

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.

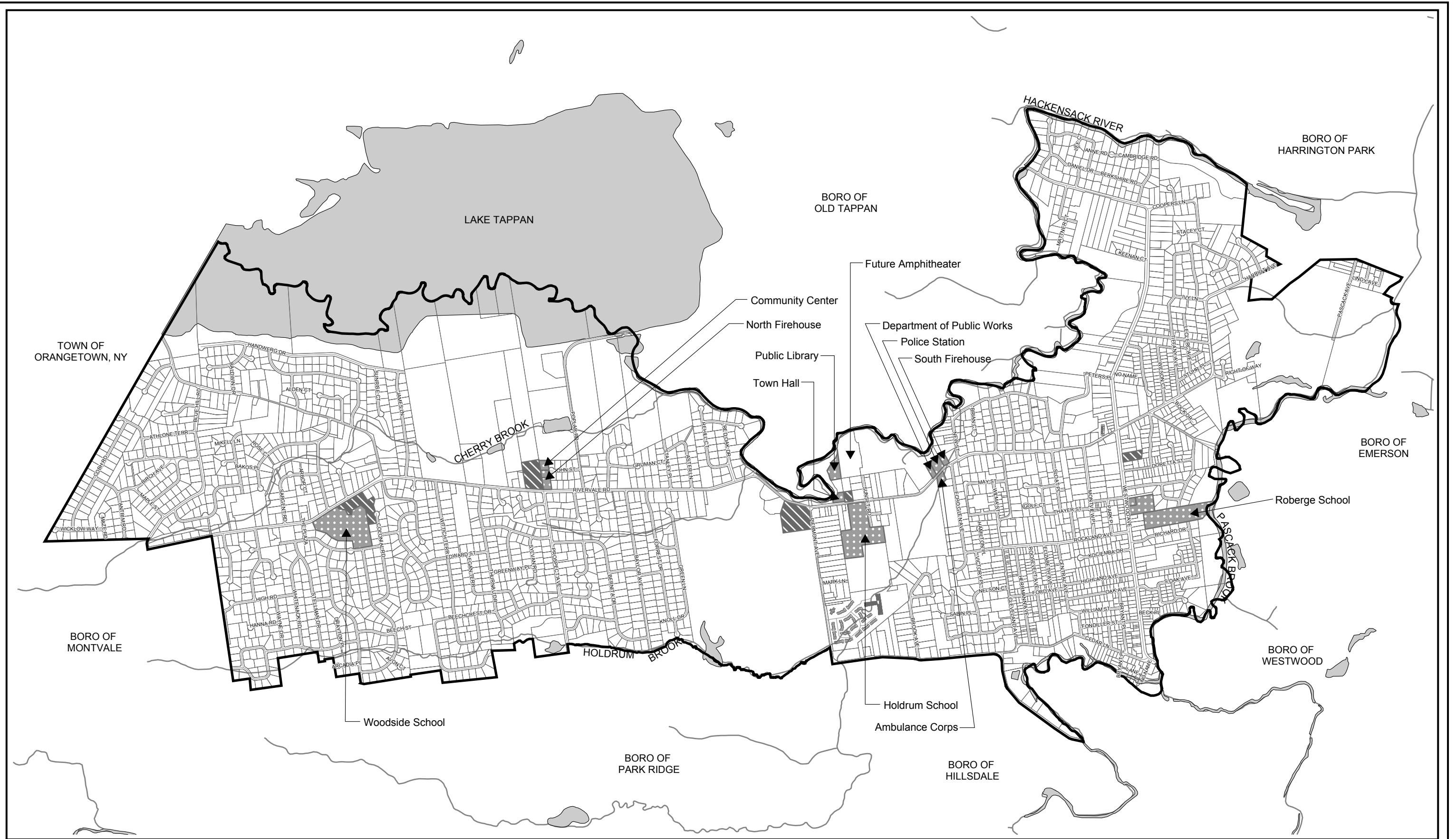
8.1.1 Educational Facilities

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.

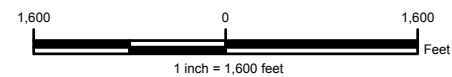
The Board of Education conducted a successful referendum in 2000 for a 19 million-dollar expansion of the three schools within the district. The expansion, renovation and site work for the three schools has just about been completed, all on the three school's preexisting sites. The District Superintendent 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

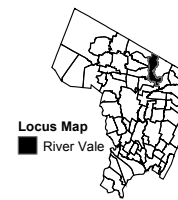


Figure 6 - Community Facilities
 River Vale Master Plan

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
K – 5	877	876	868	878	882	5	0.57
6 – 8	446	450	472	460	454	8	1.79
K – 8	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 1st 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 Pascaack 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.