

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