

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

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

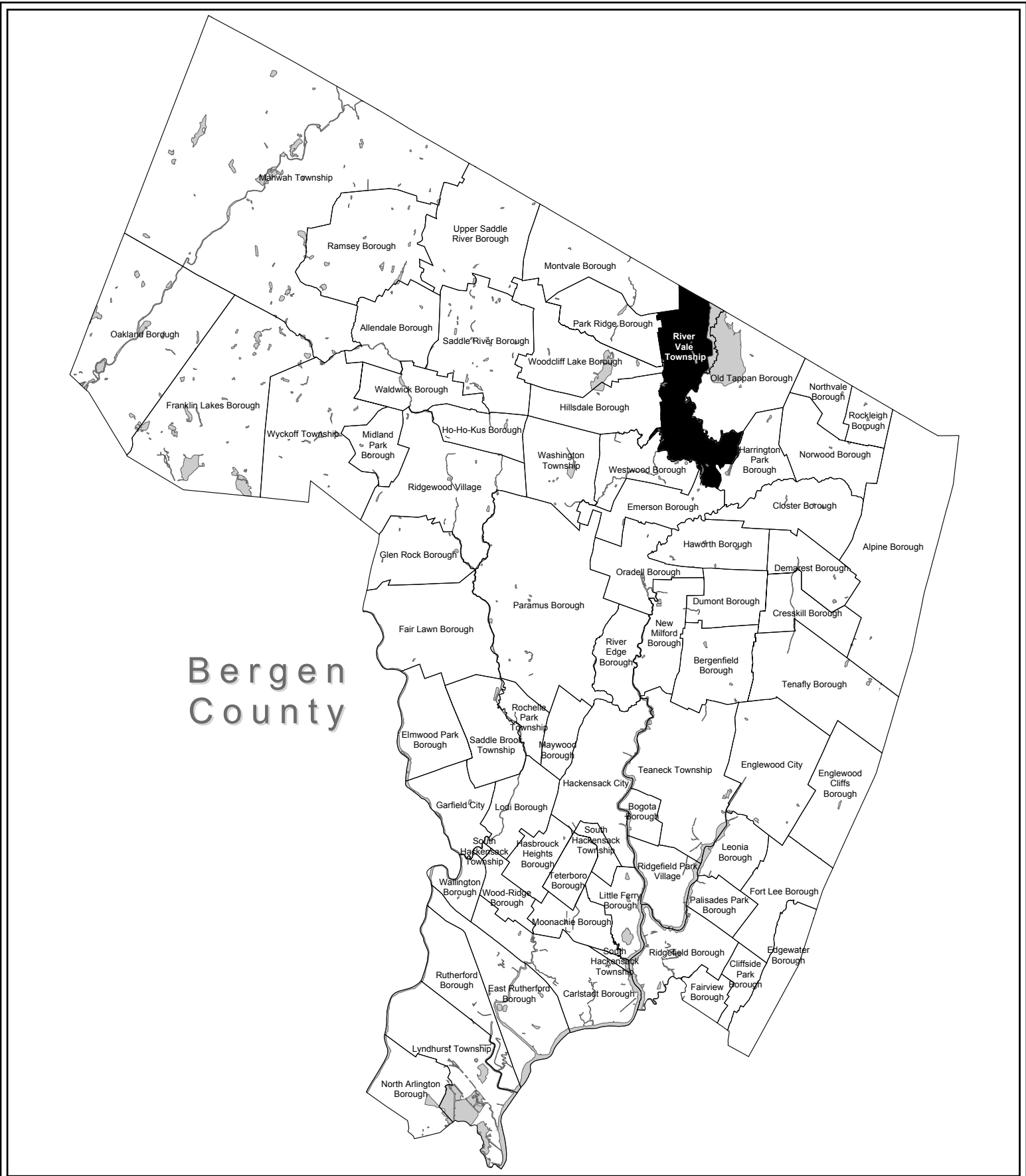
Map Prepared March 2005 by ST&A

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



Bergen
County

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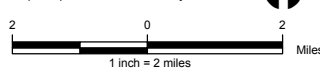
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- Municipal Boundaries
- River Vale Township
- Waterbodies

Figure 2 - Vicinity 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.