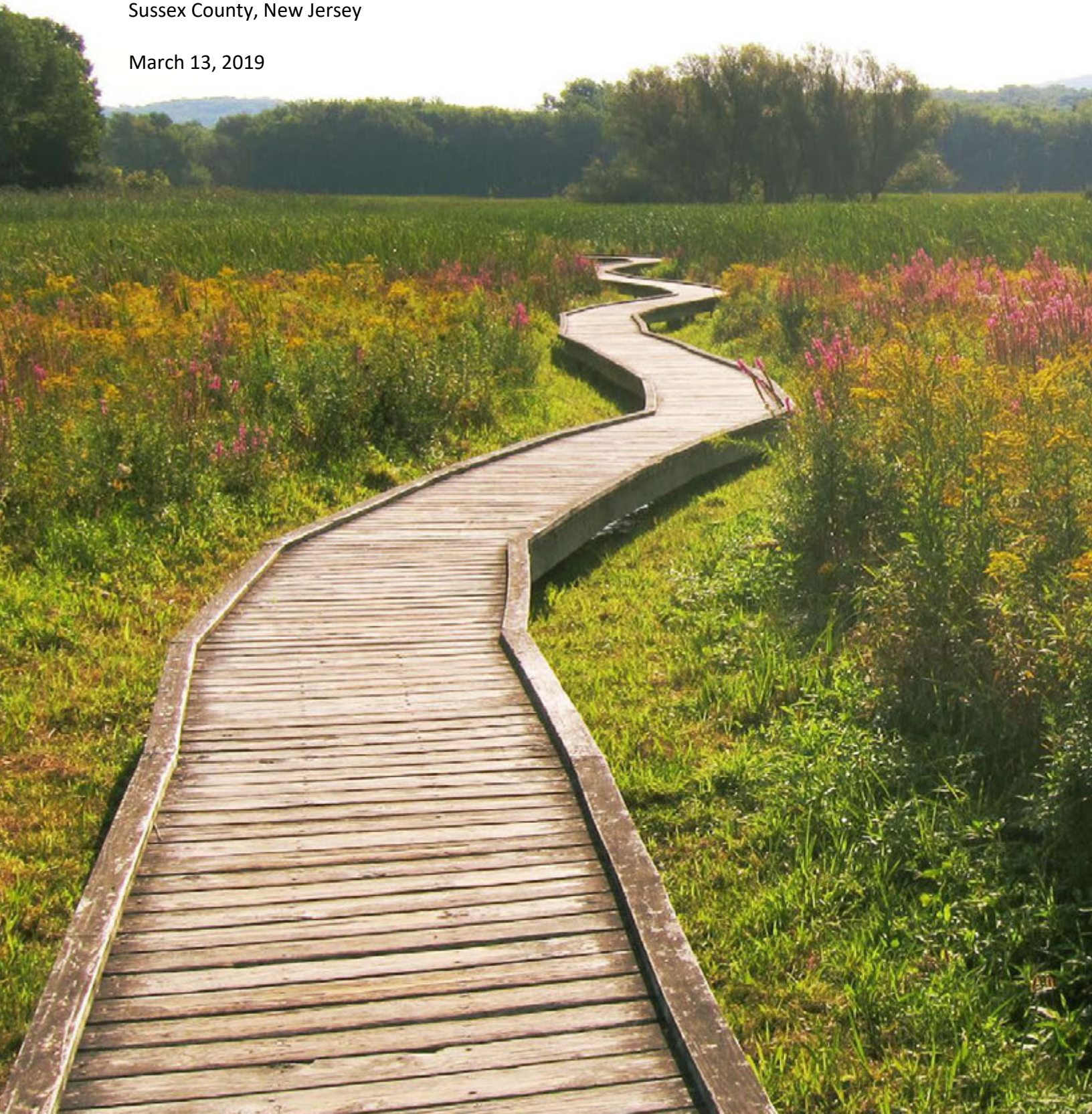


# SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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Township of Vernon  
Sussex County, New Jersey

March 13, 2019



**VERNON TOWNSHIP, SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

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Mayor Harry Shortway

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**PUBLIC OUTREACH**

Vernon Police Athletic League  
Vernon Chamber of Commerce  
Vernon Greenway Action Advisory Committee  
Vernon Economic Development Advisory Committee

**Grant funding was provided for this Plan by the New Jersey Highlands Council**

The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12

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## Introduction

### Overview

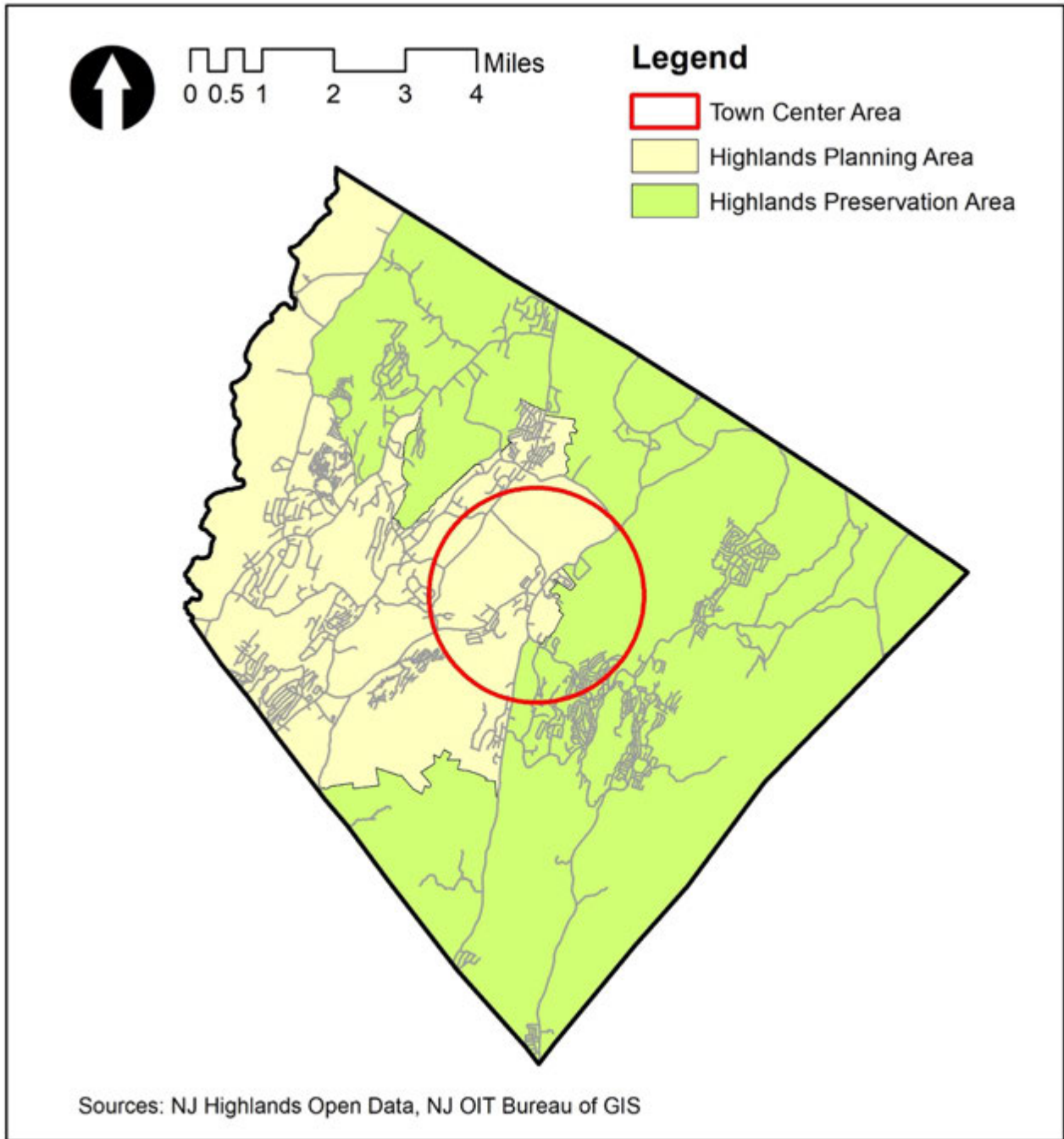
The Sustainable Economic Development Plan was prepared to explore ways to maximize the Township of Vernon's economic assets to improve the overall vitality of the Township. Vernon Township is approximately two-thirds Highlands Preservation Area and approximately one-third Highlands Planning Area. The focus of the Sustainable Economic Development Plan is to encourage a thriving sustainable economy within the Township that supports agricultural and eco-tourism while maintaining the unique environment within the Township.

### History and Town Center Concept

Vernon's business districts, like many others in the State of New Jersey, experienced a fundamental transformation in the latter part of the 20th century. Founded in 1793 when it separated from Hardyston Township, Vernon has grown from under 2,200 people in 1860 to nearly 24,000 in 2010. Vernon covers around 70 square miles, with just over two square miles of lakes. Historically, settlements in Vernon began as small villages, including McAfee, Glenwood, and the Village of Vernon, which grew primarily around farming communities and mining operations. In the 1930s, resort communities began to develop around the lakes as summer bungalow communities. From the 1950s on, suburban residential growth took hold in the Township, much as it did across the United States. Suburbanization spawned fairly rapid growth as Vernon's population grew 17 times larger from 1950 to 2000. Today, Vernon is the largest municipality in the County by both population and size.

Resort development accelerated in the 1970s, with the development of Vernon Valley, Great Gorge North, and Hidden Valley ski resorts. The preservation of open space has tempered growth and development in the Township, with over half of the municipality being preserved as open space. With the passage of the Highlands Act in 2004, approximately two-thirds of the Township was placed in the Highlands Preservation Area, which strictly limits development. As a result, the remaining one-third of the Township, designated as Highlands Planning Area, will need to accommodate nearly all of the Township's future growth.

Figure 1: Highlands Preservation and Planning Areas



The center concept for the Vernon Town Center includes the Vernon Core, which is a mixed-use center surrounding the intersection of NJSH Route 94 and County Route 515, and the Mountain Creek Core, which is further south along NJSH Route 94 and encompasses a commercial recreation center surrounding the Mountain Creek Resort. The Vernon Core is intended to serve as the Township's downtown, an area that provides local services, retail, housing, and governmental services. The Mountain Creek Core is intended to bolster the Township's commercial tourism industry, which includes destinations for skiing, golfing, and hiking, as well as resorts, waterparks, agritourism, spas, and historic bed and breakfasts. The cores complement each other in both location and use.

The Township's neighborhood centers, identified in the State Plan as Villages and Hamlets, merit special consideration as population centers, each with a unique sense of place and offerings for locals and visitors alike. These areas include both private lake communities and mountain villages.

The Town Center is the economic and governmental focal point of the Township. Its promotion and development as a Township and regional hub would help further smart growth principles and coalesce commercial, residential, institutional, and recreational uses at a central location. However, as demonstrated in a recent Area in Need of Redevelopment Study, much of the area is currently underutilized. The area is zoned for commercial and mixed-use development at relatively high densities, but a lack of comprehensive water and sewer infrastructure is deterring development and redevelopment.

The Town Center, along with the Mountain Creek Core, the Appalachian Trail, Great Gorge Golf Course, Minerals Resort and Spa, Wawayanda State Park, Heaven Hill Farm, and other tourism destinations, are a vital component of the Township's economy. A strategic and sustainable plan will not only ensure overall economic strength and sustainable growth for the Township but will create ripple effects of improved economic development in surrounding towns and the region.

### Public Input and Findings

Public outreach sessions were conducted in August 2018. These sessions included focus group-like interviews with Township organizations, committees, and business owners. These groups provided feedback on how their organization, committee, or business relates to Vernon's economic outlook, and gave an assessment of the Township's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats regarding sustainable economic development. Listed on the next few pages are some of the responses from these sessions.

## SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural resources                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountains</li> <li>• Lakes</li> <li>• Good water/fishing</li> <li>• Wawayanda State Park</li> <li>• Wallkill River Nat'l Wildlife Refuge</li> <li>• Views</li> <li>• Peaceful scenery</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recreation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appalachian Trail/boardwalk</li> <li>• Vernon trail system</li> <li>• Skiing</li> <li>• Resorts</li> <li>• Water park</li> <li>• Action Park as regional landmark</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Community                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family-oriented atmosphere</li> <li>• Volunteer participation</li> <li>• Hometown feel</li> <li>• Big population/size with a small-town feel</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Hidden gems (small businesses)</li> <li>• The Daily Bean</li> <li>• Close to NYC without all the congestion</li> <li>• Close to Warwick</li> <li>• Lower taxes for a town with a police department</li> <li>• Homes were affordable at one time</li> <li>• Benefits from the Highlands Council</li> <li>• Largest population in Sussex County</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure deficiencies                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of sewer/water/sidewalks</li> <li>• Lack of “good bones” like Warwick</li> <li>• Lack of parking by the Appalachian Trail</li> <li>• Lack of transit</li> <li>• Route 515 median is an eyesore</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Administrative/regulatory deficiencies                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of communication between organizations</li> <li>• Lack of business-friendly permitting process</li> <li>• Lack of “one-stop-shop” for recreation programs</li> <li>• Highlands Council regulations</li> <li>• Some businesses are permitted little road exposure/signage</li> <li>• Municipal Services Act</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Locational deficiencies                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long commutes to employment</li> <li>• Disparate communities with no central gathering place</li> <li>• Lack of lunchtime traffic in Town Center</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mountain Creek                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Empty promises”</li> <li>• Sensitivity in Town Council towards Mountain Creek</li> <li>• Not paying their bills</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Nothing to do at night</li> <li>• Spas/resorts too expensive for locals to enjoy on a regular basis</li> <li>• Not good for empty-nesters/senior citizens</li> <li>• Lack of variety in businesses/restaurants</li> <li>• Politics and changing visions</li> <li>• Politics keeping developers out</li> <li>• Taxes</li> </ul>

## SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring in more:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mom-and-Pop stores</li> <li>• Variety of businesses</li> <li>• Farmers’ markets</li> <li>• Outdoor events                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movies</li> <li>• Concerts</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Build on transit potential:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide adequate parking at trailheads</li> <li>• Provide a public trolley to Township areas of interest</li> <li>• Use freight rail between Vernon and Warwick as partial commuter rail</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Direct visitors to local businesses:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Realize the greenway, connect the Appalachian Trail to Town Center</li> <li>• Capitalize on Scenic Byway designation</li> <li>• Capitalize on hikers/visitors coming from all over the world with disposable income</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide four-season recreation regardless of the weather</li> <li>• Assess and advertise how things are improving in Town Center and around Town</li> <li>• Provide permitting guidance and/or fast-tracking to businesses interested in Vernon</li> <li>• Update signage ordinance for more flexibility</li> <li>• Expand liquor licenses</li> <li>• Redevelop Legends Resort</li> <li>• Capitalize on volunteer participation</li> <li>• Promote Shop Vernon program</li> <li>• Promote solar farms in the Township</li> <li>• Lease state farmland</li> <li>• Seek benefits from the Highlands Council</li> <li>• Look for outside grants for water/sewer infrastructure improvements</li> <li>• Create a Highlands “Urban Enterprise Zone”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain Creek’s bankruptcy</li> <li>• Legends if left abandoned</li> <li>• Illegal dumping</li> <li>• Politics and rhetoric interfering at Township meetings</li> <li>• Inefficiency at Town Hall</li> <li>• Losing business to neighboring towns perceived as more business-friendly</li> <li>• Long commutes keeping people from night activities</li> <li>• Selling properties that are no longer up to code</li> <li>• State/federal land acquisition, if the Township can’t find a way to make up the lost tax revenue</li> </ul>



The following topics and issues were raised during the public outreach sessions and warrant further discussion:

1. **Infrastructure:** The lack of completely connected infrastructure in the Town Center (water, sewer, sidewalks) was noted as an ongoing deterrent to prospective businesses and a weakness in the Township. Respondents think that this issue should be given the highest priority.
2. **Red Tape:** Respondents feel that the permitting process is too difficult for new businesses to navigate. Business owners specialize in their business, not in land use and signage permitting, etc. They suggest that a representative from the Township, a “business concierge” or “business center”, could help businesses through zoning requirements and the permit process.
3. **Eco-tourism:** Agriculture and recreation opportunities were often cited as ways to funnel more visitors and businesses into the Township. Vernon could identify projects to be funded through the open space trust fund. Building on these existing strengths, and strengthening trail connections to the Town Center, would help Vernon capitalize on its vast natural resources and create a symbiotic relationship between the Highlands Preservation and Planning Areas of the Township.
4. **Disparate communities:** Several respondents, as well as the Economic Development Advisory Committee survey detailed below, noted the low-density nature of Vernon Township. Historically, the Township’s small villages (McAfee, Glenwood, Highland Lakes, etc.) grew separately, without a unified center or gathering place. As noted in the survey, communities now feel cut off from Township events happening in other neighborhoods, and would like better communication and transportation connections between these population centers.
5. **Warwick:** Just across the border in New York State, the Town of Warwick stands as an example of Vernon residents’ aspirations for their own town. Its lively, historic business district is bustling with a variety of retail and restaurants, closely surrounded by residential neighborhoods. While the respondents noted that they will often go to Warwick for errands or to entertain a guest, they harbor no illusions that Vernon would transform into a Warwick-like village, and would instead like to see Vernon offer things that Warwick does not or cannot.
6. **Government:** Respondents cited a lack of consensus at Township meetings, as well as the disparate visions of the Township by various groups, as obstacles to progress in Vernon. The municipal financial burden related to Mountain Creek and the resort’s financial issues add to the need for additional development in the Town Center and add strain to the political climate.

### *Economic Development Advisory Committee Survey*

In 2018, Vernon’s Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) conducted a survey of Vernon residents, workers, and residents of nearby municipalities. The survey received 349 responses. The respondent’s suggestions for how to enhance Vernon’s economy and community roughly echoed those of this Plan’s public outreach sessions. Respondents would like the Township to attract businesses such as sit-down restaurants (over 85% of respondents), breweries, and bakeries/coffee shops. Many respondents hope that a movie theater comes to Vernon. When asked for locations where they would like community events to take place, respondents named Maple Grange Park (65.3%), and the future plans for the Town Center (60.2%) and a Township amphitheater (61%) as the top three locations. They perceive the Township to lack a business-friendly permitting process, and would like more sidewalk and pedestrian facilities, mom-and-pop stores, and stronger connections and communication between neighborhoods.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The main purpose of this plan is to create a vision and framework for a sustainable economy for Vernon Township. This vision will include ideas for promoting the Township’s tourism industry, especially its outdoor recreation, natural resources, and agritourism. These will be used as a viable economic driver for the local economy, serving the needs of residents, the region, and visitors to the area. The plan will identify targets and goals for increasing the vitality of the Township, and will cover land use initiatives, policy direction, and economic development goals and objectives. To establish this vision, the plan has the following overarching goals:

#### Township Identity

1. To foster a community sense of place and identity by further defining the unique and positive aspects of Vernon.
  - a. Improve community sense of place through beautification, streetscapes, and signage that fosters neighborhood and township identity.
  - b. Hold community input sessions to define the unique identity and sense of place in the Township.
  - c. Develop a marketing campaign, brand, and logo for Vernon’s tourism industry.
  - d. Identify methods and funding sources for promoting Vernon’s tourism industry.
  - e. Recognize Vernon’s Private Lake Communities contribution to the Township’s recreational activities through membership opportunities.
  - f. Unify the Township around one main gathering place.

### Land Use

1. To encourage commercial and mixed-use development in a form, location, and design that preserves and enhances the unique character and identity of Vernon Township.
  - a. Continue and expand upon design guidelines for commercial and mixed-use development in the Township.
  - b. Identify opportunities for beautification, renovation, and other improvements to existing non-residential development.
2. To direct the majority of future growth in the Township to the Vernon Center, Redevelopment Areas, and appropriate existing resort areas of the Township.
  - a. Review densities and sub-zone designations in the Town Center to ensure appropriate development at densities sufficient to accommodate future growth.
  - b. Identify and prioritize open space and farmland for preservation efforts.

### Economic Development Goals

1. To create a comprehensive economic development plan for the Township that promotes Vernon as a four-season recreation community while also identifying opportunities to diversify Vernon's economy.
2. To provide for economic development through the Commercial, Light Industrial, Commercial Recreation and Agri-Eco Tourism Zones.
  - a. Review locations and permitted uses in non-residential zones to ensure that appropriate development can occur that supports the tourism industry.
    - i. Identify opportunities to improve the diversity of industry in the Township.
    - ii. Identify opportunities to support the development of indoor recreational facilities.
    - iii. Identify opportunities for alternative energy production within non-residential zones.
    - iv. Identify opportunities to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities which are developed with minimal impact to neighboring properties.
  - b. Review densities and setbacks in non-residential zones to ensure that development is maximized on available developable lands and encourages adaptive re-use and redevelopment of existing underutilized commercial properties.

### Transportation/Circulation

1. To encourage use of alternative transportation modes (e.g. walking, biking, local transit, commuter buses, rail) to lessen congestion and air pollution.
  - a. Identify locations for bicycle paths throughout the Township.
  - b. Identify locations where sidewalks are missing and/or inadequate and need to be improved
  - c. Identify options for improving transit in the Township, including the addition of commuter bus service with a park and ride.
  - d. Identify opportunities to provide rail connections and off-street pedestrian connections in the Township.
  - e. Identify appropriate street tree species and establish planting guidelines and potential locations to plant additional street trees.
  
2. To support the use of rail service for passenger and freight purposes.
  - a. Explore options for improving freight rail service in the Township and supporting industrial uses adjacent to rail service.
  - b. Identify opportunities to provide passenger rail service to the Township or in close proximity to transit connections.

### Conservation

1. To preserve and protect Vernon's natural resources.
  - a. Review existing environmental ordinances to ensure they are adequate to preserve environmentally sensitive areas.
  - b. Adopt necessary protections in the Highlands Preservation Area to be consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan.
  - c. Encourage clustering techniques for developments in order to preserve open space and farmland.
  - d. Identify, preserve, and protect open space areas with significant scenic views and/or important historical, cultural, environmental, or agricultural significance.
    - i. Ensure that ridgeline protection ordinances provide a clear definition and mapping of what is protected along with methods for ensuring protection of the resource.
  - e. Minimize the impacts of development on environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, stream corridors, and aquifer recharge areas.
  - f. Minimize the environmental impact on the Private Lake Communities to ensure their continued viability.

2. Vernon Township has adopted and implemented Highlands Preservation Area land use and development regulations that ensure the protection and enhancement of the New Jersey Highlands Region, including but not limited to the Pequannock Watershed, Wawayanda State Park, Hamburg Mountain Wildlife Management area, the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail Corridor and Pochuck Mountain. The Township also works to protect the Four Seasons Greenway, and other similar natural areas such as the Black Creek Marshes in conjunction with other planning and development regulatory agencies at county, regional, state, and federal levels.

### *Implementation Schedule*

In addition to this Sustainable Economic Development Plan, the Township, with input from its Economic Development Advisory Committee, will be developing an implementation schedule to guide the progress of this Plan's recommendations. The schedule will be a flexible document subject to change and updates. It will include a list of action items and any associated sub-actions, objectives, benchmarks for success, estimated timeframes and costs, levels of priority, possible funding sources, person(s) responsible for its completion, organizational partners and collaborations, land ownership (if relevant), and other salient pieces of information. The schedule should be revised and renewed on a regular basis, ideally twice a year. The organization of this document will be essential in ensuring that this Plan's goals and objectives come to fruition in the Township. The implementation schedule is currently underway, a sample schedule is attached to this document as an appendix.

## Socio-Economic Analysis

### Background

For the purposes of this Sustainable Economic Development Plan, it is essential to understand the socio-economic conditions in the Township. This includes a review of census data related to population characteristics, employment, housing, and income. The number and types of jobs, the types of industry, and general market conditions in the Township also provide a framework for the analysis. This data, along with the status of the built environment from a land use perspective, including analyses of the infrastructure, existing land uses, roadways, and amenities, sets the backdrop for the socio-economic patterns in the Township. Understanding the existing socio-economic framework in the Township allows Vernon to develop policies that support positive and sustainable economic development.

### Population

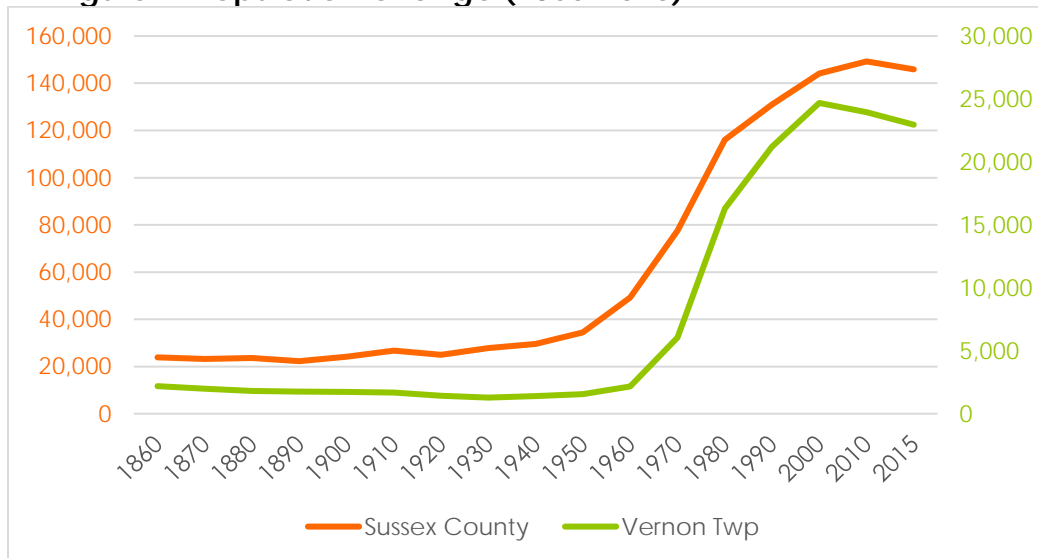
Similar to Sussex County, Vernon Township has experienced a decline in population in recent years. However, this has not always been the case. Between 1990 and 2000, the Township's population grew from 21,211 people to 24,686 people, an increase of 16.4%. Between 2000 and 2010, the population declined from 24,868 to 23,943 people, a decrease of 3.0%. The population continued to fall between 2010 to 2015, an estimated drop from 23,943 people to 22,955, or a 4.13% loss. This trajectory is similar to the County's population change (see Figure 2), which grew by 10.1% between 1990-2000. However, unlike Vernon Township, the County experienced growth between 2000 and 2010, with a population increase of 3.5%. Like Vernon Township, the County's population declined 4.7% between 2010 and 2015. This deviates from the population change in the State, which has continued to grow since 2000. Table 1 shows population changes from 1860 to 2015. The years between 1930 and 2000 saw a steady increase in population, with the most notable spikes occurring between 1960 and 1970 (181.2%) and 1970 and 1980 (169.1%). This was mostly due to rapid suburbanization, while the slight decline in recent years is most likely due to the Great Recession and economic stagnation.

Table 1: Population Change (1860-2015)

Year	Vernon Twp.	Sussex Co.	Vernon as % of County Pop.	% Change Vernon Twp.	% Change Sussex Co.
1860	2,190	23,816	9.2		
1870	1,979	23,168	8.5	-9.6	-2.7
1880	1,811	23,539	7.7	-8.5	1.6
1890	1,756	22,259	7.9	-3.0	-5.4
1900	1,738	24,134	7.2	-1.0	8.4
1910	1,675	26,781	6.3	-3.6	11.0
1920	1,433	24,905	5.8	-14.5	-7.0
1930	1,279	27,830	4.6	-10.8	11.7
1940	1,407	29,632	4.8	10.0	6.5
1950	1,548	34,423	4.5	10.0	16.2
1960	2,155	49,255	4.4	39.2	43.1
1970	6,059	77,528	7.8	181.2	57.4
1980	16,302	116,119	14.0	169.1	49.8
1990	21,211	130,943	16.2	30.1	12.8
2000	24,686	144,166	17.1	16.4	10.1
2010	23,943	149,265	16.0	-3.0	3.5
2015	22,955	145,930	15.7	-4.1	-2.2

Source: Vernon Township Master Plan; U.S. Census Bureau; 2015 American Community Survey

Figure 2: Population Change (1860-2015)

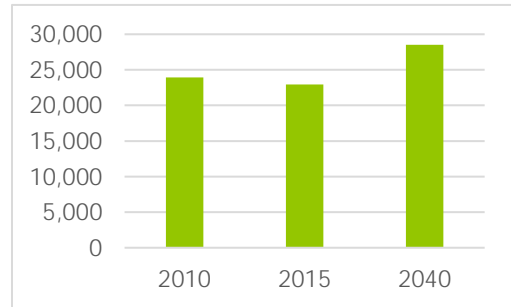


Sources: Vernon Township Master Plan; U.S. Census Bureau; 2015 American Community Survey

**Population Projection**

Population projections for Vernon Township were obtained from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA). The 2015 American Community Survey estimate is 22,955 people but is projected to reach 28,520 by 2040, an addition of approximately 2,600 people. However, the projection for 2040 is based on the 2010 Census and does not account for the loss in population between 2010 and 2015. Redevelopment could impact this projection.

**Figure 3: Population Projection (2010-2040)**



Source: NJTPA forecasts

**Age**

According to the 2015 American Community Survey Census, the median age of Township residents is 41.5 years old, which is lower than the median age of both Sussex County (43.4) but higher than the State of New Jersey (39.4). The largest age group is 45-49 years old (8.8%), followed by those who are 40-44 years old (8.3%). The generally non-working population, the population under 16 and over 65 years old, totals 7,065 people (30.8%). The remaining 69.2% of the population is in the workforce eligible age group.

**Table 2: Age groups (2010-2015)**

	2010	%	2015	%
Total population	23,943	100.0	22,955	100.0
Under 5 years	1,198	5.0	1,062	4.6
5 to 9 years	1,503	6.3	1,434	6.2
10 to 14 years	1,781	7.4	1,622	7.1
15 to 19 years	2,030	8.5	1,707	7.4
20 to 24 years	1,396	5.8	1,747	7.6
25 to 29 years	1,128	4.7	902	3.9
30 to 34 years	1,291	5.4	1,472	6.4
35 to 39 years	1,472	6.1	1,197	5.2
40 to 44 years	1,984	8.3	1,642	7.2
45 to 49 years	2,445	10.2	2,013	8.8
50 to 54 years	2,425	10.1	2,212	9.6
55 to 59 years	1,868	7.8	2,110	9.2
60 to 64 years	1,403	5.9	1,361	5.9
65 to 69 years	824	3.4	1,196	5.2
70 to 74 years	464	1.9	590	2.6
75 to 79 years	322	1.3	304	1.3
80 to 84 years	223	0.9	257	1.1
85 and older	186	0.8	127	0.6

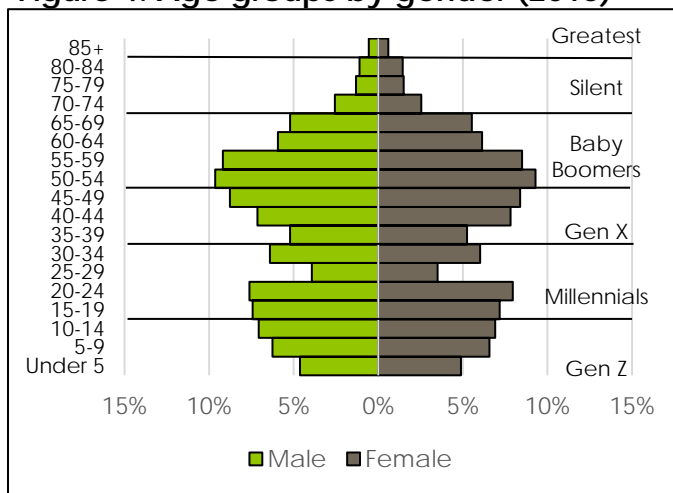
Sources: 2010 U.S. Census; 2015 American Community Survey



### Gender

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there was roughly an even distribution of male population 12,140 (50.7%) and female population 11,803 (49.3%) among residents. The 2015 American Community Survey estimates that Vernon is still weighted slightly male, with the male population at 11,549 (50.3%) and the female population at 11,406 (49.7%). Gender was also generally balanced across age groups.

Figure 4: Age groups by gender (2015)

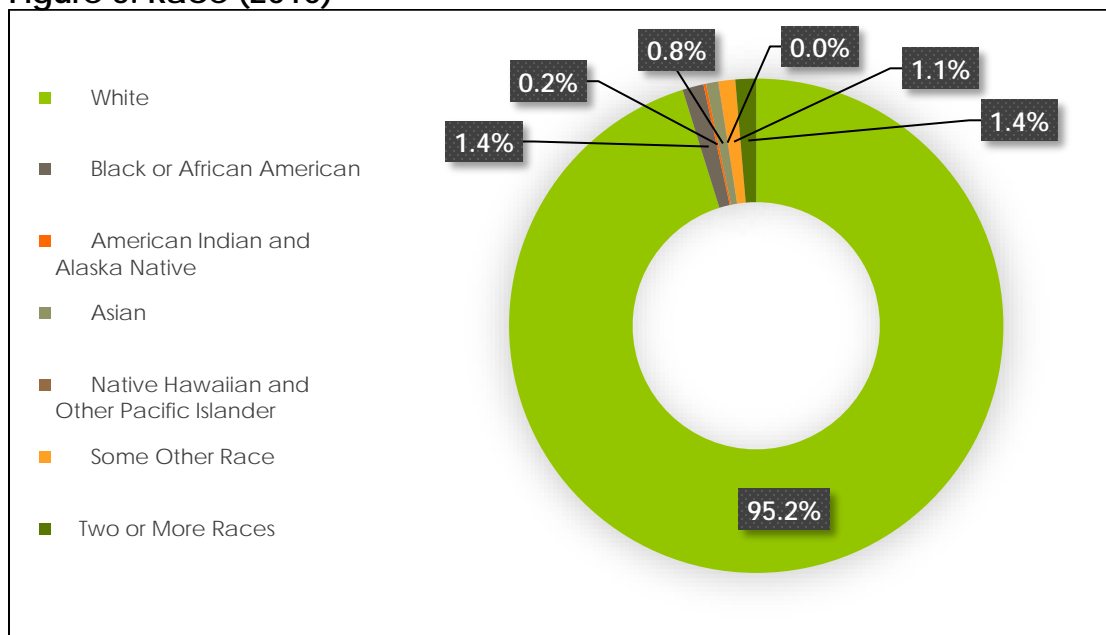


Source: 2015 American Community Survey

### Race and Ethnicity

To understand the ongoing trends and the consumer market in Vernon, it is important to understand demographics in race and ethnicity of the residents. This provides an overview on the type of markets preferred based on cultural background.

Figure 5: Race (2010)



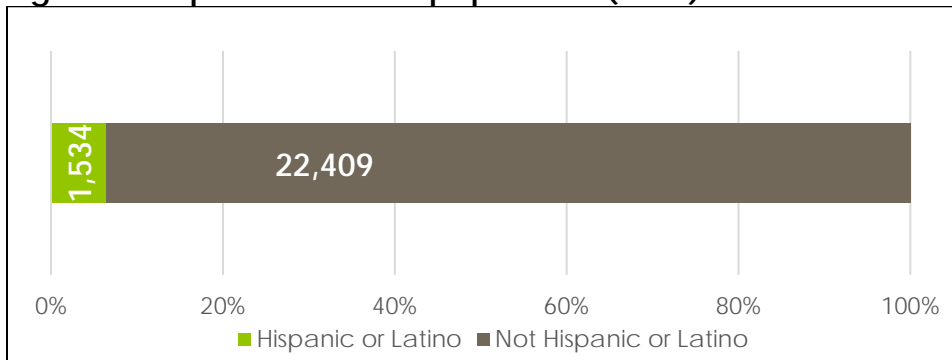
Source: 2010 U.S. Census

The largest reported group is White at 95.2% of the population. The second largest groups reported are Black or African American and “Two or more races”, which each account for 1.4%. The third largest group, 1.1% of the population, reported “Some other race”. “American Indian

and Alaska Native” and “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander” account for 0.2% and less than 0.1% of Vernon’s residents, respectively.

In 1980, the U.S. Census began tracking ethnicities of people of any race who are of Hispanic or Latino descent. 1,534 people, or 6.4% of the Township’s population, are Hispanic or Latino.

**Figure 6: Hispanic or Latino population (2010)**



Source: 2010 U.S. Census

### Income

According to the 2015 American Community Survey, about 14,072 residents are in the labor force, of which 12,768 are employed and 1,304 are unemployed. The median family income in the Township is \$96,880 and the per capita income is \$35,229. The Township’s median family income is higher than the State (at \$88,335) but lower than the County (at \$100,186).

Out of the 22,931 residents for whom poverty status is determined, 1,387 (6.0%) received an income below the poverty level in 2015. The 2008-2012 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates indicate that 1,199 of 23,928 people (5.0%) were below the poverty level in Vernon. The 2010 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) for Vernon Township School District state that out of 23,939 people and 4,607 school-age children, 248 or 5.4% of those children related to the householder were living in poverty. In the 2000 U.S. Census, 717 (2.9%) of 24,628 people were determined below the poverty line. Per these estimates, the number of people with incomes below the poverty level has increased. This may be due to the Great Recession that occurred between 2007 and 2009. Currently, the economy is improving and incomes are likely to increase.

### Household Size

The 2010 U.S. Census estimated that there were 8,622 households in Vernon, of which, 6,593 or 76.5% were “family” households and 2,029 households or 23.5% were “nonfamily” households. A “family” household, according to the U.S. Census, has at least one member of the household related to the householder (person in whose name the residence is owned or rented) by marriage, birth, or adoption.

**Table 3: Household Size (2010 and 2015)**

	2010	2015
Total Households:	8622	8185
1-person household	1635	1452
2-person household	2,665	2,882
3-person household	1,764	1,569
4-person household	1,589	1,437
5-person household	680	558
6-person household	196	195
7-or-more-person household	93	92

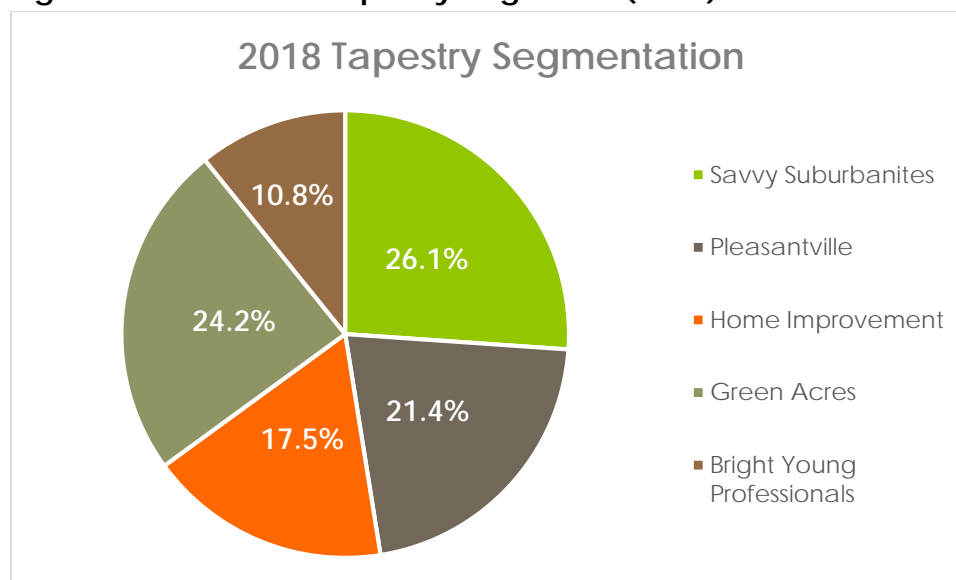
Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2015 American Community Survey

The average household size in Vernon was estimated at 2.77, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. This represents a slight decrease from the 2000 Census, when average household size was estimated at 2.95 persons per household. This figure is slightly higher than average household size for Sussex County (2.69) and the State of New Jersey (2.68).

**Market Tapestry Segmentation**

ArcGIS Business Analyst provides information on demographics by segmenting the population based on a variety of characteristics, including spending habits. There are 67 unique segments throughout the United States. According to the 2018 Esri Tapestry Segmentation, Vernon Township’s 8,504 households exhibit characteristics of the following segments: Savvy Suburbanites, Pleasantville, Home Improvement, Green Acres, and Bright Young Professionals.

**Figure 7: Esri Market Tapestry Segments (2018)**



Source: ArcGIS Business Analyst

**“Savvy Suburbanites** residents are well educated, well read, and well capitalized. Families include empty nesters and empty nester wannabes, who still have adult children at home. Located in older neighborhoods outside the urban core, their suburban lifestyle includes home remodeling and gardening plus the active pursuit of sports and exercise. They enjoy good food and wine, plus the amenities of the city’s cultural events...

Prosperous domesticity best describes the settled denizens of **Pleasantville**. Situated principally in older housing in suburban areas in the Northeast (especially in New York and New Jersey) and secondarily in the West (especially in California), these slightly older couples move less than any other market. Many couples have already transitioned to empty nesters; many are still home to adult children. Families own older, single-family homes and maintain their standard of living with dual incomes. These consumers have higher incomes and home values and much higher net worth (Index 364). Older homes require upkeep; home improvement and remodeling projects are a priority—preferably done by contractors. Residents spend their spare time participating in a variety of sports or watching movies. They shop online and in a variety of stores, from upscale to discount, and use the Internet largely for financial purposes...

Married-couple families occupy well over half of these suburban households. Most **Home Improvement** residences are single-family homes that are owner occupied, with only one-fifth of the households occupied by renters. Education and diversity levels are similar to the US as a whole. These families spend a lot of time on the go and therefore tend to eat out regularly. When at home, weekends are consumed with home improvement and remodeling projects...

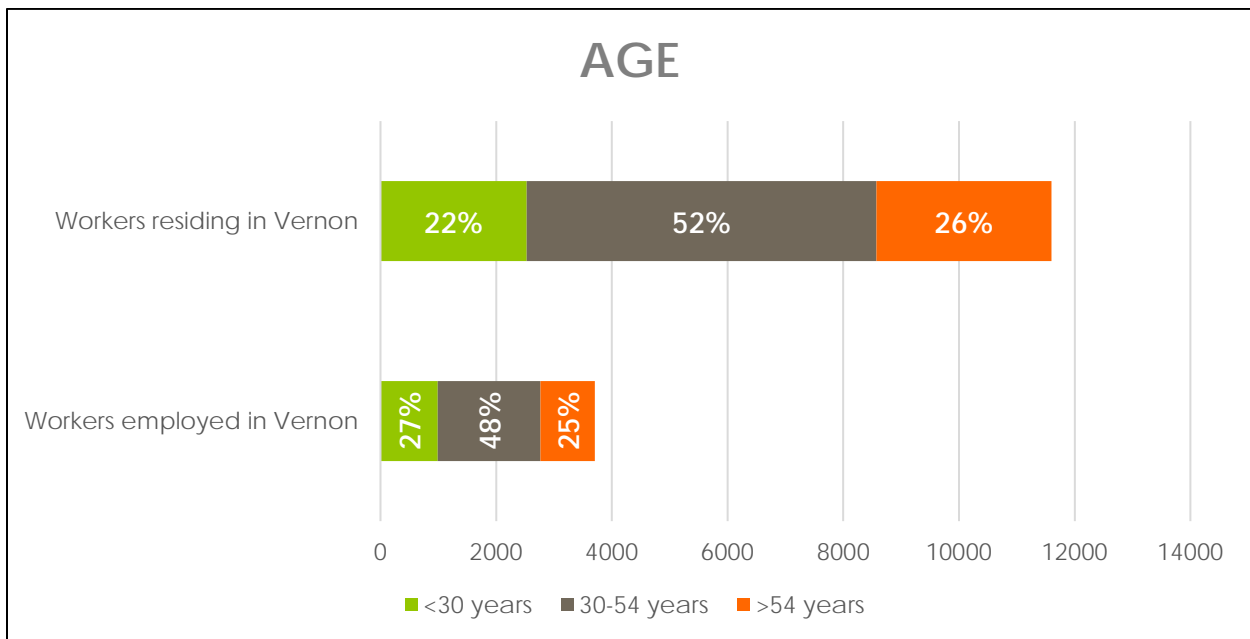
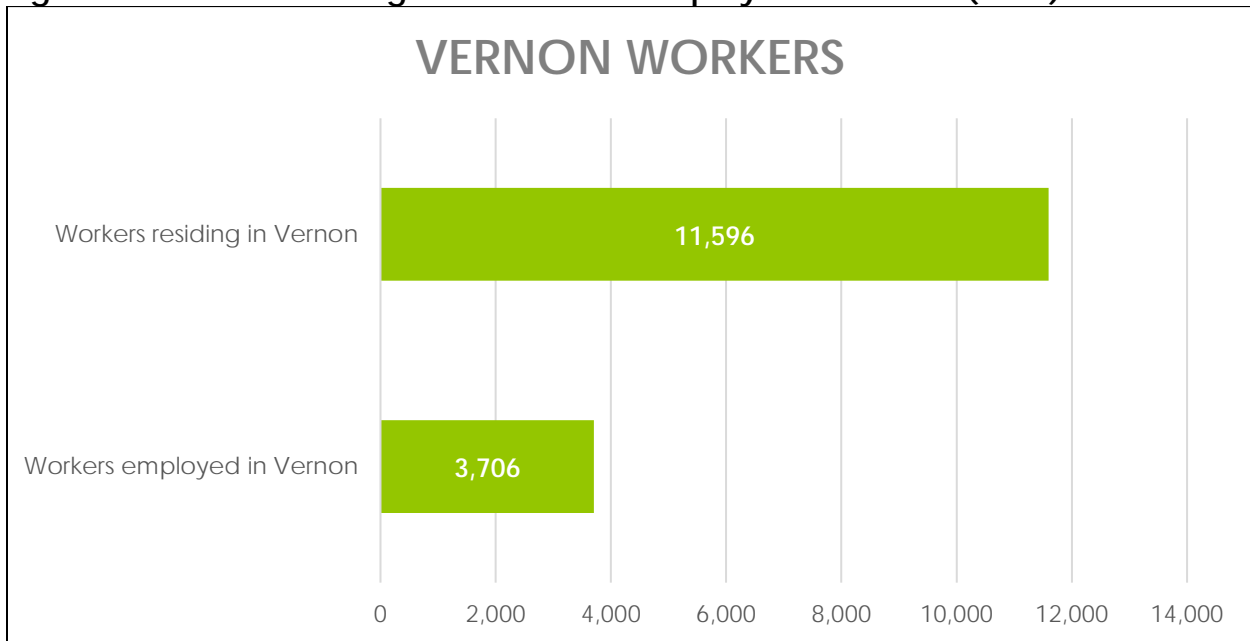
The **Green Acres** lifestyle features country living and self-reliance. They are avid do-it-yourselfers, maintaining and remodeling their homes, with all the necessary power tools to accomplish the jobs. Gardening, especially growing vegetables, is also a priority, again with the right tools, tillers, tractors, and riding mowers. Outdoor living also features a variety of sports: hunting and fishing, motorcycling, hiking and camping, and even golf. Self-described conservatives, residents of Green Acres remain pessimistic about the near future yet are heavily invested in it...

**Bright Young Professionals** is a large market, primarily located in urban outskirts of large metropolitan areas. These communities are home to young, educated, working professionals. More than one out of three householders is under the age of 35. Slightly more diverse couples dominate this market, with more renters than homeowners. More than two-fifths of the households live in single-family homes; over a third live in 5+ unit buildings. Labor force participation is high, generally white-collar work, with a mix of food service and part-time jobs (among the college students). Median household income, median home value, and average rent are close to the US values. Residents of this segment are physically active and up on the latest technology.”

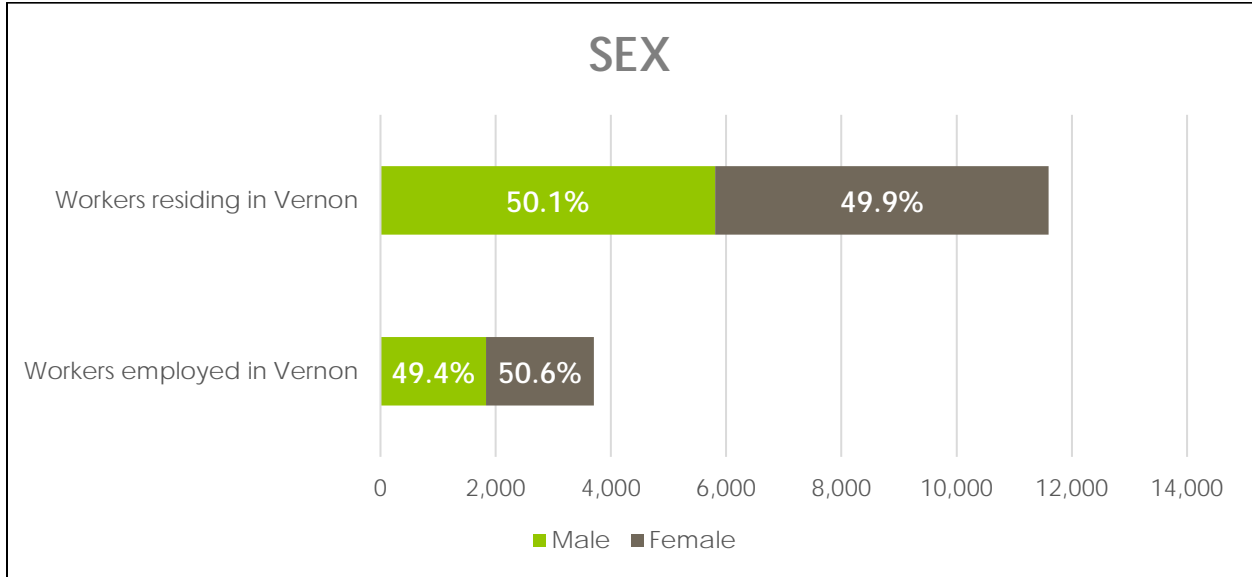
**Employment**

The U.S. Census maintains the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LED) dataset. This dataset distinguishes between workers, employed both in and out of the Township, who reside in Vernon (11,596) and workers, both residents and non-residents, employed in Vernon (3,706), shown in the following graphs in Figure 8.

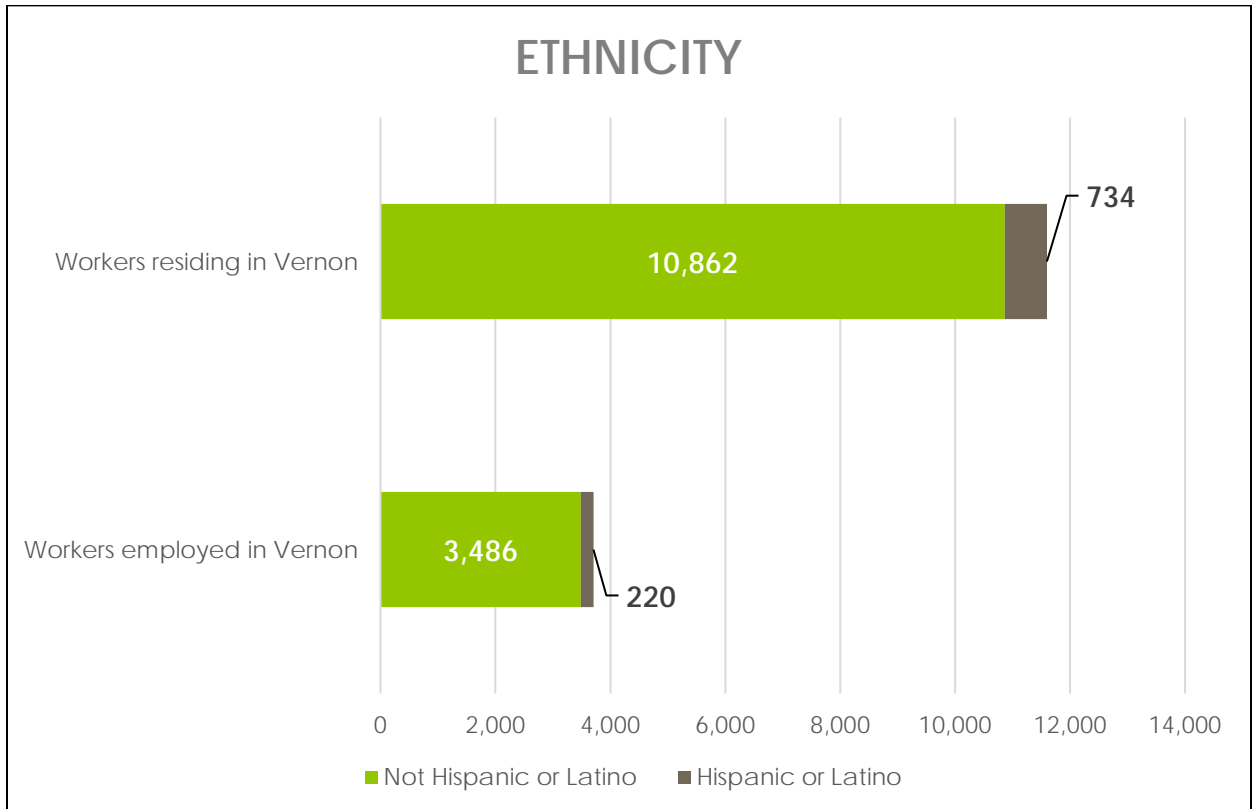
**Figure 8: Workers Residing in Vernon and Employed in Vernon (2015)**



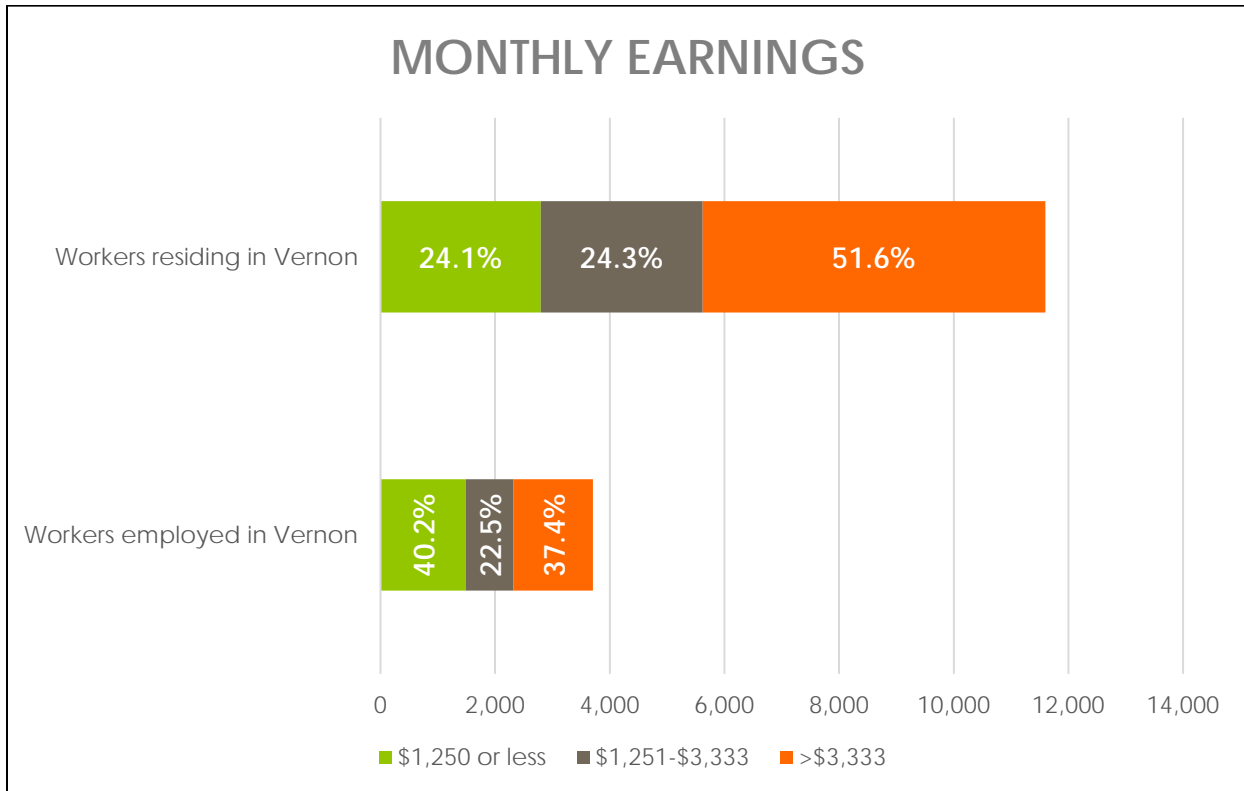
- The age distribution across three groups is roughly the same for workers residing in Vernon and worked employed in Vernon.



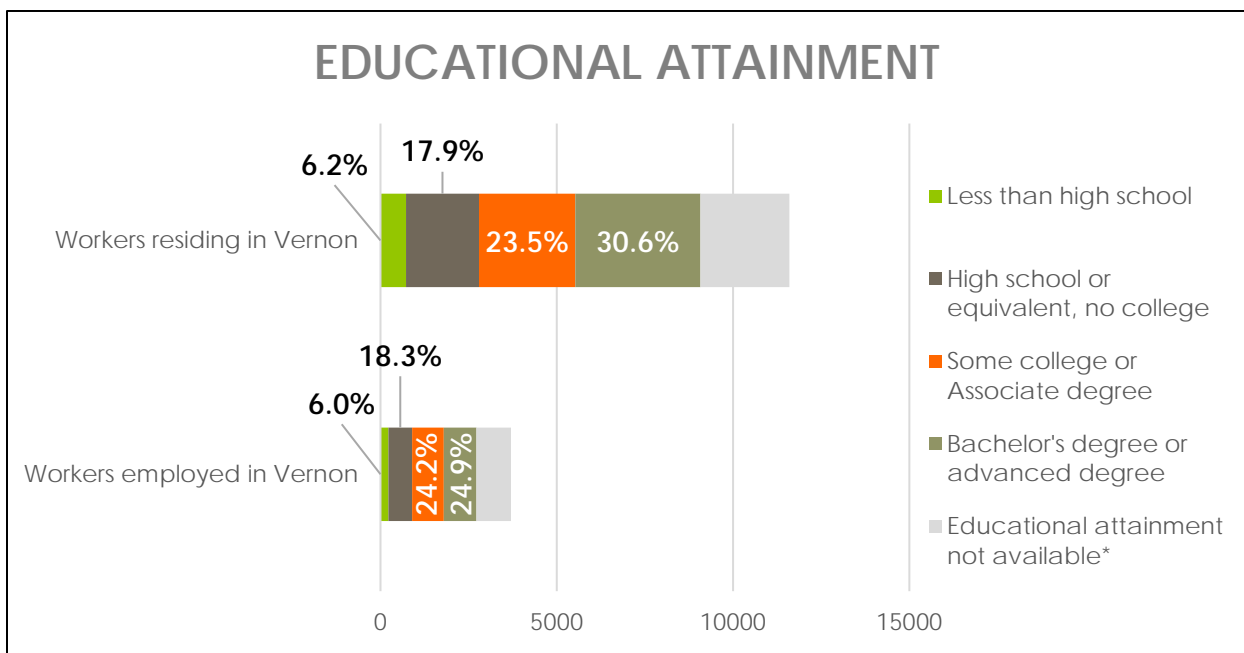
- A slightly higher percentage of workers residing in Vernon are male while a slightly higher percentage of workers employed in Vernon are female.



- The percentage of Vernon workers that are Hispanic or Latino is about the same as it is for workers employed in Vernon (6.8% vs 6.3%).



- A much higher share of workers residing in Vernon had monthly incomes above \$3,333 compared with workers employed in Vernon (51.6% vs 37.4%).



- A greater share of workers residing in Vernon attained a bachelor's degree or higher than those employed in Vernon. (\*Educational attainment information not available for workers 29 or younger.)

## SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

### Industry

The largest percentage of Vernon’s employed population works in “Educational Services” (12.5%), closely followed by “Health Care and Social Assistance” (12.2%) and “Retail Trade” (12.2%).

The largest NAICS sector of jobs in Vernon is “Educational Services” (28.2%). The largest employer in this sector is likely Vernon Township School District. The next largest sectors for jobs in Vernon are “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” (17.4%) and “Accommodation and Food Services” (11.2%). Mountain Creek Resort likely provides the majority of the jobs in these sectors.

**Table 4: Jobs by NAICS Sector, Workers Living and Employed in Vernon (2015)**

HOME		NAICS CLASSIFICATION	WORK	
38	0.3%	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	14	0.4%
11	0.1%	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	0.0%
63	0.5%	Utilities	53	1.4%
760	6.6%	Construction	303	8.2%
762	6.6%	Manufacturing	78	2.1%
650	5.6%	Wholesale Trade	138	3.7%
1,419	12.2%	Retail Trade	342	9.2%
352	3.0%	Transportation and Warehousing	38	1.0%
216	1.9%	Information	1	0.0%
456	3.9%	Finance and Insurance	94	2.5%
151	1.3%	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	22	0.6%
814	7.0%	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	94	2.5%
305	2.6%	Management of Companies and Enterprises	5	0.1%
620	5.3%	Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	203	5.5%
1,448	12.5%	Educational Services	884	23.9%
1,417	12.2%	Health Care and Social Assistance	101	2.7%
400	3.4%	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	646	17.4%
816	7.0%	Accommodation and Food Services	414	11.2%
433	3.7%	Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	133	3.6%
465	4.0%	Public Administration	142	3.8%

Source: US Census, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

Employment by occupation, seen in Table 5, shows that roughly one-third of Vernon’s employed population works in “Management, business, science and arts occupations”. Approximately a quarter work in “Sales and office occupations” and a fifth work in “Service occupations”. The remaining 20% is evenly distributed between “Natural resource, construction, and maintenance occupations” and “Production, transportation, and material moving occupations”.



Table 5: Employment by Occupation (2015)

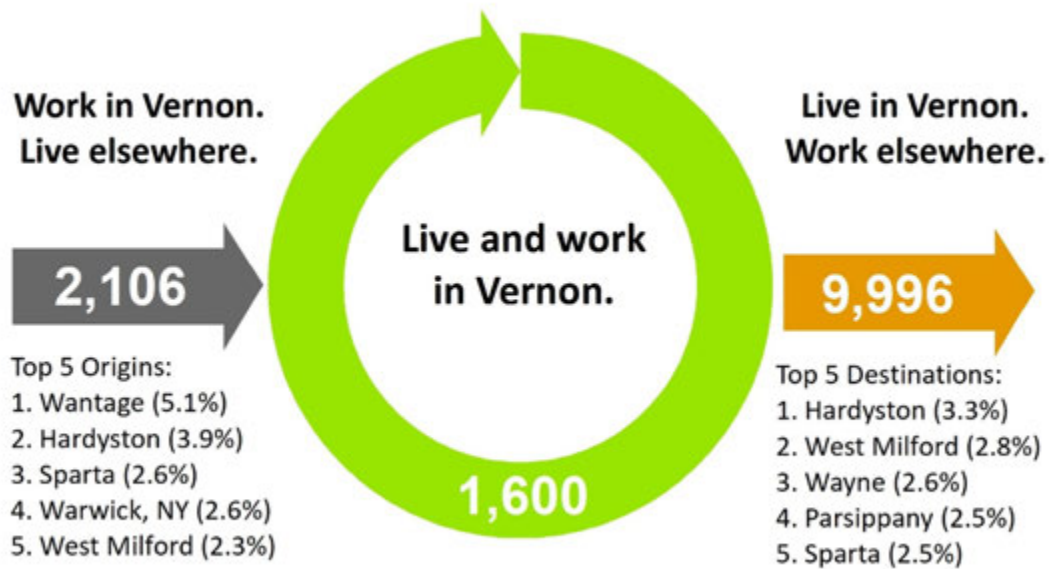
Population employed 16 years and over	12,768	100%
Management, business, science and arts occupations	4320	33.8%
Service occupations	2485	19.5%
Sales and office occupations	3338	26.1%
Natural resource, construction, and maintenance occupations	1360	10.7%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	1265	9.9%

Source: 2015 American Community Survey

### Commuting

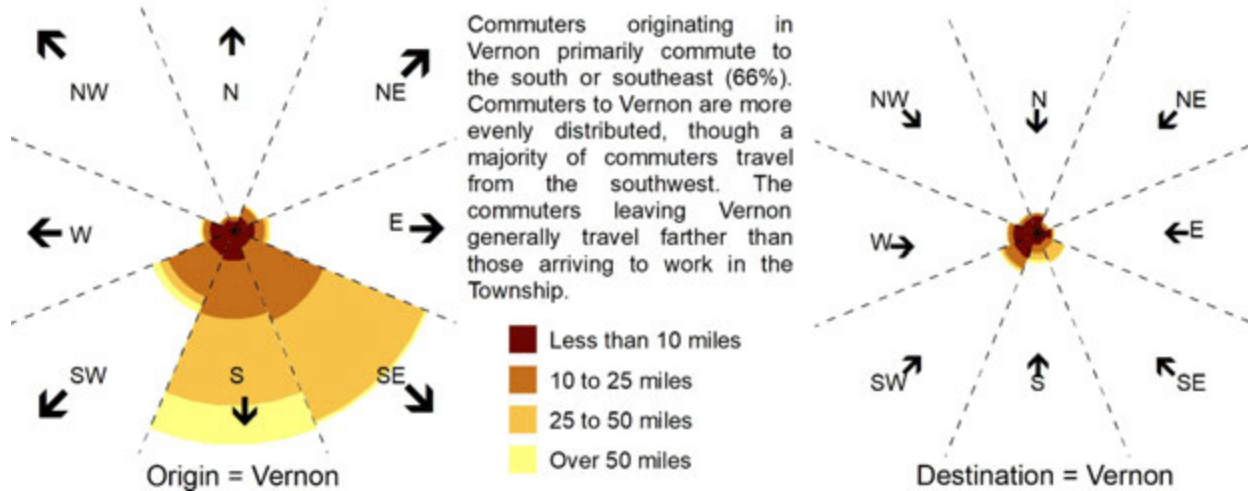
Of the 3,706 jobs in Vernon, 2,106 (56.8%) are filled by residents living in other municipalities and 1,600 (43.2%) are filled by Vernon residents. The majority of Vernon’s 11,596 resident workers work outside of Vernon (9,996 or 86.2%).

Figure 9: Commuting Origins and Destinations (2015)



Source: US Census, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

Figure 10: Commuting Direction and Distance (2015)



Source: US Census, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics

The commuting pattern provides an overview of workers’ travel time to work, their mode of transportation, and their destinations. According to the 2015 American Community Survey, the average travel time to work for Township residents is 42.3 minutes. This is approximately 4 minutes longer than the average commute for Sussex County (38.1 minutes) and 11 minutes longer than the average commute for the State of New Jersey (31.0 minutes). This is an indicator of the Township being further away from employment centers and transportation corridors.

Table 6: Commuting Patterns (2015)

Vernon Township residents	
Worked within State	88.2%
Worked in County	40.8%
Worked outside County	47.4%
Worked out of State	11.8%
Worked at home	4.9%
Worked outside home	95.1%

Source: 2015 American Community Survey

Another important element to study is the means of transportation to work. The Township has major roadways such as New Jersey Route 94 and County Routes 515, 517, and 565. Since the Township does not have a train station, and the only bus service to the Township is seasonal between Port Authority in Manhattan and Mountain Creek, the majority of commuters (85.9%) travel alone by car. Vernon residents can also use two park and rides in neighboring West Milford and Warwick for NJ Transit bus service to New York City.

Table 7: Transportation to Work (2015)

<b>Total:</b>	<b>12,521</b>	<b>100%</b>
Car, truck, or van:	11,519	92.0%
Drove alone	10,759	85.9%
Carpooled	760	6.1%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	276	2.2%
Bicycle	0	0.0%
Walked	78	0.6%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	39	0.3%
Worked at home	609	4.9%

Source: 2015 American Community Survey

## Businesses, Organizations, and Events

### Chamber of Commerce

The following establishments are active members of the Vernon Chamber of Commerce, “the collective voice of area businesses.” The Chamber works to advocate for the business community in Vernon through promotion, networking, events, and representation at government meetings.

SERVICES	FINANCIAL	FOOD/DRINK	FARMS	OTHER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Advanced Concrete Solutions</li> <li>•Alternative Septic Solutions</li> <li>•Bob Baldwin Transportation</li> <li>•BRS Landscape Care</li> <li>•The Bungalow</li> <li>•Center for Prevention &amp; Counseling</li> <li>•Copy Center of Vernon</li> <li>•Earth-Tec Associates</li> <li>•Elmer Platz Physical Therapy</li> <li>•F. W. Webb Company</li> <li>•Green Team New Jersey Realty</li> <li>•Highland Flowers &amp; Gifts</li> <li>•Kelly Hayes Mitchell, Weichert Realtors</li> <li>•Kristi Anderson, RE/MAX Realtor</li> <li>•Lakeland Pools &amp; Spas</li> <li>•Langan Engineering</li> <li>•McAfee Hardware</li> <li>•McAfee Ski &amp; Snowboard</li> <li>•R.S. Phillips Steel</li> <li>•Vernon Valley Auto Body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Edsall Insurance Services</li> <li>•Lakeland Bank</li> <li>•Nisivoccia LLP</li> <li>•PNC Bank</li> <li>•Prudential Insurance</li> <li>•Stephanie Scilingo Insurance</li> <li>•Sussex Bank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Dairy Queen</li> <li>•The George Inn</li> <li>•Healthy Thymes Market</li> <li>•The Lamp Post Inn</li> <li>•Smokey’s Brick Oven Tavern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Heaven Hill Farm</li> <li>•Mount Vernon Farms</li> <li>•Mystic Valley Farm</li> <li>•Pochuck Valley Farm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Advertiser News</li> <li>•CrossFit Skunk</li> <li>•Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice</li> <li>•Mountain Creek</li> <li>•New Jersey Herald</li> <li>•Sussex Rural Electric Co-op</li> </ul>

**Shop Vernon**

The Township offers Shop Vernon, a property tax incentive for Vernon homeowners to shop at local establishments. Residents can receive up to 10% back on purchases, which is then applied to their property tax bill. Renters and residents of other towns can receive an annual rebate check. The following businesses participate in the Shop Vernon program:

Applewood Kennel | H & H Auto Parts | Healthy Thymes Market | Highland Flowers & Gifts  
Lakeland Pools & Spas | NJ Climber | Pizza Pros | Total Eyecare

**Events**

Vernon hosts a variety of seasonal events showcasing its wealth of agricultural activity, Township businesses, and local culture. Whether the initiative of a local farm or sponsored by organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Vernon Police Athletic League, Fire Department, or the Township itself, these events have the capability to draw in visitors, feature area businesses, promote agritourism, and instill civic pride through the Township’s strong tradition of volunteer participation. 97.1% of the EDAC survey responded that they would be interested in attending community events in Vernon, and 89.6% would be most interested to attend a farmers’ market.

**Table 8: Seasonal Events in Vernon**

TIME OF YEAR	EVENT	VENUE	ACTIVITIES
Spring	Easter Egg Hunt and Bonnet Contest	Heaven Hill Farm	Egg hunts, carnival rides, bonnet contest, pony rides
Late April	EarthFest	Heaven Hill Farm	Live music, gemstone panning, food court
Late April	Taste of Vernon	Heaven Hill Farm	Gourmet food, live music, charity fundraiser
Early June	Vernon Day and Food Truck Festival	Glen Meadow Middle School	Food trucks, bounce houses, demonstrations, music
Late June/Early July	Independence Day Fireworks	Lounsberry Hollow Middle School	Fireworks, food, music
September	Vernon Street Fair and Farmers Expo	Main Street, Town Center	Family activities, food, crafts
September	Dahlia Festival	Meadowburn Farm	House and garden tours, live music, flower design workshop
September-November	The Great Pumpkin Festival	Heaven Hill Farm	Corn maze, pumpkin picking, hayrides, go-carts, games, educational exhibits
Thanksgiving	5K Turkey Trot	Glen Meadow Middle School	Family-friendly race, charitable donations

The Township’s trail system must play a key role in the continued success of these events. The Appalachian Trail brings in visitors to Vernon from all over the country, and internationally. Locating and advertising events so that visitors have direct access to event venues will help entice them to stay longer in Vernon. Events with fixed routes, such as the Turkey Trot, or a bike race similar to the Tour de Blirstown, have the opportunity to engage Vernon’s scattered neighborhoods, and to showcase Vernon’s natural and community assets. Pairing recreational walks/races with complementary, same-day cultural events in Town Center or agricultural festivals at local farms will expose visitors to a full range of Vernon’s offerings.

### Built Environment Analysis

#### Land Use

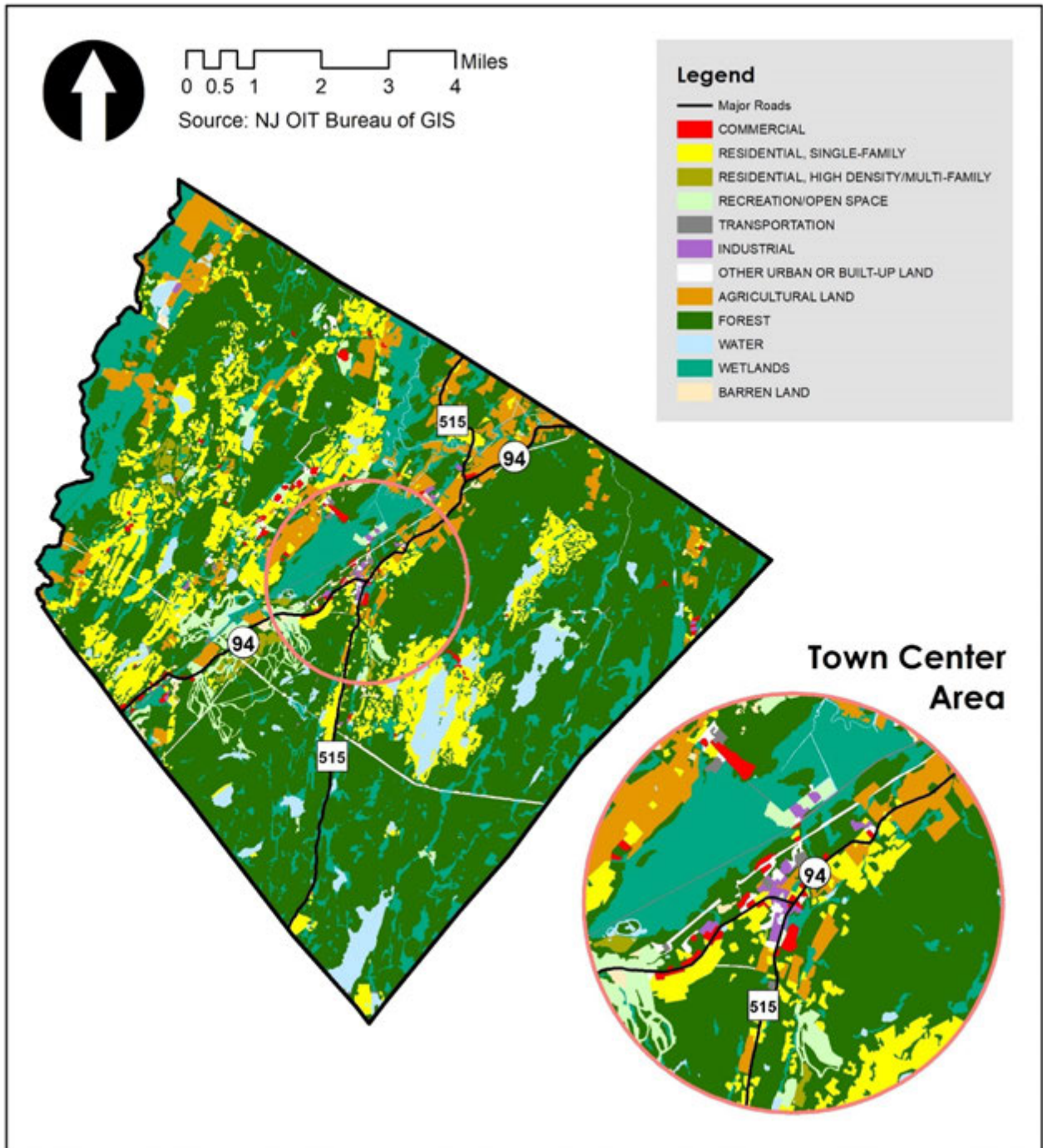
Figure 11 on the following page depicts land use and land cover in Vernon, according to NJDEP’s 2012 Land Use/Land Cover dataset. Forested lands constitute over 57 percent of the Township. Much of the southern and eastern portion of the Township is forested and included in the Highlands Preservation Area. 0.6% of Vernon is in commercial use, and only 0.2% is used for industrial purposes. High density or multi-family housing takes up just 0.5% of the Township, while 5% of the Township is medium density single-family residential and another 7.3% is rural or low-density single-family residential. Sizable portions of the Township’s commercial and industrial lands, 33.5% and 51.5% respectively, are located within the Town Center area, with recreational land use nearby in Mountain Creek. Agricultural use generally follows the NJ Route 94 and Lake Walkkill Road corridors.

**Table 9: Land Use/Land Cover Type (2012)**

Land Use/Land Cover Type	Acreage	Percentage
Agricultural Land	1,758.97	3.9
Barren Land	99.68	0.2
Forest	25,656.77	57.3
Urban	7,402.26	16.5
Water	2,007.16	4.5
Wetlands	7,844.34	17.5

Source: 2012 NJDEP Land Use/Land Cover

Figure 11: Land Use and Land Cover (2012)



### Economic Development Zoning Districts

While the Township has infrastructural issues and environmental constraints, there are several zoning districts in the Township that provide for mixed-use, commercial, resort, and light industrial uses for the benefit of economic development. These districts include: Town Center, Neighborhood and Village Commercial, General Business, Office Professional, Commercial Recreation, Light Industrial, Mountain Resort, Agri-Eco Tourism, and the McAfee Village Mixed Use and McAfee Village Commercial Resort zoning districts.

#### Town Center District

The purpose of the Town Center District, as stated in the Township's ordinances, is to "create a mixed-use Town Center...which provides for commercial, residential and senior housing uses in a development pattern and with design guidelines that promote a pedestrian scale center that reinforces the unique sense of place of Vernon," in effect providing a higher density growth area within the Township. Development in areas outside of Town Center will be limited by the designation of the Highlands Preservation Area, environmental constraints, and preserved open space in the remainder of the Township.

The Town Center District, along with areas in several other zoning districts, has been declared an area in need of redevelopment. This plan recommends revisiting the zoning regulations for the Center. Changes are likely with respect to Town Center's water and sewer infrastructure and the Center boundary may also shift as part of the Plan Endorsement process. These factors, along with a lack of development in the area over the last several years, suggest that the current zoning could be improved to more effectively produce center-based development. This area would benefit from the development of a form-based code that allows greater flexibility in terms of uses and location of uses, while promoting a design standard and form for development that fits the Center. This type of code gives municipalities the regulatory means to achieve development objectives with greater certainty, and provides clarity to residents and developers.

#### Neighborhood and Village Commercial District

The Neighborhood and Village Commercial District covers smaller scale neighborhood commercial centers that serve surrounding neighborhoods and the Village of McAfee area. This District includes the former neighborhood commercial, general commercial, and shopping centers and office professional districts. The District permits retail, commercial, office buildings, and shopping centers. The scale of the permitted uses is restricted by lot size rather than location.

#### General Business

The General Business/Shopping Center District is located primarily along NJ Route 94 in the southwestern section of the Township near its border with Hardyston Township.

### Office Professional

The Office Professional District generally permits commercial, office, retail, and restaurants. It is located just south of Town Center along NJ Route 94.

### Commercial Recreation District

The Commercial Recreation District encompasses the resort areas primarily along NJ Route 94 and generally permits active recreation, commercial resort, and related retail and commercial uses. This district includes facilities such as a “riding academy, golf course, tennis club or ski area operated for profit and open to the public.”

### Light Industrial

The Light Industrial District is located along the freight rail line in the Township and permits light manufacturing and industrial uses. Some locations along County Route 644 were added to create continuous swaths of light industrial areas to capitalize on existing light industry and promote the possible expansion of those uses. The Light Industrial District permits light manufacturing and industrial uses.

### Mountain Resort District

The Mountain Resort District covers the Mountain Creek Redevelopment Area and is governed by the Mountain Creek Redevelopment Area Plan. This district is a planned commercial development including recreational and commercial uses, with buildings that are “thematic in nature and in the resort village create a small town appearance.”

### Agricultural Eco-Tourism District

The Agricultural Eco-Tourism District is located along the Township’s northern section of NJ Route 94 and is primarily covered by the Highlands Preservation Area. This District permits limited commercial development related to tourism generated by agricultural uses and outdoor recreation.

### McAfee Village District

The McAfee Village District covers the McAfee Village Redevelopment Area which is governed by two redevelopment area plans, the McAfee Village Mixed Use Redevelopment Area and the McAfee Village Commercial Resort Redevelopment Area (the former Legends Resort). The 2016 Master Plan Update notes that as the Village of McAfee acts as a southern gateway to the Township, it “merits gateway treatments to the streetscape including lighting, sidewalks, pedestrian amenities and traffic calming measures” (Harold E. Pellow & Associates, Inc., 2016).

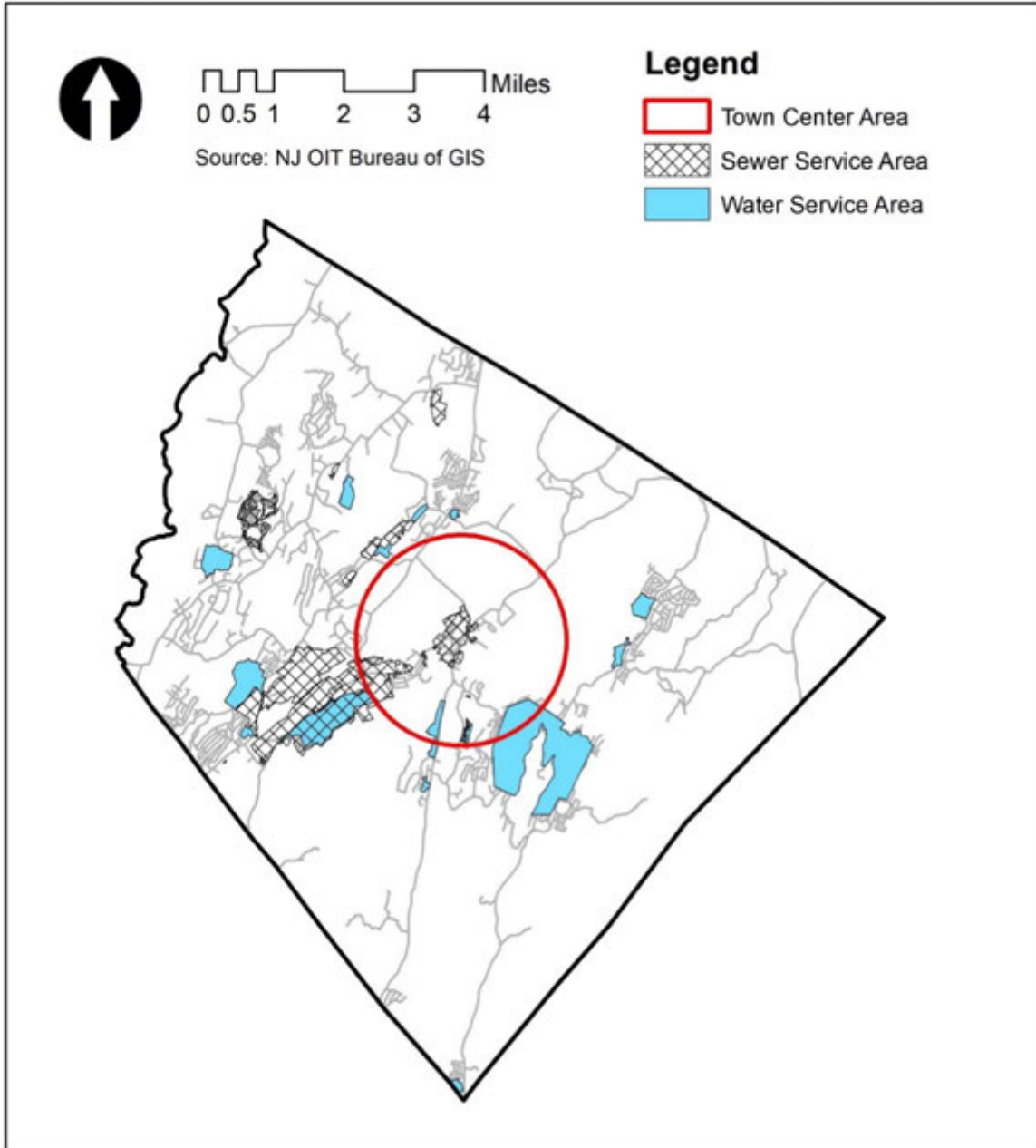


### Infrastructure

Vernon Township's water, sewer, and sidewalk infrastructures are limited to certain more densely-populated areas, and the provision of water and sewer utilities do not always overlap. Many residents and businesses rely on septic systems and/or wells which may no longer be up to code when a property owner tries to sell. The completion of water and sewer infrastructure in Town Center is essential to the Township's economic development. Without the provision of these basic and cost-saving utilities, prospective businesses will look elsewhere to decrease start-up costs. A 2014 Urban Land Institute survey of 443 public sector officials and real estate executives found that 88% of respondents rated the quality of infrastructure as the top issue influencing real estate investment and development (Urban Land Institute, 2014).

A Town Center complete with water and sewer infrastructure could then attract commercial and residential development on the merits of its natural beauty and nearby recreation. The Township's vision for a walkable, vibrant Town Center cannot be complete without a thorough sidewalk system throughout its commercial areas, connecting to residential areas nearby. The McAfee and Highland Lakes areas would also benefit from sidewalks and streetscaping to better connect these small, neighborhood centers to their surrounding residential areas. Pedestrian amenities in Town Center should also include crosswalks, benches, and street trees.

Figure 12: Water and Sewer Infrastructure (2018)



### Historic, Cultural, Scenic, and Recreational Resources

Vernon Township includes an abundance of historic and natural resources within its expansive borders, and a long history as a noted tourism destination for its skiing, resorts, spas, lake communities, and other recreational opportunities. According to a 2013 Tourism Economics report, Sussex County received 151,805 heritage tourism visitors in 2012, who spent \$320,000 at heritage sites and an estimated \$39 million off-site. A 2017 Tourism Economics study found that tourism directly accounted for 10.3% of the County's total employment, and indirectly for 13.2%. For Vernon locals, business owners, and employees, cultivating strong and balanced tourism offering brings two-prongs of benefits: the added revenue from tourism income and the ability to enjoy nearby historic, cultural, and recreational resources themselves.



Photo: Meadowburn Farm

The Highlands Council's 2008 Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Recreation, and Tourism Technical Report (Highlands Council, 2008a) includes an initial Scenic Resource Inventory of 131 scenic resource areas including publicly-owned parks, forests, and recreation areas, an Historic and Cultural Resource Inventory, and a list of the abandoned mines within the Highlands Region. Listed below are items from these inventories located at least partially in Vernon Township.

### Scenic Resources

#### Federal Open Space

Appalachian Trail

Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge

#### State Open Space

Hamburg Mountain Wildlife Management Area

Wawayanda State Park

### Historic and Cultural Resources

#### Farms

High Breeze Farm

Meadowburn Farm

P.J. Brown Farmstead Site

#### Houses

Park Log House

Sea Captain's House

Stewart House



Wawayanda State Park, Source: Google Street View

### Other

Archaeological Site  
Black Creek Site  
Glenwood Mill  
Hanke Site  
Ring Quarry Prehistoric Mining Historic District  
Sand Hill Site  
Ten abandoned iron mines from the 1800s  
Winans Tavern

### *Commercial Recreation*

Vernon's long history of resorts and commercial recreation make it a destination from around New Jersey and the northeast. These businesses, and the Township as a whole, would benefit from stronger connections (whether sidewalks, shuttle buses, trails, etc.) between commercial recreation areas, Town Center, other local business areas, and the Township's natural resources.

Great Gorge Golf | Legends Riding Stables | Minerals Golf and Spa  
Mountain Creek | Treescape Aerial Adventure Park

### *Lodging*

Vernon is also the home of several hotels, inns, and other lodgings of varying sizes, catering to different types of travelers. These establishments allow visitors to stay overnight in Vernon and frequent a greater number of local businesses, historic sites, and recreational activities. According to a 2011 Tourism Economics report, only 5.0% of overnight leisure stays in New Jersey were located in the Skylands region, or Sussex, Morris, Warren, Hunterdon, and Somerset counties (Tourism Economics, 2011). With lodging and recreational tourism already in place, Vernon could take advantage of this gap in the market.

The Township is maintaining a close eye on developments in nearby Goshen, New York, as Legoland New York is set to open in 2020. While New York municipalities such as Goshen and Warwick will likely capture most of the overnight visitors to the theme park, Vernon may expect some increase in bookings. The Township should look to advertise its spectacular natural resources to Legoland visitors as a family-friendly and active accompaniment to the theme park activities in Goshen.

Alpine Haus Bed & Breakfast Inn | Appalachian Hotel | Appalachian Motel | Apple Valley Inn  
Minerals Hotel | Quality Inn near Mountain Creek

### Sustainable Agriculture

The agricultural industry is a vital component of the economy, welfare, and cultural landscape of Vernon and the Highlands Region. However, the precarious nature of the agricultural business climate requires its promotion and protection. A 2006 Rutgers survey of 1,500 New Jersey farms reported that smaller farms earning less than \$250,000 annually relied exclusively on agritourism for income. 19% of farms did not earn any revenue from agritourism activities but gained non-monetary value in public awareness and support for local farming (Rutgers NJAES, 2006).

The Highlands Council's 2008 Sustainable Agriculture Technical Report (Highlands Council, 2008b) recommends the following ways to include agriculture in economic development plans:

- Include agricultural representation in local and regional business organizations and economic development agencies;
- Integrate agriculture into traditional business support systems;
- Engage local Chambers of Commerce and associated organizations to develop a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program that links growers with local buyers and residents;
- Work with the Office of State Tourism to promote agritourism and eco-tourism activities to support the farm economy by allowing farmers to benefit from additional sources of income;
- Coordinate historic preservation, open space and recreation efforts with agricultural preservation/retention efforts; and
- Create economic development incentives and include flexible land use regulations to support the expansion of food and farm-related businesses.

### Market Analysis

Mercer Planning Associates prepared a Transfer of Development Rights Feasibility Study: Phase III Financial Feasibility Analysis (Mercer Planning Associates, LLC, 2016) for the Township of Vernon in May 2016. The Study included a market profile and demographic overview to provide insight into current economic and jobs conditions as well as understand where opportunities exist for growth. The report specifically went over residential market demand and retail market demand. Detailed below are some of the insights from the Study.

### Residential Market Demand

A thorough investigation of the residential market demand is an important step towards understanding the level of vibrancy that new housing development will bring to Town Center. The residential market area, generally speaking, is the area that will generate and attract new households that might become residents in new housing in Town Center. It is also the area with which Town Center residential development would compete for new households.

The residential market area boundary is defined as anywhere that is within a 30-minute drive from Town Center, or the intersection of NJ Route 94 and County Route 515. The Town Center area is defined as the area within 1 ½ miles of the intersection described above. These boundaries help to estimate the future growth within the residential market area, and within Town Center.

### Market Area Demographics

To better understand the possible impacts of demographics on residential market demand, Table 11 provides select demographic characteristics for the residential market area, Vernon Township, and the Town Center area (within 1 ½ miles of the intersection of NJ Route 94 and County Route 515). See Figure 13 for a map of the Town Center area.

In 2015, an estimated 177,580 people lived in the residential market area. Esri projects that the area's population will grow by 0.22% each year, adding another 1,920 people by 2020. Reflecting a decreasing average household size, Esri also projects that the number of households in the market area will grow by 0.28% every year, adding 900 new households over the next five years, all of which will receive annual incomes of \$75,000 or more.

**Table 10: Project Change in Residential Market Area Households by Income (2015-2020)**

<b>Income Category</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>5-Year Change</b>	<b>Annual Change</b>
<\$15,000	3,090	2,660	-430	-2.9%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	3,140	2,210	-930	-6.8%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	3,510	2,440	-1,070	-7.0%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	6,140	5,520	-620	-2.1%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	10,110	9,430	-680	-1.4%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	10,120	10,230	110	0.2%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	14,560	15,440	890	1.2%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	8,000	10,380	2,390	5.4%
\$200,000+	6,350	7,600	1,250	3.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>65,000</b>	<b>65,900</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>0.3%</b>
<b>Total for Income Groups with Projected Growth</b>			<b>4,630</b>	<b>2.3%</b>

Source: ArcGIS Business Analyst

However, this net growth of households masks the dynamic change projected in the region. If present trends continue over the next five years, the number of households with annual income less than \$75,000 would decrease, through out-migration, increases in household income, and inflation pushing some households into the next income category. At the same time, the number of households earning \$75,000 or more per year would increase, by 2.3% per year.

Table 11: Demographic Comparisons (2015)

	Town Center Area	Vernon Township	Residential Market Area
Total Population	1,904 <sup>1</sup>	22,955	177,580
Median Age	43.3	39.4	41.1
Under 18	21.9%	11.0%	19.5%
65 and older	14.8%	11.7%	11.1%
Average Household Size	2.69	2.73	2.71
Med. Household Income	\$89,368	\$87,248	\$78,314
Median Home Value	\$310,706	\$264,316	\$233,075
Single-family detached (2013)	66.7%	79.6%	76.4%
Home Ownership Rate	62.6%	68.5%	72.9%
Vacancy Rate	24.4%	21.6%	10.5%
Race			
- White	90.3%	94.4%	95.2%
- Black	3.0%	1.6%	1.4%
- Asian	2.1%	0.9%	0.6%
Hispanic, any race	9.2%	7.5%	8.1%
Education			
- No HS diploma	6.4%	5.4%	5.9%
- Bachelor's degree +	34.5%	29.2%	30.1%
Households (2010 data)			
- 1-person	21.3%	19.0%	22.1%
- With children	36.6%	38.0%	35.3%
- Multigenerational	3.8%	3.5%	3.1%

Source: Transfer of Development Rights Feasibility Study

<sup>1</sup>Esri Estimate based on 2012-2016 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

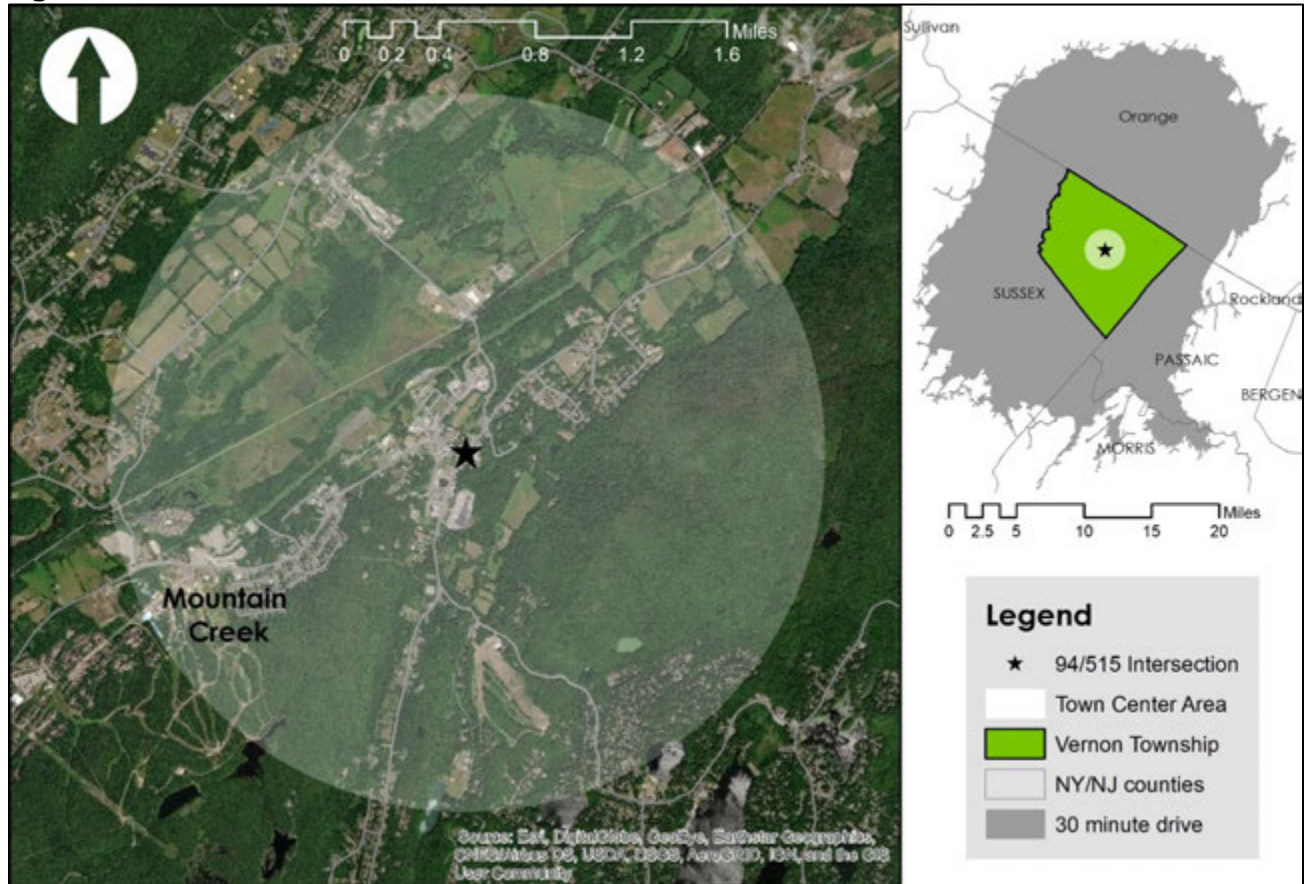
The differences in median age among the three areas are small. However, Town Center and the residential market area have higher percentages of residents under 18 (21.9% and 19.5% respectively, vs Vernon Township’s 11.0%). Meanwhile, Vernon Township and the residential market area have smaller proportion of residents aged 65 and older. This would suggest that the Town Center area is a somewhat more attractive place to live for both households with children and households with retirees.

The average household size is fairly similar across all three areas. However, the median household income and median reported home value are higher in Vernon and higher still in Town Center. Of the three areas, Town Center has the lowest home ownership rate and lowest share of single-family detached housing. This may suggest that Town Center is poised to receive an outsized share of the projected new multi-family households in the residential market area.



Vernon Township, especially the Town Center area, has much higher vacancy rates than the residential market area. Most likely, the number of lakes and seasonal homes in the Township drive the difference in vacancy, and possibly, the differences in home values. In the 2011-2015 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 1,460 of 2,257 vacant housing units (64.7%) in Vernon Township were for “seasonal, recreational, or occasional use,” while 41.8% of Sussex County’s vacant units were seasonal.

Figure 13: Town Center and Residential Market areas



Sources: NJ OIT Bureau of GIS, NYS OITS GIS Program Office

The Town Center area is more racially and ethnically diverse than the other two, but all three areas are relatively homogenous by state and national standards. Town Center has both a higher percentage of college graduates and residents without a high school diploma. By national standards, all three areas have high numbers of college graduates and residents without a high school diploma. All three areas are relatively similar regarding household composition.

For many of these demographic characteristics, the differences are not large enough to suggest that there would be a meaningful difference in housing demand throughout the three areas. Because a large portion of vacant housing units in Vernon are likely seasonal homes, average

values in these areas must come under stricter scrutiny as new residential units in Town Center have less of a draw as vacation homes than the nearby mountain or lake areas. In addition, Town Center’s higher percentages of population under 18 and over 65 suggest that individual developments could cater to household compositions like young families, down-sizing retirees, and multigenerational housing.

**Residential Market Potential**

Table 12 estimates the market potential for new for-sale and for-rent housing in the residential market area and Vernon Township’s likely share of that market potential. The estimates are based on the increase in households with annual incomes of \$75,000 or higher per year. These income categories are the only ones projected to increase (see Table 10).

The analysis finds that there is a potentially a market for up to 320 single-family detached houses and 100 multifamily housing units, almost all of which would be for-sale housing. It is important to note, however, that these numbers represent potential, based on past trends. How much of that potential is realized in Vernon Township will depend on a wide variety of factors, but mostly comes down to the supply and attractiveness of places to live in Vernon Township relative to other areas and communities in the residential market area.

**Table 12: Projected New Residential Market Potential (2015-2020)**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$75,000 - \$99,000</b>	<b>\$100,000 - \$149,999</b>	<b>\$150,000+</b>
2015 Households, Residential Market Area	39,030	10,120	14,560	14,350
2020 Households, Residential Market Area	43,650	10,230	15,440	17,980
New Households Projected (2015-2020)	4,620	110	880	3,630
Home Ownership Rate (2014)	94.3%	93.3%	95.5%	94.0%
5-Year Increase in Market Area Home Owners	4,360	100	840	3,410
Vernon Twp. Share of Homeowner Growth (2000-15)	9.6%	9.6%	9.6%	9.6%
5-Year Increase in Vernon Township Home Owners	420	10	80	330
SFD Share of 2015 Sales, Vernon Township	76.7%	76.7%	76.7%	76.7%
5-Year Market Potential, SFD	320	8	60	250
5-Year Market Potential, MF	100	2	20	80
5-Year Increase in Market Area Renter Households	260	7	40	220
Vernon Township Share of Renter Growth (2000-2015)	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%	5.9%
5-Year Increase in Vernon Renter Households	16	0	2	13
Multifamily’s Share of all Renters	69.1%	69.1%	69.1%	69.1%
5-Year Market Potential Multifamily Rental	11	0	2	9

Sources: PlaceWorks, 2016, using data from Esri, U.S. Census Bureau, and CoreLogic

### *Town Center Residential Development*

There is market potential for 4,630 new homeowners in the 30-minute drive-time trade area over the next five years, and if past trends continue, 420 of those new households could move to Vernon Township. Furthermore, all new households between 2015 and 2020 are projected to be in annual income brackets of \$75,000 or more (see Table 10 on page 38).

The challenge for the Township and for developers will be to provide a product, both at the scale of Town Center and the scale of the individual housing unit, that will appeal to these new households. Single-family homes made up 76.7% of the sales in Vernon Township in 2015, so one might expect nearly a quarter of those 4,630 new households to be inclined to purchase multifamily housing. In the past, however, such households have been attracted to townhouses or condos in a lake community or resort area. Thus, Town Center must provide amenities – including shopping, dining, and entertainment, as well as attractive architecture and vibrant public spaces – within walking distance of residential areas situated in a pleasant environment. These amenities in Town Center may be different in character to those at nearby mountain resorts and lakes but must be competitive in terms of appeal and uniqueness.

### *Retail Market Demand*

Demand for retail building space is driven by consumer spending. Residents living in proximity to shopping centers and districts provide the majority of the consumer spending that supports retail businesses in those centers and districts. People working in the area provide some additional spending to support retail businesses. Finally, visitors also spend money that supports shopping centers and districts.

### *Retail Market Basics*

Below is an explanation of terms used in retail market analysis.

#### *Trade Area*

A trade area is the geographic area from which a retail center or district will draw the majority of its customers. Sophisticated market-analysis models for individual retailers often define primary, secondary, and even tertiary trade areas. It is generally sufficient, however, for an early stage market analysis to define a single primary trade area. Several factors affect the size and boundaries of the trade area, including the type of shopping center, location of competitive retail facilities, physical barriers, and visibility and access to major roads and highways. In retail analysis for planning purposes, the radial definition of a trade area or a corresponding drive-time is usually sufficient.

### Household Spending

The household is the basic economic unit at the center of retail analysis. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes an annual report on the Consumer Expenditure Survey, detailing how Americans spend their annual income. Esri interprets that data for individual locations based on the demographics, incomes, and lifestyle characteristics of the households residing in that area. Esri reports the data using standard retail business categories from the North American Industrial Classification System.

### Retail Sales Estimate

The Esri spending report also estimates the amount of retail sales at businesses operating in the trade area. The Esri estimates are based on the U.S. Census Bureau's Economic Census and information obtained from proprietary data sources, such as Dunn and Bradstreet and InfoUSA.

### Sales Efficiency

Sales efficiency is the average annual sales per square foot of retail businesses. It varies by store type, by individual business, and location of a retail chain. This report estimates retail sales efficiency by type of store based on information from Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers / The SCORE, published by the Urban Land Institute and the International Council of Shopping Centers, annual 10K reports filed by retail corporations with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, and the U.S. Census Bureau's Economic Census.

### Calculating Retail Market Demand

The market demand is based on the difference between the amount of consumer spending by trade-area households, workers, and visitors and the amount of trade-area retail business sales. When trade area households, workers, and visitors spend more at a particular type of retail store than those types of stores in the trade area, residents are spending money outside of the trade area. This situation is often referred to as retail leakage, or just leakage, and the amount of the difference is the retail opportunity. In the opposite situation, when a trade area's retail businesses have more retail sales than trade area households spend, the businesses are attracting customers from beyond the trade area. In this situation, the difference between sales and spending is often referred to as the retail surplus.

### Types of Retail

Retail markets can be categorized into two broad groups: convenience goods and services, and comparison goods. As described in more detail in the following sections, businesses in these two broad categories typically have different location needs and often operate in different types of retail centers and districts. Table 13 describes the conventional typology for the scale of retail centers and districts. Subsequent discussion in this section further describes the types of retail relevant to Town Center.

**Table 13: Types of Shopping Centers**

Shopping Center Type	Building Size Range (sq ft)	Shopping Center Trade Area Radius (in miles)
Convenience	< 30,000	½
Neighborhood	30,000–100,000	1½
Community	100,000–450,000	3–5
Regional	300,000–900,000	8
Superregional	500,000–2 million	12

Source: Michael D. Beyard et al., *Shopping Center Development Handbook*, 3rd ed., Washington D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1999.

### Convenience Goods and Services

Convenience goods and services are those that people need on a regular basis. For these regular purchases, most consumers know where to get what they want and whether their discriminator is price, convenience, or quality. Groceries, medicines, and hair care are typical convenience goods and services. Because convenience goods and services usually have low margins and high sales volumes, convenience retailers are located throughout an area, close to concentrations of households. Convenience goods retailers typically operate in convenience-goods centers and neighborhood-scale centers, and they typically draw customers from a ½- to 1½-mile radius in suburban areas and twice that in rural areas.

### Comparison Goods

Comparison goods are retail items that consumers purchase more infrequently or rarely. For these purchases, consumers tend to compare goods across brands and across retailers. This habit of comparing induces retailers to locate near each other. It also promotes larger-scale retailers who can stock many different brands of similar products. Clothing, electronics, and furniture are quintessential comparison goods. Because comparison goods tend to have higher margins and lower sales volumes and because consumers purchase these goods infrequently, comparison goods retailers tend to locate close to major transportation corridors that give access to a greater number of consumers. These businesses typically locate in

community-scale centers and regional-scale centers, and they draw customers from a 3- to 5- mile radius up to an 8- to 12-mile radius in a suburban area and up to twice that in rural areas. Indeed, in rural areas, consumers may have to drive even further to access regional-scale retailers.

### Eating and Drinking Places

Eating and drinking places are a cross between the convenience and comparison types. Sometimes consumers are looking for convenience when buying food away from home. Fast food and limited-service restaurants typically satisfy this convenience demand. Other times, consumers are looking for higher quality and are willing to travel longer distances and pay more for the cuisine they desire. Full-service restaurants typically satisfy this demand. According to the EDAC survey, eating and drinking places and experience-oriented shopping are the most desired types of retail in Vernon.

### Experience-Oriented Shopping

A final, hybrid type of retail is experience-oriented shopping, where the experience of the trip is of equal if not greater importance than the material need for a good or service. The experience's value may accrue from socialization with friends, entertainment, or the quality of the place. Downtowns, new town centers, lifestyle centers, and even shopping malls all attempt to create an enjoyable shopping experience through providing a mix of businesses and amenities. Most consumers infrequently invest their time in experiential shopping and are willing to travel further and forego quick and easy access for the value of the experience. Experience-oriented shopping is a destination trip and can draw from a community, regional, or even superregional trade area, even if it does not offer the commensurate amount of retail square footage.

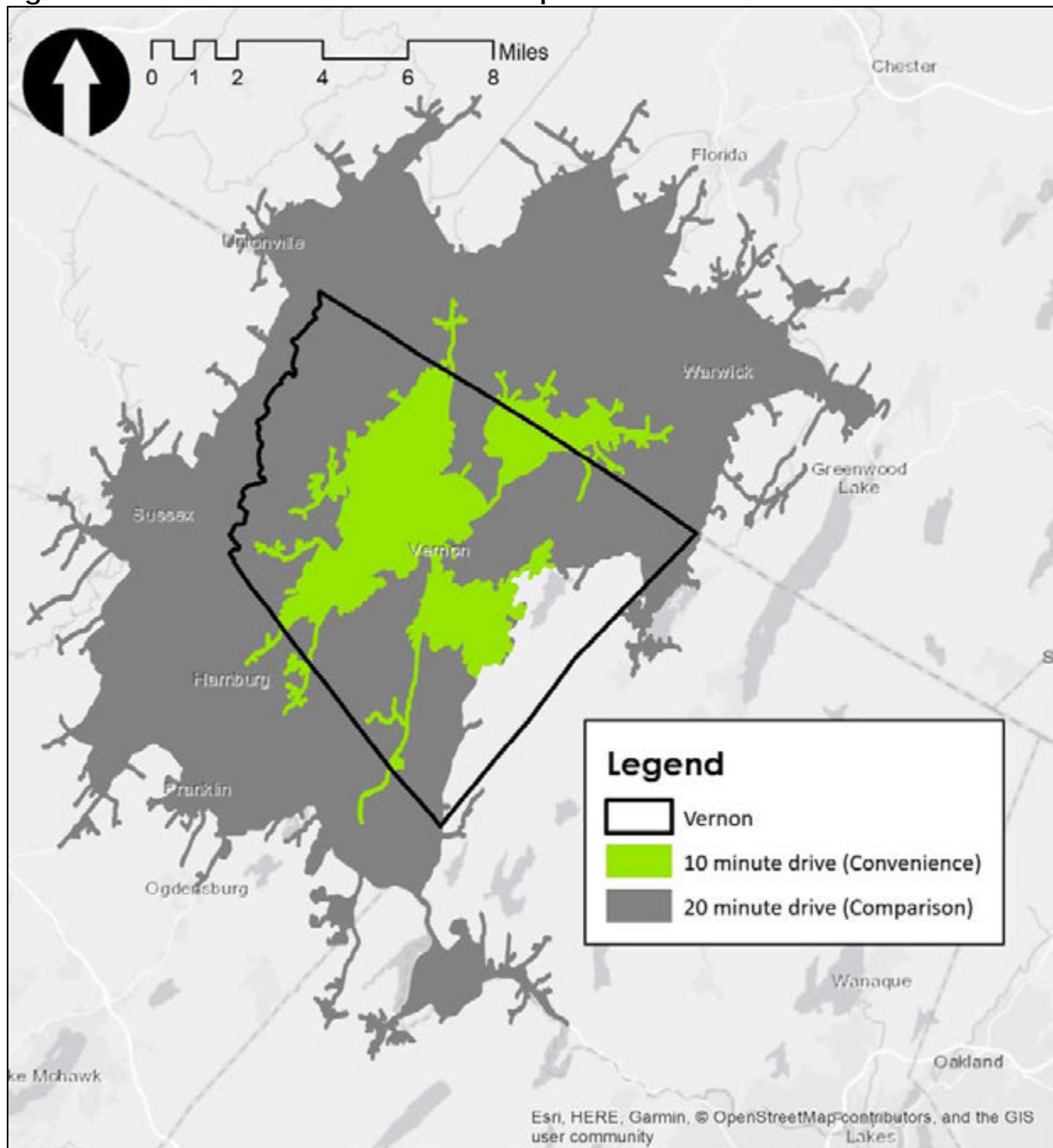
### Implications for Town Center

Town Center, like other traditional main street districts in more rural areas, would likely serve all of the previously described roles. First and foremost, it should be expected to serve as the center for convenience goods and services for households living within a short walk or drive. It does not have enough population within a reasonable drive to support large-scale chain retailers that provide comparison goods. Nevertheless, it should be expected to support small-scale independent and boutique businesses that sell comparison goods, such as clothing and accessories. Eating and drinking places are a hallmark of a successful downtown, and Town Center should be expected to provide both convenience restaurants as well as destination restaurants. Most importantly, Vernon Township clearly envisions Town Center as an experience-oriented shopping district.

### *Retail Market Potential*

This analysis uses a 10-minute drive-time to define the trade area for convenience goods and services. This area is about twice as large as what might be used in a more suburban setting, but it does approximate something of a mid-point between Town Center and Sussex, Franklin, and Warwick where there are supermarket-anchored shopping centers, essential convenience goods, and services shopping centers. The analysis uses a 20-minute drive-time to define the trade area for comparison goods, which is not much larger than what would be used in a more suburban context. However, a larger trade area would extend too close to community- and regional-scale centers—such as Westfall Town Center, Harriman Commons, Sussex Commons Lifestyle Outlets, and Riverdale Crossing—which would overstate the demand for retail businesses in Town Center.

Figure 14: Convenience Goods and Comparison Goods Trade Areas



Source: ArcGIS Business Analyst



Market Potential for Convenience Goods

The market potential for convenience goods and services in the 10-minute drive-time trade area is shown in Table 14. The data indicate that there is sufficiently more spending by trade-area households than sales by trade area businesses, enough to potentially support up to 62,000 square feet of more retail businesses. This gap represents the leakage or missed retail opportunity within the convenience goods trade area. Convenience goods and services businesses in the Town Center area could expect to earn a majority of nearby residents’ spending on their goods, but not all of it. The data in Table 14 provide an estimate of the share of residents’ spending that could be reasonable for Town Center, and this percentage share is used to quantify the potential absorption in the final column.

**Table 14: Sq. Footage Market Potential for Convenience Goods (2016 and 2021)**

Store Type	Building Space Support, 2016	Building Space Support, 2021	Town Center Capture Rate	Absorption Potential
Food & Beverage	39,100	40,000	75%	30,000
Health & Personal Care	31,600	32,000	75%	24,000
Gasoline Stations	3,570	3,650	50%	1,820
Limited-Service Eating Places	920	1,390	75%	1,040
Drinking Places (Alcohol)	4,660	4,710	75%	3,530
Additional Support by Workers	1,630	1,650	100%	1,650
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,500</b>	<b>83,400</b>		<b>62,000</b>

Source: PlaceWorks, 2016

Market Potential for Comparison Goods

Table 15 depicts the market potential for comparison goods in the 20-minute drive-time trade area. Households within a 20-minute drive of Town Center are spending more than businesses in that same area are making in sales, enough to suggest that the area could potentially support up to 217,000 more square feet of retail businesses. Town Center makes up a smaller portion of the comparison goods trade area, hence the smaller capture rates than in Table 14. As with convenience goods, Town Center’s potential capture rate is used to calculate the absorption potential for each type of comparison good.

**Table 15: Sq. Footage Market Potential for Comparison Goods (2016 and 2021)**

<b>Store Type</b>	<b>Building Space Support, 2016</b>	<b>Building Space Support, 2021</b>	<b>Town Center Capture Rate</b>	<b>Absorption Potential</b>
Furniture & Home Furnishings	224,000	228,000	10%	22,800
Electronics & Appliances	158,900	161,600	10%	16,160
Building Materials, Garden Equipment & Supply	91,100	93,300	10%	9,330
Clothing & Accessories	327,000	332,000	15%	49,800
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Books & Music	171,600	174,600	10%	17,500
General Merchandise	362,000	370,000	10%	37,000
Miscellaneous Retailers	99,000	101,900	20%	20,400
Full-Service Restaurants	143,000	146,200	30%	43,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,577,000</b>	<b>1,608,000</b>		<b>217,000</b>

Source: PlaceWorks, 2016

## Placemaking

“WHAT IS PLACEMAKING? As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.” – Project for Public Spaces

Vernon Township’s independently-developed villages and hamlets, each with their own character and relationship to the natural environment, are ripe for placemaking interventions. In his book *Walkable City*, planner Jeff Speck dubs placemaking efforts as “land-appreciation tools” for their ability to create located value (Speck, 2012). Town Center, along with Glenwood, Highland Lakes, etc., would benefit from concentrated strategies to create unique, pedestrian-friendly places.

### Recreation and Relaxation

While Vernon is graced with many recreational resources (for hiking, biking, kayaking, skiing, etc.), there are opportunities to pair these activities with food and drink establishments catering to tired travelers after a long day outdoors. Microbreweries, restaurants, convenience stores, and lounges located near trailheads and other recreational ending points could help expand a visitor’s time in Vernon and create a mutually supportive relationship of open space recreation and economic development. These establishments could be tailored to the natural resource(s) nearby, further emphasizing the place-based nature of the commercial and social activity.

Trailhead Brewing Company (St. Charles, Missouri) and New Terrain Brewing Company (Golden, Colorado) take advantage of prime locations adjacent to Missouri’s Katy Trail State Park, pictured below, and Colorado’s North Table Mountain, as post-recreation destinations.



Photo: Flickr/MoBikeFed



Source: Trailhead Brewing Company

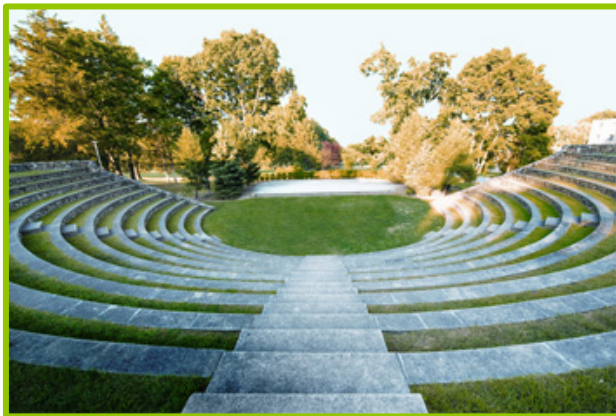
### Mobile Vendors and Pop-up Shops

Temporary commercial or non-residential uses such as mobile food vendors and pop-up shops can help draw locals and tourists to events in Vernon Township. Small businesses by nature, these short-term establishments allow retailers to test out new markets or products and begin operations while looking for a permanent location. Events such as Vernon Day and Food Truck Festival and the Vernon Street Fair and Farmers Expo capitalize on this opportunity to celebrate local businesses and transform underutilized space into a lively public realm (see *Events* section).

### Public Art and Outdoor Entertainment

Inviting public spaces attract visitors with their eyes and ears (and sometimes, noses). Public art creates visual interest and can showcase local history and artisans. For outdoor musical, theatrical, and other public performances and events, the Township should investigate potential sites near Town Center for an outdoor entertainment venue, such as a naturally-landscaped amphitheater. 68.2% of EDAC survey respondents identified live music as a community event that they'd love to bring to Vernon.

The Outdoor Stage at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey (Florham Park, New Jersey) and the more intimate Woodland Amphitheater (Mendham Township, New Jersey) provide nearby examples of simple outdoor entertainment venues in harmony with the natural environment.



Source: College of St. Elizabeth



Source: Schiff Nature Preserve

### Wayfinding

A comprehensive wayfinding scheme should not only help visitors reach their destination quickly and easily, it should create a cohesive welcome to Vernon's attractions, introduce new or unfamiliar destinations and districts, and reflect community character. The scale of signage should cater to a visitor's likely transit mode (i.e. signs in pedestrian areas can be constructed at a smaller, human scale).

### Strategies

- Identify areas with strong connection to trails, and means to attract food/drink businesses
- Market local small businesses and the Shop Vernon program
- Identify areas for an outdoor movie night or concert in Summer 2019, and areas with the appropriate sloping topography for an amphitheater
- Identify and address shortcomings in wayfinding to businesses and sites of interest

## Recommendations

**Prioritize** the completion of infrastructure (water, sewer, sidewalks) throughout the Town Center area. Once completed, advertise the progress to alert prospective developers/redevelopers.

**Establish** a dedicated “business concierge” to guide new businesses through each step of the permitting process, providing a boilerplate guide for different types of businesses. This business center should also inventory and advertise infrastructure improvements to potential businesses.

**Complete** Vernon’s proposed trail system, promote its use via the Greenway Action Advisory Committee, and produce an updated brochure/map available at local businesses and the Township website.

**Coordinate** event planning and wayfinding with the Greenway Action Advisory Committee to ensure that the people who are interested in Vernon’s trail system are also informed about Town Center, other destinations in the Township, and events going on nearby through social media or appropriate signage.

**Integrate** the Western Highlands Scenic Byway plans and Greenway plans. Travelers along the Scenic Byway should know, through either color-code signage, kiosks, or street furniture, how the Scenic Byway connects to Vernon’s trail system. The Monmouth County Cultural & Heritage Virtual Tours website (Monmouth County, 2019) is an excellent example of a combined Scenic Byway, historic and cultural sites of interest, and recreational trails database.

**Strengthen** connections between the various communities in the Township (McAfee, Highland Lakes, Glenwood, Town Center, etc.) through transit such as a regular shuttle bus between destinations, and communication including social media and newsletters regarding Township events. 67.6% of EDAC survey respondents named the Township Facebook page as a preferred means of communication.

**Identify** locations for potential electric vehicle charging stations to help alleviate Vernon residents’ gas expenditures for their exceptionally long commutes, and bring in visitors from all over the region where charging stations are scarce.

**Devise** and implement placemaking strategies to create unique neighborhoods through recreation, the arts, events, and wayfinding.

**Encourage** redevelopment in underutilized commercial areas such as Town Center and the former Legends Resort. This redevelopment will rely heavily on the provision of infrastructure.

**Allow** greater flexibility in the Town Center zoning district in terms of permitted uses, parking requirements, and human-scale development with the implementation of a form-based code.

**Advocate** for local farms through the promotion of agritourism and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Agritourism operations should list their business and events on the State’s tourism website, VisitNJ.org

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Appendix: Implementation Schedule Template



## SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

### Implementation Schedule Template

Action Item	Priority Level	Timeframe	Cost Estimate	Objective(s)	Success Indicator(s)	Funding	Responsibility	Partners	Land Ownership	Note
<b>Establish a dedicated business concierge</b>	High	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00				Township		n/a	
Sub-action #1: Draft guide of current permitting process	High	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00				Township	EDAC, Township Planner		
Sub-action #2: Determine capacity of role	Medium	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00							
<b>Create a public amphitheater</b>	High	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00						Township of Vernon	
Sub-action #1:	High	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00							
Sub-action #2: Develop performance programming plan	Medium	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00	To establish long term vision for amphitheater's use.	Dozens of families attend an outdoor concert.	LCWF, arts funding	Township	VHS, local musicians, Chamber		
<b>Complete Vernon trail system</b>	High	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00							
Sub-action #1:	Medium	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00							
Sub-action #2:	Low	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00							
<b>Complete infrastructure improvements</b>	High	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00							
Sub-action #1:	Low	X-X months	\$XX,XXX.00							