a small section of Rivervale Road, and Old Tappan Road presently serve as the major east-west access thoroughfares through the Township that interconnect with Rivervale Road.
- b. Old Tappan Road is a County road with only a small segment of it within the Township. This segment occurs between the roadway's Hackensack River Bridge and Rivervale Road. Its intersection with Rivervale Road was recently improved and has a left turn lane and traffic signal.
- c. Westwood Avenue, also a County road spanning from the westerly boundary line of the Township and the Four Corners Area, is a collector street. It connects the Four Corners business center with that of the Borough of Westwood. This section of the road is predominantly four lanes wide; and although it is predominantly striped for only two lanes, its width allows for turning movements. It features striping, and is partially served with sidewalks and curbs. The Roberge Elementary School is located on Westwood Avenue and accounts for a high volume of automobile traffic at various times of the day. The Bergen County Planning Board considers the easterly part of Westwood Avenue that extends between Rivervale Road and the Hackensack River Bridge to be a local road. It carries substantially less traffic than the westerly part. The intersection with Rivervale Road is signalized and there is a left turn lane and through right lane eastbound and westbound and northbound approaches. There are plans for a southbound left turn lane, and there is a need to reconfigure some of the lanes (see Section 7.2 of this master plan).
- d. Piermont Avenue is also a County road, and serves a particularly important collector function in that the Pascack Valley Regional High School in Hillsdale is located along it about a mile from the western boundary line of River Vale. It also connects to Kinderkamack Road and Broadway in the Borough of Hillsdale.
- e. Prospect Avenue is another County road. It serves mostly as a collector street between Broadway in the Borough of Woodcliff Lake and Rivervale Road. Approximately 500 feet south of its intersection with Rivervale Road, Poplar Road continues eastbound into the Borough of Old Tappan. This roadway combination provides a minor east-west access route through the Township.
- f. Orangeburgh Road is a County road in the northern section of the Township that serves as the main feeder route into the Veterans Memorial Highway in Rockland County. The Blue Hill/Orangeburgh Road intersection, however, is congested due to the northbound traffic headed for Veteran's Memorial Highway during rush hours.
- g. Blue Hill Road was originally designed to be a collector road to serve local streets between Rivervale Road and Orangeburgh Road. It is also used for through traffic connecting to the Montvale business park area and the Garden State Parkway. The offset intersection of Blue Hill Road and Grand Avenue with Rivervale Road is a particular traffic problem at rush hours.

### 3. Local Roads

Those streets in the Township not discussed above function primarily as local roads. Their primary purpose is to provide direct access to the individual properties that front on them. They require sufficient width to permit two-way traffic to pass safely. In low-density residential areas, such as half acre and larger lots where car parking is usually provided for on each lot, a two-lane pavement is generally adequate. In higher density areas, a wider pavement should be provided to allow for parking on one or both sides. The overall right-of-way width should normally measure 50 to 60 feet. The existing Township Ordinance provides that the paved width of the streets should range between 24 and 36 feet, depending upon the density of adjacent land use. While it is usually not practical to widen local roads in built up neighborhoods, and to the extent that inconsistencies with N.J. Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) are avoided, the above standards should be followed if the few remaining potentially developable sites are developed.

A few local roads (Central Ave., north end of Cedar Lane and Demarest Road/Cedar Lane) are County roads.

#### 7.1.1.2 Traffic Accidents Report

Traffic accidents analysis is an important section of the background for the Master Plan Circulation Element. The report helps to identify problematic intersections and streets to help plan for better transportation flow in the Township. Data was secured from the Township Police Department. There were approximately 278 accidents in the past three years on primary roads and intersections such as Rivervale Road, Orangeburgh Road and Westwood Avenue. The total amounts to about 1.8 accidents per week and does not include accidents on the secondary and tertiary side streets or accidents that go unreported to the Township. The quantity of accidents is relatively high for a Township with a population of less than 10,000, but reflects the high volume of through traffic experienced by River Vale.

The majority of accidents (81%) were a result of either lack of attention from their operator or vehicle malfunction. There were, however, two recorded cases of medical conditions as a contributing factor. Other circumstances that contributed to Township accidents were related to surrounding environment factors or weather conditions such as:

- Debris on the roadways (1.4%)
- Icy roadways (2.2%)
- Animal action (2.4%)
- Snow (5.0%)
- Water on the roadways (5.4%)

There were a minimal percentage (0.36%) of accidents due to fallen trees, wet leaves, and roadway defects. It may not be a critical factor for the Master Plan since it is difficult to avoid accidents due to weather conditions. Snow and water on the roadways seems to be the second leading factor of accidents in the Township. It may be helpful to increase public awareness by alerting the public to the dangers of driving during poor weather conditions, and by emphasizing the point with local statistics.

It appears that while there is a high incidence of accidents in the Township, most are not due to unsafe conditions created by roadway conditions or alignments.

### 7.1.2 Public Transportation

Public transportation serves to facilitate commuting, as well as general travel for residents who do not have the desire to utilize an automobile or who do not have means of private transportation. The Township is

served by a few bus transit lines offered by Rockland Coach, which operates with Red and Tan Lines, Coach USA and Rockland Transit Corporation. The bus transit lines include the following:

**Route 14 (14K-14ET)**

Operates from Port Authority Bus Terminal to Westwood.

**Route 84**

Operates from GW Bridge Bus Station to the Rockleigh Industrial Park.

These lines provide service to the Township, but the service is not extensive as the buses make only limited stops in River Vale. On the weekdays, Route 14 and Route 14ET operate northbound from Port Authority to Westwood. Route 14 stops twice a day in the PM at two intersections - Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue and Piermont Avenue and Cedar Lane. Route 14ET stops in at the intersection of Rivervale Road and Prospect Avenue six times a day, while Route 14K operating southbound stops twice in the AM and does not operate on the weekends.

For weekend activity, residents must rely on Route 84 operating northbound and southbound from the George Washington Bridge, which stops in River Vale at the intersection of Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue and Piermont Road and Cedar Lane eight times. On the weekdays, the bus stops eight times northbound and seven times southbound.

### **7.1.3 Bike Paths, Routes and Trails**

Bike paths, routes and trails are an important alternate transportation system for school children, for recreation and to connect the Township's various activity areas including parks, schools and community services. Bicycle transportation for people of all ages offers many advantages over motor vehicle transportation. Bicycling provides exercise and improves health, does not produce air or noise pollution, is accessible to a wider age group, and is safer and more compatible with the pedestrian environment.

The Township has a limited bike system, and that which does exist is not entirely continuous (see Figure 5).

### **7.1.4 Pedestrian Circulation**

A pedestrian friendly environment is invaluable to the viability of River Vale's downtown commercial area. In addition, walking, bicycling, skating, or skateboarding to get to downtown destinations decreases traffic, and therefore also decreases noise and air pollution, making the community more livable. Walking as exercise is overwhelmingly beneficial to public health. In order to encourage walking, pedestrians must be presented with an environment that is friendly and built to their scale. Such an environment should be safe from crime, aesthetically pleasing, visually interesting, terminate at and contain along its course points of interest, and provide access to necessary services.

The Township already has a partial existing inventory of sidewalks, most of which are on the major collector roads. Many of these sidewalks are not continuous, however, or are not in good repair. Additional sidewalks exist on a few of River Vale's local roads, but these are random and discontinuous. These sidewalks should serve to connect local residents with the collector road sidewalk system. Most local roads do not need sidewalks, because traffic volumes and speeds are more compatible with pedestrian traffic on those roads. The Township has very little in the way of off-road pedestrian circulation. One path exists in Alexander Field, and a new nature path exists in the Poplar Road Nature Center.

## **7.2 PROPOSED CIRCULATION PLAN**

### **7.2.1 Streets**

No significant changes are proposed to the Township's vehicular circulation system. The Township is virtually built out so that new roads or major realignments are neither possible nor desirable. While specific points of congestion do exist, these can be addressed by intersection improvements or other minor roadway adjustments. More specifically:

- Review plans for further improvement of Rivervale Road and Westwood Avenue as part of the continuing revitalization of the Four Corners.
- The movement on Rivervale Road between Piermont Avenue and Poplar Road should be reviewed in detail to determine if turning lanes are required.
- A detailed traffic analysis of the intersection of Blue Hill Road and Orangeburgh Road should be undertaken.

### **7.2.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Routes, Paths and Trails**

As previously discussed, few bicycle and pedestrian routes exist within the Township at present. It is the Township's desire to remedy this omission by introducing such routes in a coordinated and interconnected manner. Proposals for extensions to non-motorized routes that are primarily transportation oriented can be seen on figure 5. Proposals for extensions to non-motorized routes that are primarily recreation oriented can be seen on figure 7.

- To the extent practical, connect the existing sections of designated bike routes.
- Extend the designated bike routes as shown on figure 5.
- Implement as seamless a trail system as practicable for walking, hiking, skating, biking etc. through parks and open spaces in order to connect various destinations including parks and recreation areas, schools, residential neighborhoods, community facilities, and the four corners. Some of these links can be implemented as new development occurs or additional sites are acquired for open space. The proposed greenway paths, along with the existing and proposed sidewalk system, would provide a safe and efficient way for people to access many destinations in River Vale without using motorized vehicles. Pedestrian circulation promotes public health through increased exercise activity among residents, and decreased automobile trips, which alleviates air pollution. It also provides recreation, and access for those who are too young, old, or otherwise unable to operate a motor vehicle.
- In order to provide access to downtown destinations, the Plan encourages the development of continuous sidewalks on the Township's major collector roads, but does not specifically discourage their development elsewhere. Sidewalks along collector roads should be either be completed or repaired. The Township has been actively pursuing this objective along Poplar Road.
- The plan encourages the development of an interconnected on and off road pedestrian circulation system.
- In order to facilitate the completion of sidewalks along the major roads, the Township should institute a policy of "sidewalk banking". Through sidewalk banking, subdivisions and site developments that would otherwise have a sidewalk requirement along a non-collector road are given relief from installing sidewalks at their location in exchange for funding or constructing sidewalks along one of the major roads. Sidewalk banking can be accomplished by agreements arrived at with the applicants during the review process, or it can be adopted as a local ordinance.

## 8. COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN ELEMENT

### 8.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Community facilities help to promote a better quality of life for a community's residents. Such facilities provide both the necessary and complementary services that the public relies on. A strong and highly developed system of public facilities and services often will help a community to develop its own unique character through which residents can interact and define their sense of place. The major features of River Vale's municipal facilities are summarized below.

River Vale is fortunate to have an active and dedicated Advisory Municipal Facilities Committee. This committee has examined all of the community facilities reported on in this chapter. Much of the information was gleaned from their in-depth investigations and projections. Other information contained in this chapter directly results from interviews we conducted with officials within each organization. Community facilities are shown on Figure 6.

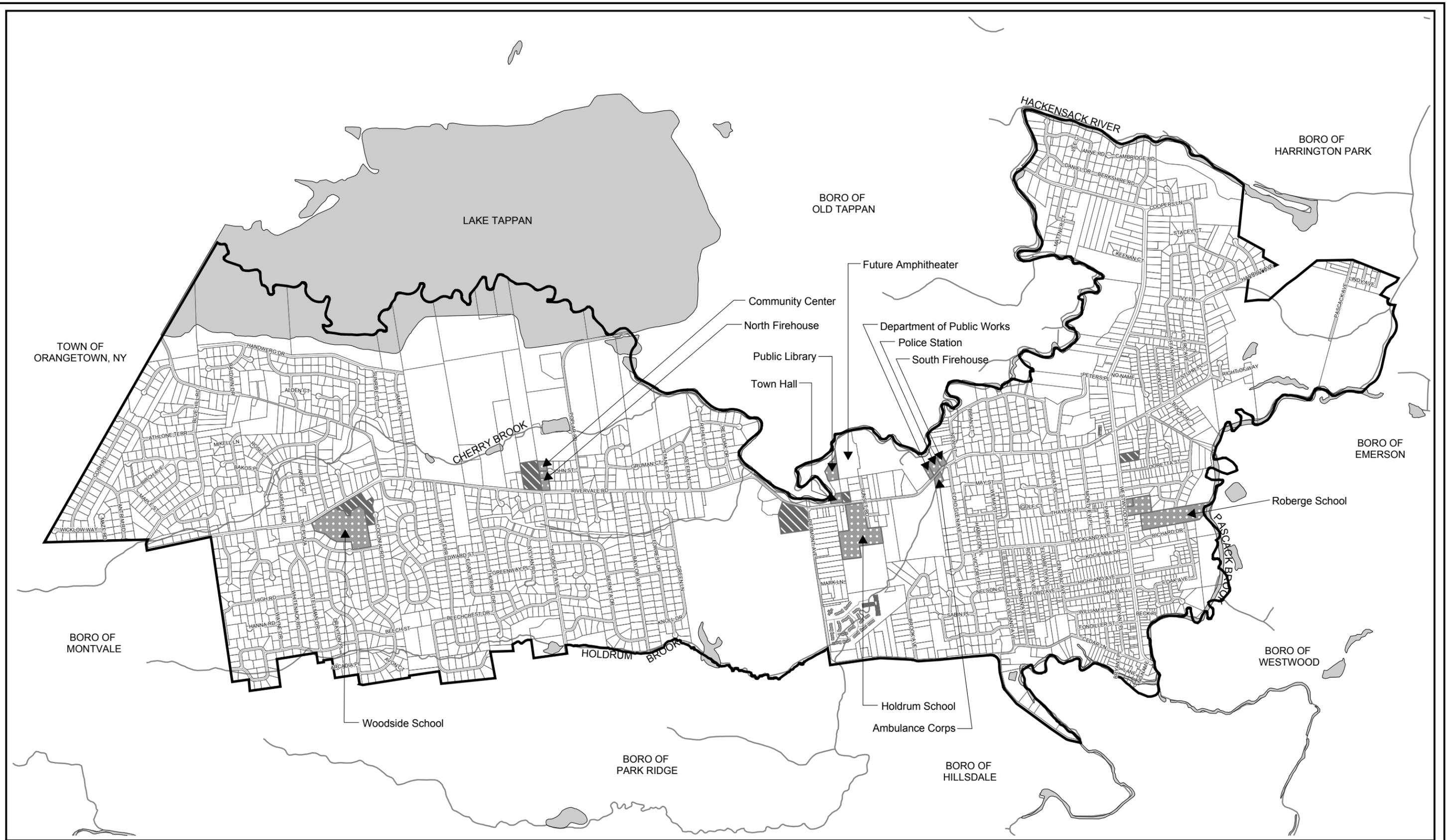
#### 8.1.1 Educational Facilities

The River Vale School District is comprised of three schools, each with their own outdoor facilities:

- The Roberge Elementary School provides education for students in grades K to 5, and is located on a seven-acre site along the south side of Westwood Avenue between Richard Drive and Bergen Place. In addition to the school building, the site also contains softball fields and a soccer/multi-purpose field. The site also supports the Roberge Annex Building (the original school off of Westwood Avenue) that now houses the Board of Education administrative offices.
- The Woodside Elementary School also provides education for students in grades K to 5, and is located on a ten-acre site along the west side of Rivervale Road between The Plaza and Barr Court. In addition to the school building, the site also contains a softball and multi-purpose field.
- The Holdrum Middle School provides education for grades 6 to 8, and is located on a twelve-acre site along the west side of Rivervale Road between Piermont Avenue and Sunset Road. In addition to the school building, the site also contains a softball field and a multi-purpose field, and has the advantage of being contiguous to the Alexander Field/Mark Lane municipal sports complex.

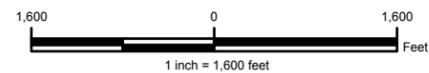
The Board of Education conducted a successful referendum in 2000 for a 19 million-dollar expansion of the three schools within the district. The expansion, renovation and site work for the three schools has just about been completed, all on the three school's preexisting sites. The District Superintendent wrote that the project was warranted because it would address these key issues: "(a) classroom and other learning centers to accommodate student enrollment; (b) infrastructure needs for improved heating and ventilation and facilitating new technologies; (c) regulation-size gymnasium at Holdrum to enhance school, interscholastic and community athletics; (d) relocating all classrooms from Roberge Annex to the main school building; and (e) all administrative offices relocated to one building." The added facilities are expected to satisfy the pre-secondary school educational needs of the community for the foreseeable future. After the proposed expansions have been completed, the capacities will have been increased to accommodate future projected needs. No new referendums for future expansions are being contemplated at this time.

Two reports were recently prepared for the River Vale Board of Education. The first is entitled Demographic Studies and Enrollment Projections, the River Vale School District, and is dated June 2000. This study reports on past school enrollment history, and projects the school enrollments out to year 2009. Its summary

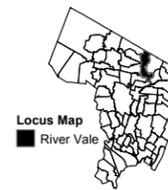


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Source:  
 Bergen County Geographic Information Systems  
 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
 Map Prepared March 2005 by ST&A



- Existing Community Facility Site
- Potential Community Facility Site
- Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Streams
- Roads



**Figure 6 - Community Facilities**  
 River Vale Master Plan

Township of River Vale, New Jersey

breaks down the projections into grade categories K to 5 and 6 to 8, with totals given for K to 8. The “best estimate” projections for 2005 to 2009 are as follows:

Table 7: River Vale Public Schools Enrollment Projections

GRADE	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Actual increase from 2005 to 2009	% increase from 2005 to 2009
<b>K – 5</b>	877	876	868	878	882	5	0.57
<b>6 – 8</b>	446	450	472	460	454	8	1.79
<b>K – 8</b>	1,323	1,326	1,340	1,338	1,336	13	0.98

These projected increases can be considered insignificant, and should not by themselves generate any need for expanded facilities.

The second study is entitled New Jersey Department of Education Long Range Facility Plan, and is dated May 10, 2001. This is a five-year plan mandated by the State. The River Vale School District is currently operating under this Plan. It has been reported that the recent expansions, renovations and improvements to the three schools directly resulted from the findings of this study. Since the study’s life span will soon expire, the School District will soon need to embark on an update to this plan for adoption in the spring of 2006. Its data is now obsolete, which means that it successfully fulfilled its objective.

River Vale’s secondary school children (public high school students in grades 9-12) attend the Pascack Valley Regional High School in the neighboring Borough of Hillsdale, which is one of two high schools in the district. It is located on the north side of Piermont Avenue approximately 0.4 miles west of River Vale’s western boundary. In addition to the school building, the site also contains numerous amenities including, baseball fields, softball fields, a soccer/multi-purpose field, a football field, tennis courts, track, and outdoor basketball courts. A referendum was recently passed that will result in major renovations and expansion of the facility.

### 8.1.2 Library

According to both the Library Board President and Library Director, River Vale first initiated their library in 1952 and then relocated it to its present building on the east side of Town Hall in 1983. The building measures approximately 8,000 square feet in size, and this has been determined to be insufficient for present and future needs. The River Vale library is a township library and thus operates only semi-independently from the Township. The library has a board of directors that has sole responsibility for governing the library operations and staff, yet the Mayor appoints the board and that makes it answerable to the Township. State laws governing all municipal libraries also govern the River Vale library. The library is funded by standards set by the State of New Jersey for municipal financial participation. Approximately 95% of the library’s \$603,000 budget comes from the Township. The remainder of their income is self-generated. Library employees are considered employees of the Township with full Township benefits.

The River Vale Public Library is a member of the Bergen County Cooperative Library System, which pools the resources of over 70 regional libraries. Membership in BCCLS allows the library to have a smaller shelf capacity, without limiting its resident’s reading selection. Currently, the River Vale library houses a total of about 55,000 books, compact disks, tapes, videotapes, and other pieces of media. This represents an adequate number of volumes for current and future needs. The library regularly undergoes a process known as “weeding”, wherein items that have not recently circulated are either inexpensively sold off or disposed of, in order to maintain their optimum inventory of 55,000. Through membership in BCCLS, the River Vale

Library has access to over 4 million items. The River Vale library is a member of both the American Library Association and the New Jersey Library Association.

The River Vale Public Library provides both regularly scheduled programs and special presentations. Some of the regularly scheduled programs include a children's story hour 4 days per week, lunch and learn once per month primarily targeted towards senior citizens, a spring concert, a fall lecture, trips to cultural events, a book discussion group, a young adult program, and summer reading for children. Approximately 10,000 people are in attendance at library programs each year.

The library building also has a community room for meetings of many community groups including the local Boy Scout, Girl Scout and Cub Scout troops, all sports teams, cultural groups, and all other nonprofit town groups (some also from out of town). The community conducts meetings at the library every day.

The library employs three (two full time and one part time) professional librarians, one full time children services specialist, and three part time circulation and administrative support employees. One is a full time bookkeeper/office manager. There are also four part time pages. The Library Director believes that the level of staffing is currently adequate to serve the approximately 6,600 cardholders.

Despite technological advances with the Internet and the wide availability of data and information available via the Internet, River Vale's borrowing rates have increased yearly. The River Vale Public Library provides computers for Internet access and word processing. Despite these resources, circulation increased by 15% over the 1999 borrowing rates.

### **8.1.3 Town Hall**

The River Vale Town Hall is situated along the east side of Rivervale Road between Piermont Avenue and Sunset Road. The Hackensack River runs directly behind Town Hall to the north. The building measures approximately 7,000 square feet in size, and houses offices, conference rooms, court room/council chambers, closets, lounge, utilities space, bathrooms, hallways, and storage. Storage and office space have been the primary spatial problems in this building. The storage needs will most likely be met through more contemporary methods of information storage. As for office space, building expansion is not being contemplated, and would be constrained on this site in any event due to the 2004 N.J. Stormwater Regulations and the C-1 highest level anti-degradation classification given to the adjacent Hackensack River. Therefore, the scarcity of office space will remain a problem in this building.

### **8.1.4 Police Protection**

The headquarters for the River Vale Police Department is situated in a centrally located building in the middle of three community buildings along the east side of Rivervale Road (#334) and north of Echo Glen Avenue. This location allows the police force to have adequate access and provide satisfactory response time to all portions of the Township. According to the Chief, the headquarters location is not critical since the police are on regular patrols. The Township's DPW is in the building immediately to its north, and the Fire Department is in the building immediately to its south. The northern boundary of the lot coincides with Holdrum Brook. The River Vale Police Department employs a force of 21 sworn police officers and three civilians. The Township of River Vale Police Department performs dispatch duties for the neighboring Borough of Old Tappan. Patrolling duties operate in three eight-hour shifts throughout the day. Each shift consists of 3 to 5 officers. The patterns are mixed so that they vary from day to day.

It is expected that the River Vale Police force will grow slightly in numbers in the foreseeable future. The department also foresees a need for facilities that can service an expected increase in female employees. The Police Chief expects the future River Vale Police Department to consist of officers, dispatchers and a secretary.

All of River Vale's police officers were trained in EMT-Defibrillator at the police academy. The Township does not maintain EMT-Defibrillator qualified officers, however, due to the extensive time required for continuing education and certification. Rather, the Township's officers maintain 1<sup>st</sup> Responder status, which is a lesser classification that requires a more manageable level of continuing education. The police department, on average, responds to 15 to 20 medical emergencies each month, and saved the life of one person in the past two years. The need for medical emergency response is expected to increase in the near future because of the new Jewish Home for the Aged that will soon be constructed.

There is no foreseen need for additional equipment beyond the scope of the current replacement schedule. The police department is well equipped. The police headquarters building itself is outdated and unsuitable for the foreseeable future. The building measures over 3,600 square feet and includes a vestibule, Traffic Bureau, processing and storage, bathroom, interview/conference rooms, offices, kitchen, locker rooms, shower rooms, holding cells, dispatch, holding area, hallway, evidence room, utilities area, bureau, closet, and ammunition room. It is believed that a building of approximately 7,000 to 8,000 square feet will be required to meet the needs of the near future. Currently, the department does not have any garage facilities. Generator storage space is needed for a larger generator. The Police Chief indicated that the addition of a sally port would benefit the department. The addition of a sally port (private jail booking entrance) would permit police officers to bring prisoners directly into the jail areas of the department. Currently, police officers must bring prisoners in from the rear of the building through the rear entrance, after which the prisoners are brought to the detention area. The parking facilities are also inadequate. Currently, police officers park their vehicles across River Vale Road in the Ambulance Corps parking lot, and this arrangement has been acceptable to both parties. The department has not needed to use the vacant water company land behind the station.

Any building expansion that may be contemplated would be constrained on this site due to the 2004 N.J. Stormwater Regulations and the C-1 highest level anti-degradation classification given to the adjacent Holdrum Brook. As discussed above, if a new site were to be required, the police department would not share the same location concerns as the Fire Department does, since they would not require a centrally located site within this elongated township. A more detailed examination of the Police Department is a Facilities Study prepared by Arcari Iovino Architects. This study is undated and was transmitted to this consultant on Dec. 6, 2004. This study, as well as the "Police and fire Complex Proposed Program" as prepared by the Advisory Municipal Facilities Committee dated June 25, 2003, both support the need for expanded police facilities.

### **8.1.5 Fire Protection**

The Township of River Vale's Fire Department currently has two firehouses. The North Firehouse was built in the 1960's and is situated along the east side of Rivervale Road near Prospect Avenue. Originally built to house two truck bays, it now houses one bay, a meeting room and a bar. The South (or main) Firehouse was built in 1974 and is situated in a centrally located building (#334) on the south end of three community buildings along the east side of Rivervale Road and north of Echo Glen Avenue. The Township's DPW is in the most northerly building, and the Police Department is in the middle building. It contains two engine bays, a rescue bay, tower bay, rescue boat bay, and all administrative needs. The northern boundary of the lot coincides with Holdrum Brook. These two locations allow the fire department to have adequate access and provide satisfactory response time to all portions of the Township. It is believed by some that one new

combined fire complex could replace these two existing stations, provided it meets the standards for a contemporary firehouse and is centrally located. Given River Vale's elongated north/south shape, and the need to keep response times to a minimum, the challenge is to find the optimum location for such a facility. It was reported in the Arcari Iovino Architects more detailed study that any location in the Township within five miles would meet this criteria. This study also noted that the furthest point from Town Hall is 3.3 miles, therefore a centrally located single facility could be satisfactory. The primary objection to this possibility is that Rivervale Road is the only direct access from north to south. Should something occur to impede this access, fire protection would be impaired.

All members of The River Vale Fire Department are volunteers. The Department has a Fire Chief and two Assistant Chiefs. One of the Assistant Chiefs is also the Chairman of the Department's Building Committee and Expansion. There is also a Fire Official / Marshall. The River Vale Fire Department currently maintains a roster of about 45 volunteers, 40 of whom are active. These volunteers responded to 233 calls in 2004, which represents a typical year. The Assistant Chief believes that the department currently has an adequate number of volunteers to satisfy the needs of the Township. He adds, however, that more members would be desirable. He foresees problems with staffing in the future because many of the volunteers are aging, and it's getting difficult to get new volunteers who succeed in making long-term commitments.

The Assistant Chief has stated that there is currently need for additional space, as delineated in the "Police and fire Complex Proposed Program" that was prepared by the Advisory Municipal Facilities Committee dated June 25, 2003. The Facilities Study prepared by Arcari Iovino Architects cited above also supported these findings. Today, Fire Departments have to deal with additional paperwork requirements that have been issued by the Public Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA). Mandates issued by OSHA require the installation of additional facilities such as emergency showers for decontamination, and exhaust blowers for the engine bays.

The Assistant Chief believes the Department possesses adequate equipment for protection of the Township for the next six years. He advised that the Department has adopted a five-year equipment replacement schedule for major pieces, which should be satisfactory to address the issue of aging equipment and its need to be replaced. Each major piece has a twenty-five year life expectancy. The Township's expensive aerial ladder truck will not need to be replaced for some time since it is only nine years old. In addition, the department maintains pumper trucks, a rescue truck, a fireboat, a chief's car, an assistant chief's car, and an emergency generator. Such equipment should be maintained and replaced when needed. The current main facility should be of adequate size to accommodate the replacement pieces for the near future in adequately sized bays. The North Firehouse, however, is too short for the new truck that is currently planned, and will need to be elongated to house the new truck.

The Township of River Vale has a mutual aid agreement with eight surrounding municipalities, not including the Town of Orangetown, New York. These agreements provide reciprocal access and use of equipment and manpower. Specialty equipment and teams may also be utilized on a contract basis from other municipalities, however River Vale has not had the need. Such specialties could include confined space, hazardous materials, air truck, and SCUBA team. For hazardous materials, the Department turns to Paramus, which has Hazmat capabilities, or to Bergen County for more serious matters. The Assistant Chief has also explained that while the recent vintage townhouse and multifamily developments have not caused any problems to date, the Fire Department is cognizant of other projects in the planning stages and is concerned about the Department's capability to properly provide their emergency services for these planned developments.

### **8.1.6 Ambulance Corps.**

River Vale's Ambulance Corps. is situated in a centrally located building that recently underwent an expansion, along the west side of Rivervale Road across from the Fire and Police Departments and DPW. This is a volunteer organization that provides emergency services to the residents of River Vale. The building and parking facilities are owned by the Ambulance Corps. and are adequate for present and future needs.

### **8.1.7 Community Center**

The Township of River Vale currently has a community center of approximately 5,100 square feet, however it hasn't been in operation since December of 2002. It is situated along the east side of Rivervale Road across from Prospect Avenue, and it houses three functions. One function is a Daycare Center for a group of Toddlers known as "First Friends". Approximately 20 percent of the building is allocated to this use. The second function is a Senior Center. This use accounts for approximately 33 percent of the building. The third use is for a shooting range. Despite this use servicing a very small number of residents, it accounts for the remaining 47 percent of the building. These three uses are not compatible with each other, and have shared this building in an uneasy manner. It was learned in 2004 that the residual effects of the shooting range have contaminated the building, and that serious remedial actions would be required to make the building safe for public use.

The River Vale Advisory Municipal Facilities Committee issued a report dated May 25, 2004 regarding the Community Center. After evaluating several alternatives, they concluded that the most cost effective and beneficial way to remediate the problems with the Community Center building, and to provide a facility that meets the needs of the River Vale public, would be to demolish the existing building and develop a new building in its place. The Township has put this on hold until the future of the future of the Bergen Hills Golf Course has been determined.

### **8.1.8 Post Office**

Currently, the Township of River Vale does not have its own Post Office. Exacerbating this problem, River Vale also does not have any private mail facility. In some communities, private facilities provide all the services of a post office except for local delivery. Oftentimes these services include post office box rental, money order purchasing, sale of postal service supplies, and acceptance of outgoing mail. As a result, River Vale is at a disadvantage. Delivery to River Vale is handled by the United States Postal Service facility in Westwood. The facility in Westwood also expedites delivery to Westwood and Old Tappan. River Vale does have a postal satellite office on Westwood Avenue that provides for post office box rental, sorting, and other services.

At this time, there is no proposal for a Post Office facility exclusively for River Vale. However, future needs of the Township may warrant a Post Office, and a lot within the Central Business District should be considered if and when this becomes a reality. It should be stressed that a new post office would only be provided if the US Postal Service believes one to be necessary. A facility within the revitalized town center would be most appropriate for a post office use. Discussions are currently underway that could lead to River Vale being assigned its own zip code.

### 8.1.9 Department of Public Works

The River Vale Department of Public Works (DPW) is situated in a centrally located building on the north end of three community buildings along the east side of Rivervale Road (#320) and north of Echo Glen Avenue. The Township's Police Department is in the middle building, and the South Fire Department is in the most southerly building. The DPW yard and outdoor storage area is located behind the building. The northern boundary of the lot coincides with Holdrum Brook. The DPW's building space measures approximately 4,150 square feet, and includes a bathroom, locker area, offices, attic space, shed, living and closet space, basement and kitchen. The space allotted to outdoor use is insufficient in size, and sometimes some of the DPW's outdoor activities extend beyond their property line onto Water Company property. A detailed operations study was prepared in April 2004 by Wayne DeFeo, LLC and is entitled Township of River Vale Public Works Study.

### 8.1.10 Office of Emergency Management

The Township maintains an Office of Emergency Management (OEM) that is not directly connected to either the Police Department or the Fire Department. Such connections are common within other nearby municipalities, but not in River Vale. Nevertheless, the deputy OEM coordinators are Police officers, and the Emergency Response Team consists of members of the Police and Fire Departments and Ambulance Corps. The Township's has appointed a new Director of the Office of Emergency Management. This office has just recently established a command post within the DPW.

## 8.2 PROPOSED COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN

The following proposals are included as part of the Township plan for study, and for improvements to community facilities:

1. A one-story 4,000 square foot addition is under consideration for the library, since the current building is not capable of supporting a second floor. Ideally, the library board believes an 8,000 square foot addition would meet their present and future needs. Any on site expansion would be constrained due to the site's close proximity to NJDEP C-1 waters that carry significant setback requirements. These limitations and encumbrances would likely require any expansion to take place on another site.
2. Preferably, any approved library addition would address the following concerns: house a children's room with areas for children's and young adult book collections and program areas; provide more small meeting rooms and small private English as a Second Language (ESL) tutoring space. River Vale also has numerous Americans who require assistance with reading and High School equivalency exams who could also use this space; since every Pascaek Valley High School student has a laptop computer, the library needs improved wiring for wireless internet service; provide additional private space to work on computers. Junior High School students cross street to use the library every day after school; provide space for the expanded demand for high tech Audio/ Visual information storage, and other storage closets in general; provide adequate parking provisions which have become problematic.
3. Together, the limited quantity of available land area, and NJDEP's C-1 anti-degradation standards for area surface waters, combine to constrain the ability to expand the police department, the south firehouse, and the DPW. At least one of these three facilities needs to be relocated.

One possibility would be to relocate Town Hall and the community center into a Four Corners building that may become available, such as the four-story bank building on Westwood

Avenue. This would free up the current site of the North Fire House and Community Center for a single more modern and efficient Fire Department to service the entire Township. It would permit the Police Department to relocate into the existing Town Hall. It would also free up the site across from the Ambulance Corps for the sole use of the DPW.

A second possibility would be to construct a new complex on the current North Fire House and Community Center site to house the Police Station and Community Center. The Fire Department could consolidate on the main Fire Station site, and the DPW and Town Hall could remain in their current locations.

A third alternative would be to develop a new Town Hall along the north side of Piermont Avenue should a site become available, and a new Community Center/Library Annex on the current Town Hall site. A consolidated Fire Department and Police Station could then share the current North Fire House and Community Center site, and the DPW could utilize the entire site across from the Ambulance Corps.

One other factor that could further expand the range of potential solutions to these spatial problems is the possibility that the Township could acquire the Bergen Hills Golf Club, either by itself or in partnership with Bergen County. If this were to happen, the possibility exists for a site to emerge along Rivervale Road that could be suitable to develop a building for one of these community facilities.

4. Encourage any additional high school expansion beyond the improvements currently underway to take place on its existing campus in Hillsdale Borough.
5. Encourage the electronic storage of information in Town Hall, thereby minimizing the need to expand the Town Hall just for storage.
6. The pros and cons of introducing a full Township Post Office (beyond the satellite office and presumably in the Four Corners area) should be explored. Such a facility provides a community with a sense of individual place, and can also provide some beneficial level of business spin-off. There are potential drawbacks as well, including traffic issues and possible property tax implications.
7. If the North Firehouse is maintained, it will need to be elongated to house the new truck because the current bay is too short.
8. If the DPW remains in its current location, its outdoor activities need to be consolidated so that they do not extend beyond their common property line with the Water Company property.
9. Monitor the compatibility of the Township's Office of Emergency Management's command post within the DPW facility.

## 9. PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT

### 9.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Because the format of this master plan is one that provides a comprehensive master plan with all its elements, yet also provides complete independent Elements that can stand alone for certain purposes if required, there will necessarily be some redundancy between this Parks and Recreation Element and the Green Acres Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) that is Chapter 11 of this Master Plan.

The following parks in River Vale are used for active recreation:

Alexander Park	17 acres
Grove Field	7 acres
Ranges Field	<u>4.5 acres</u>
Total Area of Active Rec. Facilities:	28.5 acres

River Vale's 28.5 acres of lands dedicated to recreation represents only 40% of the 2003 –2007 New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) recommended *minimum* of 70.7 acres (see OSRP). It also falls short of the quantity of recreation lands required by local desires, conventions and specific needs on a community specific basis. As discussed in the OSRP, there is an unsatisfied demand for golf facilities within Bergen County in general, and within the northern reaches of the County more specifically. This is despite the fact that River Vale is host to three golf courses, because they are not all available to the public. In addition, as the population of River Vale increased over the past decade, only a few improvements were made to the Township's existing recreation facilities, leaving them inadequate for present and future needs. The Township Athletic Director reports that the River Vale public is underserved by recreation facilities, due primarily to high levels of competition for facility use. He reports that all types of facilities are needed, with no one more than others.

The most apparent weaknesses in River Vale's open space and recreation inventory are as follows:

- A shortage of publicly owned land to accommodate and support current and future active recreation needs;
- A shortage of passive recreation facilities, although opportunities do exist to expand these resources. This item also includes a shortage of publicly accessible open space;
- The difficulty, and in some cases inability, to connect existing and proposed resources together for the promotion of the more popular and contemporary linearly oriented recreation activities;
- Pressure to redevelop the Township's remaining developable and re-developable properties by private interests, thereby potentially removing them from possible inclusion in River Vale's open space and recreation inventory;
- Aging recreational facilities that require replacement and upgrading;
- A shortage of recreation facilities targeted towards the needs of senior citizens;
- The shortage of availability of active recreational fields during the most popular evening and weekend hours; and
- The loss of the community center, which is a facility that residents desire to have replaced.

In response to this recognized demand, River Vale has begun to upgrade some of its aging facilities, and to increase the variety of recreation facilities within the Township. This program has included the rehabilitation of softball fields, the construction of a creative playground and two tennis courts, the marking of a shared bicycle route along community roadways, and the initiation of a community amphitheater project. Unfortunately, these improvements have not had any positive impact on their availability to greater numbers of citizens. River Vale has also lost an indoor community facility due to its contamination by an incompatible former use. This loss has affected the Township's ability to respond to the needs of their growing senior citizens and preschool resident population.

The following tables itemize all of the publicly owned open space and recreation resources that are located within the Township of River Vale. Since Township residents often make use of public school fields when they are not in use by the schools, they have been included for accuracy in reporting the at least periodically available resources.

Table 8: Existing Municipally-Owned Open Space and Recreation Resources  
(see Figure 7)

BLOCK/ LOT	SIZE (AC)	TYPE (and Name if appropriate)	LOCATION (see System Map-Recr. & O.S. Inventory)	LEVEL OF PROTECTION	OWNERSHIP
1301/28	17	Alexander Field	Mark Lane and Piermont Avenue	Strong*	Township
501.01/4 through 9	12	Beechcrest Park	Beechcrest Drive	Strong*	Township
1401/3	7	Grove Field	Behind Town Hall off River Vale Rd.	Strong*	Township
1801/4	4.5	Ranges Field	River Drive	Strong*	Township
1002/1.01	2.8	Former Watershed Property	Poplar Road	Strong*	Township
1002/1.02	15.3	Former Watershed Property	Poplar Road	Strong*	Township

\* Owned and protected by the Township as permanent open space and/or recreation land, and included on River Vale's NJDEP Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI)

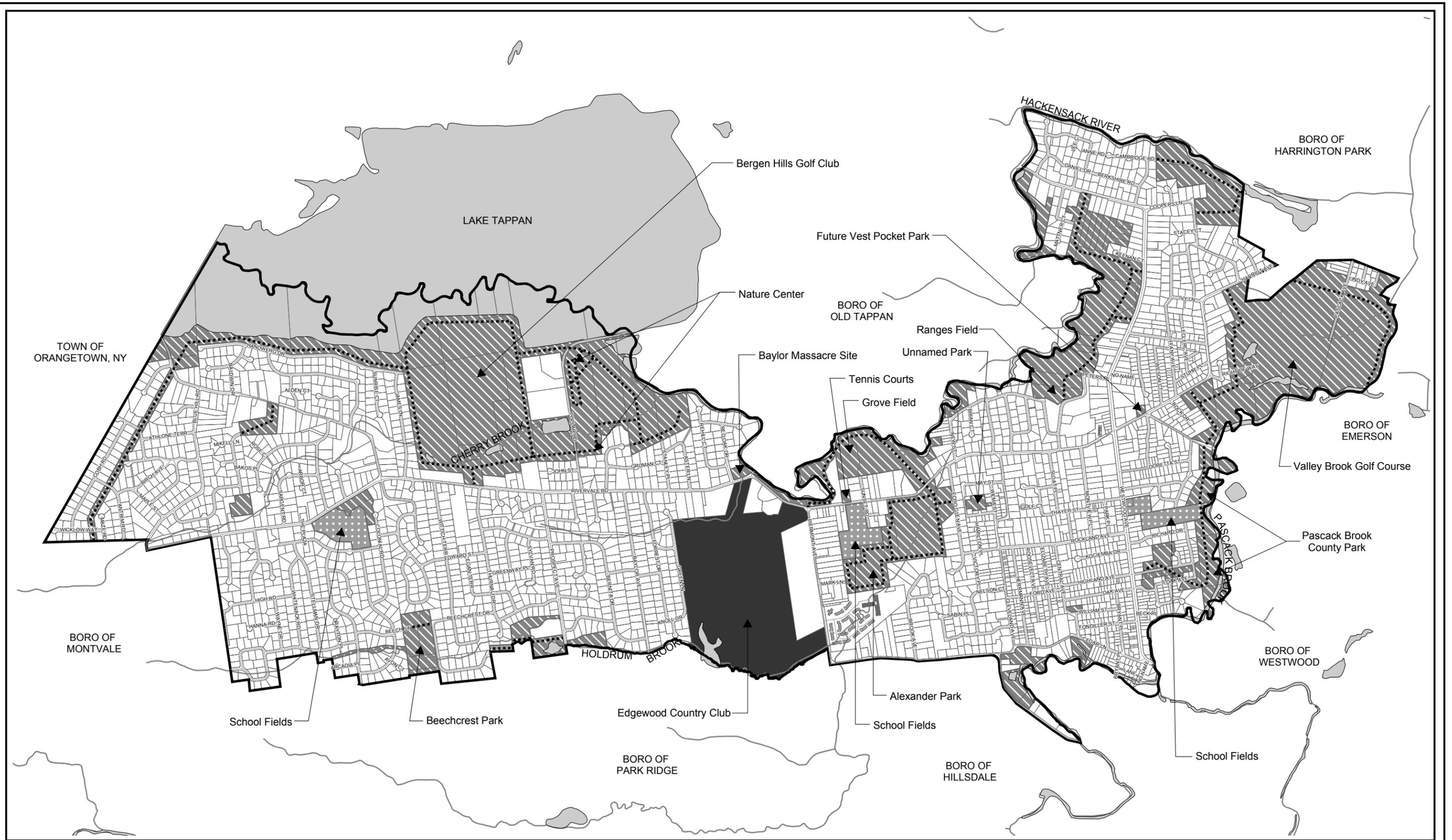
Table 9: Other Existing Publicly-Owned Open Space and Recreation Resources  
(not owned by River Vale, and therefore not on River Vale's Green Acres ROSI)  
(see Figure 7)

BLOCK/ LOT	SIZE (AC)	TYPE (and Name if appropriate)	LOCATION (see System Map-Recr. & O.S. Inventory)	LEVEL OF PROTECTION	OWNERSHIP
1106/29,30 & 31	2	Baylor Massacre Site	River Vale Road and Old Tappan Rd.	Strong*	County of Bergen
2201/20; 2203.02/1.02; 2203.03/8; 2208/1 & 7.01; 2208.01/17	19.3	Pascack Brook County Park	Between Geiger Drive and Roberge Drive and Pascack Brook	Strong*	County of Bergen
2204/4,6 & 8	11.3	Roberge Elementary School	Westwood Avenue between Richard Dr. and Bergen Pl.	Medium**	RV Board of Education
502/1	11.2	Woodside Elementary School	River Vale Road opposite Woodside Avenue	Medium**	RV Board of Education
1301/28	22.1	Holdrum Middle School	River Vale Road and Sunset Road	Medium**	RV Board of Education

\* Owned and protected by the County of Bergen as permanent open space/recreation land, and included on the County's NJDEP Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI)

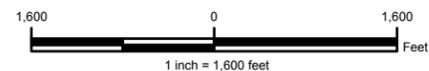
\*\* Owned and protected by the Board of Education as recreation land, but not included on any NJDEP Green Acres Recreation & Open Space Inventory (ROSI) because not owned by River Vale or the County of Bergen

The facilities at Alexander Field include a softball field, playground, walking track, baseball field, basketball court, football field, snack shed and parking lot. Beechcrest Park, being a natural resource rich passive undeveloped natural area, contains no facilities. The lower grove of Grove Field contains a baseball field and



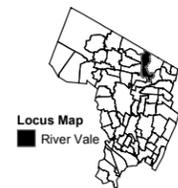
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Source:  
 Bergen County Geographic Information Systems  
 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
 Map Prepared March 2005 by ST&A



**Parks Recreation & Open Space**

- Existing Privately-Owned Recreation Areas
- Existing and Proposed Accessible Open Space, Parks & Recreation Areas
- Other Public Land with Recreation Function
- Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Streams
- Roads
- Proposed Trails



**Figure 7 - Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces**  
 River Vale Master Plan

Township of River Vale, New Jersey

a snack stand. The upper grove of Grove Field contains two softball fields and a multi use soccer field. Parking is available adjacent to the upper grove. Ranges Field supports a baseball field, soccer field, and snack stand, and relies on on-street parking. Similar to Beechcrest Park, the two parcels that make up the former Water Company Property contain no facilities. A rustic parking area along Poplar Road is currently under construction, and an informational kiosk has been erected just inside the entry gate. An elevated osprey nest was also erected.

There are three privately owned open space and/or recreation resources that still exist within River Vale Township. The northernmost is known as the Bergen Hills Golf Course, which was recently purchased from the former River Vale Country Club, and services members only. A portion (33.3 acres) of the property on which it is situated is owned and protected by United Water Resources. The second is the Edgewood Country Club that also services members only, and their property is privately owned. The third is the Valley Brook Golf Course (formerly Pascack Brook Golf Course). This course is privately owned and services both members and the public. The property on which it is located is owned and protected by United Water Resources via deed restriction. There are no other privately owned swim clubs or athletic or other recreational facilities of any sort that exist within the Township that are commercially available.

Each of River Vale's existing Township-owned active recreation facilities is used to near maximum capacity at the present time. Recreation leagues (primarily Township youth leagues) compete for practice and game time for teams on the Township's soccer, baseball, football and softball fields, and basketball and tennis courts. The Township supports boys and girls and coed teams in leagues in all of these sports, from Kindergarten through Junior High School age. The Township also supports cheerleading teams. Evenings and weekends are the times of highest demand. High school age and older people also use these facilities, more often individually than in teams although some teams are available and active. The Township maintains a walking track that is used by residents of all ages. Lights have extended the availability of some of the fields and courts into the later evening hours; but while discussions have taken place, the same has not been accomplished for other field and court sports due to the expected and past objections of residents who are neighbors to these facilities.

The three grade schools provide some recreational facilities (e.g. playground, softball, soccer, and basketball), but these facilities are only available when they are not needed by the school district whose students have first priority on all of these facilities. This policy renders them unavailable much of the time. More fields are needed. The school field facilities are also in poor condition. The regional High School is located in the neighboring town of Hillsdale. While it also provides numerous fields and courts, it is not located within the Township within easy reach of many residents, and these facilities are also subject to the first priority to school district activities policy. Other district towns also share these facilities. The school field facilities are also in poor condition and in need of refurbishment.

Similarly, the nearby Wood Dale County Park in Hillsdale and Woodcliff Lake, and the nearby Pascack Brook County Park in Westwood, together satisfy some of the recreation needs of Township residents. These too are shared with all Bergen County residents, however, and are not within the Township's boundaries for easy accessibility.

The above information was gathered from several sources, including the Township Athletic Director. He reports that the public is underserved by recreation facilities. He also reports that there is a high level of competition for facility use. He suggests that there is a need for more of all types of active recreational facilities. He also states that there are no Township facilities that are underutilized, or that have been degraded to the point that it is not reasonable to attempt to rehabilitate them. Therefore the elimination of any specific facilities that are no longer in vogue, are in disrepair, or that no longer service a significant enough segment of the population, should not be considered as a means to provide an opportunity to introduce newer more contemporary facilities. Parks, recreation, and open spaces are shown on Figure 7.

## 9.2 PROPOSED RECREATION PLAN

The evaluations of River Vale's open space and recreation needs have been on-going processes for over three decades, historically led mainly by the Planning Board. More recently, the Mayor's Open Space Advisory Committee has taken the lead on addressing the Township's open space needs, and over the course of the past three years has prevailed in swaying public opinion in favor of increasing the provisions of open space. These efforts have been based primarily on current need, projections of future need, the high levels of environmental sensitivity of the remaining undeveloped lands, and the acceptance by River Vale of responsibility for stewardship of the remaining natural resources that are adjacent to the region's water supply. This statement is supported by a review of River Vale's voting record in favor of all N.J. Green Acres bond issues by wide margins of over 4 to 1. In addition, passing by a large margin in 1998 and then again in 2004, the Township's voters elected to tax themselves for open space, again based primarily on need. There is every indication that this trend will continue in the future, and this Plan encourages those objectives.

River Vale clearly has a shortage of publicly owned land that can accommodate and support current and future active recreation needs. River Vale also has a shortage of passive recreation facilities and publicly accessible open space. Given River Vale's increasing population, the Township should continue to pursue additional lands that become available for recreational use. This can be accomplished as a part of the development review process, through bequeaths and donations, and through purchase. With regard to the latter, the Township should continue to request annual funding through its existing Planning Incentive Grant from the NJDEP Green Acres Administration. Chapter 11 of this Master Plan is an Open Space and Recreation Plan that was prepared expressly for this purpose. With regard to the development review process, a new parcel may soon be added at the west end of the Jewish Home site within the Four Corners section of the Township.

The Township does not maintain a volunteer Recreation Commission. Rather, the Athletic Department with a paid Director oversees all recreation within the Township. In River Vale, the Athletic Department focuses on provisions for active recreation, leaving the passive recreation associated with open space and natural areas to the Open Space Advisory Committee. The Athletic Department is assisted with active recreation planning by independent volunteer basketball, junior football and cheerleading, baseball and softball, and soccer associations. This system seems to have worked for River Vale in the past, and this Plan recommends its continuance.

One aspect of contemporary recreation planning that is missing within River Vale is the ability to interconnect existing and proposed resources. Such interconnections can often do include active recreation facilities, passive recreation areas, points of cultural interest, community facilities, public rights-of-way, nearby neighborhoods, and other places of public congregation. In this manner, greenways can be formed that together provide levels of community value that exceed the sum of their parts. The Plan endorses this concept for River Vale, despite the inability in many cases to complete these connections. Figure 7 Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces identifies several connections that can be made that either create segments of greenways, or connect neighborhoods through open spaces. The Township should consider establishing environmental education stations along natural portions of the greenways, possibly including benign improvements such as botanical labeling, an outdoor "classroom", and descriptive displays of the micro-environments (e.g. flood plains, wetlands of varying types, transition slopes, deciduous and evergreen uplands, etc.). This latter type of recreational facility induces the schools to incorporate environmental education into their programs, and also promotes a greater level of appreciation for the natural environment on the part of Township residents, thereby promoting higher levels of stewardship. Given the highly developed nature of River Vale, it is infeasible to create one continuous green link through the Township along its long north south access. The major pieces of greenways that can be reasonably created include:

1. A west side of Lake Tappan Reservoir trail, from its dam northward to and across the Tenneco Gas pipeline easement that cuts across the northern end of the Township. The Township should lobby United Water Resources to create a publicly accessible Lake Tappan Reservoir trail for the full length of its River Vale waterfront, and explore methods of adding additional points of access into the community, thereby increasing its value. The Township should also lobby Tenneco Gas Company to create the segment of trail that would traverse its east-west segment;
2. The central loop, from Town Hall through Grove Field and the water company property to the south, and across to Alexander Field and back to its point of beginning;
3. The southeast trail, from Ranges Field through water company property to the east, and out to Westwood Avenue near the border with Old Tappan; and
4. The southern trail, through Valley Brook Golf Club, across water company and Pascack Brook County Park properties, to the open space surrounding Highland Avenue.

The Plan also endorses an investigation into the feasibility of adding sports lighting to the unlighted Township fields and courts. Since Alexander Field, the Grove Fields, and Ranges Field are all somewhat buffered from adjacent residential neighbors, it is likely that state of the art sports lighting can be designed and constructed without causing adverse impacts on neighboring properties. In support of that belief, some of the fields at Alexander Field are already lit with older technology lighting, and few problems have resulted. The addition of sports lighting would help to extend the utility of these facilities by extending the available evening hours to some acceptable time beyond sundown. This subject has been a topic of discussion in the past, and it is uncertain whether or not there would be any public opposition to such a suggestion.

One method some municipalities use to introduce new facilities is to have them replace old facilities. The Township Athletic Director reports that there are no underutilized Township facilities, and we should not therefore consider eliminating any specific existing facilities that are no longer in vogue, or that no longer service a significant enough segment of the population, in order to introduce new facilities. In addition, there are no Township recreation facilities that should be removed because they are degraded to the point that it is not reasonable to attempt to rehabilitate them. The Plan endorses this position. Despite this, the Township does have aging recreational facilities that require replacement and upgrading.

The Township is pursuing the establishment of a municipal wildlife sanctuary on the recently purchased 18 acres of former water company property south of Poplar Road. The Plan encourages this activity.

The Township is pursuing the establishment of a municipal amphitheater on the slope leading down to the lower grove of Grove Field. The Plan encourages this activity, and recommends that the provisions for grandstand viewing of baseball games not be impaired.

The Township is also considering the acquisition of the Bergen Hills golf course for public use. Some discussions have taken place with Bergen County that have considered a joint purchase. The Plan endorses these efforts. The Plan also encourages any efforts that seek creative means of providing greater accessibility to golf for the general public in a public/private partnership with the current owners of this facility.

There are a few specific “wish list” facilities that are not available within the Township that have been sought by numerous members of the community. A few of these include a skate park, an indoor community center, a public swim club, and recreation facilities targeted towards the needs of senior citizens. The Plan recommends that the feasibility of introducing these new facilities be studied in more depth.

It should be recognized that the nearby County parks (Wood Dale and Pascack Brook) satisfy some of the recreation needs of Township residents. River Vale shares the use of these facilities with all other Bergen County residents. Both of these parks are accessible by automobile and bicycle. The Plan encourages River Vale residents to take advantage of these resources.

The Athletic Director reports that there have been no recent improvements made to Township recreational facilities, aside from those previously mentioned. He also reports that there haven't been any new facilities that have recently come on line.

The Athletic Director also reports that he is unaware of any written document that spells out the future open space and/or recreation plans of the township. A new plan that addresses the land necessary for this effort is included as Chapter 11 of this Master Plan. If it is true that no facilities or programming plan exists, the Plan recommends that a more detailed facilities and programming plan be prepared that expands upon the recommendations contained herein. Parks, recreation, and open spaces are shown on Figure 7.

## 10. CONSERVATION PLAN ELEMENT

### 10.1 BACKGROUND

Because the format of this master plan is one that provides a comprehensive master plan with all its elements, yet also provides complete independent Elements that can stand alone for certain purposes if required, there will necessarily be some redundancy between this Conservation Plan Element and the Green Acres Open Space and Recreation Plan that is Chapter 11 of this Master Plan.

Over the course of the last two decades, River Vale's residents have come to appreciate the multi-dimensional values provided by their open spaces and natural resources. These benefits come in the form of quality of life, sustenance of natural systems, protection and stewardship of the region's water supply, peace of mind and tranquility, provision of passive recreational opportunities, and high quality community identity. Together these values enrich the lives of River Vale's residents and bring them closer to the natural environment of which they are a part.

Over the years, River Vale has taken several steps, prepared numerous documents, enacted relevant ordinances, and expended local funds, all of which demonstrates its resolve to direct land use within the Township in an environmentally sensitive manner, consistent with the objectives of N.J. State planning and environmental goals. These actions substantiate long-standing Township policies towards open space preservation. Many of these are enumerated below:

- River Vale's municipal Master Plan efforts since at least 1975 have strongly espoused the desirability of preserving open space and protecting natural resources within the township. Those 1975 objectives were reinforced, strengthened, and/or reaffirmed in 1978, 1982, 1988, 1994 and especially in 2000, and are in the process of being further strengthened for 2005. The 1975 Master Plan also recommended the establishment of an interconnected greenway along the Hackensack River, Pascack Brook, Holdrum Brook and Cherry Brook, for natural resource protection as well as passive recreation in the form of a pedestrian-accessible linear green belt. Each master plan generation thereafter adopted those same recommendations;
- The Township was one of the earliest communities to apply for and receive Green Acres funding in the early 1970's. These funds were used as partial payment for the purchase of an 8 acre environmentally sensitive tract in the northern portion of River Vale, now known as Beechcrest Park;
- River Vale has actively participated in the latest round of NJSDRP Cross Acceptance. The Township hopes this involvement will result in the designation of expanded lands west of the Lake Tappan Reservoir as lying within Planning Area #5, as well as specific smaller areas of significant

- environmental sensitivity for designation as Critical Environmental Sites (CEHS), by the N.J. State Planning Commission;
- River Vale was at the forefront of the open space preservation movement when the Township opted to be one of New Jersey's first communities to establish an officially sponsored Open Space Advisory Committee. This Committee has been continuously active since its inception;
  - River Vale also established a Shade Tree Advisory Committee that actively reviews all land use proposals and tree removal requests. Their review of tree removal plans is required by the Township Zoning Code;
  - River Vale voters have consistently supported N.J. Green Acres bond issues. In each of the previous two votes, River Vale voters approved the bond issues by overwhelming tallies of over 80% in favor each;
  - In 1997 the township enacted Ordinance No. 0-5-97 (R) entitled "An ordinance amending Chapter 175, Land Use Code of the Township of River Vale – Tree Preservation and Removal". The stated objective in this ordinance's "Purpose" introduction is to "...discourage indiscriminate and excessive removal, cutting, and destruction of trees, ...";
  - In 1998 the township enacted Ordinance No. 0-10-98(R) entitled "An ordinance adopting a new chapter of the Land Use Code of the Township of River Vale, entitled 'Chapter XLI – Environmental Impact Study Ordinance'. This ordinance requires in-depth evaluations and full disclosures of the impacts projected to be caused by major land development proposals;
  - The above two ordinances were challenged by the developer of former watershed properties that were sold by the (then) Hackensack Water Company for land development. The basis of their COAH lawsuit was that the ordinances would be cost generative, in violation of COAH regulations. Despite evidence supporting the lawsuit, River Vale invested in professionals to defend these two ordinances and their integrity rather than settling;
  - River Vale aggressively and successfully secured its second Green Acres funding, this time in the form of a Planning Incentive Grant in 2002. These funds were used to purchase 18.1 acres of non-regulated yet environmentally sensitive lands adjacent to the Lake Tappan Reservoir in 2003 that was the subject of an active land development proposal for multi-family housing. This property is about to be opened as the River Vale Wildlife Sanctuary;
  - In 1998 the voters of River Vale imposed an Open Space Preservation tax upon themselves, for the purpose of acquiring some of the remaining undeveloped lands within the Township. The tax was authorized to be collected at the rate of one cent per \$100 of assessed value per year, and is renewable in five-year increments. It was renewed in 2003 and is now authorized through 2008. This tax currently generates approximately \$99,000 per year for open space acquisition, historic preservation and recreation improvements. This figure should about double after the 2006 property re-evaluation. The Mayor and Council established a seven member citizens Open Space and Recreation Grant Committee, charged with the responsibility of advising the Township as to which properties would be of value to acquire for open space and recreation purposes. The Mayor and Council are authorized to decide how to expend these funds;
  - In 2004 the Township initiated a regional open space and recreation movement who's objective is to purchase the privately owned Bergen Hills Golf Club (then "River Vale Country Club"). The River Vale mayor solicited and received support from the Pascack Valley Mayors' Association. This support came in the form of a resolution in support of its acquisition by Bergen County and other public entities for use by Bergen County residents as a public facility;
  - The Township aggressively and actively supported NJDEP's 2004 Stormwater Regulations in general, and the highest anti-degradation C-1 classification for its surface waters more specifically. The Mayor spent numerous days in Trenton and in correspondence and communication with the Department to hasten this legislation;

- The Township enacted stormwater management regulations in 2004 for the purposes of protecting water quality, controlling flooding, and augmenting the State’s anti-degradation regulations at the local level; and
- Through these “growing greener” efforts of the Township, River Vale was also able to satisfy its affordable housing obligation and receive substantive certification for Rounds 1 and 2 from COAH. At the present time, and in concert with COAH, the Township is conceiving creative plans involving re-development to replace the previously approved affordable housing site that was lost to open space preservation.

A review of the environmental conditions, natural features and historic significance of River Vale’s undeveloped sites reveals several significant elements which should have profound effects on the potential for development of many of the remaining and available properties within the Township. The natural elements include steep slopes, mature native forest vegetation, sensitive soils with shallow depths to seasonally high water tables, freshwater wetlands, flood plains, and high quality NJDEP C-1 designated surface waters. Collectively, the quantity and quality of natural resources within River Vale are being stressed and challenged, and steps for their protection, preservation and enhancement are being pursued. For these reasons, among others, River Vale is considering undertaking the preparation of a community-wide natural resource inventory.

A listing of existing publicly owned undeveloped lands that are potential passive recreation resources can be found in Chapter 11 Green Acres Open Space and Recreation Plan of this Master Plan. They are also graphically shown on Figure 7. One important and unfortunate observation is that the majority of River Vale’s open space is Water Company owned watershed and reservoir property that is securely fenced and inaccessible to the public. None of these lands have been opened to the public for passive use of any kind. That notwithstanding, the Township of River Vale serves as a host to and responsible steward of Lake Tappan and many tributaries of the Hackensack River and its public water supply. This is further discussed in the Green Acres Open Space and Recreation Plan this Master Plan.

## **10.2 PROPOSED CONSERVATION PLAN**

Collectively, the quantity and quality of natural resources within River Vale are being stressed and challenged, and steps for their protection, preservation and enhancement are warranted. As discussed in the Background section of this Conservation Element, many such steps have been on-going for many years, since several official bodies within the community have taken action within their own arenas towards both protecting the quality of natural resources and increasing the quantity and quality of open space. River Vale currently owns about 40.5 acres of undisturbed open space within the entire Township. Of this, 26.1 acres are in parkland, and the remaining 14.4 acres are preserved in approximately 19 lots whose primary functions are the conveyance of surface drainage and storm water. The natural resources that remain within River Vale are situated on these lands, as well as on other publicly and privately owned properties including those owned and protected by United Water Resources. Natural resources play an important role in defining the character of a community, and an overly stressed natural environment can be indicative of a lower quality of life within the community. Parks, recreation, and open spaces are shown on Figure 7.

To achieve River Vale’s conservation objectives, several recommendations are included in the Plan.

- 10.2.1 The Township should consider the creation of a municipal Environmental Commission in compliance with the N.J. State enabling legislation. By doing so, the Township would gain a volunteer commission with the authority to provide valuable input into land use hearings, and oversee the preservation of open space and protection of natural resources, as well as one that

- qualifies for State-generated grants for environmental projects that include the preparation of a municipal Natural Resource Inventory (NRI).
- 10.2.2 The Township should consider authorizing the preparation of an NRI on a community wide basis. An NRI documents, delineates, and (where appropriate) classifies the various natural resources within a community without editorializing. It is a factual document (hence an “inventory” rather than a planning document) that uses previously collected and generated information from various environmental agencies (i.e. local, county, state, federal) to illustrate the full extent of a town’s natural resources. It does not generate new empirical data as might be required of a site-specific examination. A composite of the most sensitive of these resources can also be generated to function as the “first look” document that serves to raise a red flag when a land use proposal threatens to cause adverse impacts to natural resources. It alerts the reviewing agency that some feature requires further examination and closer scrutiny. The NRI takes the form of a published report with individual graphics for topography (also includes ridges, steep slopes, and flood plains), soils (also includes their level of constraint to development, hydric soil identification, and flood prone soil identification), water resources (includes water bodies, waterways and wetlands), and vegetation (delineates predominance of vegetative types). An NRI also includes a mounted Township base map with acetate overlays for each of these resources for display in the council chambers, where land development applications are heard and where the information becomes readily available and of most value to review boards during their deliberations and considerations of these proposals.
- 10.2.3 The Township should then consider adopting the NRI by reference as the background information upon which future Conservation Elements are based, as has become common in several nearby communities. Then, the large scale NRI exhibits on display in the Council Chambers should be used on a regular basis in the evaluation and review of land development and alteration proposals. Applicants should be required to address the presence of and proposed disturbance to any natural resources identified as present on their subject sites. Applicants should also be required to address development alternatives that serve to minimize adverse impacts upon natural resources, and to propose mitigation measures commensurate with the disturbance expected to result from their proposals.
- 10.2.4 Following the efforts outlined above, the Township should then consider authorizing the preparation of a River Vale Township Open Space Preservation Strategies (OSPS) report. This would be a planning document (or action plan) that would serve as the basis or framework for preserving the Township’s remaining open spaces. The OSPS would delineate the remaining open spaces within the Township. Each open space property would be assigned an existing level of protection. The discussion would include an evaluation of highest and best use, the value of open space, the compatibility of recreation and conservation, the value of greenways and contiguous open space, River Vale’s position within a regional greenway, ways in which greenways can change, and methods for their conservation and preservation. Finally, the study would evaluate a series of reasonable acquisition and municipal regulatory techniques available to the Township to accomplish this task. The OSPS report would likely point out that the Township need not rely on property acquisition alone to preserve all of the desired property, and that other innovative methods can be found. Property management techniques would also be discussed that would improve the quality of the open spaces where the land is already committed.
- 10.2.5 The Township should continue its annual requests for additional funding from the N.J. Green Acres Administration. Prior recent Township funding has come from the Planning Incentive Grant program, and the Plan recommends its continuance. This is an innovative program that provides significant benefits to municipalities in their quests to improve their open space and recreation opportunities and facilities. The program provides successful applicants with the ability to partially fund the purchase of any of the properties included within their approved Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP – Chapter 11 of this Master Plan) from the same

funding source, without the need to return to the Green Acres Administration on a site by site basis. The latter had been the traditional and painstaking method of seeking State open space acquisition funding. The program also permits municipalities to legitimately and fairly negotiate in an open market environment with potential land sellers. To further this objective, the Plan recommends that the Township submit the OSRP to Green Acres in fulfillment of its prior obligation.

- 10.2.6 With professional assistance, the Township should revise the Tree Preservation and Removal ordinance to rectify the specific shortcomings that were identified by the judge during its recent legal challenge. The basic ordinance should be able to remain intact. The Township should also pursue enactment of the Tree Bank provisions that would further strengthen this ordinance.
- 10.2.7 The Township should monitor the effectiveness of its 2004 stormwater management regulations, and make adjustments as proves necessary and desirable.
- 10.2.8 The Township should revisit the objectives of the A-1 Zoning District to determine if they remain appropriate for the remaining undeveloped lands adjacent to the Lake Tappan Reservoir and the Hackensack River. The Township should consider whether or not the CN Conservation District is more appropriate for these particular areas. The A-1 Zoning District may only be appropriate for a limited area along Rivervale Road.
- 10.2.9 The prime objective of the CN district is clearly to promote the most environmentally sensitive land uses by the most contemporary standards. Since the water company owns most all of these lands, the more strict limitations of CN as opposed to A-1 in the areas identified above should not unduly minimize individual private property rights. Furthermore, since formal lawns and ornamental landscaping contribute little to environmental quality, and in many cases are detrimental and inconsistent with the District's objectives, these too should be restricted within the CN district.
- 10.2.10 The checklist for attachment to land development applications should be updated to require more detailed natural resources and environmental impact information, to provide for full disclosure of potential impacts from development proposals, and to identify reasonable alternatives to the proposal that might serve to lessen adverse impacts.
- 10.2.11 The Township should continue to participate in the Cross Acceptance processes of future N.J. State Development and Redevelopment Plan updates.
- 10.2.12 The Township should consider embarking upon a Community Forestry Management Plan (see Community Design Element of this Master Plan).
- 10.2.13 The Township should consider developing means to require Best Management Practices to apply for the two northern golf courses.

## 11. GREEN ACRES OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

### 11.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Township of River Vale is located in Bergen County, New Jersey (see Figure 1), in the state's northeastern corner. Within Bergen County, River Vale is located at its northern extremity, in the County's northeastern quadrant (see Figure 2). From the Township of River Vale's standpoint, the Planning Incentive Grant Program has been and will continue to be a vitally important program. For this Township, it represents the most important and significant revision to the manner with which the N.J. Green Acres program operates since the inception of Green Acres. First and foremost, if the extension of River Vale's application were to

be approved, the township would be able to partially fund the purchase of any of the properties included within their approved Plan from the same funding source, without the need to return to the Green Acres Administration on a site-by-site basis. The latter had been the traditional and more cumbersome method of seeking State open space acquisition funding. One other significant benefit of this approach is that it would provide River Vale (along with other N.J. communities) with the ability to legitimately and fairly negotiate with its several potential land sellers. Previously, these land sellers always knew that if a purchase price could not be agreed upon, the municipality more than likely would have to decline the state funding, which most were not inclined to do. Consequently, sales prices tended to be too high. With this program, this municipality can walk away from the negotiating table, secure in the knowledge that the money will still be available to negotiate on another parcel within its inventory with another land owner, thereby creating desirable near free-market competition. This should have the effect of “leveling the playing field”, and should result in more efficient expenditures of limited public open space funds.

Over the years, River Vale has taken several steps, prepared numerous documents, enacted relevant ordinances, and expended local funds, all of which demonstrates its resolve to direct land use within the Township in a manner that is consistent with the objectives of the Planning Incentive Grants Program. These actions substantiate long-standing Township policies towards open space preservation and recreation provision. Many of these are enumerated below and detailed in the Needs Analysis. It is River Vale’s hope that their track record places the township in a favorably competitive position with other candidate communities. For example:

- River Vale’s municipal Master Plan efforts since at least 1975 have consistently and strongly espoused the desirability of preserving open space and protecting natural resources within the township. This position is in the process of being further strengthened for 2005;
- The Township was one of the earliest communities to apply for and receive Green Acres funding in the early 1970’s, and subsequently purchased an 8 acre environmentally sensitive tract;
- River Vale actively participated in the latest round of NJSDRP Cross Acceptance;
- River Vale was at the forefront of the open space preservation movement when the Township opted to be one of New Jersey’s first communities to establish an officially sponsored Open Space Advisory Committee;
- River Vale also established a Shade Tree Advisory Committee that actively reviews all land use proposals and tree removal requests. Their review of tree removal plans is required by the Township Zoning Code;
- River Vale voters have consistently supported N.J. Green Acres bond issues. In each of the previous two votes, River Vale voters approved the bond issues by overwhelming tallies of over 80% in favor each;
- In 1997 the township enacted Ordinance No. 0-5-97 (R) entitled “An ordinance amending Chapter 175, Land Use Code of the Township of River Vale – Tree Preservation and Removal”. The stated objective in this ordinance’s “Purpose” introduction is to “...discourage indiscriminate and excessive removal, cutting, and destruction of trees, ...”;
- In 1998 the township enacted Ordinance No. 0-10-98(R) entitled “An ordinance adopting a new chapter of the Land Use Code of the Township of River Vale, entitled ‘Chapter XLI – Environmental Impact Study Ordinance’”;
- The above two ordinances were challenged by the developer of former watershed properties that were sold by the (then) Hackensack Water Company for land development. The basis of their COAH lawsuit was that the ordinances would be cost generative, in violation of COAH regulations. Despite evidence supporting the lawsuit, River Vale invested in professionals to defend these two ordinances and their integrity rather than settling;
- River Vale aggressively and successfully secured its second Green Acres funding, this time in the form of a Planning Incentive Grant in 2002. These funds were used to purchase 18.1 acres of non-

- regulated yet environmentally sensitive lands adjacent to the Lake Tappan Reservoir in 2003 that was the subject of an active land development proposal for multi-family housing. This property is about to be opened as the River Vale nature center;
- In 1998, and then again in 2004, the voters of River Vale imposed an Open Space Preservation tax upon themselves;
  - Earlier in this year 2004 the township initiated a regional open space and recreation movement whose objective is to purchase the privately owned Bergen Hills Golf Club (then “River Vale Country Club”);
  - The Township enacted stormwater management regulations in 2004 for the purposes of protecting water quality, controlling flooding, and augmenting the State’s anti-degradation regulations at the local level; and
  - Through these “growing greener” efforts of the Township, River Vale was also able to satisfy its affordable housing obligation and receive substantive certification from COAH. At the present time, and in concert with COAH, the Township is conceiving creative plans involving re-development to replace the affordable housing site that was lost to open space preservation.

Furthermore, a review of the environmental conditions, natural features and historic significance of a few of River Vale’s candidate sites reveals several significant elements which should have profound effects on the potential for development of many of the remaining and available properties within the Township. The natural elements include steep slopes, mature native forest vegetation, sensitive soils with shallow depths to seasonally high water tables, freshwater wetlands, flood plains, and high quality NJDEP C-1 designated surface waters.

Relatively early among Bergen County municipalities, River Vale achieved its COAH Substantive Certification using creative and contemporary means, thereby avoiding the land-consumptive conventional set-aside methodology. This approach saved the Township from excessive and intensive redevelopment of its underutilized sites, as well as from the intensive new development of their remaining undeveloped sites, since the township’s obligation was satisfied on only a few concentrated sites. If this grant is approved to assist River Vale in acquiring these few strategic sites, River Vale will indirectly become able to then continue to improve its recreation facilities by focusing future expenditures towards improvements within its existing parks, rather than utilizing all of its limited resources on the acquisition of expensive properties.

## **11.2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Over the course of the past three decades, the Township of River Vale has become increasingly aware and proactive in its quest to achieve two significant goals: (a) to preserve the remaining dwindling open spaces within its municipal boundaries; and (b) to provide recreational resources of the highest order given reasonable fiscal constraints. Both elected and appointed resident volunteers share these two goals and have reached accord on these important issues.

Through public processes that included the Mayor and Council, Planning Board, Athletic Director, Shade Tree Commission, Open Space Advisory Committee, Township stakeholders and the invited general public, needs evaluations were formulated. These processes represent the origin of this OSRP. The resulting open space and recreation needs have been addressed in the last Master Plan Reexaminations, and they are being strengthened in the new and updated master plan document currently being prepared. Those same needs have been expressed in this document which focuses on these two aspects of land use alone. This document itself was the subject of public processes, having undergone meetings and sessions involving vision gathering, brainstorming, site visitations, refining and critiquing, and finally ending in a public hearing leading to its adoption by the Planning Board as an official planning document of the Township of River Vale.

The findings of this study recognize River Vale's status as a growing municipality within Bergen County. The findings assert and positively establish River Vale's unique position within the regional geographic regime as a municipality whose land use decisions will impact the environment and quality of life of other communities, both surrounding and distant. Through open space preservation and best management practices, River Vale has the opportunity to insure that those regional impacts are beneficial, rather than adverse. The findings also recognize River Vale's unenviable land use position of being nearly fully developed, with redevelopment rapidly becoming the most common method of land development in this Township. The findings ultimately recognize that the status quo will not be sufficient for current and future needs, and strive to seize the opportunities that currently exist before they are no longer available, due to the increasing redevelopment pressure. Therein lies the purpose of this document. The most significant of these findings include the following:

- As a result of River Vale's successful effort to comply with the affordable housing mandates of COAH, the Township has nearly exhausted its supply of available land *and* increased its population, two factors that cumulatively serve to exacerbate an already overstressed open space and recreation system;
- Each of River Vale's existing recreation facilities is used to near maximum capacity at the present time. It is concluded, therefore, and verified by N.J. standards, that River Vale is underserved by its open space and recreation resources;
- River Vale's population is growing;
- River Vale has a unique opportunity to preserve several of the large blocks of its remaining eastern (reservoir district) open spaces and potential recreation resources. This would be an achievement that would reap significant regional benefits, extending far beyond the Township's boundaries. To do so, River Vale needs to acquire strategically located parcels;
- Existing Township recreation facilities are aging and in need of upgrade, and in some cases do not reflect contemporary recreational pursuits;
- The Township must act in the short term for its long-term benefits. Private properties with active or passive recreation and/or open space potential must be pursued for acquisition on an expedited basis, within the next five years if possible;
- The Township must continue its upgrade of its current recreation inventory, including exploring new and innovative means of increasing the efficiency of current resources by increasing their availability through creative physical and programmatic improvements; and
- River Vale should closely examine its publicly held properties that are currently used solely for drainage purposes to determine whether or not they can serve the dual purpose of providing passive recreation opportunities.

This Executive Summary will be attached to the System Map and made available to the resident public of River Vale. In addition, in keeping with NJDEP's GIS request, should River Vale be fortunate enough to be selected as a recipient of a continuation of its existing Green Acres Planning Incentive Grant, the Township will provide NJDEP with the requisite mapping. This will be provided either on an original USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangle, or digitally compatible with NJDEP's system.

### 11.3 GOALS AND POLICIES

The Township of River Vale has opted for an *Agency Centered* approach to preparing this OSRP. It was initiated and is being headed by the governing body (Mayor and Council with assistance from the Township Administrator), and is receiving active participation from the Planning Board, the Open Space Advisory Committee, and the Athletic Director (in place of a Recreation Commission). Through the consistent actions and common objectives of each of these full-member participants, River Vale strives on an on-going basis to

make open space preservation and recreation provision among the highest priorities within their community. They have accomplished this through cooperative and inclusionary methods. Both in the preparation of this Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and the current Master Plan, broad-based input and support has been insured by reaching out to all interested groups and individuals, and by conducting public information and “Vision Gathering” sessions. Ideas have been brainstormed and shared, wish lists gathered, and consensus achieved. The tools used to stimulate the public participation process, including the public notice, preliminary map and preliminary list of sites, are included in this document. Importantly, River Vale has never hesitated to adjust its course after conducting public hearings; and the consensus referenced above was reached at the public hearing that concluded this process. The result of these methodologies has been the unified objectives that are expressed in this Plan.

The actions of River Vale in this regard have:

- helped the township discover the beneficial **public purposes** being realized by meeting the growing needs of an increasingly active population, by protecting the quality of life residents have come to enjoy, by preserving River Vale’s sense of place as espoused in the NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and by acknowledging and pursuing the public benefits (including quality of life and economic) of *not* pursuing further *new* economic development, but rather opting for *redevelopment* instead. This position is evidenced by the more concentrated redevelopment efforts currently underway in their downtown;
- enlightened township residents as to the **obligation** they have to protect their public and private open spaces. River Vale is one of only a handful of northeastern New Jersey communities that have natural features forming most of their boundaries, including the Hackensack River, Lake Tappan Reservoir, Pascack Brook, Musquapsink Brook, and Holdrum Brook. The township has recognized that when the largest open space and recreation parcels are combined with Board of Education properties, stream corridors and protected watershed lands, they form desirable and interconnected greenways through and around the perimeter of the township. Moreover, these greenways link to similar neighboring open space corridors and greenways: to the south within Emerson and Harrington Park, to the east within Old Tappan, to the north within Orangetown N.Y., and to the west within Montvale, Hillsdale and Westwood. Township residents have also come to appreciate the growing need to provide additional recreation resources, and to make more efficient use of the opportunities that are currently available. New recreational needs have arisen, traditional facilities have become less available due to overuse, and because of the locations of existing resources and the elongated shape of the township, the distribution of these resources has not always been equitable;
- acknowledged a deep-seated sense of **responsibility** to insure adequate recreation and open space provisions by those in a position to influence such decisions, to the extent that the township has opted to tax itself, invest other township monies, raise money to pay for new and specific public recreation and community facilities, and seek additional sources of funding, all in a concerted effort to accomplish these goals; and
- instilled a similar level of **stewardship** of these resources by the community as a whole.

### 11.3.1 Philosophies adopted by River Vale

River Vale has adopted the following positions in its quest to improve and expand open space and recreation opportunities:

- A review of the environmental conditions and natural features of River Vale reveals five significant elements that should have profound effects on the potential for development of the few remaining and available undeveloped open spaces within the township. These five elements include the documented presence in some locations and likely presence in others of NJDEP regulated

freshwater wetlands, the documented presence of one hundred year flood plains and associated flood hazard areas, the documented presence of State Open Waters, the proximity of the Lake Tappan Reservoir and its adjacent lands that are subjects of the Watershed protection act, and the recent formalization of C-1 designations under the 2004 N.J. Stormwater Regulations for the township's waterways and water bodies. The scarcity and dwindling amount of publicly accessible open space is also of concern.

- Collectively, the quantity and quality of natural resources within River Vale are being stressed and challenged, and steps for their protection, preservation and enhancement are warranted. Natural resources play important roles in defining the character of their community, and an overly stressed natural environment can be indicative of a lower quality of life within the community. For these reasons, among others, River Vale is seriously considering undertaking the preparation of a community-wide natural resource inventory.

### **11.3.2 Tools of our Public Process**

#### ***Newspaper Notice:***

### **NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED RESIDENTS OF RIVER VALE**

*A public information gathering / brainstorming session will be conducted at the Planning Board meeting of August 16, 2004 that begins at 8:00 pm. The subject will be twofold:*

- the identification of privately-owned sites within the Township that have the potential to become future public open space and recreation resources; and*
- the identification of unrealized recreation and open space opportunities and/or potential within existing Township-owned lands.*

*The purpose of this session is to assist the Township in preparing an application for an extension of our Green Trust Planning Incentive Grant from the N.J. Green Acres Program. This is an innovative program that provides significant benefits to municipalities in their quests to improve their open space and recreation opportunities and facilities. Because we now have a municipal open space tax, River Vale is one of only 20 of Bergen County's 70 towns that qualify to even apply for these monies. A preliminary mapping of existing and potential open space and recreation lands will be available at the session, which will serve as a starting point for the discussion. Our consultant will be available to answer questions and guide the discussion. Please come to participate in this process that will help shape River Vale's land use future.*

#### ***Handout at Public Input Session:***

**N.J. GREEN ACRES  
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN  
for a  
PLANNING INCENTIVE GRANT  
August 16, 2004**

## Preliminary List of Existing and Potential Open Space and Recreation Resources

### EXISTING OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION RESOURCES

#### Developed Municipally-owned Lands

- A. Alexander Park (17 Ac.)
- B. Grove Field (7 Ac.)
- C. Ranges Field (4.5 Ac.)

#### Undeveloped Municipally-owned Lands

- D. Beechcrest Park (12 Ac.)
- E. Former Water Company Property (18.1 Ac.)

#### Developed Board of Education Lands

- F. Woodside School (11.2 Ac.)
- G. Holdrum School (22.1 Ac.)
- H. Roberge School (11.3 Ac.)

#### Nearby County Park Lands

- I. Baylor Massacre Site (2.0 Ac.)
- J. Wood Dale County Park (118 Ac.; 0 Ac. in River Vale)
- K. Pascack Brook County Park (140 Ac.; 15.3 Ac. in River Vale)

### POTENTIAL OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION RESOURCES

- 1. Ms. Agnes Sakho property adjacent to (south side) Woodside School (Lot 502, lots 12 & 18)
- 2. Mr. McKellar's property on Demarest Avenue west of Cedar Lane (Block 1602, Lots 6 & 7)
- 3. Vacant parcel at 371 Rivervale Road
- 4. Vacant wetland property south of Grove Field between Rivervale Road and the Hackensack River
- 5. Bergen Hills Golf Course on east side of Rivervale Road south of James Lane
- 6. Older house at 650 Rivervale Road
- 7. Medium aged house at 654 Rivervale Road
- 8. Vacant parcel at 634 Rivervale Road
- 9. Vacant parcel at 644 Rivervale Road

## 11.4 INVENTORY

The following tables itemize all of the publicly owned open space and recreation resources that are located within the Township of River Vale. These properties are consistent with the information contained within both the previous Master Plan and this new municipal Master Plan. Since Township residents often make use of public school fields when they are not in use by the schools, we have included them for accuracy in reporting the at least periodically available resources. The Township is in the process of reviewing its N.J. Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) to determine if revisions are necessary to more accurately reflect the Township's NJDEP-encumbered open space and recreation properties. In compliance with Green Acres guidelines, River Vale's revised ROSI will not include any school properties.

Table 10: Existing Municipally-Owned Open Space and Recreation Resources  
(see Figure 8)

<b>BLOCK/ LOT</b>	<b>SIZE (AC)</b>	<b>TYPE (and Name if appropriate)</b>	<b>LOCATION (see System Map-Recr. &amp; O.S. Inventory)</b>	<b>LEVEL OF PROTECTION</b>	<b>FORM OF OWNERSHIP</b>
1301/28	17	Alexander Field	Mark Lane and Piermont Avenue	Strong*	Township
501.01/4 through 9	12	Beechcrest Park	Beechcrest Drive	Strong*	Township
1401/3	7	Grove Field	Behind Town Hall off River Vale Rd.	Strong*	Township
1801/4	4.5	Ranges Field	River Drive	Strong*	Township
1002/1.01	2.8	Former Watershed Property	Poplar Road	Strong*	Township
1002/1.02	15.3	Former Watershed Property	Poplar Road	Strong*	Township

\* Owned and protected by the Township as permanent open space and/or recreation land, and included on River Vale's NJDEP Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI)

Table 11: Other Existing Publicly-Owned Open Space and Recreation Resources  
(not owned by River Vale, and therefore not on River Vale's Green Acres ROSI)  
(see Figure 8)

<b>BLOCK/ LOT</b>	<b>SIZE (AC)</b>	<b>TYPE (and Name if appropriate)</b>	<b>LOCATION (see System Map-Recr. &amp; O.S. Inventory)</b>	<b>LEVEL OF PROTECTION</b>	<b>FORM OF OWNERSHIP</b>
1106/29,30 & 31	2	Baylor Massacre Site	River Vale Road and Old Tappan Rd.	Strong*	County of Bergen
2201/20; 2203.02/1.02; 2203.03/8; 2208/1 & 7.01; 2208.01/17	19.3	Pascack Brook County Park	Between Geiger Drive and Roberge Drive and Pascack Brook	Strong*	County of Bergen
2204/4,6 & 8	11.3	Roberge Elementary School	Westwood Avenue between Richard Dr. and Bergen Pl.	Medium**	RV Board of Education
502/1	11.2	Woodside Elementary School	River Vale Road opposite Woodside Avenue	Medium**	RV Board of Education
1301/28	22.1	Holdrum Middle School	River Vale Road and Sunset Road	Medium**	RV Board of Education

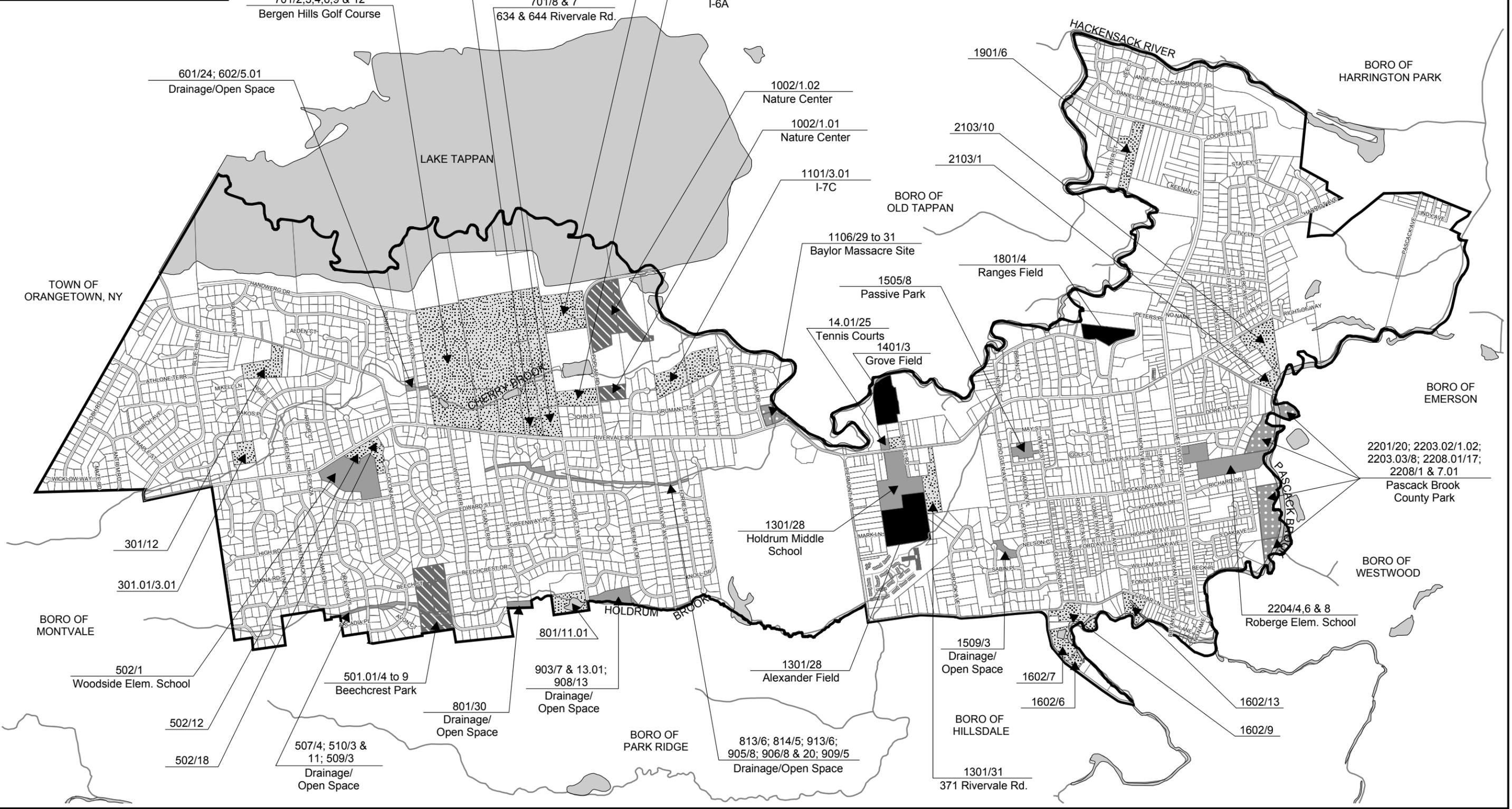
\* Owned and protected by the County of Bergen as permanent open space/recreation land, and included on the County's NJDEP Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI)

\*\* Owned and protected by the Board of Education as recreation land, but not included on any NJDEP Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI) because not owned by River Vale or the County of Bergen

There are three privately owned open space and/or recreation resources that still exist within River Vale Township. The northernmost is known as the Bergen Hills Golf Course, which was recently purchased from

**LEGEND**

1401 / 3 Block No. / Lot No.  
Grove Field Name of Facility



**HAKIM ASSOCIATES**  
Professional Planning / Landscape Architecture  
68 Dean Street, Harrington Park, NJ 07640  
In Association With  
**STUART TURNER & ASSOCIATES**  
Planning and Development Consultants  
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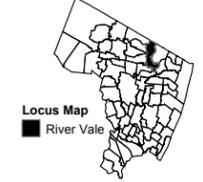
Source:  
Bergen County Geographic Information Systems  
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
Map Prepared March 2005 by ST&A

**Open Space**

- Township-Owned Developed & Partially Developed Open Space
- Other Publically-Owned Properties with Recreation Potential
- Privately-Owned Potential Open Space & Recreation Resources
- Township-Owned Wholly Undeveloped Open Space & Recreation Property
- County-Owned Open Space & Recreation Areas

**Other Symbols:**

- Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Streams
- Roads



**Figure 8 - System Map**  
**Recreation and Open Space Inventory**  
River Vale Master Plan  
Township of River Vale, New Jersey

the former River Vale Country Club, and services members only. The second is the Edgewood Country Club that also services members only. The third is the Valley Brook Golf Course (formerly Pascack Brook Golf Course). This course is privately owned and services both members and the public. The property on which it is located is owned by United Water Resources, and is forever protected from development by a settlement agreement that was reached between the water company, and the Environmental Defense Fund and Bergen Save the Watershed Action Network (Bergen SWAN). There are no other privately owned swim clubs or athletic or other recreational facilities of any sort that exist within the Township that are commercially available.

River Vale has an extremely small inventory of public lands currently unused for recreation and/or open space purposes that could be dedicated for that use. This category, therefore, does not represent an opportunity for the township to satisfy an appreciable portion of their needs by utilizing currently owned lands. The few parcels that may have some potential include the following:

Table 12: Existing Publicly-Owned Undeveloped Lands that are Potential Recreation Resources (see Figure 8)

<b>BLOCK/ LOT</b>	<b>SIZE (AC)</b>	<b>TYPE (and Name if appropriate)</b>	<b>LOCATION (see System Map-Recr. &amp; O.S. Inventory)</b>	<b>LEVEL OF PROTECTION</b>	<b>FORM OF OWNERSHIP</b>
507/4; 510/3 & 11; 509/3	1.53	Open Space with Holdrum Brook & woodlands used for drainage	Corridor ext. north from Beechcrest Park into resid. neighbor-hood, crossing Dorchester Dr. & Rolling Hill Dr.	Strong*	Township
801/30	0.99	Open Space with Holdrum Brook & woodlands used for drainage	South end of Beechcrest Drive cul-de-sac	Strong*	Township
903/7 & 13.01; 908/13	4.15	Open Space with Holdrum Brook & woodlands used for drainage	East side of brook from Prospect Ave. to just south of Baylor Ave.	Strong*	Township
813/6; 814/5; 913/6; 905/8; 906/8 & 20; 909/5	3.84	Open Space with unnamed stream & woodlands used for drainage	From just north of Patriot Lane to just north of Thurnau Drive	Strong*	Township
601/24; 602/5.01	0.60	Open Space with Cherry Brook & woodlands used for drainage	North and south of James Lane, east of Rivervale Road	Strong*	Township
14.01/25	1.38	Tennis courts and parking lot	South of Town Hall, east of Rivervale Road	Strong*	Township
1509/3	1.10	Open Space with unnamed stream & woodlands used for drainage	From Perry Place to Buckley Court	Strong*	Township
1505/8	2.17	Open Space with woodlands	Wilma Street to May Street	Strong*	Township

\* Owned and protected by the Township as municipal land, and not included on River Vale's NJDEP Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI)

Table 13: Publicly-Owned Potential Open Space and Recreation Resources Opportunities  
(see Figure 8)

BLOCK/ LOT	OPPORTUNITIES ENVISIONED BY RIVER VALE FOR THE TOWNSHIP'S OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION SYSTEM
507/4; 510/3 & 11; 509/3	This narrow drainage corridor provides a respite of natural land within a heavily developed and underserved residential neighborhood. It could serve as a passive trail that offers users the opportunity to enjoy the woodlands and stream corridor, and that connects two existing neighborhoods to the undeveloped Beechcrest Park.
801/30	This narrow drainage corridor would provide a natural land linkage to other open spaces in neighboring Park Ridge Borough, and then back into other potential open space resources within River Vale, and could include a trail.
903/7 & 13.01; 908/13	An expanded open space on its north, and a long narrow corridor on its south, this parcel would continue the western greenway south of Prospect Ave. from the potential open space resource mentioned in 801/30.
813/6; 814/5; 913/6; 905/8; 906/8 & 20; 909/5	This is a narrow natural corridor featuring woodlands and a drainage stream. It extends for approximately 3,500 linear feet through five residential neighborhoods, potentially providing a valuable pedestrian linkage.
601/24; 602/5.01	These parcels would permit pedestrian access into the Bergen Hills Golf Course property, should it become publicly owned.
14.01/25	This property already supports two heavily used public tennis courts, and would then be included as an officially dedicated township recreation facility.
1509/3	This narrow drainage corridor provides a respite of natural land within a heavily developed and underserved residential neighborhood. It could serve as a passive trail that offers users the opportunity to enjoy the woodlands and stream corridor, and that connects an existing neighborhood to the larger undeveloped and protected open spaces.
1505/8	This is a beautiful natural open space within a residential neighborhood with substantial width to almost match its length.

**11.5 NEEDS ANALYSIS**

River Vale’s residents have come to realize that the open spaces remaining in the Township are precious resources that are priceless in their contributions to the quality of life in River Vale. Residents have concluded that open space provides for their mental and physical health, in addition to providing recreational opportunities. Some of the qualities they associate with open space include peace, tranquility, aesthetics, and relief from urban and suburban congestion. River Vale residents also recognize that their open spaces help to define a sense of place, or unique identity, for their community. River Vale residents further acknowledge that the dwindling resource that is their open space provides them with an enormity of values. Many of these values are measurable, and can therefore be quantified, such as water resource protection and opportunities for recreation. More common, however, are the intangible benefits which can only be described in qualitative terms. Together these values enrich the lives of River Vale’s residents and bring them closer to the natural environment of which they are a part.

The evaluations of River Vale’s open space and recreation needs have been on-going processes for over three decades, led mainly by the Planning Board. More recently, the Open Space Advisory Committee has taken the lead on addressing the Township’s open space needs, and over the course of the past three years has prevailed in swaying public opinion in favor of increasing the provisions of open space, based primarily on current need and projections of future need. This claim is supported by a review of River Vale’s voting record in favor of all N.J. Green Acres bond issues by wide margins of over 4 to 1. In addition, passing by a large margin in 1998 and then again in 2004, the Township’s voters elected to tax themselves for open space, again based primarily on need. This action itself, along with the preparation of this Open Space and

Recreation Plan, makes River Vale eligible to apply for a Green Acres Planning Incentive Grant. The “need” argument repeatedly points out a fact that is not immediately apparent or obvious to the casual observer:

*The majority of River Vale’s open space is Water Company owned watershed and reservoir property that is securely fenced and inaccessible to the public. Since none of these lands have been opened to the public for passive use, public use of this property is considered to be trespassing.*

In Chapter 1 Introduction and Background of this OSRP, many of the activities to increase the Township’s open space and recreation facilities and opportunities were mentioned. These activities were undertaken by this Township because they foresaw their needs as long as three decades ago. Those activities specifically spurred by need include the following:

- River Vale’s municipal Master Plan efforts since at least 1975 have strongly espoused the desirability of preserving open space and protecting natural resources within the township. Those 1975 objectives were reinforced, strengthened, and/or reaffirmed in 1978, 1982, 1988, 1994 and especially in 2000, and are in the process of being further strengthened for 2005. The 1975 Master Plan also recommended the establishment of an interconnected greenway along the Hackensack River, Pascack Brook, Holdrum Brook and Cherry Brook, for natural resource protection as well as passive recreation in the form of a pedestrian-accessible linear green belt (see Chapter #11 Planning Consistency). Each master plan generation thereafter adopted those same recommendations;
- The Township was one of the earliest communities to apply for and receive Green Acres funding in the early 1970’s. These funds were used as partial payment for the purchase of an 8 acre environmentally sensitive tract in the northern portion of River Vale, now known as Beechcrest Park;
- River Vale has committed to actively participate in the latest round of NJSDRP Cross Acceptance. The Township hopes this involvement will result in the nomination of expanded lands west of the Lake Tappan Reservoir as lying within Planning Area #5, as well as specific smaller areas of significant environmental sensitivity for designation as Critical Environmental Sites (CEHS), to the N.J. State Planning Commission. The Township conducted its initial meeting with Bergen County Planning to kickoff the process on September 2, 2004, officially resolved to participate, and did fully participate by submitting all proper documentation and support for their positions;
- River Vale was at the forefront of the open space preservation movement when the Township opted to become one of New Jersey’s first communities to establish an officially sponsored Open Space Advisory Committee. This Commission has been continuously active since its inception, and actively participated in the preparation of this document;
- River Vale voters have consistently supported N.J. Green Acres bond issues. In each of the previous two votes, River Vale voters approved the bond issues by overwhelming tallies of over 80% in favor;
- In 1998 the township enacted Ordinance No. 0-10-98(R) entitled “An ordinance adopting a new chapter of the Land Use Code of the Township of River Vale, entitled ‘Chapter XLI – Environmental Impact Study Ordinance’”. The stated objective in this ordinance’s “Purpose” introduction is “In order that the Township of River Vale may assess the impact of proposed land use changes or developments on the environment of the municipality, particularly with respect to potable water, pollution of all kinds, drainage, waste disposal, landscape and other pertinent environmental factors, ...”. River Vale invested in professionals to defend this ordinance and its integrity against a lawsuit rather than settling. This effort was unsuccessful because COAH ruled that the ordinances would be cost generative;

- River Vale aggressively and successfully secured its second Green Acres funding, this time in the form of a Planning Incentive Grant in 2002. These funds were used to purchase 18.1 acres of non-regulated yet environmentally sensitive lands adjacent to the Lake Tappan Reservoir in 2003 that was the subject of an active land development proposal for multi-family housing. This property is about to be opened as the River Vale nature center;
- In 1998 the voters of River Vale imposed an Open Space Preservation tax upon themselves, for the purpose of acquiring some of the remaining undeveloped lands within the Township. The tax was reauthorized to be collected at the rate of one cent per \$100 of assessed value per year, and is renewable in five-year increments. It was once renewed and is now authorized through 2008. This tax currently generates approximately \$99,000 per year for open space acquisition, historic preservation and recreation improvements. This figure should about double after the 2006 property re-evaluation. The Mayor and Council established a seven member citizens Open Space and Recreation Grant Committee, charged with the responsibility of advising the Township as to which properties would be of value to acquire for open space and recreation purposes. The Mayor and Council are authorized to decide how to expend these funds;
- Earlier in this year 2004 the township initiated a regional open space and recreation movement who's objective is to purchase the privately owned Bergen Hills Golf Club (then "River Vale Country Club"). The River Vale mayor solicited and received support from the Pascack Valley Mayors' Association. This support came in the form of a resolution in support of its acquisition by Bergen County and other public entities for use by Bergen County residents as a public facility;
- The Township aggressively and actively supported NJDEP's 2004 Stormwater Regulations in general, and the highest anti-degradation C-1 classification for its surface waters more specifically. The Mayor spent numerous days in Trenton and in correspondence and communication with the Department to hasten this legislation; and
- The Township enacted stormwater management regulations in 2004 for the purposes of protecting water quality, controlling flooding, and augmenting the State's anti-degradation regulations at the local level.

The "need" argument repeatedly points out a fact that is immediately apparent and obvious to River Vale residents. That is that River Vale was once a low-density suburban community with numerous open spaces and recreational resources located throughout the Township. Today, with real estate values soaring, developers have launched an assault on the few remaining parcels that have not been committed as public open space. More significantly, they have also targeted their development objectives towards lands recently held in the public trust by the local water company for protection of the watershed's water quality. These latter lands were made available for development, and the public trust was hence compromised, by a N.J. Board of Public Utilities ruling that accepted a private consultant's report deeming numerous properties that had been publicly subsidized for watershed protection as no longer necessary for this purpose. This underscores the regional need to protect and preserve River Vale's remaining open spaces. One by one, privately held and water company held open spaces have disappeared and been replaced by new housing and business facilities. River Vale is now a moderately developed suburb, and opportunities to expand the open space and recreation facilities to meet the needs of their growing population are scarce and can only come from one of two sources. First, the privately held open spaces that remain must be obtained and brought into the township's open space and recreation inventory. Second, sites that support (or formerly supported) low value, obsolete, underutilized and/or derelict land uses must also be brought into the public realm, to be converted to public open space and/or recreational uses.

***Description of current recreation activity levels, participation patterns, and trends for the future:***

Each of River Vale's existing Township-owned active recreation facilities is used to near maximum capacity at the present time. Recreation leagues (primarily Township youth leagues) compete for practice and game time for teams on the Township's soccer, baseball, football and softball fields, and basketball and tennis courts. The Township supports boys and girls and coed teams in leagues in all of these sports, from Kindergarten through Junior High School age. The Township also supports cheerleading teams. Evenings and weekends are the times of highest demand. High school age and older people also use these facilities, more often individually than in teams although some teams are available and active. The Township maintains a walking track that is used by residents of all ages. Lights have extended the availability of some of the fields and courts into the later evening hours; but while discussions have taken place, the same has not been accomplished for other field and court sports due to the expected objections of residents who are neighbors to these facilities.

The three grade schools provide some recreational facilities (e.g. playground, softball, soccer, and basketball), but these facilities are only available when they are not needed by the school district whose students have first priority on all of these facilities. This policy renders them unavailable much of the time. The regional High School is located in the neighboring town of Hillsdale. While it also provides numerous fields and courts, it is not located within the Township within easy reach of many residents, and these facilities are also subject to the first priority to school district activities policy. Other district towns also share these facilities. The school field facilities are also in poor condition and in need of refurbishment.

Similarly, the nearby Wood Dale County Park in Hillsdale and Woodcliff Lake, and the nearby Pascack Brook County Park in Westwood, satisfy some of the recreation needs of Township residents. These too are shared with all Bergen County residents, however, and are not within the Township's boundaries for easy accessibility.

The above information was gathered from several sources, including the Township Recreation Director. He maintains unequivocally that the public is underserved by recreation facilities. He also reports that there is a high level of competition for facility use. He suggests that there is a need for more of all types of active recreational facilities. He also states that there are no Township facilities that are underutilized, or that have been degraded to the point that it is not reasonable to attempt to rehabilitate them. Therefore the elimination of any specific facilities that are no longer in vogue, are in disrepair, or that no longer service a significant enough segment of the population, should not be considered as a means to provide an opportunity to introduce newer more contemporary facilities.

Through both regional observations and personal experiences, River Vale officials also recognize that trends in open space and recreation use have evolved over time in response to identifiable stimuli. These stimuli include the recognition that:

- the environmental protection of sensitive natural resources is of paramount concern;
- desirable passive recreational pursuits have expanded to include participation in environmental awareness activities;
- the population has aged, and the elderly today are active participants and not just observers;
- the physically and cognitively challenged need to be considered in all open space and recreation planning;
- cultural facilities can be enjoyed as integral components of recreational pursuits;
- technology has advanced to allow for more mobile bicycles, skates, skateboards and scooters, and facilities to accommodate these are in demand;

- linear green links have been in vogue as open space corridors which link larger recreational facilities, accommodating the more mobile and traveling aspects of recreation popular today;
- natural linear features (e.g. streams) as well as abandoned linear corridors of yesterday (e.g. railroad beds, utility corridors) can provide opportunities for these green corridors to connect the larger and more spacious “green rooms” of activity centers;
- waterfronts deserve to be reclaimed and returned into the public domain, with access to and for the enjoyment of all;
- the attention span of children can be elongated and experiences enhanced by the construction of creative playgrounds with climbing structures and imaginative play opportunities, rather than routine playground equipment; and
- specific facilities have become more desirable in response to the influx of specific ethnic groups in recent years.

A few of the more tangible results of the changes recognized above include increased demand for soccer fields, greenways including hard surface and soft surface trails, passive parks, environmental centers which are educational and permit the observance (and in some cases hands-on experience) of natural habitats, accessible facilities, active senior citizen oriented facilities, and creative playgrounds. Recreation facilities today are being planned and designed to complement natural systems, rather than impose upon them as was common in the past when athletic fields were developed at the expense of natural resources. These new demands are being offset by reductions in demand for traditional playgrounds, tennis courts, and isolated open spaces with benches and little else. These trends have been observed within River Vale, and it is the community’s desire to respond accordingly by attempting to provide as many of these in-demand uses as they can accommodate, while remaining fiscally responsible.

***River Vale’s minimum standards of acceptable recreation service:***

Today, all communities are subject to State and County open space and recreation standards, in addition to their own local determination of need. The importance of this discussion is to demonstrate that River Vale’s scarcity of open space and recreation resources cannot be satisfied or even partially offset by the also scarce regional, state and federal facilities. According to the 2003 –2007 New Jersey Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) there are 109,672 acres of Federal Recreation Open Space lands in New Jersey, which represents 2.3% of the State’s overall area. However, none of these Federal lands are located in Bergen County, much less in River Vale, so they are not readily available to River Vale residents. The SCORP indicates that there are 679,646 acres of State Open Space in New Jersey representing 14% of the State’s land area, but only 3,461 of such areas are located in Bergen County, for a countywide percentage of just 2.3%. Even when the area of the Palisades Interstate Park (PIP) is added to the State total, their combined percentage is only 4% of the County’s land area. Additionally, neither the State nor PIP lands are located in or near River Vale. There are 8,216 acres of County Open Space lands, which accounts for 5.5% of the total land area of Bergen County, but only 17 of those acres are located in River Vale, representing less than 1% of the Township’s land area. In addition, the County Open Space lands located in River Vale are low-lying lands along the Pascack Brook corridor, which are not appropriate for active recreation.

On a municipal basis, the SCORP recommends that recreation lands (apart from open space lands) comprise a *minimum* of 3% of the developed and developable area of a municipality. River Vale’s total area is 2,751 acres. Of that area 395 acres are either state-mapped wetlands or open water, which are considered undevelopable. Therefore, 2,751 minus 395 equals 2,356 remaining acres, which represents River Vale’s developed and developable area. Three percent of this figure is 70.7 acres. The following parks in River Vale are used for active recreation:

Alexander Park	17 acres
Grove Field	7 acres
Ranges Field	<u>4.5 acres</u>
Total Area of Active Rec. Facilities:	28.5 acres

River Vale's 28.5 acres of lands dedicated to recreation falls woefully short of the SCORP recommended *minimum* of 70.7 acres. In fact, it represents only 40% of that recommended minimum. Therefore, River Vale needs to act quickly to preserve additional recreation lands before they become developed and unavailable for public recreation.

It is important to understand that State agency-generated planning numbers and generally accepted recreation ratios are only one part of recreation planning. Local desires, conventions and specific needs can alter and refine those numbers to be more community specific. For example, there is an unsatisfied demand for golf facilities within Bergen County in general, and within the northern reaches of the County more specifically. This is despite the fact that River Vale is host to three golf courses. Only one of those three, however, permits the public to play at all, and then only on weekdays. The other two courses are open to members only, as is the third course on weekends. River Vale is attempting to purchase one of the private courses and convert it into a public facility. River Vale has reached out to the Bergen County Parks Department who, due to their need for more golf opportunities, has expressed an interest in joining River Vale in this endeavor. Discussions are tenuous at this time, due to the new owners' having land development objectives of their own for this property. In addition, as the population of River Vale increased over the past decade, only a few improvements were made to the Township's existing recreation facilities, leaving them inadequate for present and future needs.

As to the preservation of natural lands for conservation and passive recreation purposes, River Vale has purchased and set aside the 12-acre Beechcrest Park, as well as the 18.1 acres of watershed property formerly owned by the local water company. This latter property will soon be opened to the public as River Vale's nature center. We reported previously on the regional importance of these watershed lands, and the regional interest in seeing them protected. All of these lands, as well as water company lands that continue to be protected by NJ State law, as well as other privately owned undeveloped lands, are needed to fill the local and regional need to protect River Vale's remaining undeveloped lands.

***Condition of existing recreation facilities and barriers to participation:***

The most apparent weaknesses in River Vale's open space and recreation inventory are as follows:

- A shortage of publicly owned land to accommodate and support current and future active recreation needs;
- A shortage of passive recreation facilities, although opportunities do exist to expand these resources. This item also includes a shortage of publicly accessible open space;
- The difficulty, and in some cases inability, to connect existing and proposed resources together for the promotion of the more popular and contemporary linearly oriented recreation activities;
- Pressure to redevelop the Township's remaining developable and re-developable properties by private interests, thereby potentially removing them from possible inclusion in River Vale's open space and recreation inventory;
- Aging recreational facilities that require replacement and upgrading;
- A shortage of recreation facilities targeted towards the needs of senior citizens;

- The shortage of availability of active recreational fields during the most popular evening and weekend hours; and
- The absence of a community center, a skate park, and a swim club, all of which are facilities that residents have long desired.

In response to this recognized demand, River Vale has begun to upgrade some of their aging facilities, and to increase the variety of recreation facilities within the Township. This program has included the rehabilitation of softball fields, the construction of a creative playground and two tennis courts, the marking of a shared bicycle route along community roadways, and the initiation of a community amphitheater. Unfortunately, these improvements have not had any positive impact on their availability to greater numbers of citizens. River Vale has also unfortunately lost an indoor community facility due to its contamination by an incompatible use. This loss affected the Township's ability to respond to the needs of their growing senior citizens and preschool resident population.

***Changing factors that will affect the provision of recreation and open space:***

The primary changing factors that are expected to negatively affect the provision of open space and recreation within River Vale are as follows:

- The increasing grade school population;
- The increasing senior citizen population;
- The increasing general population;
- The demand for development of River Vale's remaining privately-owned open spaces; and
- The newly enacted C-1 anti-degradation classification by NJDEP of the streams throughout River Vale, which is the highest water quality designation within the State of New Jersey. This classification restricts all forms of development along stream corridors in River Vale, including the development of recreational facilities.

River Vale's overall population has remained rather steady in recent years, but expectations are that it is spiking upwards as a result of new and ongoing development activity. Much of this new development is large five-to-six bedroom homes that can be expected to generate numerous children. Therefore, and most particularly, River Vale's school age population and senior citizen populations are expected to grow in coming years, thereby demanding more recreational facilities for these two groups. School age children generate the need primarily for active recreational facilities, but it is also important for them to experience less formal recreational activities that bring them closer to the natural world. Senior citizens are requiring age appropriate recreation facilities to a greater degree today than ever before. This group is not so much requiring large quantities of facilities, but rather the types of facilities not heretofore provided by recreation providers in general, and within River Vale in particular. In addition, as the general population of this suburban community seeks more options for exercise that will promote healthier lifestyles, linear trails and bikeways will be in strong demand. Lastly, the families moving into these large new homes will have parents in their late 20's to early 50's who demand both active and passive recreational facilities, and generate large-scale demands for themselves and their young children.

River Vale's rate of growth is expected to be unusually rapid in the coming years, a phenomenon that can be traced to the Township's efforts to satisfy their affordable housing obligations under COAH. River Vale's COAH compliance is expected to add record numbers of residents with their own levels of demands for services. While the population of River Vale is expected to rise rapidly over the next decade, there is no assurance that there will be a commensurate increase in recreation facilities. None of the COAH affiliated multi-family developments will support their own recreation facilities.

The other significant factor affecting the Township's ability to meet current and future recreational demands is the rapidly dwindling land on which to provide recreational facilities. River Vale is a desirable community, and the competition for developable land is intense. Redevelopment is in its infancy in River Vale, but this trend most assuredly will continue because the suitable undeveloped land remaining is becoming scarce. This has begun to cause innovative and clever developers to propose land development on marginal lands. This phenomenon has the potential to negatively affect both the quality of life and the environment within the Township. With the demand for additional recreation land increasing and the availability of lands decreasing due to development pressure, conditions regarding the provision of adequate recreation and open space in River Vale will ultimately become critical and unsolvable.

In recent years River Vale has taken aggressive action and expended significant sums in partnership with the State's Green Acres Program and Bergen County's Open Space Trust Fund to preserve its remaining open spaces. River Vale is committed to continuing its campaign to secure additional open space and recreation lands, to assure a sufficient supply of such lands to meet the current and future needs of all sectors of its population. However, with some of the highest land values in the State of New Jersey, River Vale needs strong and continuing support from the Green Acres Program to realize its goal ambitious goal.

***Additional property and facilities necessary to meet current and future needs:***

River Vale has a total of three areas set aside for municipal active recreation – Alexander Park, Grove Field and Ranges Field. Their total area is 28.5 acres, which is 42.2 acres or 60% less than the State recommended minimum of 70.7 acres. This deficit speaks volumes about the work to be done, just to bring River Vale up to the recommended *minimum* for recreational open space. With the intense demand for land for real estate development and the consequent high real estate prices in River Vale, simply bringing the Township up to the recommended minimum will require substantial monetary resources from River Vale, Bergen County and the State.

A closer examination of the undeveloped open space that is currently set aside and available for passive recreation only is even more revealing. The only lands in this category are the 12.0 acre Beechcrest Park, and the 18.1 acre Poplar Road former watershed property. This latter property was only recently acquired, and will soon host the River Vale Nature Center. These 30.1 acres are far less than should be expected in a reservoir-hosting municipality with a population of almost 10,000.

Community recreation, open space and environmental representatives were asked to identify any specific "wish list" facilities that are not currently available within the township. They identified desires for a skate park, trails for walking, hiking and jogging, a community center, and a public swim club.

In addition, as a host to and a steward of Lake Tappan and many tributaries of the Hackensack River and its public water supply, River Vale has many areas of high environmental sensitivity that warrant preservation to protect water resources, guard against flooding, conserve wildlife, and provide a respite from the developed areas within the Township. This responsibility of stewardship falls upon River Vale, just as it does the few other area reservoir-abutting and watershed communities, and the benefits are not just local but regional. United Water provides water supply service to the better part of Bergen, Hudson and Rockland Counties. Since the amount of area of environmental sensitivity varies from municipality to municipality, there is not one standard that applies to all municipalities. However, River Vale has significant undeveloped areas of environmental sensitivity, which demand preservation. These areas are described in the Conservation Element of the municipal Master Plan.

## 11.6 RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

Through its on-going work towards establishing a “greener” River Vale, the Township has supported strong conservation and recreation objectives in its most recent Master Plan Periodic Reexaminations (1988, 1994, and 2000), and is preparing even stronger Conservation and Recreation Elements for the preparation of its new Master Plan. These documents have served to define the potential for preservation and redevelopment/reclamation of land for both conservation and recreation within River Vale. These Master Plan Elements influenced this Open Space and Recreation Plan for River Vale. The recommendations have been updated and made more contemporary, and they have been put into the following format that most closely matches the directions in the NJ Green Acres OSRP Guidelines.

Table 14: Privately-Owned Potential Open Space and Recreation Resources  
(see Figure 8)

BLOCK/ LOT	SIZE (AC)	TYPE (and Name if appropriate)	LOCATION (see System Map-Recr. & O.S. Inventory)	LEVEL OF PROTECTION	FORM OF OWNERSHIP
502/12	3.40	Woodlands & old house	South side of Woodside School	Weak (Owner's prerogative)	Private Individual
502/18	0.41	House and lot	South side of Woodside School	Weak (Owner's prerogative)	Private Individual
1602/6	1.20	Woodlands, pond, Pascack Brook, flood plain, old house, wetlands	Demarest Avenue west of Cedar Lane across from Washington Ave	Medium (regulatory control)	Private Individual
1602/7	3.80	Woodlands, pond, Pascack Brook, flood plain, house, wetlands	Demarest Avenue west of Cedar Lane	Medium (regulatory control)	Private Individual
1301/31	4.76	Woodlands, flood plain, wetlands	371 Rivervale Road, south of Holdrum School	Medium (regulatory control)	Private Individual
701/2, 3, 4, 6, 9, & 12	99+	Bergen Hills Golf Course & Club House	East side of Rivervale Road (#660) south of James Lane	Weak (New owner's prerogative, but with regulatory restrictions)	Corporation
701/5	0.484	Older house on upland lot	650 Rivervale Road adjacent to Bergen Hills Golf Course	Weak (New owner's prerogative)	Corporation
701/5.01	0.780	Medium aged house on upland lot	654 Rivervale Road adjacent to Bergen Hills Golf Course	Weak (New owner's prerogative)	Corporation
701/8	3.40	Vacant former industrial site	634 Rivervale Road adjacent to Bergen Hills Golf Course	Weak (New owner's prerogative)	Corporation
701/7	0.67	Vacant formerly developed site	644 Rivervale Road adjacent to Bergen Hills Golf Course	Weak (New owner's prerogative)	Corporation
301.01/3.01	2.20	Vacant, wooded, with utility easm't.	West end of Graney Drive	Weak (Owner's prerogative)	Private Individual
301/12	5.30	Woodlands, wetlands	West side of Orangeburgh Road across from Abbe Court	Medium (regulatory control)	Private Individual

801/11.01	4.30	Lake, Holdrum Brook, wetlands, woodlands, house	North side of west end of Prospect Avenue	Medium (regulatory control)	Private Individual
1001.01/10.01	5.16	Woodlands, wetlands, C1 lands	North side of Poplar Road east of John Street	Weak, subject of development proposal	Corporation
1001.01/2.01	10.05	Woodlands, C1 lands	North side of Poplar Road west of reservoir	Weak, subject of development proposal	Corporation
1101/3.01	10.6	Woodlands, C1 lands	East end of Stanley Place	Weak, subject of development proposal	Corporation
1602/9	4.04	Woodlands, Pascack Brook, pond, flood plain, wetlands, house	Southwest corner of Demarest Avenue and Cedar Lane	Medium (regulatory control)	Corporation
1602/13	2.76	House, Pascack Brook, wetlands, pond, flood plain, woodlands	West side of Cedar Lane opposite Cedar Place	Medium (regulatory control)	Private Individual
1901/6	4.30	House, wetlands, C-1 Hackensack River, flood plain, woodlands	West side of Westwood Ave, south of Blauvelt Street	Medium (regulatory control)	Private Individual
2103/10	6.30	Woodlands, Pascack Brook, flood plain, wetlands	West side of Rivervale Road south of Tiffany Avenue	Medium (regulatory control)	Private Individual
2103/1	2.20	Woodlands, Pascack Brook, flood plain, wetlands	Southeast side of Brookside Ave abutting Boro. of Westwood	Medium (regulatory control)	Private Individual

**Opportunities**

The following table corresponds to the table above. In this new table, each potential resource identified above is evaluated for its open space and/or recreation potential, with the most likely opportunities expressed.

Table 15: Privately-Owned Potential Open Space and Recreation Resources Opportunities (see Figure 8)

<b>BLOCK/ LOT</b>	<b>OPPORTUNITIES ENVISIONED BY RIVER VALE FOR TOWNSHIP'S OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION SYSTEM</b>
502/12	This site contains undisturbed woodlands and an old house on an oversized lot, adjacent to Woodside School. Would provide uplands habitat for ecological study by students.
502/18	This site contains woodlands and a house on a lot, adjacent to Woodside School. Would provide uplands habitat for ecological study by students if combined with 502/12.
1602/6	This is a beautiful natural site in the Pascack Brook flood plain, replete with numerous natural resources including a passing waterway. It also features an old house. It would make a lovely passive park when combined with 1602/7.
1602/7	This is a beautiful natural site in the Pascack Brook flood plain, replete with numerous natural resources including a freshwater pond and passing waterway. It also features a house. It would make a lovely passive park.

1301/31	This lowland site would provide a wetlands and flood plain habitat for ecological study by students.
701/2, 3, 4, 6, 9, & 12	Some State funding has already been received for the acquisition of this site. Bergen County has also expressed an interest in participating in its purchase. This site would provide opportunities for active recreation (publicly accessible golf which is otherwise a scarce resource), protection of C-1 waters, a large open space adjacent to the Lake Tappan Reservoir, passive recreation, and protection of numerous natural resources.
701/5	The acquisition and razing of this old house would provide an opportunity to ease the congestion of the police, fire house and ambulance corps that currently share the same small lot. While none of those uses would constitute an open space or recreation use, the relocation of one of those municipal services would ease the over-development pressure of the current site on the sensitive Hackensack River basin and flood plain.
701/5.01	The acquisition and adaptive reuse of this moderately sized house would provide an opportunity to offer indoor recreation facilities, particularly to senior citizens and pre-school aged children.
701/8	The acquisition of this extensively disturbed site would provide an opportunity to construct a senior citizens multifamily residential development in a logical location. This is a land use not currently available within the township. In return, the township would propose to add a different open space lot to its ROSI that might otherwise be used for this planned development.
701/7	The acquisition of this vacant but formerly developed site would expand the passive recreation provisions available on the adjacent Bergen Hills Golf Course site, and would complete the entire block of open space in this reservoir-adjacent location of town.
301.01/3.01	This lot has both active and passive recreation potential in an area of the township that is currently under-serviced. If combined with 304/36 and its natural resources, a lovely neighborhood park would be created.
301/12	This lot has beautiful passive recreation potential in the midst of a residential neighborhood, and could provide pedestrian linkage between neighborhoods.
801/11.01	This lot has beautiful passive recreation potential, as an almost 2-acre on-stream lake is the site's dominant feature.
1001.01/10.01	The acquisition of this undisturbed former watershed lot would add greatly to the township's reservoir-adjacent consolidated open space and passive recreation system. It would add woodlands and wetlands adjacent to an existing conservation district, and provide pedestrian access from Poplar Road to the larger parklands.
1001.01/2.01	The acquisition of this former watershed lot would add greatly to the township's reservoir-adjacent consolidated open space and passive recreation system. It would add woodlands adjacent to the reservoir and protected buffer lands, and provide pedestrian access from Poplar Road and the township's nature preserve to the larger parklands.
1101/3.01	The acquisition of this former watershed lot would add to the township's reservoir-and-Hackensack River-adjacent consolidated open space and passive recreation system. It would add woodlands on an elevated bluff adjacent to the Hackensack River, Cherry Brook, protected buffer lands, conservation district and the nature center, and provide pedestrian access into the parklands.
1602/9	This is a beautiful natural site in the Pascack Brook flood plain, replete with numerous natural resources including a freshwater pond and passing waterway. It also features a house. It would make a lovely passive park, particularly in conjunction with 1602/7.
1602/13	This is a beautiful natural site in the Pascack Brook flood plain, replete with numerous natural resources including a passing waterway. It also features a house. It would make a lovely addition to a passive park in this neighborhood.
1901/6	The addition of this parcel into River Vale's open space inventory would provide an open space/recreation amenity in the SE corner of the Township where none currently exist.
2103/10	With 2103/1, this site would make a wonderful addition to the adjacent Pascack Brook County Park. It would also provide pedestrian access into the park from a disconnected neighborhood.
2103/1	With 2103/10, this site would make a wonderful addition to the adjacent Pascack Brook County Park. It would also provide pedestrian access into the park from a disconnected neighborhood.

## 11.7 ACTION PLAN

### Township Actions of Recent Past Years

The Township has added only two parcels to its open space and recreation inventory in recent years, and both were products of the local water company's efforts to dispose of what they termed excess lands no longer needed for watershed protection. Known as I-7A and I-7B, these two parcels together amount to 18.1 acres within a much larger already protected open space on the south side of Poplar Road. These lands are directly adjacent to the Lake Tappan dam and contain numerous sensitive natural resources. Prior to their acquisition, these two parcels were the subjects of multi-family land development applications. The zoning that enabled the applications was a result of the settlement of an Affordable Housing lawsuit. N.J. Green Acres and the Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund aided in their purchase by the Township. Early in the 1970's, N.J. Green Acres assisted River Vale in purchasing the 12-acre Beechcrest Park as undeveloped open space. The Township also made open space preservation a priority in their 2000 Master Plan Periodic Reexamination. As previously mentioned, the Township is currently pursuing the purchase of the recently sold Bergen Hills Golf Course. Also recently, the Township was offered a 0.6-acre site near the center of town for use as a community park. This offer was made in conjunction with a site plan application.

### Seven Year Prioritization Program

The following is an attempt to assign priority levels to the privately owned potential open space and recreation resources previously identified. They have been divided into two categories of priority. All of these properties are considered to be valuable to the community. For three distinct reasons, we have deliberately not prioritized them to any greater level of detail. First, each potential resource offers something very different to River Vale, and it would be presumptuous at this point to subjectively decide which of these provide the most value to the community. Second, the order with which opportunities present themselves to acquire these resources will play an important role in our prioritization, in the same manner that the level of threat for their development influences these decisions in a reactive manner. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, for reasons expressed in the opening paragraph of the Introduction and Background chapter of this OSRP, in order to legitimately and fairly negotiate, the Township does not wish to disclose its entire approach to potential sellers. It should be further noted that the approximate costs are expressed as estimates of Fall 2004 dollars.

Table 16: Privately-Owned Potential Open Space and Recreation Resources  
First Priority (1 to 4 years)  
(see Figure 8)

BLOCK/ LOT	SIZE (AC)	LOCATION	PRIORITY RATIONALE	ESTIM. COST (\$)*
502/12	3.40	South side of Woodside School	Natural lands & old house would expand school site and facility. Owner desires to sell to Township.	1,037,300
1301/31	4.76	371 Rivervale Road, south of Holdrum School	Contiguous to school site & primary Township rec. facility. Would provide expansion & passive recreation.	330,000
701/2, 3, 4, 6, 9, & 12	99+	East side of Rivervale Road (#660) south of James Lane	Bergen Hills Golf Course & Club House would represent a vast increase in golf availability to the public. Bergen County is a potential partner.	22,512,380
701/5	0.484	650 Rivervale Road adjacent to Bergen Hills Golf Course	With golf course, would expand open space & provide meeting room and an upland lot for active recreation	491,700

701/5.01	0.780	654 Rivervale Road adjacent to Bergen Hills Golf Course	With golf course, would expand open space & provide meeting room and an upland lot for active recreation	590,920
701/7	0.67	644 Rivervale Road adjacent to Bergen Hills Golf Course	With golf course, would expand open space & provide an upland lot for active recreation	220,880
301.01/3.01	2.20	West end of Graney Drive	Would provide natural park in under-served area of township	495,880
301/12	5.30	West side of Orangeburgh Road across from Abbe Court	Would provide natural park in under-served area of township	934,604
1001.01/10.01	5.16	North side of Poplar Road east of John Street	Would expand conservation district in reservoir area & save parcel that is currently the subject of a development proposal.	2,270,400
1001.01/2.01	10.05	North side of Poplar Road west of reservoir	Would add to conservation district in reservoir area & save parcel that is currently the subject of a development proposal.	4,417,600
1101/3.01	10.6	East end of Stanley Place	Would expand conservation district in reservoir area & save parcel that is currently the subject of a development proposal.	4,928,440
1602/7	3.80	Demarest Avenue west of Cedar Lane	With 1602/6 would make a spectacular natural park along the Pascack Brook. Owner is interested in selling to Township.	750,860
2103/10	6.30	West side of Rivervale Road south of Tiffany Avenue	Would provide natural park in under-served area of township, and connect neighborhood to County Park	1,110,934
2103/1	2.20	Southeast side of Brookside Ave abutting Boro. of Westwood	Would provide natural park in under-served area of township, and connect neighborhood to County Park	349,151

\* Estimated costs were obtained by multiplying assessed values by a factor obtained from the Township's Tax Assessor, which was based on their knowledge of actual sales multipliers as compared to Bergen County's published equalization ratio for River Vale.

Table 17: Privately-Owned Potential Open Space and Recreation Resources  
Second Priority (3 to 7 years)  
(see Figure 8)

BLOCK/LOT	SIZE (AC)	LOCATION	PRIORITY RATIONALE	ESTIM. COST (\$)*
502/18	0.41	South side of Woodside School	Would further expand school site	640,640
701/8	3.40	634 Rivervale Road adjacent to Bergen Hills Golf Course	With golf course, would expand open space & provide lot for COAH senior citizens resid. complex, thereby freeing up other township sites for recreation.	750,420
801/11.01	4.30	North side of west end of Prospect Avenue	Would provide recreational lake and natural park	1,100,000
1602/6	1.20	Demarest Avenue west of Cedar Lane across from Washington Ave	With 1602/7 would make a spectacular natural park along the Pascack Brook. Owner is interested in selling to Township.	401,940
1602/9	4.04	Southwest corner of Demarest Avenue and Cedar Lane	Would expand the spectacular natural park along the Pascack Brook at an important intersection.	629,200

1602/13	2.76	West side of Cedar Lane opposite Cedar Place	Would further expand the spectacular natural park along the Pascack Brook	714,340
1901/6	5.08	West side of Westwood Ave, south of Blauvelt Street	This parcel would provide an open space/ recreation amenity into an un-served neighborhood. Would provide equitability.	609,400

\* Estimated costs were obtained by multiplying assessed values by a factor obtained from the Township’s Tax Assessor, which was based on their knowledge of actual sales multipliers as compared to Bergen County’s published equalization ratio for River Vale.

**Other Initiatives**

The Township has taken regulatory action to further these same goals, enacting ordinances requiring the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements, and the protection of trees complete with a tree bank. In recent years the Township established land use ordinance provisions that require the reservation of open space within their multifamily site plans. Throughout the years, the Township has also consistently supported all N.J. Green Acres bond referendums. Additionally, the Township enacted a tax for open space on them that twice passed by a wide margin. Finally, River Vale has begun informal discussions with a few of the property owners of some of the sites in this OSRP inventory for their purchase.

As mentioned in Chapter #5 Needs Analysis of this document, River Vale successfully initiated a regional resolution to purchase the Bergen Hills Golf Course. River Vale has interested the Bergen County Department of Parks (BCDP) in joining in to preserve this golf course, one of the largest parcels of open space that remains in the Township. The Township has also apparently successfully negotiated the dedication of land for a small park in the central business district. Furthermore, River Vale has now become proactive with the Bergen County Department of Planning and Economic Development (BCDPED) in pursuing consistency with the NJSDRP.

In terms of programmatic adjustments to better manage public open spaces and recreation facilities, the Township continues to pursue alternatives that will not unduly affect neighboring properties in an adverse manner. The primary example of this is the Township’s experimentation with athletic lighting to expand field availability further into the evenings when volunteer coaches are more available after their working days. This effort has not met with universal acceptance. Solutions and expansions of these lights are being sought.

**11.8 SYSTEM MAP**

See the “System Map, Recreation and Open Space Inventory, Township of River Vale, Bergen County, New Jersey” included herein as Figure 8. This map will be attached to the Executive Summary of this study and made available to the resident public of River Vale.

**11.9 ADDITIONAL PARCEL DATA REQUIREMENTS**

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the data offered by the Township of River Vale to assist the State of New Jersey in maintaining a statewide map of existing and planned open space. River Vale intends to provide the following information, in the identified forms, either as attached to this OSRP or as a supplementary submission upon the approval of the extension of the Township’s Planning Incentive grant:

- a) Existing preserved open space sites documented in the plan's inventory (ROSI) delineated at the block and lot level. These will be shown on copies of tax maps and on copies of USGS 7.5 minute Quadrangles.
- b) Potential open space and recreation areas identified in the same detail outlined in the plan's resource assessment. Delineation will be as described in a) above.
- c) The above information will be submitted as digital data.

### 11.10 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The resident public of River Vale Township has indirectly participated in this process long before this specific process began. They have participated in both Master Plan and all of the Periodic Reexamination processes that led to this OSRP. They participated by expressing their strong opinions in the two overwhelmingly favorable votes to *tax themselves* by passing the referendums that enacted, and then continued, the municipal open space and recreation tax. More specifically:

The volunteer residents of River Vale participated in the formulation of this OSRP by representing their official committees and agencies as full members of this process. These include the Open Space Advisory Committee, the Athletic Director, the Board of Education, the Mayor and Council, and the Planning Board, among others. These groups, along with the interested general public, participated in the Vision Gathering Session that was conducted on June 9, 2004. Along with other community stakeholders, they participated in the Stakeholders Issues Meeting conducted on June 28, 2004. The general public also participated in the Public Input/Brainstorming Session that was conducted on August 16, 2004. An advertised public progress meeting that scrutinized the details of the draft OSRP was conducted on September 27, 2004. The public also participated in the Planning Board meeting and Public Hearing that took place on November 15, 2004, during which the details of the draft OSRP were discussed and finalized, consistency with the Township Master Plan established and certified, and the Plan adopted. The tools utilized for these sessions are described in 11.3 GOALS AND POLICIES of this OSRP, and the certifications will be attached to the next Grant extension request submitted by the Township. It is also expected that these same participants will be present whenever the Mayor and Council also adopt the OSRP and resolve to commit matching funds and submit a Planning Incentive Grant Application to the N.J. Green Acres Program.

### 11.11 PLANNING CONSISTENCY

The Township of River Vale Planning Board adopted this OSRP on November 15, 2004. At that time they certified it as being in complete consistency with the conservation and recreation elements of River Vale's master plan. The OSRP will then sent on to the Mayor and Council for their attachment of the document to the next Planning Incentive Grant Application to be submitted to N.J. Green Acres.

Consistency is demonstrated as follows:

#### **Master Plan**

River Vale has always kept their Periodic Reexaminations current, and they regularly make use of their contents in the Township's land use decisions. The Township insists that land use policies be identified in their Reexaminations, and that land use ordinances and alterations be consistent with these policies. Since the Township's last full Master Plan was adopted in 1975, River Vale is currently undertaking the preparation of an entirely new Master Plan. At the inception of this process, it was decided that the Master Plan would include both a Recreation Element and a Conservation Element, and that the OSRP would clearly espouse the recommendations of these two elements and be in complete consistency with them.

That process is currently ongoing. Included among the **goals and objectives** of the new Master Plan, which is scheduled for adoption in 2005, *(and their current status within the Township)* will be:

1. To Preserve the Natural Environment including the preservation of wetlands and their transition areas, river and stream corridors, flood plains, surface waters including reservoirs, steep slopes, sensitive soils, natural areas, remaining open spaces, forested lands, wildlife habitat, and vistas. For the purpose of this goal, “to preserve” shall mean to protect against both the actual disturbance of sites that contain these features, and activities on nearby sites that could adversely affect their natural quality. *(The Township has made much progress in this area. The Township has acquired two significant parcels in its reservoir district. Through the regulatory actions of creating conservation zones, other lands in this district have been preserved for the purpose of eventually piecing together a contiguous and continuous natural preserve. The Township has also obtained conservation easements over some of these lands. Other woodlands, steeply sloping lands, stream corridors and undeveloped pockets of property have been identified as the subject sites for the inventory that is being proposed by this Open Space and Recreation Plan.)*
4. To Promote the Protection of Neighborhoods, by establishing and enforcing sufficient buffer areas between residential and non-residential land uses, by avoiding the introduction of incompatible adjacent land uses, by encouraging the maintenance and care of the residences, environment and properties, and by discouraging traffic through residential neighborhoods. *(River Vale has consistently insisted on naturally vegetated and planted buffers for areas that separate incompatible land uses. They have enacted a tree preservation ordinance that is serving to preserve the street trees in already developed portions of the township, and trees in general in its undeveloped portions.)*
5. To Support the N.J. State Development and Redevelopment Plan, by participating in the Cross Acceptance process and striving to bring land use policies and local ordinances into consistency with the State Plan. *(This newly adopted position by the Township has already been initiated by inviting the Bergen County Department of Planning and Economic Development to town to embark upon the Cross Acceptance process. One of the objectives is to maximize the PA 5 designated lands)*
6. To Promote Historic Conservation, Preservation and Adaptive Reuse Where Appropriate. *(A newly formed Historic Preservation Commission is working to establish historic sites that will become part of the Township’s open space and recreation system.)*
7. To Provide for the Quantity, Quality and Availability of Parks and Open Space, to include adding, improving, and assuring proper distribution and accessibility for active and passive recreational facilities, neighborhood parks, and open space to protect environmentally sensitive areas. This also includes making better use of all parks, and seeking a site for a municipal swimming pool. *(River Vale is unique because its shape is dramatically elongated in a north-south configuration. This makes the distribution of resources somewhat problematic. River Vale is also limited by protected watershed properties along its lengthy eastern boundary, thereby further limiting opportunities. The cooperative use of Board of Education athletic facilities and playgrounds has been established and has functioned fairly well for several years. The shortcoming of this arrangement is that the demand has far exceeded the supply of facilities and time slot availability. The Township has responded by improving and lighting some of its primary athletic fields, thereby expanding the hours of their availability and improving its utility. The Township has also arranged to have a small parcel dedicated for public recreation in the town center. Unfortunately, the Township projects that even these creative provisions will still be inadequate, given the increasing population resulting from the successful resolution of its COAH affordable housing obligation and other as-of-right development approvals that will result in numerous new dwelling units.)*
8. To Support the Continuation of the Township’s Three Golf Courses, to the extent that they provide semi-public and private recreation opportunities and vast open spaces. *(The Township is committed to the continuation of its three golf courses, to the extent that they are willing to explore the feasibility of purchasing at least one of them, and they are seeking purchase partners to make this a reality. One*

*other golf course is permanently protected by a settlement agreement from a lawsuit and is deed restricted as “forever golf course”. It is also protected by N.J.’s Watershed Protection Act.)*

14. To Recognize and Protect the Watershed Lands, and the drainage basins of the reservoir lands within the Township. In cooperation with neighboring towns, recognize (a) their status as the region’s primary source of potable water, and (b) their strategic regional location within one of the last remaining contiguous blocks of open space, providing locally rare high quality wildlife habitat. *(As discussed above, the Township has acquired two significant parcels in its reservoir district. Also as discussed, through the regulatory actions of creating conservation zones, other lands in this reservoir district have been preserved for the purpose of eventually piecing together a contiguous and continuous natural preserve that continues into neighboring Old Tappan Borough. The Township has also obtained conservation easements over some of these lands.)*

15. To Promote Ease and Convenience of Non-Motorized Transportation, including the expanded provisions of sidewalks, walking paths, bicycle paths, lanes and routes, to interconnect residential neighborhoods with public facilities, and to meet the needs of Township residents. *(The Township’s master plan espouses improvements to the pedestrian and bicycle circulation system. To this end, the Township has delineated a bicycle route through the entire town from north to south. The Township has also identified linear parcels used for drainage purposes that may be able to support the secondary function of a pedestrian path that would connect neighborhoods. These parcels have been identified within Chapter #4 of this OSRP as Existing Publicly-Owned Undeveloped Lands that are Potential Recreation Resources. Additionally, the Township is committed to improving pedestrian facilities within its downtown as a part of its downtown revitalization program that is currently underway.)*

The Township also committed to consistent and specific goals and policies of investing in both recreation and open space resources in the last Master Plan Periodic Reexamination of 2000. These recommendations will be strengthened in the most current municipal master plan that is in the process of being prepared, and is scheduled for adoption later in 2005. More specific information about this commitment can be obtained in the “Needs Analysis” chapter of this Plan. The adopted 2000 Periodic Reexamination states the following:

*“Open Space: Residential development pressures in the community since the 1950’s have greatly reduced the amount of available open space. As a result, the more recent single-family housing developments are on a substantially smaller scale than those of previous decades. There is, however, a committed effort by the Township to secure remaining parcels of land for open space preservation. River Vale has an existing Open Space Tax and is in the process of securing funding from both Bergen County and the State of New Jersey to acquire additional acreage along Poplar Road. The Township should broaden this commitment by assessing its total open space needs and identifying the remaining undeveloped parcels for future open space acquisition. United Water Resources easements should be identified since these lands may be privately reserved or restricted to development. Some of these easements, depending on their restrictions, may be eligible for inclusion in the open space inventory. The Township may also wish to pursue purchasing its own conservation easements from the water company. This may be a viable alternative when it is determined infeasible to acquire open space through direct purchase.”*

The adopted 2000 Periodic Reexamination goes on to state:

*“Development pressures jeopardize remaining open space in the Township. Conservation Zoning is currently in place to preserve some of the remaining land, however outright purchase of developable properties is in the communities (sic) interest. Efforts are being taken to secure the necessary funding from other public agencies.”*

Finally, the adopted 2000 Periodic Reexamination states:

*“Open space. The Township should do an inventory and analysis of the few remaining parcels to determine if any are suitable for preservation as parks and/or open space. Funding feasibility should be assessed and various mechanisms for open space preservation should be considered.”*

## 12. HISTORIC PLAN ELEMENT

### 12.1 BACKGROUND

Before 1841, the area known today as River Vale was originally part of Harrington Township and was known as the “Overkill Neighborhood,” because of its location over the ‘kill,’ another name for the Hackensack River. River Vale was incorporated as a Bergen County Township in 1906. In 1929, some parts of River Vale became part of Park Ridge Borough. The current municipal boundaries of River Vale are composed of sections from parts of Hillsdale Borough and Washington Township, which in 1959 expanded with newly acquired territory from that originally a part of Montvale Borough.

River Vale was an agricultural community prior to World War II. Afterwards, the Township developed into a residential community that is now home to more than 2,675 families (See Chapter 4 Community Profile Plan Element).

General awareness of important historical sites has increased within the Township in the last several years. The preservation of buildings and sites mostly relating to the community’s founders or historical events related to the American Revolutionary War has been the focus of preservation efforts within the Town. Local historians and the Township have completed several initiatives to preserve historic resources. These efforts include recognition and preservation of the Baylor Massacre site, and local efforts to identify historic cemeteries and homes of many of the founding families that had an impact on the early history of River Vale.

In addition to preservation efforts of existing sources on site, a cabin occupied by one of the founding families was taken apart and painstakingly cataloged, so that it can be erected on another site, when the opportunity is made available. This home, known as the Cornelius Holdrum House, was the second oldest wood-frame house in Bergen County. The house was originally located on the Bergen Hills Golf Course with the address of 660 River Vale Road. A typical example of an existing historic resource is the Mabie-William Holdrum House, currently addressed on 634 Midvale Court. The house’s construction is attributed to Johanne Mabie prior to 1756. Prior to 1775, William Holdrum, Sr. acquired it for his son William Jr., who lived there until his death in 1826. William Jr. enlarged the house and it remains approximately in the same configuration today. The surrounding lands were later developed into a single-family subdivision, and this house was incorporated into the subdivision and re-addressed (It was formally addressed as 606 Prospect Street).

The 1975 River Vale Master Plan does not include a historical preservation element, but in the midst of urban revitalization and/or renewal that occurred since the plan was adopted, the Town and residents became proactive in efforts to preserve important historic resources.

A particularly good example of preservation efforts headed by the Town in cooperation with the County is associated with the Baylor’s Massacre site, which is a gravesite from the Revolutionary War where six bodies

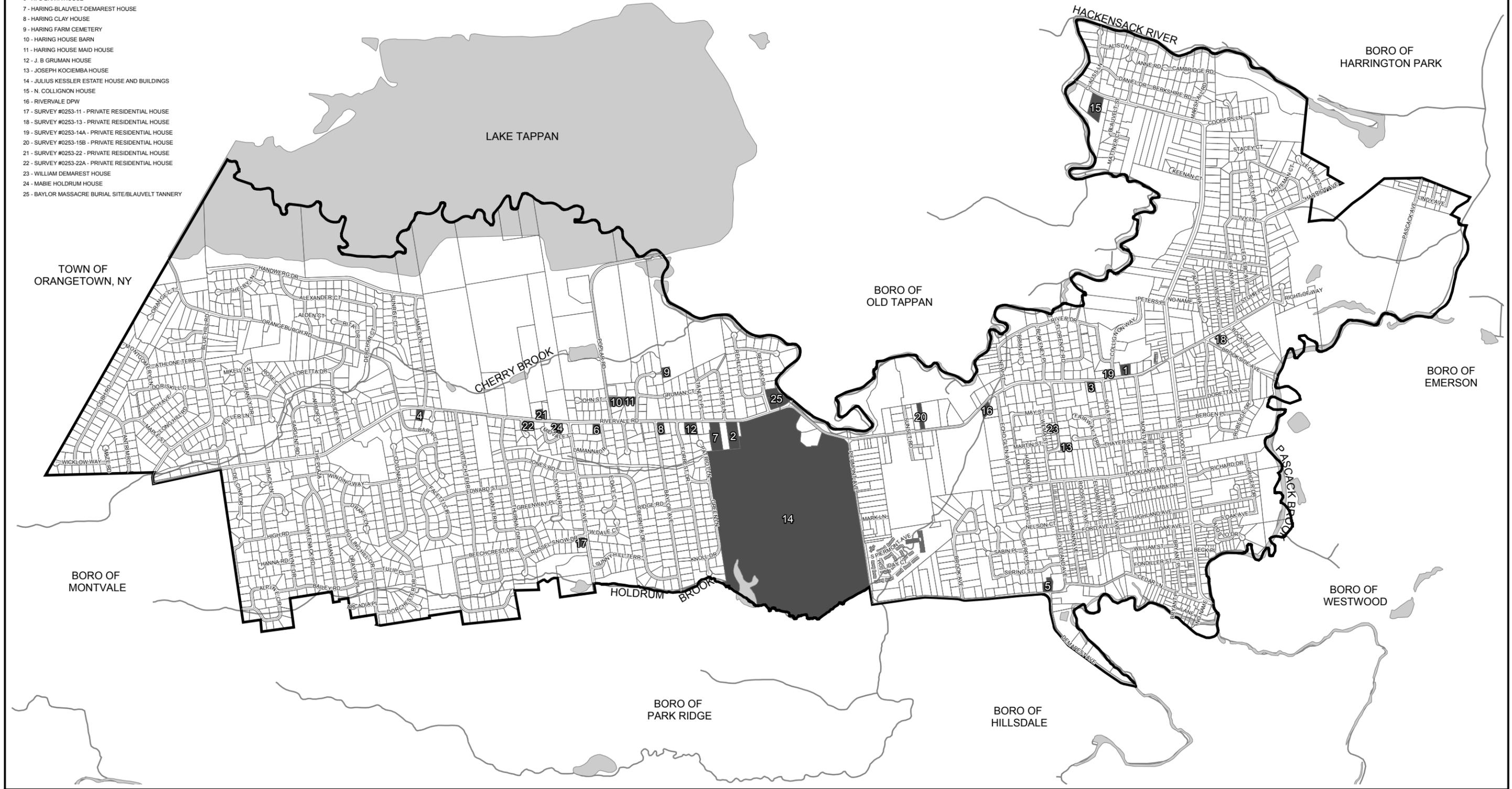
were excavated. This particular site is the most significant revolutionary era site within the Township. It is located on the east side of Rivervale Road between Old Tappan Road and Red Oak Drive (See Figure 9). Originally under threat of development, this site is now a County owned historical site and is listed in the August 1992 Cemetery Inventory of Bergen County Historical Sites Survey, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Table 17 is a compilation of historical sites and buildings currently identified in the Township:

Table 18: Historic Resource Inventory for River Vale

1	Adam Collignon House	234 Rivervale Road	Block 1801 Lot 8
2	Blauvelt-Haring Cemetery	South of 513 River Road	Block 1201 Lot 2
3	Blauvelt-Post—Collignon House	320 Rivervale Road	Block 1715 Lot 9
4	Blauvelt-Seaman House	725 Rivervale Road	Block 501 Lot 10
5	Fords House	506 Cleveland Avenue	Block 1511 Lot 25
6	H.G Banta House	605 Rivervale Road	Block 901 Lot 10
7	Haring-Blauvelt-Demarest House	525 Rivervale Road	Block 1201 Lot 1b
8	Haring-Clay House	565 Rivervale Road	Block 906 Lot 1
9	Haring Farm Cemetery	South of Haring Farm Court cul-de-sac bulb	Block 1002.02 Lot 5.01
10	Ralph C. Haring House Barn	611 Poplar Road	Block 1002 Lot 5
11	Ralph C. Haring House Maid House	615 Poplar Road	Block 1002 and 6
12	J.B Gruman House	551 Rivervale Road	Block 909 Lot 11
13	Joseph Kociemba House	601 Cleveland Avenue	Block 1715 Lot 4
14	Julius Kessler Estate House and Buildings	461 Rivervale Road & Edgewood Country Club	Block 1201 Lot 6
15	N. Collignon House	898 Westwood Avenue	Block 1901 Lot 8
16	River Vale DPW	Rivervale Rd, Corner of Echo Glen Ave	Block 1501 Lot 35.01
17	Private Residential House Bergen Co. Survey #0253-11	534 Prospect Avenue	Block 801 Lot 28
18	Private Residential House Bergen Co. Survey #0253-13	165 Rivervale Road	Block 2103 Lot 6
19	Private Residential House Bergen Co. Survey #0253-14A	240 Rivervale Road	Block 1801.02 Lot 6
20	Private Residential House Bergen Co. Survey #0253-15b	376 Rivervale Road	Block 1401 Lot 8
21	Private Residential House Bergen Co. Survey #0253-22	650 Rivervale Road	Block 701 Lot 5
22	Private Residential House Bergen Co. Survey #0253-22A	655 Rivervale Road	Block 814 Lot 21
23	William Demarest House	602 Cleveland Avenue	Block 1506 Lot 10
24	Mabie Holdrum House	634 Midvale Court	Block 814 Lot 20
25	Baylor Massacre Burial Site/ Blauvelt Tannery	Rivervale Road east side between Old Tappan Road and Red Oak Drive	Block 1106 Lot 29- 31
26	Cornelius Holdrum House	Currently disassembled, but formerly at 660 Rivervale Road	N/A

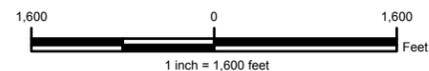
Source: Division of Cultural and Historic Resources of Bergen County, updated with assistance from Edmond Moderacki, River Vale Historian.

- HISTORICAL PROPERTIES**
- 1 - ADAM COLLIGNON HOUSE
  - 2 - BLAUVELT-HARING CEMETERY
  - 3 - BLAUVELT-POST COLLIGNON HOUSE
  - 4 - BLAUVELT-SEAMAN HOUSE
  - 5 - FORDS HOUSE
  - 6 - H. G BANTA HOUSE
  - 7 - HARING-BLAUVELT-DEMAREST HOUSE
  - 8 - HARING CLAY HOUSE
  - 9 - HARING FARM CEMETERY
  - 10 - HARING HOUSE BARN
  - 11 - HARING HOUSE MAID HOUSE
  - 12 - J. B GRUMAN HOUSE
  - 13 - JOSEPH KOCIEMBA HOUSE
  - 14 - JULIUS KESSLER ESTATE HOUSE AND BUILDINGS
  - 15 - N. COLLIGNON HOUSE
  - 16 - RIVERVALE DPW
  - 17 - SURVEY #0253-11 - PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL HOUSE
  - 18 - SURVEY #0253-13 - PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL HOUSE
  - 19 - SURVEY #0253-14A - PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL HOUSE
  - 20 - SURVEY #0253-15B - PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL HOUSE
  - 21 - SURVEY #0253-22 - PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL HOUSE
  - 22 - SURVEY #0253-22A - PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL HOUSE
  - 23 - WILLIAM DEMAREST HOUSE
  - 24 - MABIE HOLDRUM HOUSE
  - 25 - BAYLOR MASSACRE BURIAL SITE/BLAUVELT TANNERY

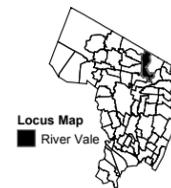


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Source:  
 Bergen County Geographic Information Systems  
 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
 Map Prepared March 2005 by ST&A



- Historical Properties
- Parcels
- Waterbodies
- Streams
- Roads



**Figure 9 - Historical Sites**  
 River Vale Master Plan

Township of River Vale, New Jersey

All of these sites are listed on the Historic Sites survey prepared in 2001 by the Division of Cultural and Historic Resources of Bergen County. Three sites, the Baylor Massacre Burial Site, Haring-Blauvelt-Demarest House, and Mabie Holdrum House, are also listed in the New Jersey State Department of Historical Places and the National Register of Historic Places.

Two of the homes in River Vale listed on the 2001 survey have been demolished and are not included in Table 17. These homes include the Post House located at 666 Westwood Avenue, and the Herring-Fournner House located at 490 Rivervale Road.

Development that has occurred from Post World War II to the present created the setting that exists today: the rural-suburban community with mostly converted farmhouses that remind us of the early settlers, and the early suburbanite housing. The new housing that has been built along side the historical housing also has its place in the history of River Vale as a developing community.

Currently, the Township Historic Preservation Commission advises the Planning Board and the Board of Adjustment on applications for development. The Commission promotes educational and cultural enrichment programs and events to encourage the historical development of the Township as well as obtain financial assistance to aid the preservation of historical landmarks. The creation of the Historic Preservation Commission is authorized by a locally adopted ordinance No. 0-9-00.

Although there may be several properties eligible for the National or State Historic Registers, at this point only a few are listed. Eligible properties may include those that were identified by the Bergen County Division of Cultural and Historic Resources, as well as other resources yet to be identified.

At the date of this Master Plan, no formal local protection exists for historic properties. Informally, when presented with the opportunity to do so, the Township has recognized the aesthetic value of historic properties and has required developers to consider the value of the historic properties during development. The Township has been successful in a number of informal preservation campaigns of important sites, such as the Baylor Massacre Site and the William Holdrum House as discussed above. The retention of these important historical sites remains a testament to the Township's commitment to historic preservation.

## **12.2 PROPOSED HISTORIC PLAN**

The Master Plan proposes to retain and enhance the Township's historic sites as part of the overall fabric of the community. River Vale needs more effective tools to do this beyond their expressed commitment to save historic sites. As mentioned previously, there are a number of historic sites within River Vale that have been identified but not formally recognized on the National Register of Historic Places. The main purpose of the National Register of Historic Places is to provide an official repository of information on properties that link us with the past, and provide a permanent record of these resources. There is nothing in the federal law that prohibits private owners from modifying or demolishing or altering structures that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Listings, however, can heighten awareness of historically significant properties and the importance of the property to significant historic events, and therefore sometimes result in the preservation of the property through public discourse and negotiation. Several studies suggest that homes on the National Historic Register are more likely to be maintained in character with the original building.

Properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places appear on a list maintained by the National Park Service. The standards for inclusion are set by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and are as follows:

*“...districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and:*

- a. are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or*
- b. are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or*
- c. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
- d. that have yielded, or may likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. (applies mostly to archeological sites)*

*Ordinary cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historic figures, properties owned by religious institutions, or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the last 50 years are not generally eligible for the National Register of Historic Places unless they fall within the following categories:*

- a. a religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance;*
- b. a building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural values, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event; or*
- c. a birthplace or grave of a historic figure of outstanding importance if there is not other appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life; or*
- d. a cemetery that derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or*
- e. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or*
- f. a property primarily commemorative in intent of design, age tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or*
- g. a property achieving significance within the past 50 years if it is of exceptional importance.*

All properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places have been determined to meet a minimum standard of significance as described above. This significance can be at the national, state or local level of importance. A building where George Washington may have headquartered a campaign (national level of significance) and a building where the Township may have held their first municipal government meeting (local level of significance) are equally eligible for listing on the National Register.

The New Jersey Historic Register includes New Jersey properties only, and is maintained by the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office (referred to herein as SHPO). The criteria for listing on the State and National Registers are nearly identical. Properties in New Jersey that are placed on the National Register are automatically placed on the State Register.

To determine National Register eligibility, the National Park Service evaluates a property with the aid of a nomination form, supporting documents and pictures of the site. The National Park Service encourages an applicant to first submit the application to SHPO, and use that office as a resource for evaluating the site. If a nomination form is sent directly to the National Park Service, it is referred back to the SHPO for its recommendation.

Anyone may submit a National Register application for a historic property. However, there is an owner consent provision for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. If the property is determined to be eligible, and the owner does not wish it to be listed, the property is not listed. However, the property information is kept on a separate list as a property that has been “determined eligible” but not listed by wish of the owner. There is no owner consent requirement for the State Historic Register.

State law provides limited protection to National or State Register listed properties if public money is expended for the project. However, there are no state laws that provide protection from the effects of private development.

The most effective tool for preserving historic properties is locally adopted historic regulations, commonly referred to as landmark ordinances. The properties that are selected for inclusion as a “historic district, landmark, or landmark site,” under procedures described in a zoning ordinance are placed on this list by action of the governing body. The authority to review and approve exterior changes to a locally designated property is then delegated to a separate agency, most commonly the Historic Preservation Commission. As a result, local listing as a historic district, landmark, or landmarked site provides substantially more protection than National or State Register listing.

Currently, the Township ordinance that establishes the Historic Preservation Commission does not authorize a locally adopted landmark list, or provide for final approval authority of projects affecting landmarked resources. The township should pursue amending the ordinance to allow for more protection of its historic resources. A model ordinance is available from the State Office of Preservation website. At a minimum, the Township should consider creating a landmarking program for formal recognition of sites, even if formal approval of changes to the sites remains advisory, and adopt a policy of adaptive re-use of historic sites before they are demolished. The list should be inclusive enough to allow the addition of sites that may not be eligible for listing on other lists, such as local cemeteries and churches.

Funding for historic preservation programs are available from several private and public sources; however, one of the most effective programs from municipalities’ perspectives is their participation in the Certified Local Government Program (CLG). The National Historic Preservation Act Amendment of 1980 authorized the CLG program. Its primary goal is to provide for formal participation of communities in federal and state historic preservation programs. In order to participate in the CLG program, the municipality must apply to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which office in turn determines the eligibility of the local government. In order to be certified by the SHPO, the applying government is required to submit evidence that meets the basic program criteria as follows:

- They must have a Historic Preservation Commission with demonstrated interest in historic preservation;
- They must have an adopted ordinance that allows the municipality to create a local landmarking program that includes review and approval of substantial modifications of those resources that are landmarked. This includes the ability to deny a demolition permit;
- They must maintain a system for the survey and inventory of historic properties; and
- They must provide for adequate public participation in the historic preservation program, including the process of recommending properties to the National Register.

Once the government is certified, they are eligible:

- To apply for a portion of the State’s grant funding for historical sites survey and historic preservation planning projects. The use of the funding ranges widely and can include brick and mortar project (such as the assembly of the Holdrum House); to pay for the use of a historic

- preservation specialist to conduct a survey of the Township; or for the creation of promotional materials and events focusing on historic preservation;
- For an opportunity to be more involved in New Jersey and federal historic preservation programs such as involvement on all New Jersey and National Register nominations in their jurisdictions; and
  - For training sessions for local historic preservation review commission members to be more informed in identifying properties which are eligible for federal tax incentives and development grants, when available.

The participation in the States CLG program allows for formalization of the local historic preservation process, and will create a more favorable status when applying for funding through the SHPO and Non-profit groups linked with the SHPO, such as Preservation New Jersey and New Jersey Historic Trust.

Other initiatives that should be undertaken by the Township include a reassessment of historic resources within the Township. Although the County historic survey undertaken in 2001 is an important resource, the Township should develop a comprehensive inventory that focuses primarily on River Vale, and the various historical events that occurred in the Township. This list could also include items of local significance, such as the Town Hall, cemeteries, statues and markers dedicated to servicemen and other civic leaders, and churches that are visible landmarks important to the visual landscape of the Township.

## 13. REGIONAL CONTEXT

A meaningful analysis of the various physical, social and economic characteristics of a community cannot be accomplished without the consideration of regional trends and forces acting on that community. Although a municipality is a separate and distinct political entity, it is influenced by factors beyond the immediate local area. For this reason, regional considerations, as they apply to River Vale, are being given attention in this section and where appropriate, elsewhere in this report.

Regional analysis involves determination of the impacts of State, County and municipal planning activities on the development and development policies of the jurisdiction under study. As part of the current Master Plan, attention was given to the zoning policies in areas immediately bordering the Borough. State and County Plans were examined briefly.

### 13.1 STATE PLANNING

#### 13.1.1 The New Jersey Statewide Master Plan in General

The State Planning Act of 1985 (N.J.S.A. 52:18A-196 et seq.) declared that the "State of New Jersey needs sound and integrated statewide planning...". The Act created the State Planning Commission and the Office of State Planning, and their primary responsibility was to prepare the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (hereinafter either "SDRP" or "State Plan"). The Office of Smart Growth, whose objectives are similar to the office it replaced, has since replaced the Office of State Planning. The Act also requires the SDRP to be reviewed and revised on a three-year cycle. On June 12, 1992, the New Jersey State Planning Commission and the New Jersey State Legislature approved the original SDRP. On June 25, 1997, the State Planning Commission approved the 1997 Reexamination Report and Preliminary State Plan, which was adopted by the State Planning Commission in 2001. In general, the revisions that pertain to River

Vale include modifications to Policy Objectives acknowledging the significance of redevelopment, the significance of planning on a regional scale, and the introduction of a new section on the importance of high quality site design within public rights-of-way (see "Community Design Element" of this Master Plan). This latter item emphasizes the revitalization of central business districts. The State Planning Commission commenced the current round of Cross-Acceptance on April 28, 2004 when it released the Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan for 2004. This signaled the beginning of the third round of Cross-Acceptance with a projected completion date of March 2005.

A significant amount of work from a broad-based coalition of public and private interests went into the original SDRP. A new Cross-Acceptance process was conducted for this latest version that allows, provides and encourages input, critique and refinement from bottom up as well as top down. The active participants include representatives from such divergent interests as the State Planning Commission, other related State agencies, County Departments of Planning and Economic Development, local and regional Planning Commissions and Agencies, environmental advocacy groups, builders institutes, the New Jersey Alliance for Action, local planning boards and environmental commissions, and interested citizens. River Vale's mayor, who is also a member of the River Vale Planning Board, serves as the Township's Cross Acceptance Representative and is participating on your behalf, with the assistance of this consultant. These two representatives are working with the Bergen County Department of Planning and Economic Development in this effort, since the County serves as the lead agency for this process. River Vale appointed another individual to serve as its representative to the last Cross-Acceptance process, but the Township did not actively participate in the process.

The objectives of the State Plan are, in general, to delineate where future development within the State should take place; and conversely, where environmental, agricultural and other conditions are present to the extent that extensive future development should be discouraged. The State was divided into five (5) "Planning Areas", each of which exhibits enough common characteristics to receive common treatment by the State Plan. This treatment ranges from strong discouragement of development for the higher Planning Area numbers, to overt encouragement of development to the extent that the State would be willing to commit funds and technical assistance to development proposals for areas falling within the lower Planning Area numbers.

Since the SDRP is a Master Plan, it is a guide plan and is not intended or empowered to usurp local zoning powers. Implementation occurs by prioritizing State funding and assistance in the form of State grants towards those locales falling within the lower numbered Planning Areas. More specifically, the Act which authorized the preparation of the State Plan mandates that local plans be ". . . consistent with State plans and programs" (N.J.S.A.52:18A-196(f)). It has also become apparent that, in order to encourage local participation, State funding in the form of financial grants for local improvements are being targeted towards those communities that participate in the process and seek consistency with SDRP and compliance for their communities.

The SDRP expounds the benefits of linear tracts of open space including regional ones that travel through different Planning Areas. The Hackensack River Watershed forms a significant regional greenway. Upstream from River Vale, the watershed lands are protected through a variety of methods. The source of the Hackensack River is protected by NYSDEC in High Tor State Park from which it flows into the Town of Clarkstown, New York. Near the end of the 1990's, Clarkstown upzoned parcels contiguous to the river to conservation density residential, permitting only single-family homes on 160,000 sq. ft. lots to be developed near the river and within its watershed. In addition, Clarkstown is undergoing an Open Space Initiative. This program has the potential to result in a bond issuance for the purpose of securing funds for the town's acquisition of watershed lands for perpetual conservation and open space uses. Also in the late 1990's, the neighboring Town of Orangetown (into which the Hackensack River flows from Clarkstown) also upzoned many parcels contiguous to the Hackensack River. The conservation

residential zone in Orangetown allows for only single-family homes on 80,000 sq. ft. lots to be located near the river or watershed lands. Other Orangetown lands of the watershed support open space owned by the public and/or United Water Resources, a golf course, the old Rockland Psychiatric Center that will become various open space and recreation uses, and the Manhattan Woods – Kaufman Campgrounds Area. Various methods of protecting the watershed lands and maintaining them as open space are employed downstream of River Vale as well, especially within the Meadowlands Estuary. The Township of River Vale should continue to do its part for the sake of regional consistency, and to fulfill its resource stewardship responsibility, by preserving lands designated as PA 5 as permanent open space. Open space advocates envision the benefits of a 34-mile long continuous greenway protecting the Hackensack River in its entirety as both a potable water source and a recreational amenity.

### 13.1.2 Planning Area 1

The Township of River Vale, as was most of Bergen County, has been designated as falling primarily within Planning Area 1 (PA 1). This is known as the Metropolitan Planning Area, and is the area most targeted for development by the SDRP. To paraphrase the State's partially revised and expanded Policy Objectives for PA 1:

- (1) **Land Use** - Guide development and redevelopment into centers, cores and nodes, to promote diversification of land uses while ensuring efficient and beneficial utilization of scarce land and resources to strengthen its existing diversified and compact nature;
- (2) **Housing** - Provide diversity of housing choices by means of conventional and innovative techniques, including the introduction of housing into appropriate non-residential settings, and preserve existing housing;
- (3) **Economic Development** - Promote economic development by encouraging conditions, public/private partnerships, and private sector investment to retain and attract businesses, by adopting supportive local government policies that support appropriate redevelopment;
- (4) **Transportation** - Encourage public transit systems, walking and alternative modes of transportation to reduce auto dependency, and encourage mass transit-friendly nodal redevelopment;
- (5) **Natural Resource Conservation** - Reclaim environmentally damaged sites, emphasize air quality concerns, and provide open space and recreation amenities, particularly those which either reinforce neighborhood and community identity or provide linearly oriented opportunities to connect with other open space resources;
- (6) **Agriculture** - Use appropriate and economically feasible opportunities to promote agriculturally oriented land uses (primarily support services), also including farmers markets, greenhouses and community gardens;
- (7) **Recreation** - Maximize recreational opportunities through maintenance and rehabilitation at existing facilities, and expand and link the system as practicable;
- (8) **Redevelopment** - Encourage redevelopment at intensities sufficient to support transit, broad ranging land uses, and efficient use of infrastructure, and encourage safety oriented and pedestrian friendly site design;
- (9) **Historic Preservation** - Integrate historic preservation with redevelopment efforts by innovative and adaptive means which allow for both to take place;
- (10) **Public Facilities and Services** - Upgrade public facilities and services, including infrastructure, to provide for sustainable development and concentrated public facilities; and
- (11) **Intergovernmental Coordination** - Regionalize as many public services as feasible, and establish multi-jurisdictional entities to guide governments towards compatible and coordinated redevelopment.

An examination of the Township's goals and objectives indicates that they remain consistent with the statewide goals and objectives of the SDRP and the policy objectives for Planning Area 1. To the extent that the term "appropriate redevelopment" in Policy Objective #3 Economic Development excludes the development of the Township's few remaining undeveloped sites, there are no inconsistencies between the two documents.

### **13.1.3 Planning Area 5**

The SDRP targets environmental resources as worthy of protection, regardless of which Planning Area they are located within. On a broad basis, this is done by designating them as Planning Area (PA 5): Environmentally Sensitive.

PA 5 areas have been designated by the NJ State Planning Commission through the NJ Office of Smart Growth to correspond with the Lake Tappan Reservoir, and the Hackensack River and Pascack Brook and their tributaries. The exact limits of these designations are subject to the NJSDRP Cross Acceptance process now underway. To date, the Township has not prepared a natural resource inventory (NRI). The preparation of such a document would be advisable in response to the PA 5 designations and the NJDEP C-1 surface water designations within River Vale. The elements of an NRI can then be incorporated into the Master Plan's Conservation Element. A local stream corridor protection ordinance, a tree protection ordinance, and an environmental impact statement ordinance, were all adopted to protect potable water sources from point and non-point pollution. All of these actions are (and can be) consistent with the goals of PA 5.

River Vale has acquired parcels of undeveloped watershed land utilizing Green Acres funding, and these parcels are primarily situated within PA 5. It is the stated goal of the Township of River Vale to continue to acquire and preserve watershed land in order to protect the potable water supply of the region, and provide a passive recreation area in the form of greenways and hiking trails. This is evidenced by:

- Goal and Objective #1 To Preserve the Natural Environment...;
- Goal and Objective #7 To Provide for the Quantity, Quality and Availability of Parks and Open Space, to include adding, improving, and assuring proper distribution and accessibility for active and passive recreational facilities, neighborhood parks, and open space to protect environmentally sensitive areas...; and
- Goal and Objective #14 To Recognize and Protect the Watershed Lands, and the drainage basins of the reservoir lands within the Township...

River Vale has completed the installation of their sanitary sewer system that provides public sewerage to all sections of the Township. The installation of sewer systems and the elimination of private individual septic systems has reduced the risk of contamination of potable groundwater from non-point sources, consistent with the policies of the PA 5 district of the SDRP.

### **13.1.4 CES and CHS**

The State Plan goes on further to target environmental resources as worthy of protection, regardless of which Planning Area they are located within. On a broad or larger scale basis, this is accomplished by designating them as Planning Area 5 (PA 5): Environmentally Sensitive, as described above. On a smaller scale, and within the context of local communities, in earlier versions of the State Plan Critical Environmental/Historic Sites (CEHS's) were established to provide these smaller sites with the same level of protection as is afforded PA 5 properties. Following the last round of Cross-Acceptance, the CEHS designation was divided into two designations – CES for critical environmental sites, and CHS for cultural and historic sites. These designations are used today. Detailed sets of criteria were established for qualification under these provisions, one of which is that the site must be nominated for inclusion by the local

municipality. River Vale has not previously participated in the Cross Acceptance process through which these nominations are made. Consequently, no CES's or CHS's exist within the Township.

Several nominations have been made during this current round of Cross Acceptance, however, and after negotiation with the State by Bergen County on behalf of River Vale, several CES sites should become mapped for the first time by the new version of the SDRP. Most of these are smaller isolated and non-contiguous parcels along the Township's C-1 waterways that drain into the Hackensack River system. Most are encumbered by various natural resources.

### **13.1.5 Planning Area 9**

For ease of computerized mapping, Lake Tappan has been designated as Planning Area 9. PA 9 is reserved for areas of open water. The SDRP properly makes no policies or recommendations for areas included in Planning Area 9 since they are not subject to development or redevelopment pressures, except to the extent that surrounding development may impact them. This Planning Area does not appear in the most recently revised plan, and was created when cartographers initially needed to designate open water as some type of Planning Area.

### **13.1.6 Cross Acceptance**

As mentioned above, the Township of River Vale did not actively participate in either of the previous two Cross Acceptance processes. As a result, unlike some of its neighboring towns, no sites were nominated for CES or CHS designations. Additionally, PA 5 areas were heretofore limited to the lands immediately adjacent to Lake Tappan and the Hackensack River corridor. These included short sections of several tributaries where they join the Hackensack, and lands along the shore of Lake Tappan south from the portion of the Bergen Hills Golf Club that is owned by United Water Resources to the point at which the Hackensack River exits the Lake. A short segment of Pascack Brook along the southern edge of the Pascack Brook Golf Course, near the Brook's confluence with the Hackensack River, was also previously designated as PA 5. North of that, along the border between River Vale and Westwood, the Pascack Brook Corridor was designated as a CES. On a regional basis, therefore, as a result of River Vale's non-participation in the SDRP Cross Acceptance I or II process, an inconsistency was created regarding watershed protection. Since it has become evident that it is the desire of the residents of River Vale to preserve as much of this watershed as is possible in much the same way as have their neighboring towns, the Township has made several nominations during this current round known as Cross Acceptance III.

The third round Cross Acceptance process of the SDRP (2004) is now underway. The initial State-generated recommendations for Planning Areas, Critical Environmental Sites, Cultural and Historic Sites, and changes from Cross Acceptance II, can be viewed on the State Planning Commission's website. The Preliminary State Plan proposes to change the designations of several properties along the Hackensack River in River Vale from PA 1 to PA 5. The Plan also identifies numerous areas along various streams in River Vale for potential designation as CES's. For three important reasons, the Township resolved to fully participate in this process and is now actively involved. The first reason is to offer local input into the State's planning recommendations for River Vale. The second is to be better able to achieve consistency with the State Plan, a status that will place the Township in a more favorable position to be awarded State grants. The final reason is the recognition that N.J. State environmental permits are now, for the first time, directly tied to SDRP consistency.

The proposed designations in the Preliminary State Plan are informed by numerous new layers of data generated by various state departments, the bulk of which have been created by the Department of Environmental Protection. One of the intentions of the State in creating detailed and accurate data for the next version of the State Plan is to use the Plan in the future as much more of a regulatory tool in permit

decisions, both to speed up the permit process in appropriate areas and to slow it down in areas with significant environmental resources. The County Department of Planning and Economic Development is hopeful that municipalities within the County will participate fully in the Cross-Acceptance process, to make sure the designations in the next State Plan are accurate and conform to each municipality's planning objectives. River Vale's participation to date has been to review the preliminary state mapping and petition to expand both PA 5 and CES lands.

### **13.1.7 New Jersey Residential Site Improvement Standards**

On December 5, 1996 these rules (RSIS) were adopted by the State of N.J. Department of Community Affairs, and became operative on June 3, 1997. RSIS was last revised December 16, 2002. The RSIS rules were promulgated by the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs pursuant to the authority of P.L.1993, c. 32 (N.J.S.A.40:55D-40.1 et seq.). They apply only to residential development, and their intent and purpose as set forth in 1996 and reaffirmed in 2002 are paraphrased as follows:

- (1) To standardize public improvements within residential developments, so that an economy of housing costs can be realized;
- (2) To avoid unnecessary construction costs;
- (3) To ensure predictability in site improvement standards;
- (4) To encourage development reviews based on sound objective site improvement standards, avoiding discretionary design standards;
- (5) To streamline the development approval process and improve the efficiency of the application process;
- (6) To provide design freedom and promote diversity through performance oriented standards; and
- (7) To separate the policy-making aspects of development review from technical determinations.

These rules attempt to standardize public right-of-way site improvements in the areas of streets, parking facilities, water supply, sanitary sewers, and stormwater management. The rules reaffirm local jurisdiction over the application and review procedures, however, as set forth in the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq. and in municipal ordinances adopted pursuant to the MLUL. They also set forth a series of exceptions, waivers, and special area standards. The impacts of these standards should have an effect on some of River Vale's residential zoning standards. In order for River Vale to achieve consistency, they should be addressed in the upcoming zoning code review of residential limiting standards that is planned to follow the preparation of this Master Plan, and amendments made where necessary.

### **13.1.8 Cellular Communication Towers**

The provision of radio/wireless communications has been determined to be "inherently beneficial" as an essential service by the New Jersey Courts. The doctrine of "inherently beneficial" dates back to the mid-1960's where it applied to schools and hospitals. Its favored status is granted only to facilities that benefit society as a whole, promoting the general welfare. In general, this determination serves to satisfy the positive criteria required for a variance, under New Jersey MLUL. This technology today requires the construction of antenna towers to send, receive and/or boost and re-transmit signals. Towers in this area of Bergen County generally need to be in the range of 100 feet tall, but due to their line-of-sight technology may need to be as tall as 300 feet in some locations.

The most recent January 26, 1998 decision by the New Jersey Supreme Court reaffirmed that municipalities cannot prevent companies from building wireless communications towers within their borders. This ruling contains provisions for municipalities to assert some reasonable level of control over their location and

design. One of the provisions is that the sites must be reasonably selected. The burden of proof is on the Applicant to show that a specific site is particularly suitable. One important aspect of this recent ruling is that the N.J. Supreme Court stopped short of endorsing the lower courts' numerous "inherently beneficial" determinations.

The 1996 federal Telecommunications Act requires all municipalities to provide wireless telecommunications carriers with reasonable access to the airwaves, and to preclude the exclusion of such facilities based on public health and safety concerns. Due to the heights required for these facilities, and possibly also the land use itself, there is no specific building zone that exists within River Vale that includes their development as a permitted use. Rather, Article LVIII A Communications Facilities on Municipal Property (August 26, 2001) of River Vale's Zoning Code makes provisions for their construction, subject to the approval of the municipality. Criteria for approval include the site being owned, leased or otherwise controlled by the Township; Township Council approval; and an executed license or lease between the operator of the facility and the Township. As a result of several court decisions, it has become prudent for municipalities to amend their zoning codes so as not to exclude these facilities altogether, but rather to control their development. The Act acknowledges the right of local governments to determine the criteria for siting cellular facilities, provided such regulations are not based upon the environmental or health effects of radio frequency emissions as long as such facilities comply with FCC regulations. Municipalities can do this by several means:

- (1) Limit their possible locations to sites that would cause minimal adverse impacts;
- (2) Permit these towers only as conditional uses, which provides for a greater level of control over their design. Such control can include allowable heights, setbacks, landscaping, and finishing, and if necessary can provide for their removal;
- (3) Require that sharing of tower facilities through rental agreements precede the construction of any new towers;
- (4) Encourage creativity in design, including such ideas as incorporating them into new or existing steeples and towers, and camouflaging their appearance by means of having such towers adopt the physical form of a tree, and painting them a neutral sky color, among others; and
- (5) Offset their adverse visual impact with the beneficial fiscal impact of siting them on public lands, thereby providing the municipality with the lease income.

River Vale currently has one cellular tower that was constructed in 1992 behind the South Fire Hall that serves the southern portion of the Township. However, it is reported that there is a "dead zone" in the northern end of River Vale. In 2000, the Township took on the task of locating a "Township" multi-user cell tower site to fill the void in reception. The reasoning behind the Township's decision to locate a suitable site was to avoid having to manage with multiple proposals from cellular providers that could result in numerous towers and protracted hearings before the Township Zoning Board. Over the next few years, the Township worked with various cellular providers, the owners of the former River Vale Country Club (now Bergen Hills Golf Club) and United Water Resources (UWR) to locate a suitable cell tower site midway along the Golf Course property along the west side of Lake Tappan, on property owned by UWR. Following two years of studies, negotiation and litigation, the parties agreed to a site. In March of 2003, the Township Council authorized an engineering firm to move forward with a permit application to the NJDEP. In December 2003, UWR withheld its permission to file the permit, in light of concerns expressed by NJDEP Commissioner Bradley Campbell about the legality of interests in land that UWR had granted to others on lands held by it that are subject to the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Watershed Property Review Board (Watershed Board). In March 2004, Commissioner Campbell issued an order for UWR to submit a "complete listing of all licenses, agreements and approvals executed by United Water between United Water and other parties through which United Water has granted to others the right to use any property that is under the [Watershed] Board's jurisdiction for the period January 1, 1988 to the present."

The Township proceeded in good faith and expended significant time and capital in attempting to locate a suitable cell tower site. It remains to be seen, however, if the Watershed Board will permit the selected site to be used for the construction of a cell tower. If not, the Township will have to work on locating another site, or perhaps entertain multiple proposals from cellular providers. The latter is the situation the Township was striving to avoid when it began the site selection process over four years ago.

### **13.1.9 Group Homes Within Established Residential Neighborhoods**

Without the need to obtain a zoning variance or conditional use permit, the State of New Jersey permits group homes in residential neighborhoods and zoning districts for people with head injuries, developmental disabilities, battered women, and Alzheimer's Disease. This list was expanded to include Hospices, or homes for the terminally ill. It was determined that such group homes are allowed under federal Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination based on age, sex, race, or disability. As a result of these rulings, N.J. municipalities are required to treat group homes no differently than any other residence. Since the overall size, floor area, height, lot coverage, building footprint, and property line setbacks can be governed on residential lots, these dimensional limitations can also be used to govern group homes.

In New Jersey, proper licensing is required. The group home types described above are licensed as boarding homes under the State Department of Community Affairs' Bureau of Rooming and Boarding. Any involvement by other agencies such as the New Jersey Board of Health have to do only with their operations, and not their appropriate location within a community.

River Vale currently has a 30-bedroom group home for the developmentally disabled along the southern end of River Vale Road, known as the Spectrum for Living Group Homes, Inc. In addition, River Vale also has a small group home for the disabled that consists of five rental units.

### **13.1.10 Stormwater Management Regulations**

The State of New Jersey enacted stormwater management regulations that were promulgated by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and took effect on February 2, 2004. As of July of 2004, due to the fact that they are tributary to the C-1 category Oradell and/or Lake Tappan Reservoirs, the streams within River Vale have all been designated by NJDEP with the C-1 anti-degradation classification, the highest water quality designation within the State. Prior to July 2004, the regulations only impacted certain portions of River Vale's waterways. The legislation states:

*“(h) Special water resource protection areas shall be established along all waters designated Category One at N.J.A.C. 7:9B and perennial or intermittent streams that drain into or upstream of the Category One waters as shown on the USGS Quadrangle Maps or in the County Soil Surveys, within the associated HUC 14 drainage. These areas shall be established for the protection of water quality, aesthetic value, exceptional ecological significance, exceptional recreational significance, exceptional water supply significance, and exceptional fisheries significance of those established Category One waters. These areas shall be designated and protected as follows: 1. The applicant shall preserve and maintain a special water resource protection area in accordance with one of the following: i. A 300-foot special water resource protection area, measured perpendicular to the waterway from the top of bank outwards or from the centerline of the waterway where the bank is not defined, consisting of existing vegetation or vegetation allowed to follow natural succession is provided. ii. Encroachment within the designated special water resource protection area under (h)1.i above shall only be allowed where previous development or disturbance has occurred. The encroachment shall only be allowed where applicant demonstrates that the functional value and overall condition of the special water resource protection area will be maintained to the maximum extent practicable. In no case shall the remaining special water resource protection area be reduced to less than 150 feet as measured perpendicular to the waterway. All encroachments proposed under this subparagraph shall be subject to review and approval by the Department.”*

These designations will have beneficial impacts on land preservation efforts, and detrimental impacts on those that desire to develop properties. Properties impacted are along stream waterway corridors to the extent the lands fall within 150 feet of the waterbody or waterway (300 feet for natural lands). For previously disturbed properties, those lands that fall within 150 to 300 feet will be subjected to stringent performance standards known as Best Management Practices requirements. These regulations are already having an impact on the land development proposals along Poplar Road. They may also impact the Township’s plans for an amphitheater at Grove Field. Most of the lands within River Vale would not be considered “natural” since most have been modified and/or manipulated, including the largest among the undeveloped parcels in the Township that consist of golf courses. Therefore, the regulations could have an impact on the potential future development of the Edgewood Golf Course, and the already expressed desire to develop parts of the Bergen Hills Golf Course.

**13.1.11 Transfer of Development Rights Ordinance**

Recently enacted, this legislation authorizes all municipalities within New Jersey to adopt transfer of development rights ordinances. Previously, TDR was only permitted in Burlington County where it had been a pilot program since 1976. This ordinance permits municipalities to designate areas of the community which they proposed to preserve as “sending zones”, and other areas of the community in which additional development could be appropriate as “receiving zones,” with the authority to transfer the development rights from the sending zones to the receiving zones.

**13.1.12 Proposed State Planning**

The following bills before the State government are proposed legislation on various aspects of land use development that would have a potential bearing on municipalities in New Jersey. In order to protect the integrity and maintain local control of its land use ordinances, the Township should monitor the progress of these proposed bills and be positioned to proactively comply with any new mandates that would be forthcoming if and when any of these pieces of legislation is adopted.

- (1) Timed Growth Ordinance. This would authorize municipalities to adopt a timed growth ordinance, provided it has adopted a master plan and a capital improvement plan. This ordinance would permit municipalities to segregate their land into special districts within which development could be staggered over time as capital improvements become available. The Department of Community Affairs would develop the standards and guidelines for these ordinances that would exempt single and two-family dwellings.
- (2) Impact Fee Ordinance. If enacted, municipalities would be authorized to assess impact fees on development projects to reflect the proportional cost of those developments on various sectors of the community; including but not limited to schools, wastewater treatment, water supply, stormwater management, transportation facilities, and parks and recreation. This would enable municipalities to fund the costs of capital improvements or facilities expansions that are caused and necessitated by specific developments. The fee would have to be directly related to the needs created by the new development, or meet the “Rational Nexus” test.
- (3) One-Year Moratorium Ordinance. This legislation would authorize municipalities to place a temporary moratorium on land development for a period of up to one year, to enable the municipality to adopt an impact fee ordinance, a timed growth ordinance or to update its master plan.
- (4) Mediation Board. This legislation would create a mediation board for the purpose of resolving inter-municipal land use disputes, commonly known as “border wars.” Its

objective is to formulate regional solutions for regional problems, as opposed to the piecemeal procedures often followed today. It is also hoping to encourage municipalities to consider the regional impacts of their development decisions, beyond the limits of their borders. An ancillary benefit should be to avert litigation between municipalities by helping to resolve bordering land use disputes outside of the court system.

- (5) Municipal Land Use Law Changes for Smart Growth. This sweeping legislation would amend various portions of the MLUL to increase the authority municipalities and counties have in reaching decisions that are more consistent with the principles of Smart Growth. They would provide additional tasks in reviewing applications for development. Proposed amendments include: changes to certain definitions (such as excluding environmentally-sensitive lands from density calculations); changes in notification requirements for land development applications (i.e. notifying adjacent municipalities within 1,000 feet of the site of a development application); requiring additional elements of a master plan to be mandatory rather than optional as they are today (e.g., historic preservation, circulation, farmland preservation, and conservation); requiring that both a “vision statement” and a “buildout analysis” become mandatory elements of municipal master plans; the authority to consider off-tract impacts (e.g., traffic, parking, recreation) in addition to on-site impacts as a part of development reviews; and increasing the educational requirements of Planning and Zoning Board members.
- (6) Smart Growth Act. This Act was signed into law on July 9, 2004. Former Governor McGreevey, however signed an executive order on November 5, 2004 prohibiting State agencies from accepting any Smart Growth Act applications until State agencies promulgate rules that implement the statute’s provisions. If this act becomes authorized, it will streamline the permit review process and expedite reviews of development applications in designated Smart Growth Areas. River Vale is in one of those designated areas. It also provides for a Smart Growth Ombudsman within the NJ Department of Community Affairs who will be responsible for coordinating the review process between DCA, DEP and DOT. The environmental community sees this Act as subverting complete and thorough reviews, and as a fast track methodology for development that would cause nothing but harm. Municipalities have seen this Act as usurping their local land use review authority. Developers on the other hand, see this act as providing a degree of certainty to a process that currently is unpredictable. In July of 2005, Governor Cody put this act on hold until such time as the contradictions with federal law are removed.
- (7) County Planning Act Amendments. This legislation would define the role counties should play in municipal planning, and would encourage cooperation between municipalities, counties and the state in planning related matters. It would not impose additional layers of county decision-making authority over municipalities. As proposed it would address items such as the mandatory contents of county master plans, educational requirements of county planning board members, and assessing off-tract improvements by municipalities.
- (8) The Big Map. Although subsequently withdrawn for further evaluation, the NJDEP proposed the adoption of the “Blueprint for Intelligent Growth” or BIG map. This map depicted the entire state in three colors, each of which indicates the State’s policy towards encouraging or discouraging future land development. The State would do this through the approval or denial of State permits, or through the provision of State funding for infrastructure improvements or extensions. The “Green” area indicates a policy of supporting growth; “red” indicates a policy of discouraging growth; and “yellow” indicates a policy of cautiously analyzing growth proposals to assess their impacts prior to determining support or opposition. The Township of River Vale is designated green, as is virtually all of Bergen County. The Big Map may reemerge, and if it does the Township should be prepared for impacts it may induce.

## 13.2 COUNTY PLANNING

For the most part, Bergen County is a fully developed County, with only a few isolated pockets of remaining developable open space. The two exceptions to this characterization are in the County's northwestern most reaches in Mahwah, and in the northeastern most reaches in Alpine. As a result, countywide master planning has traditionally focused on reporting on existing development patterns, the plans of local municipalities, and most recently on transportation planning and open space acquisition.

The Bergen County Master Plan now in effect is dated 1966, and is acknowledged as obsolete by County Planners. As it regarded River Vale, it identified the Hackensack River and Pascack Brook corridors, as well as the Lake Tappan Reservoir, and the surrounding properties of each of these, as "Recommended Conservation Areas" and "Golf Courses Recommended for Open Space Deletions". It made specific reference to "lands bordering the new Hackensack Reservoir (Dam Three) in the Borough of Old Tappan and in the Township of River Vale" as Additional areas for open spaces and stream protection...". It also recommended the preservation of the former River Vale Golf Course (now "Bergen Hills Golf Course") and the former Pascack Brook Golf Course (now "Valley Brook Golf Course") as "Golf Courses Recommended for Open Space". Later, in 1978, Bergen County prepared Existing Land Use Plans for the entire county. Almost the entire Township of River Vale was included in the "Low Density Residential" category, with lesser amounts in either the "Open Space" or "Transportation Utilities Communication" category. According to the County's website:

*"Department records showed that there have been 26 reports published from 1969 (Report 1, Physical Characteristics) to 1975 (Report 26, Open Space and Recreation Inventory). However, since 1975 the only documents that are somewhat related to county master planning, have been several Cross Acceptance reports to the State Planning Commission written in 1989 and 1998. These reports were required as part of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan."*

Bergen County's long-term Director of the Department of Planning and Economic Development, who retired in 2002, directed the most recent Bergen County Master Planning effort. That effort was known as the Bergen County Growth Management Plan. This most recent County planning effort was known as the Bergen County Growth Management Plan. Its intent was to replace the 1966 Plan; however this plan was never completed or adopted. The major components of that plan were to include: (1) Transportation and Land Use Model; (2) Fusing Land and Transportation Planning; (3) Influencing the Planning and Spending of Others: The Transportation Executive Council; (4) Open Space; and (5) Municipal Assistance Program: A Key Growth Management Initiative. Transportation Planning has been a major thrust of the County's efforts, however it has not focused on the River Vale area. Economic efficiency through regionalization of community services has been another thrust. As it regards River Vale in general (without specific reference), County Planning has encouraged regionalization as a viable method of reducing municipal costs.

While not taking issue with this most recent direction, the new Bergen County Planning Director has abandoned that plan for a newly focused effort for the County Master Plan. This project is just beginning, and a consultant is being selected to head the effort. When completed (estimated 2009/2010), the new Bergen County Master Plan is intended to follow the following outline (from the County's website):

**"Mission Statement:**

*The purpose of the Division of Master Planning is to plan comprehensively all aspects of land, environment, economy, and transportation affecting the future character, composition, and viability of Bergen County. The objective of Master Planning is to effectively and comprehensively think and plan in a matter that is consistent with sound regional planning principals.*

**“Duties and Responsibilities:****“1) Development and Creation of the County Master Plan**

*“The primary intent of the Division of Master Planning is to develop and create a new Master Plan for the County of Bergen. The division will pursue intergovernmental coordination with all 70 municipalities to ensure that the County Master Plan as well as each municipality’s master plan is generally consistent with each other. Moreover, the County Master Plan will provide municipalities with a regional framework for their local planning process. The development of the County Master Plan will also include an extensive public outreach component (for example, public meetings and hearings) to ensure that there is sufficient public discussion and feedback. Lastly, the County Master Plan will be fully in accordance with the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law as well as consistent with the goals and objectives of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The Master Plan will be comprised of nine (9) elements or sub-plans as shown below:*

- A) Land Use Plan
- B) Transportation Plan
- C) Environmental Plan
- D) Open Space, Recreation, Farmland and Historic Preservation Plan
- E) Housing Plan
- F) Utilities Plan
- G) Economic Redevelopment Plan
- H) Community Facilities Plan
- I) Demographic and Data Profile

*Along with preparing and developing a new Master Plan, the County will develop of a new **Official County Map**, which will show and delineate all Municipal and County Boundaries, County Streets and Roads, Right-of-Way, Viaducts, Culverts, Bridges, Waterways and Waterbodies, Forest Areas, Parks and Open Space Areas and other public ways or facilities within the County.”*

Other County planning activities include the preparation of an Open Space Plan. A June 2000 draft is posted on the County website, and is currently undergoing review. When completed, this document will become an element of the Bergen County Master Plan. The plan identifies six broad areas in the County as “Open Space Acquisition and Preservation Opportunities.” One area that relates specifically to River Vale is the Hackensack River Corridor, including its tributaries. Open Space preservation is a major thrust of the County, with recent major purchases having taken place in Mahwah, Alpine, Rockleigh, Norwood and Hackensack. Additionally, the Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund has resulted in numerous smaller purchases throughout all reaches of the county. Additional open space in Oradell and New Milford, at the site of the long abandoned water filtration and pump facility, was donated to the County by United Water Resources.

The County Division of Open Space is encouraging county municipalities to become proactive in their quests to preserve open space and recreation lands. The County has an Open Space Trust Fund that assists communities with the acquisition and improvement of lands for these purposes. They would like the county’s communities to seek other assistance as well, including N.J. State Green Acres funding, and they are contemplating an initiative for 2005 that would be intended to stimulate activity on the local level.

Bergen County is still actively involved with transportation planning, and was an active supporter of the Frank Lautenberg Secaucus Transfer Station in Hudson County that provides multiple benefits to Bergen County residents.

Bergen County is also resurrecting its Hackensack River Greenway project, hoping to provide a regional recreation amenity.

### 13.3 ADJOINING MUNICIPALITIES

Very often, existing conditions in one community can generate considerable impacts upon its bordering communities, particularly in proximity to the common municipal boundary lines. Therefore, it is important that planning and zoning policies in the surrounding municipalities be carefully studied before any planning proposals are formulated or any planning action taken.

Eight municipalities adjoin River Vale: The Boroughs of Old Tappan, Harrington Park, Emerson, Westwood, Hillsdale, Park Ridge and Montvale, and the Town of Orangetown, New York. In addition, since the Borough of Woodcliff Lake is only one block removed from contiguity with River Vale, we have examined the relevant portions of their master plan as well. Current master plan status and zoning in areas adjacent to River Vale are discussed below (see Figure 2).

Old Tappan shares most of River Vale's eastern border from the New York State line south to Harrington Park. The Hackensack River and the Lake Tappan Reservoir form the boundary between the two municipalities. Therefore, the primary land use along the boundary is watershed protection/ conservation. The only exceptions are two improved low-density residential lots and a relatively small area of agricultural use. These uses are compatible with the pattern of single family residential and watershed/conservation uses across the river/reservoir in River Vale. Old Tappan received substantive certification of its Housing Element/Fair Share Plan from COAH in 1999, and any future plans for affordable housing in Old Tappan will be accomplished in areas removed from the Hackensack River corridor.

Harrington Park shares the southern segment of River Vale's eastern boundary. As in Old Tappan, the primary land use along the boundary is watershed protection/conservation. Other uses along the boundary include three low-density residential areas and one municipal park/open space area. The uses are compatible with the adjacent uses in River Vale. They also consist of the Valley Brook Golf Course, the bulk of which is situated within River Vale. Harrington Park's certified Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, adopted in May of 2000, identified areas for potential affordable housing that are on the eastern side of Harrington Park, well away from River Vale.

Emerson shares a border with River Vale along River Vale's southern extremity. The Hackensack River forms the boundary between the two municipalities. The area immediately adjacent to the River in Emerson is preserved as watershed/conservation lands, which use is compatible with the adjacent Valley Brook Golf Course in River Vale. This area is also restricted to watershed/ conservation use. Several parcels of varying land uses, with frontage along Old Hook Road, are adjacent to the watershed/conservation lands. These parcels include single-family residential use, a nursing home, medical office buildings, a supermarket, and a small farm. The farm had been included in Emerson's affordable housing plan, but has since been removed from it, thereby removing affordable housing sites from contiguity with River Vale. Emerson completed their most recent Periodic Reexamination in 2000.

Westwood lies along the southwestern boundary of River Vale. Westwood's Master Plan was adopted in 1993, and the last Periodic Reexamination of it was in 1999. The land uses in Westwood adjacent to River Vale consist primarily of single-family residential use, the Pascack Brook County Park (which extends into River Vale), and a municipal park. These uses are compatible with the adjacent single-family residential uses in River Vale. Westwood's most recent Housing element and Fair Share Plan was prepared in 2000, and it does not envision affordable housing in areas adjacent to River Vale.

Hillsdale is located along River Vale's central western border north of Emerson and south of Park Ridge. The majority of land uses in Hillsdale along this border consist of single-family residential homes on lots ranging from 10,000 to 15,000 square feet. A portion of the Edgewood Country Club Golf Course also lies within this area. Hillsdale's Master Plan, which was prepared in 2003, designates the area of the golf course for low-density residential use. Hartsdale House, a Senior Citizens Complex, lies adjacent to River Vale on the north side of Piermont Avenue. The Stony Brook Swim Club, located on the south side of Piermont Avenue, is zoned for single-family residential use. There is a very small PO (Professional Office) zone in River Vale in this area, which is a slight inconsistency with Hillsdale's adjacent residential zoning. Overall, the land uses and zoning along the River Vale/Hillsdale border are compatible. COAH granted substantive certification to Hillsdale's Housing Element/Fair Share Plan in 2001 that did not require any new construction of affordable housing units in Hillsdale.

Park Ridge is located along River Vale's western border between Hillsdale to the south and Montvale to the north. Park Ridge's most recent Periodic Reexamination Report of its Master Plan was prepared in 2003. As part of this effort, a new Land Use Plan was prepared that indicates low and moderate density single-family residential land uses along the River Vale border. This is compatible with River Vale's designation of low-density residential land use and open space adjacent to Park Ridge. In 1996, Park Ridge received substantive certification from COAH of its Housing Element/Fair Share Plan, which was subsequently amended in 1999. Neither the original plan nor the amendment relies on any areas adjacent to River Vale to fulfill Park Ridge's affordable housing obligation.

Montvale is located along the most northerly segment of River Vale's western border, between Park Ridge to the south and the Town of Orangetown, New York to the north. Montvale's Master Plan, which was adopted in 1997, designates the lands along Montvale's border with River Vale as moderate density residential land use. This designation is compatible with River Vale's adjacent low-density residential land use. In 2003, Montvale adopted an amendment to its Housing Element/Fair Share Plan that includes no Fair Share Sites in the vicinity of River Vale.

Woodcliff Lake is situated between Park Ridge and Montvale to the west of River Vale, and comes within just a few blocks of being contiguous with River Vale. Woodcliff Lake's Master Plan was updated in 2002. The land uses existing and proposed within close proximity to River Vale include medium density single-family residential, and open space and recreation. These land uses are compatible with the nearby single-family residential uses within River Vale. The Borough adopted its Housing Element and Fair Share Plan in 1999, and it has been COAH certified. None of the affordable housing sites are in the vicinity of River Vale.

Orangetown, New York forms River Vale's northern boundary. On the extreme western end of this boundary, medium density residential land uses are adjacent to South Middletown Road. These uses are compatible with the nearby residential land uses in River Vale. To the east of this area and due north of River Vale sits the Blue Hill Plaza, a high rise office complex south of Veterans Memorial Drive (VMD), as well as the Pearl River Hilton along the north side of VMD. Still further to the east, between VMD on the north and the River Vale border on the south, is a large area of vacant land that is zoned Office Park. The Town of Orangetown adopted their Comprehensive (Master) Plan in 2003 that recommends maintaining this area as an Office Park zone, permitting such uses such as manufacturing, offices, warehouses, hotels and conference centers.

Orangetown's land use code also has a floating residential zone for adult/senior citizen housing that, if approved by the governing body, would permit these types of age-restricted residential uses within this area. Two such proposals are now being considered. In the land area now vacant south of VMD, an Applicant has applied for a change of zone for the eastern portion of the site to PAC, or Planned Adult Communities, to permit 143 senior citizens dwellings. The proposal would also include some office uses and a hotel at the

western end of the site. The second site is directly east of the Hilton Hotel, on the north side of VMD and west of Blue Hill Golf Course. There is a conceptual proposal for 120 senior citizens dwellings.

The Town-owned Blue Hills Golf Course is also located on the north side of VMD. This public facility is considered to be a stable land use with little chance for change in the future. This area is zoned Rural Residential, which is consistent with the nearby low density residential zoning in River Vale. East of the area zoned as Office Park there is a narrow area along Blue Hill Road West that is also zoned compatibly with River Vale as rural residential. Further to the east, and generally north of VMD is the Rockland Psychiatric Center, a N.Y. State-run psychiatric facility. On January 23, 2003, the Town of Orangetown acquired 348 acres of this 555-acre area that had been declared surplus by the State of New York. The contract of sale requires Orangetown to devote a minimum of 216 acres to recreation. Plans for a municipal swimming pool and commercial indoor recreation are in the final stages of approval on part on this site. Orangetown also is seeking interest from private firms in developing 130 acres of this site for senior citizen housing and/or research and development facilities.

The combined impacts of all the proposed and potential uses along VMD in Orangetown could have an adverse impact on traffic on the roads connecting with River Vale. Other adverse impacts could also be anticipated, including impacts on water and air quality, storm drainage control, loss of open space and habitat, and visual impacts. The office park uses that are existing and proposed in Orangetown are not compatible with the low-density residential uses that are contiguous in River Vale. The existing office park uses are well buffered from the residential areas in River Vale, however, and any additional uses are likely to have ample buffers as well. It is recommended that the Township continue to monitor the progress of these proposals in Orangetown, attending public meetings, establishing official interested party status under the NYS Environmental Conservation Law, and establishing a rapport with Orangetown officials.

### **13.4 SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT INCLUDING RECYCLING**

#### **13.4.1 Compliance and Reporting**

The Bergen County Utilities Authority (BCUA) reports on several items regarding both the disposal and recycling of solid waste. The Township's solid waste disposal has historically been in compliance with the Statewide Recycling Plan and the Bergen County Long Term Solid Waste Management Plan, as well as the State Solid Waste Management Act. These plans mandate the materials to be recycled, and require that a minimum of 60% of solid waste be recycled. The Township's recently retired long term Superintendent/Director of Public Works reports that there has been no change to this self-policing status. The only direct check on municipalities takes place when the County compares solid waste weights to County allowances. Today, municipalities may send their solid waste disposal wherever they wish, in consultation with their vendors. River Vale contracts with multiple private carters for residential solid waste collection and disposal. The commercial sector arranges their own private contracts with private carters.

Municipalities are required to report annually to the State of New Jersey and the BCUA, however reporting on compliance is voluntary. In addition, each municipality is required to enact its own recycling ordinance, and is responsible for self-enforcement. Municipalities are required to include the following materials for recycling within their ordinance: Residential Sector (newspaper, glass beverage containers, aluminum cans, ferrous scrap, leaves, white goods, tin cans, and grass); Commercial Sector (corrugated cardboard, high grade paper, glass beverage containers, ferrous scrap, white goods, aluminum cans, mixed paper, and construction and demolition debris).

According to Township and NJDEP/Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste records, River Vale's residential and commercial recyclable tonnage has fluctuated each year since 2001. The State and Bergen County goals for their constituent municipalities are for these quantities to increase each year. River Vale should promote a

greater level of compliance with statewide recycling goals and statutes within the Township through a public information program. The Township should also either encourage or require the DPW to expand the recycling program as their capacity permits.

### **13.4.2 Household Waste**

Property owners in River Vale contract directly with private haulers for their household waste removal. There are several private companies that service River Vale. Each property owner is responsible for entering into an individual contract with one of these companies to remove their household waste. Consequently, rates differ and a variety of companies operate their trucks within the Township. The Township should consider entering into a Township-wide agreement with a private carter for solid waste collection and disposal of household waste. This would relieve property owners from the burden of having to enter into individual contracts with haulers.

### **13.4.3 Recycling**

Manmade Materials. River Vale has a recycling ordinance that covers residential as well as non-residential recycling. The Township has no in-town recycling facilities, and consequently residents are unable to drop off any of these materials. Instead, it has a contract with a private recycling firm (Buldo Brothers) to collect newspapers and magazines, as well as commingled plastic, aluminum, steel cans, and tin. These materials are collected once a week at the curbside. The Township also makes private arrangements to recycle textiles, scrap metal, electronic equipment, and masonry waste. Commercial facilities within the Township also recycle these materials, in addition to recycling used motor oil, household batteries, petroleum contaminated soil, and wood scraps. When space permits, the Township should develop a recycling center for manmade materials for use by the resident community. Such a facility would not have to be made available to the business community.

Vegetative Waste. River Vale also has a contract with the same firm to collect lawn clippings and other garden debris once a week from mid-March to mid-November. All of the materials collected by the contractor are taken out of River Vale for processing. The Township DPW collects branches, logs and stumps, also on a weekly basis during the same period. These materials are stockpiled at the DPW yard behind the Police Station, and then ground into wood chips that are then distributed to residents for \$25 per truckload. Any wood chips that accumulate over a number of years are disposed by allowing interested companies to take them away at no cost. In the fall, the Township collects leaves in bulk at curbside. Two thousand cubic yards of the collected leaves are taken to Old Tappan for composting under an agreement between the two municipalities. Nature's Choice, a private firm, takes the remainder of the leaves for a charge of \$3.50 per cubic yard for treatment at facilities outside of River Vale, most notably within the Hackensack Meadowlands District atop closed landfills. When the available land area permits, the Township should develop a composting site for windrowing leaves, for use by the Township DPW. Due to the odors they generate as they decompose, it would not be desirable to compost lawn clippings. Compost can then be redistributed to residents in the same fashion as the DPW currently distributes woodchips.

## **13.5 REDEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Redevelopment has become an effective planning strategy in the State of New Jersey, but it is not applicable to all communities. The State Development and Redevelopment Plan touts the benefits of redevelopment on the environment and on the economic viability of blighted neighborhoods. The redevelopment process replaces or rehabilitates and reuses previously developed substandard properties for new more appropriate uses. Redevelopment benefits the region in many ways;

1. Redevelopment allows affordable development within already established population centers thereby slowing the spread of sprawl development in less populated areas. This has the added benefit of creating jobs in locations where there is an established labor force, thereby reducing dependency on commuting to work. Appropriate locations for redevelopment most often are served by public transportation as well, furthering the public benefits.
2. Redevelopment improves the fiscal health of municipalities by providing viable taxable uses where none existed previously, and where they are most needed.
3. Redevelopment improves neighborhoods aesthetically by eliminating dilapidated structures that often are contagious to their surroundings. This has an added safety benefit, by removing abandoned structures that become attractive nuisances.
4. Redevelopment locates new uses in locations that have adequate existing infrastructure thereby eliminating the need for the public expenditure of funds. An added benefit of this factor is the elimination of the growth inducing pressure of expanded infrastructure.

On August 5, 1992 the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey approved the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, in order to establish a legal mechanism through which municipalities could take advantage of the benefits of local redevelopment. The law cited, “the existence of deteriorated housing, commercial and industrial installations, and public service facilities, or the lack of proper development, that without action by the responsible public bodies would not be corrected,” as a reason for enactment of the law.

The law allows municipalities to redevelop land, only after an investigation has been performed and a Redevelopment Plan has been enacted. The local governing body must initiate such an investigation after due public process and review by the Planning Board. It is unlikely that River Vale would need to avail itself of this planning implementation tool. Nor does an appropriate opportunity exist where River Vale would benefit from a Redevelopment Plan. The Master Plan incorporates this discussion for information purposes, however, because there may come a time when the Township could benefit from this law.

Once a redevelopment area has been delineated, and a Redevelopment Plan enacted, the municipality is then given certain rights with respect to the redevelopment parcel(s). Rights include issuance of bonds for public improvements, condemnation, demolition, contracting of professional services, contracting of construction services, and relocation of residents, commerce or industry.

According to the State Redevelopment and Housing Law, an investigation of possible blighted areas would seek the presence of one or more of the following conditions in determining if an area qualifies as a redevelopment area:

1. *[Generally,] buildings are substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated, or obsolescent, or possess any of such characteristics, or are so lacking in light, air, or space, as to be conducive to unwholesome living or working conditions.*
2. *The discontinuance of the use of buildings previously used for commercial, manufacturing, or industrial purposes; the abandonment of such buildings; or the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to [present an inability to find tenants].*
3. *Land that is owned by the municipality... or unimproved vacant land that has remained so for a period of ten years prior to adoption of this resolution, and that by reason of its location, remoteness, lack of means of access to developed sections or portions of the municipality, or topography, or nature of the soil, is not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital.*
4. *Areas with buildings or improvements which, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout, or any combination of these or other factors, are detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community.*

5. *A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real property therein or other conditions, resulting in a stagnant or not fully productive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety, and welfare.*
6. *Areas, in excess of five contiguous acres, whereon buildings or improvements have been destroyed, consumed by fire, demolished, or altered by the action of storm, fire, cyclone, tornado, earthquake, or other casualty in such a way that the aggregate assessed value of the areas has been materially depreciated.*
7. *In any municipality in which an enterprise zone has been designated....*

Under provisions of the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL), (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.) the Township, as the redevelopment entity...."may undertake a broad range of activities after an area has been designated a redevelopment area and a redevelopment plan has been adopted. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Acquire property by negotiation or condemnation.
2. Contract with public agencies or redevelopers for the undertaking of the project.
3. Negotiate and collect revenue from a redeveloper to defray costs of the redevelopment entity, including costs incurred in conjunction with bonds, notes or other obligations issued by the redevelopment entity.
4. Lease or convey property to any other party without public bidding and at such prices and terms as it deems reasonably consistent with a redevelopment plan."

The next step in the redevelopment process is the preparation of a redevelopment plan that is ultimately adopted by ordinance by Mayor and Council. The plan includes an outline for the planning, development, redevelopment or rehabilitation of the project area sufficient to indicate:

1. Its relationship to local objectives regarding land uses, density of population and improved traffic and public transportation, public utilities, recreational and community facilities and other public improvements.
2. Proposed land uses and building requirements.
3. Adequate provision for temporary and permanent residential relocation if necessary.
4. An identification of any property within the redevelopment area that is proposed for acquisition in accordance with the redevelopment plan.
5. Any significant relationship of the redevelopment plan to (a) the master plans of contiguous municipalities, (b) the master plan of the county in which the municipality is located and (c) the State Development and Redevelopment Plan adopted pursuant to the "State Planning Act," P.L. 1985, c.398 (52:18A-196 et al.).

Further, a redevelopment plan may include the provision of affordable housing in accordance with the "Fair Housing Act" and the housing element of the municipality. The plan may supersede applicable provisions of the Zoning regulations or constitute an overlay zoning district. Providing for affordable housing within the context of redevelopment gives the Township greater control than traditional zoning and also provides the Township with more implementation powers to assure the construction of the inclusionary development as proposed.

There are at least two large parcels in River Vale (Edgewood Country Club and Bergen Hills Golf Course) that have the potential for large-scale redevelopment. The statutes criteria, however, are not met on these two sites, nor are they met anywhere else in the Township. Therefore, if the Planning Board were to apply these criteria to the Township or any part thereof, it would find that there are currently no parcels or areas that qualify for redevelopment under the State Redevelopment and Housing Law. Nevertheless, redevelopment remains as a viable instrument for implementing plans, and subsequent reexaminations of the Township Master Plan should continue to examine the applicability of redevelopment in River Vale.

## 14. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This new Master Plan and reexamination report, which includes an updated Land Use Plan Element, represents the Township's on-going, long-range planning efforts intended to provide the best possible environment for River Vale's residents. The Plan should be considered a general guide as opposed to a hard and fast rule of development activity. It should be used with flexibility so that those changing circumstances that cannot be predicted can be used to local advantage as a means of achieving Township goals. These conditions emphasize that planning, if it is to be effective, must be a dynamic and continuous process. Such an approach will insure that each new development and redevelopment, and each land use change that takes place, will result in the greatest possible benefit to the Township.

Finally, this new Master Plan and reexamination report has been drafted with due consideration to master plans of contiguous municipalities, plans of the County having an impact on the Township, the latest update of the N.J. State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and the Township's Council on Affordable Housing obligation. Where pertinent, these plans have been reviewed and evaluated and are consistent with Township planning policies. As a result, the Township can look to the future with the confidence that its planning program follows statewide legal guidelines as well as meeting realistic, local planning objectives, and expresses the land use vision desired by the Township.

In summary the revisions of significance to the 1975 Master Plan and its subsequent periodic reexaminations, including the last reexamination dated 2000, are as follows:

1. Continue to develop creative means of providing opportunities for affordable housing.
2. Continue to find opportunities to acquire land for open space, recreation, and community facilities purposes. Particular attention should be paid to those 305 acres of parcels identified in Section 3.1.1.12 Vacant Lands of this Master Plan, paragraph #2 "Parcels that could expect development in the foreseeable future".
3. Monitor the effectiveness of the new building height limitations, and eliminate the conflicting definitions in the land use code.
4. Eliminate the EO Executive Office Building Zone.
5. Revise the Township's residential development standards to achieve consistency with the N.J. Residential Site Improvement Standards.
6. Revisit the Township's regulations pertaining to payment in lieu of recreation facilities within the Multi-Family Housing Zones.
7. Develop and enact Floor Area Ratio (FAR) ordinance provisions.
8. Develop and enact Improved Lot Coverage limitations within residential zones.
9. Remove the residential zoning designations from environmentally sensitive lands, public facilities, and golf courses.
10. Reconsider the limitations currently placed on locating senior citizens residential developments.
11. Reduce the extent of the multi-family affordable housing zone to more acceptable boundaries.
12. Reduce the extent of the general business zone to more acceptable boundaries.
13. Consider permitting affordable rental housing, senior citizens housing, and offices on the second floors of buildings within the general business zone.
14. Increase the extent of the professional office zone, and revise the dimensional limitations to enable this use as infill development within River Vale's central business district.
15. Introduce a new mixed-use district at the edge of the central business district that permits first floor office uses and second floor rental affordable housing uses.
16. Permit open space, recreation, and parkland uses in all Township building zones.

17. Revise the HDD Housing District for the Disabled regulations to accommodate and enable assisted living, congregate care, skilled nursing, long-term medical care, and senior housing uses. Expand the district to include the new Jewish Home site and the strip of land along the north side of Piermont Avenue.
18. Pursue Round 3 Substantive Certification from COAH.
19. Expand the Township's sketch plat submission provisions for subdivisions to also include conceptual site plan submissions.
20. Community-wide design vernacular standards of the highest order should be established, thereby introducing quality of design into the landscape.
21. Modify those Land Use Code provisions that have the objective of harmoniously blending new and redevelopments into existing neighborhoods by means of maintaining and enhancing existing site features. Sections 175-164 A (3) and 175-227.2 N (6) (a, c and d) both attempt to preserve existing trees, and topographic and other site features. Their qualitative provisions should either become more quantitative, or they should feature measurable performance standards.
22. Enhance the streetscapes of both the pedestrian-oriented and suburban vehicular-oriented configurations that exist within River Vale's central business district.
23. Consider embarking upon a Community Forestry Management Plan program.
24. In order to limit over-building and inappropriate redevelopment while still permitting reasonable building, formulate bulk standards that include controls for mimicking prevailing development patterns within existing neighborhoods.
25. Develop design standards for off-street parking lots.
26. Refine the Township's signage standards and ordinance, and include aesthetics among other considerations. Introduce signage regulations to govern multifamily residential land uses.
27. Improve the street tree presence on River Vale's streets.
28. Consider pursuing "Tree City USA" status from the National Arbor Day Foundation.
29. Repair and complete continuous sidewalks along the Township's collector roads.
30. Consider implementing "Sidewalk Banking" provisions in the land use ordinances.
31. Expand the bicycle route network within the Township and extend it to its boundaries.
32. Revisit the Township's site plan standards to emphasize better aesthetics and design in the built environment.
33. Revisit the Township's lighting regulations to bring them closer to contemporary standards. Items for consideration should include illumination levels, light sources, fixture designs, and the advisability of requiring a minimal level of lighting on residential streets that currently have no lighting.
34. Revisit the Township's landscaping regulations to bring them closer to contemporary standards. Items for consideration should include preserving natural features, the use of native vegetation, and utilizing plants that serve multiple purposes.
35. Review traffic conditions along the north central portion of Rivervale Road, and review plans for roadway improvements within the Four Corners, to better understand the improvements that may be necessary.
36. Undertake a traffic analysis of the Blue Hill Road and Orangeburgh Road intersection.
37. Interconnect, expand, and improve the bicycle routes within the Township.
38. Implement an interconnected trail system through the Township's parks and open spaces to various community destinations.
39. Address the library's expressed need to expand.
40. Resolve the spatial issues that plague the Police Department, the Fire Department, and the DPW.
41. Resolve how to replace the Community Center to replace the closed facility.
42. Address the issue of the absence of a full service postal facility within the Township.
43. Investigate the possibility of acquiring a site along the north side of Piermont Avenue to develop a new Town Hall.

44. Continue to request annual funding through the Township's existing Planning Incentive Grant from NJDEP Green Acres.
45. Continue to pursue the new park parcel that has been offered at the west end of the Jewish Home site within the Four Corners. Continue to pursue the reconstruction of the Cornelius Holdrum House on this same site.
46. Through the use of greenways, pursue the interconnections of active and passive recreation areas, points of cultural interest, community facilities, public rights-of-way, nearby neighborhoods, and other places of public congregation.
47. Conduct an investigation into the feasibility of adding sports lighting to the unlighted Township fields and courts.
48. Encourage benign improvements to the municipal wildlife sanctuary.
49. Continue to pursue the establishment of a municipal amphitheater on the slope leading down to the lower grove of Grove Field.
50. Continue to pursue the public acquisition of the Bergen Hills golf course.
51. Conduct a study to determine the feasibility of introducing a public recreation facilities targeted towards the needs of senior citizens.
52. Prepare a detailed recreation facilities and programming plan.
53. Create a municipal Environmental Commission.
54. Prepare a community wide Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), and then adopt it by reference as background information upon which future Conservation Elements are based.
55. Follow up the NRI with the preparation of an open space preservation strategies report.
56. Revise the Tree Preservation and Removal ordinance to rectify its shortcomings.
57. Monitor the effectiveness the Township's 2004 stormwater management regulations.
58. Revisit the objectives of the A-1 Zoning District for the regulation's appropriateness within environmentally sensitive undeveloped lands. Consider whether or not the CN Conservation District would be more appropriate. Confine the A-1 district to non-sensitive sites.
59. Update the checklist for attachment to land development applications to include more contemporary considerations.
60. Continue to participate in future NJSDRP Cross Acceptance processes.
61. Complete the public process for adopting the Green Acres Open Space and Recreation Plan.
62. Revisit and make any corrections that may be necessary in the Township's Green Acres Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI).
63. Consider amending the Township's ordinance that establishes the Historic Preservation Commission to authorize the Commission to create a locally adopted landmark list, and to provide for approval authority of projects affecting landmarked resources. At a minimum, consider creating a landmarking program for the formal recognition of sites, even if the Commission's input regarding proposed changes to the sites remains advisory.
64. Adopt a policy of adaptive re-use of historic sites and resources before they are demolished.
65. Pursue Township certification in the Certified Local Government Program (CLG) for historic preservation.
66. Initiate the preparation of a comprehensive inventory of historic resources within the Township, particularly for those resources that are not eligible for inclusion on rosters.
67. Resolve to locate a suitable cell tower site that would serve to offset the "dead zone" reportedly covering the northern portion of the Township. In this regard, obtain a ruling from NJDEP on the previously selected site at the eastern end of the Bergen Hills Golf Club.
68. Revisit municipal regulations pertaining to group homes.
69. Continue to monitor and measure the impact of New Jersey's new stormwater management regulations of 2004 on proposed developments, both public and private in sponsorship.
70. Continue to monitor all proposed state land use planning regulations for their impacts on the Township.

71. Monitor the progress of the Bergen County Master Plan process for its impacts on the Township. When the appropriate time comes, participate in the County's public hearing process to ensure that River Vale's concerns are adequately addressed.
72. Continue to monitor the progress of the zone change proposals in neighboring Orangetown, N.Y. Continue to attend public meetings, and establish official interested party status under the NYS Environmental Conservation Law. Establish a rapport with Orangetown officials. If approved, these proposals would permit Planned Adult Communities, some office uses and a hotel, all of which would be adjacent to River Vale.
73. Continue to monitor the progress of the redevelopment plans for the former N.Y.S. Rockland Psychiatric Center. This should include both publicly and privately sponsored projects. In particular, the Township should pay close attention to Orangetown's interest in finding private firms to develop 130 acres of this site for senior citizen housing and/or research and development facilities.
74. Promote a greater level of compliance with statewide recycling goals and statutes within the Township. Encourage the DPW to expand the recycling program as their capacity permits.
75. When space permits, develop a Township recycling center for manmade materials for use by the community.
76. When land area permits, develop a Township composting site for windrowing leaves, for use by the Township DPW.
77. Consider entering into a Township-wide agreement with a private carter for solid waste collection and disposal. This would relieve property owners from the burden of having to enter into individual contracts with haulers.
78. Continue to examine and revisit the applicability of redevelopment in River Vale, in accordance with the N.J. Local Redevelopment and Housing Law.

One other Master Plan element that should be considered for future preparation and adoption by the Township is a Utility Services Plan Element. Such an Element would report on the state of all public utility services within the Township, and would project their adequacy into the future. It would also identify any planned upgrades by the various utility companies that service the Township. At the Township's option, this element could also explore and report on the status of private utilities that do business within the Township, such as cable, satellite and cellular companies.

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