

VERNON TOWNSHIP
Sussex County
MUNICIPAL SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT



February 2009

Prepared by
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**MUNICIPAL SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT
VERNON TOWNSHIP, SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

Acknowledgements:

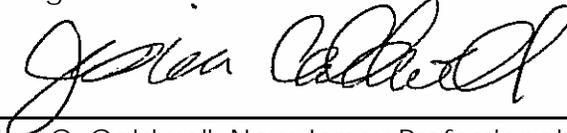
PLAN ENDORSEMENT COMMITTEE

Austin Carew, Mayor
Melinda Carlton, Township Manager
David Gornstein, Land Use Board Member
Gino Misciagna, Land Use Board Member
Michael Furrey, Environmental Commission Member
Charlie Blessing, Citizen
Kevin Jones, Citizen
Mary Emelius, Citizen

Professional Staff

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Jessica C. Caldwell, P.P., A.I.C.P., HPA Principal Planner
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The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12.



Jessica C. Caldwell, New Jersey Professional Planner #5944

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INTRODUCTION

With continued growth and increasingly complex State regulations, Vernon Township recognizes the many benefits of working with the State Planning Commission and creating planning documents which are consistent with the State Plan. Through the Plan Endorsement process, Vernon is also seeking to extend its Center Designation, which established a two core center along NJSH Route 94 in the Township. For these and a variety of other positive benefits, the Township is seeking Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission. The Office of Smart Growth has updated their guidelines for Plan Endorsement which requires municipalities to follow a ten step process. Vernon fulfilled Step 1 by completing a pre-petition meeting with the Office of Smart Growth and other state agencies on December 9, 2008. The Township Council had previously fulfilled Step 2 by appointing a Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee by resolution on January 24, 2008. This document represents, Step 3, the completion of a Municipal Self Assessment Report. This Self Assessment Report will review Vernon's plans for consistency with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and will act as the Township's petition for Plan Endorsement.

Purpose of Plan Endorsement

The purpose of the Plan Endorsement process is to reach consistency among municipal, county, regional and state agency plans with the State Plan, and to facilitate the implementation of these plans. Plan Endorsement seeks to:

1. Encourage municipal, county, regional and state agency plans to be coordinated and support each other to achieve the goals of the State Plan;
2. Encourage municipalities and counties to plan on a regional basis while recognizing the fundamental role of the municipal master plan and development regulations;

3. Consider the entire municipality, including Centers, Cores, Nodes and Environs, within the context of regional systems;
4. Provide an opportunity for all government entities and the public to discuss and resolve common planning issues;
5. Provide a framework to guide and support State investment programs and permitting assistance in the implementation of municipal, county and regional plans that meet Statewide objectives;
6. Learn new planning approaches and techniques from municipal, county and regional governments for dissemination throughout the State and possible incorporation into the State Plan. (The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan, 2001, page 14); and
7. Ensure that petitions for Plan Endorsement are consistent with applicable State land use statutes and regulations.

Benefits of Plan Endorsement

Following State Planning Commission endorsement of a municipality's plan as consistent with the State Plan, state agencies will provide benefits to the municipality that will assist in implementing the endorsed plan. This assistance will include technical assistance, direct state capital investment, priority for state grants and low-interest loans, preferential interest rates, and a coordinated regulatory review for projects consistent with endorsed plans. In addition, Center Designation is only approved through Plan Endorsement. Center Designation offers many benefits such as lower utility connection fees for new development, the ability to establish and maintain sewer service areas, and the ability to receive funding for special planning activities and infrastructure projects. Vernon Township is seeking Plan Endorsement in order to have access to the benefits provided by state agencies for endorsed municipalities.

Consistency with Goals of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan seeks to “achieve all the State Planning Goals by coordinating public and private actions to guide future growth into compact, ecologically designed forms of development and redevelopment and to protect the Environs, consistent with the Statewide Policies and the State Plan Policy Map.” (The State Development and Redevelopment Plan General Plan Strategy).

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan) divides the Township into three Planning Areas. The classifications are; Rural Planning Area PA4, Rural / Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area PA4B, and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area PA5. The State Plan policies for the Planning Areas limit development and encourage protection of the “Environs”. Development and economic growth are recommended in “Planned Centers”, which are served by sewer, water and transportation corridors.

Vernon received Center Designation from the State Planning Commission for a two core center on July 16, 2003. The two cores are the Vernon Center Core and the Mt. Creek Core. This Center Designation is set to expire on July 16, 2009. One notable goal of Plan Endorsement is for the Township to receive an extension of its Center Designation. The Township has been working on plans for the Center since 1995 and invested more than \$12 million dollars on infrastructure to support the Center. The vision and planning concepts for the Center have changed little since the designation of the Center. Center Designation was originally sought by the Township to create a “downtown” area that promotes a unified identity and sense of place in a geographically large and diverse Township. The Township’s Center Plans remain consistent with the goals of the State Plan. Reviewing these plans and those that impact the areas outside the Center will show that Vernon Township’s plans are consistent with the goals of the State Plan.

Vernon's Goals in Seeking Plan Endorsement

Vernon Township has the largest population of any municipality in Sussex County and is unique for its recreational tourism found at its ski resorts, hotels and other attractions. Even still, the Township is a rural community with farms and open spaces that attract visitors, as well as preserve much of the Township as open space. Most recently, the entire Township was declared part of the Highlands Region with a large swath of the Township in the Preservation Area and the remainder in the Planning Areas. From 1990 to 2000 Vernon saw the largest population increases of any Sussex County Municipality. This growth, when coupled with the large amount of environmentally sensitive areas in the municipality, makes it increasingly important to employ smart growth and planning in the Township.

Vernon is seeking Plan Endorsement to maintain its Town Center which will accommodate population growth in a compact development pattern while furthering Vernon's goal to be a regional recreational and agricultural tourism center. This is important in the Township because the tax base is currently 90 percent residential and 10 percent commercial. This creates a heavy tax burden on residential properties as the average commercial to residential ratio in the country is closer to 60 percent residential and 40 percent commercial. A better balance between commercial and residential development in the Township will create greater tax stability in the Township.

The areas outside of the Town Center will naturally be limited from any substantial development because of the Highlands designation. For this reason, the Center Designation becomes even more important in addressing the land use needs of the Township. Vernon also seeks assistance from the State to address many of its planning needs via grants and assistance programs. Because of the Highlands designations and recent efforts by the New Jersey Department of

Environmental Protection to limit Vernon's sewer service areas, Vernon is seeking assistance in maintaining the boundaries of its existing sewer service areas to accommodate growth.

The Vernon Township Council promotes the following goals for Plan Endorsement:

- Concentrate growth into the designated Town Center and those growth corridors along NJSH Route 94 and County Route 517 in the McAfee area where existing sewer facilities are located.
- Maintain the characteristics of a rural and environmentally sensitive area while accommodating responsible economic growth.
- Enhance regional and Township recreational opportunities.
- Preserve large tracts of open space and farmland properties in the environs.
- Encourage mechanisms which conserve natural resources and permit resource-based tourism to flourish.
- Provide housing diversity for low income families and senior citizens.
- Encourage redevelopment parcel developers to provide for economic stability while preserving the environs.
- Promote linkages between open space and recreational activities by connecting the Town Center and environs via greenway corridors and a bikeway/trail system.
- Regionalize municipal, county and state activities which provide cost savings to the public.
- Encourage state investment in eco-tourism activities which promote the Skylands/Highlands area of Vernon Township.
- Promote preservation of historic and cultural resources through cooperative partnerships between public and private entities.

- Promote use of and access to the Appalachian Trail in the Township and the Boardwalk area of the trail, being one of the most unique features on a 2,400 mile trail system.

LOCATION AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Vernon Township is located in the northeastern corner of Sussex County and encompasses 70.8 square miles. It is surrounded by two Sussex County municipalities: Wantage Township and Hardyston Township. Vernon also borders West Milford Township in Passaic County to the east and Warwick Township in New York State to the north. Vernon is located in a geographic province of ridges and valleys, including the Hamburg, Wawayanda, and Pochuck Mountains. Vernon is a regional tourist destination and is the home of the only two ski resorts in New Jersey: Mountain Creek and Hidden Valley. Other area attractions include the Mountain Creek Water Park, Legends Hotel and Resort and Crystal Springs Resort's Minerals Hotel and Elements Spa.

Vernon has large areas of land which are preserved as parks and open space including: Wawayanda State Park, Hamburg Mountain State Park, and the Walkill River National Wildlife Refuge. The Township also encompasses the Canistear Reservoir and its surrounding area which is part of the Newark Pequannock Watershed. The entire municipality is located within the New Jersey Highlands with the majority of the Township in the Highlands Preservation Area. The regional planning entities for Vernon are the Sussex County Planning Board and the Highlands Council. The Sussex County Strategic Growth Plan received Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission in February 2007. The Township works closely with Sussex County to ensure that Township plans are consistent with the County's Strategic Growth Plan. Vernon is in the process of completing an initial assessment to determine the next steps to achieve Plan Conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Background

Vernon Township encompasses 70.8 square miles, and is the largest municipality in Sussex County by land area. The Township makes up about 13 percent of the 536 square miles that comprise Sussex County, the fourth largest County in the State by land area. Vernon has the largest population of any municipality in the county with 24,686 residents, making up about 16 percent of the County's total population of 153,384 people. Vernon has almost twice as many residents as Wantage Township's 14,299 residents, which is the second largest municipality (by land area) in the County. The average household size in Vernon is 2.95 people, slightly higher than both the County average of 2.75 people and the State average of 2.68 people. Median household income in Vernon is \$67,566, nearly 14 percent less than the County median income of \$78,488 and about 18 percent higher than the State median income of \$55,146. The homeownership rate in Vernon is 85.9% and is consistent with County homeownership rates of just above 84 percent. Statewide homeownership rates are much lower at 66 percent. Vernon's housing vacancy rate is very high at 16.3 percent, which is almost double the County and State rates of 8.8 percent and 7.4 percent, respectively. The poverty rate in Vernon is 2.9 percent, lower than the County rate of 4.8 percent and the State rate of 8.5 percent. Unemployment in the Township is 4.8 percent. The County unemployment rate of 4.6% is similar to the State rate of 4.8%. (These rates are from 2004 and are likely to be higher now because of current economic conditions.)

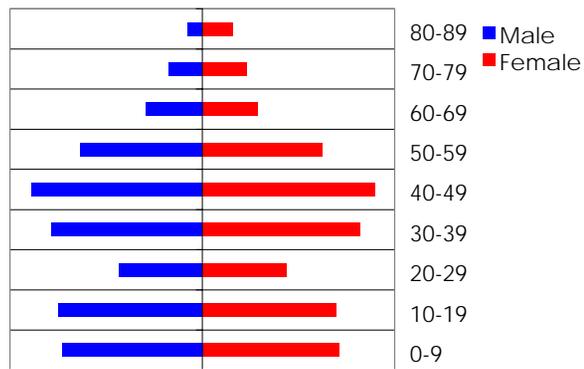
The data on the following pages is primarily from the US 2000 Census, with the exception of land area and State Department of Labor Statistics, which is from 2004.

Demographics Table	Vernon Township	Sussex County	New Jersey
Land area (sq mi)	70.8 square miles	536 square miles	7,417 sq. miles
Population	24,686	153,384	8,414,350
Households	8,368	54,811	3,064,645
Average Household Size	2.95	2.75	2.68
Housing Units	9,994	60,086	3,310,275
Home Ownership Rate	85.9%	84.1%	66%
Vacancy Rate	16.3%	8.8%	7.4%
Median Household Income	\$67,566	\$78,488	\$55,146
Per Capita Income	\$25,250	\$32,997	\$27,006
Poverty Rate	2.9%	4.0%	8.5%
Unemployment Rate (NJDOL 2004)	4.8%	4.1%	4.8%

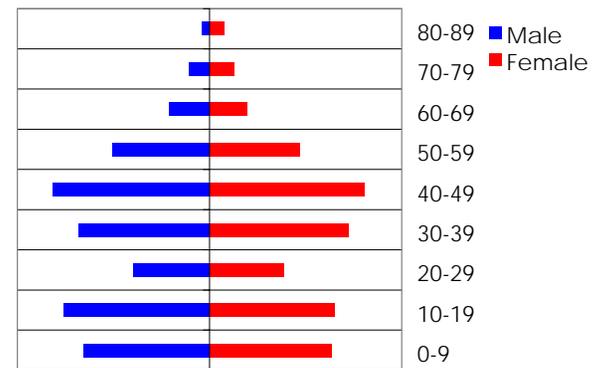
Demographic Comparison Charts – Vernon Township – Sussex County – State of New Jersey

Vernon Township is similar to Sussex County with respect to age distribution; however female cohorts over 70 years of age are larger, similar to the statewide distribution. Vernon is almost identical to Sussex County when it comes to racial diversity, but less racially diverse than New Jersey as a whole. Vernon has more construction and retail trade jobs than is typical for the State and the County. Vernon has fewer finance, insurance and real estate jobs than is typical for the State and County.

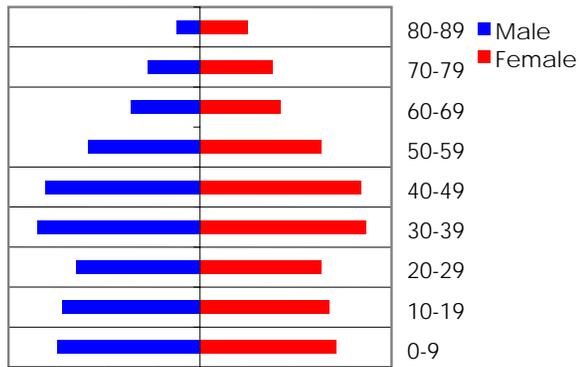
Vernon Township Age Distribution



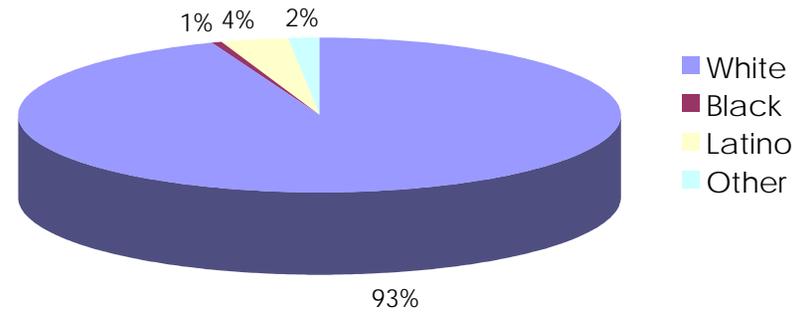
Sussex County Age Distribution



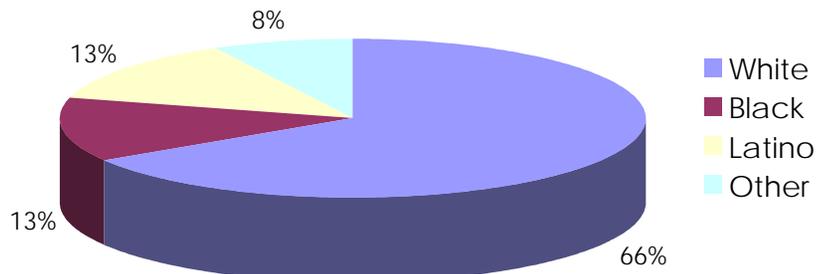
New Jersey Age Distribution



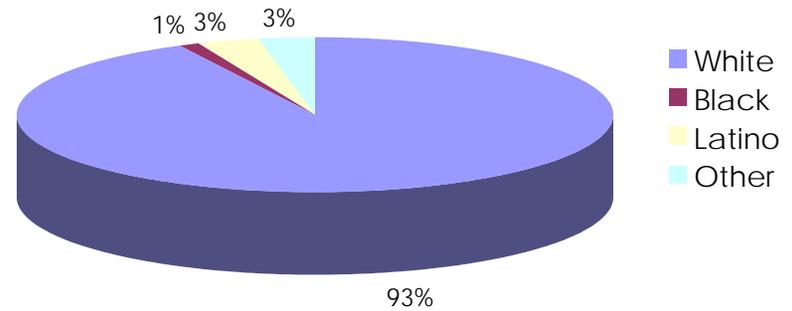
Vernon Township Racial/Ethnic Breakdown



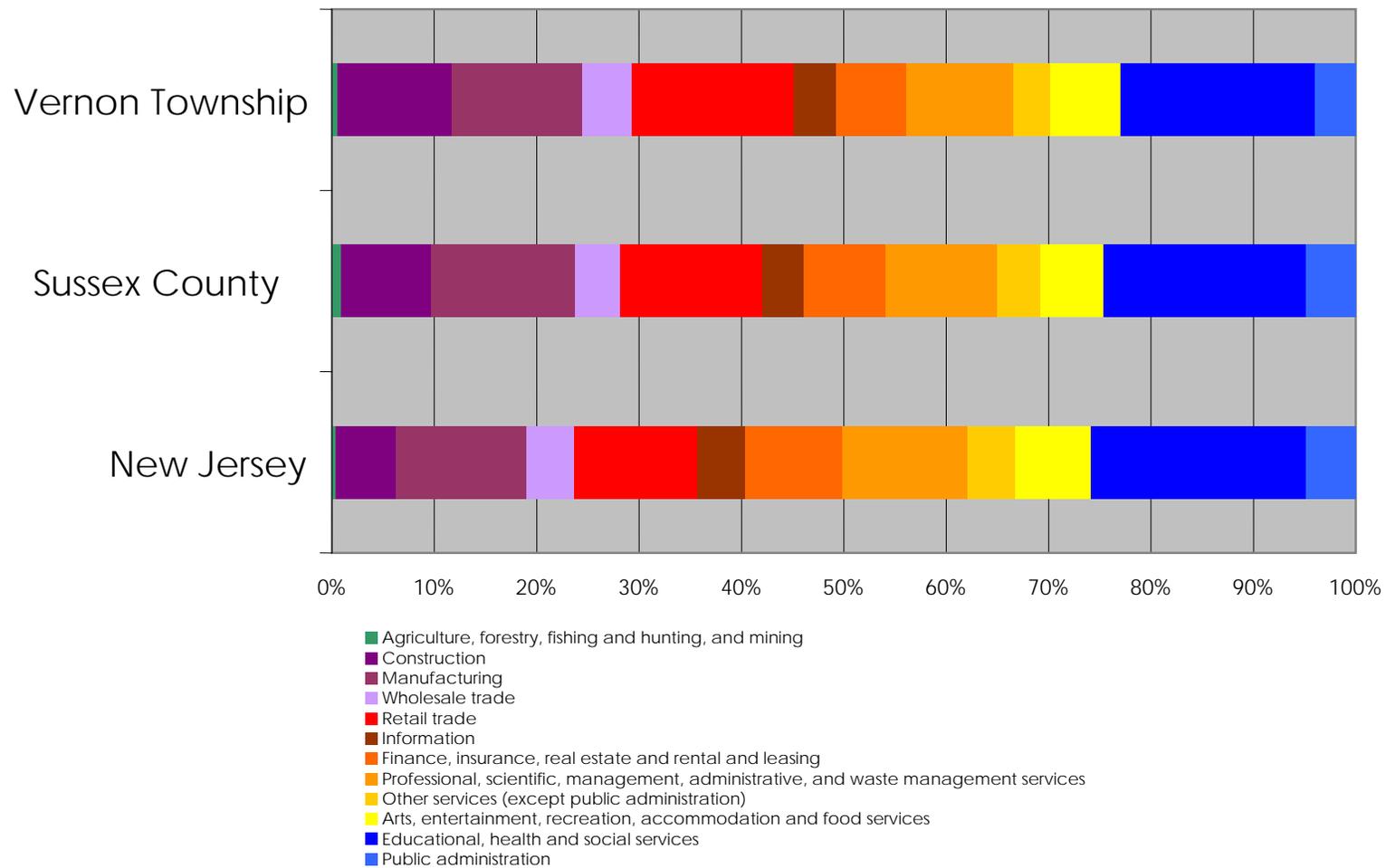
New Jersey Racial/Ethnic Breakdown



Sussex County Racial/Ethnic Breakdown



Workers by Industry



Housing and Population Projections

Vernon Township is located entirely within the Highlands Region. The Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) and the Highlands Council entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) regarding COAH compliance for Round 3 Growth Share. The MOU essentially gave municipalities in the Highlands Region an additional year to review the impact of the Highlands designation and find locations to provide affordable housing in the Region. Vernon filed its Notice of Intent to comply with the Highlands Regional Master Plan on November 13, 2008 and subsequently requested an extension of the COAH deadline to December 8, 2009. The Township is exploring the impacts of the Highlands designation and will likely utilize an adjusted growth projection for the Township either utilizing an alternate build-out under the Highlands rules or a vacant land adjustment as allowed by COAH. The Township will be exploring these options into 2009 and has not developed projections at this time.

Under COAH's current projections for Vernon, the Township has a prior round obligation of 60 units, a rehabilitation share of 31 units and a projected growth share of 389 units. The Township's growth projections are for 1,428 housing units and 1,658 jobs for the period from 2004 to 2018.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) population projections for Vernon Township predict that the Township will grow by about 25 percent from the year 2000 to the year 2030. An issue for Vernon is when and how the Township will reach full build-out and what sized population can be accommodated within that build-out. The population projections provided do not account for land use limitations, which will need to be explored further. The MPO population projections are provided in the table below:

Metropolitan Planning Organization Population Projections	
Year	Vernon Township Population
2000	24,690
2005	26,690
2010	28,690
2015	30,040
2020	31,400
2025	31,980
2030	32,700

The Highlands Act and Build-out of the Township

The first two phases of the Highlands Plan Conformance process will result in a land use capacity analysis based on existing zoning and comparing that to implementation of the Highlands Act in the Township. This will provide a further analysis of how population projections and land use will interact, with land use capacity becoming the limiting factor for the Township. Whether or not the Township conforms to the Highlands Plan in the Planning Areas will to a certain extent determine the capacity of the Planning Areas. However, it is clear that regardless of whether the Township chooses to conform in the Planning Areas or not, there will be limiting factors imposed by the NJDEP through their rules which

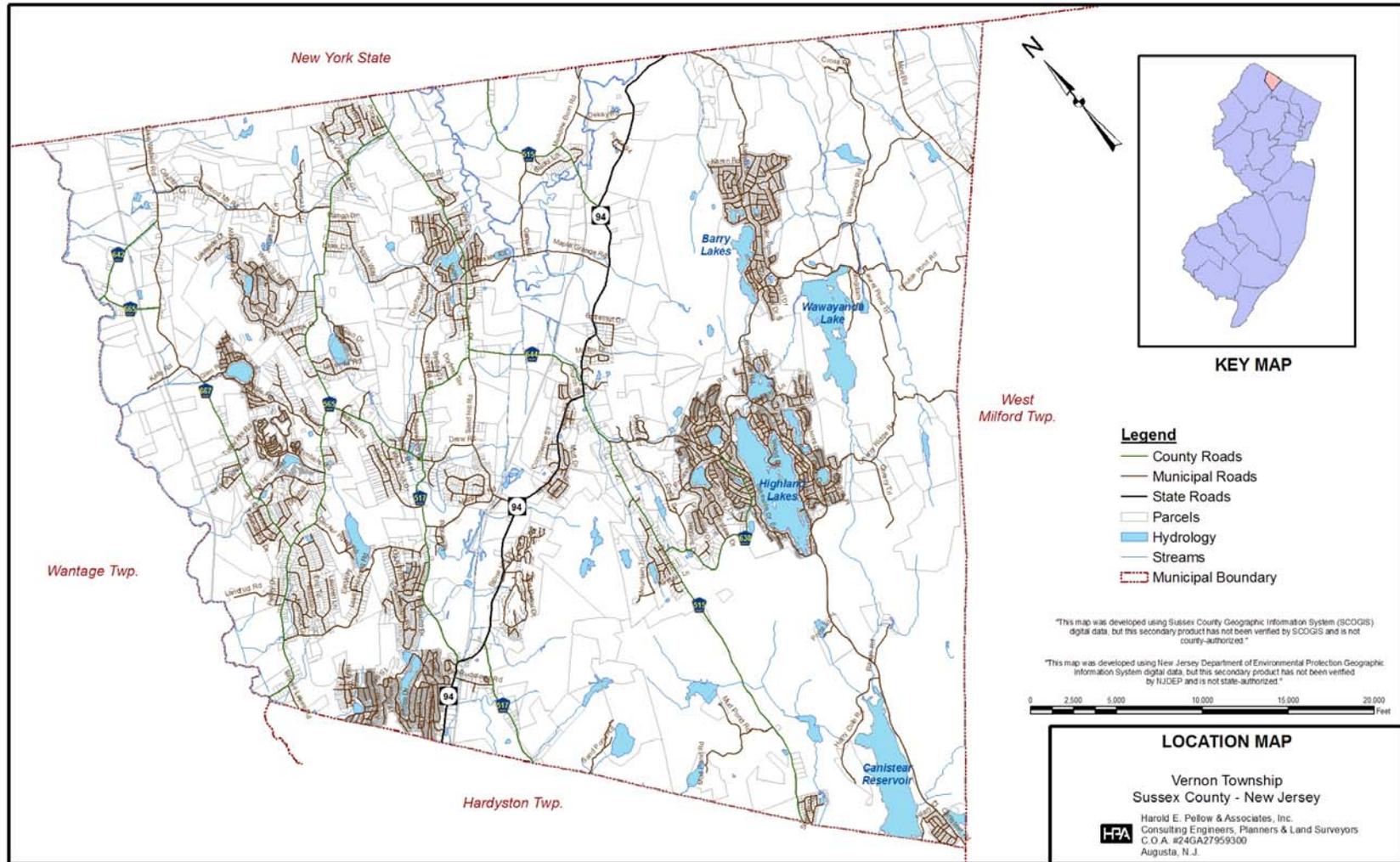
implement the Highlands Act. Clearly, this will pose a challenge to development within the Township Planning Areas and the Center in particular, where areas identified as environmentally constrained may limit the location of sewer services.

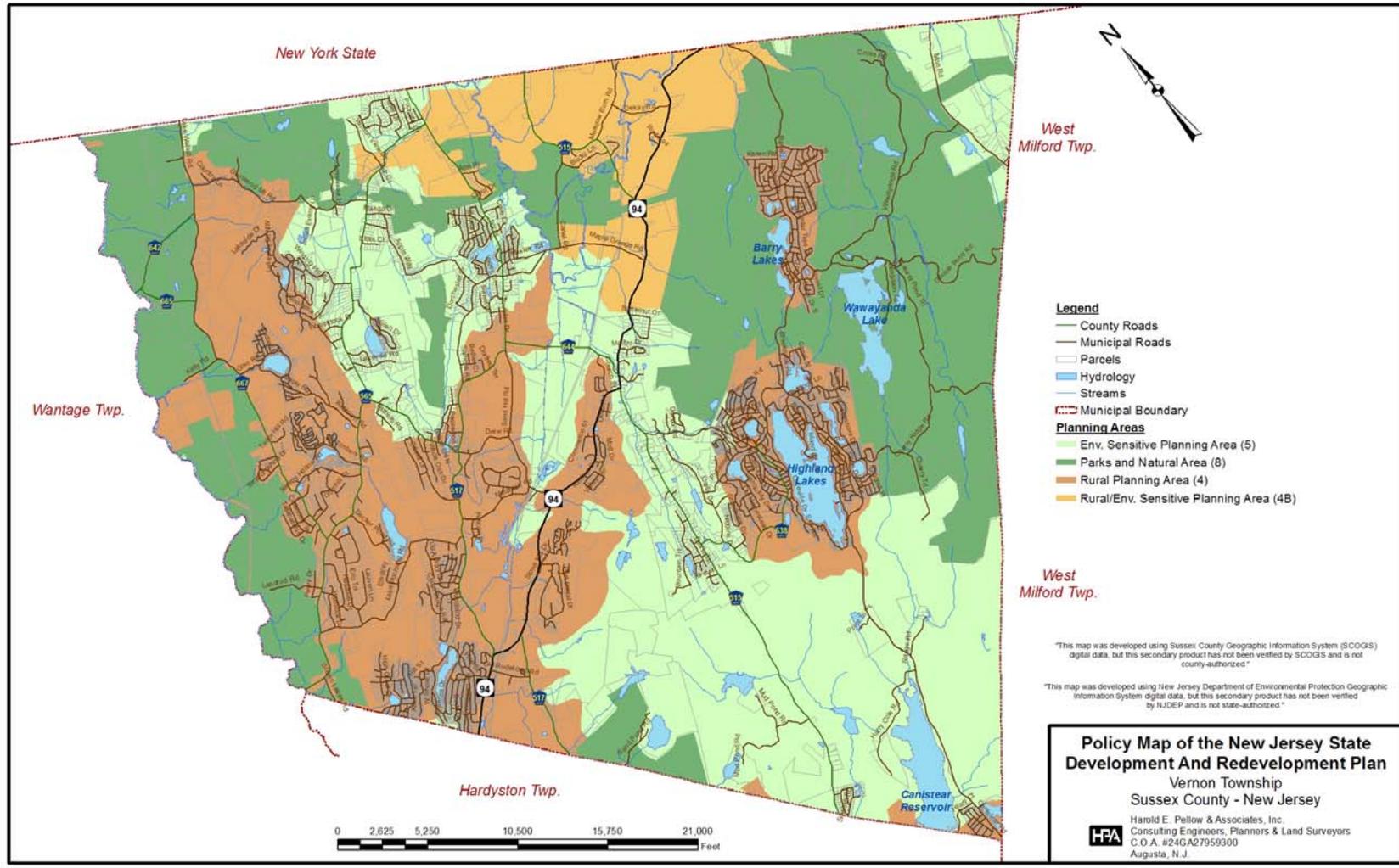
COMMUNITY INVENTORY

General Information

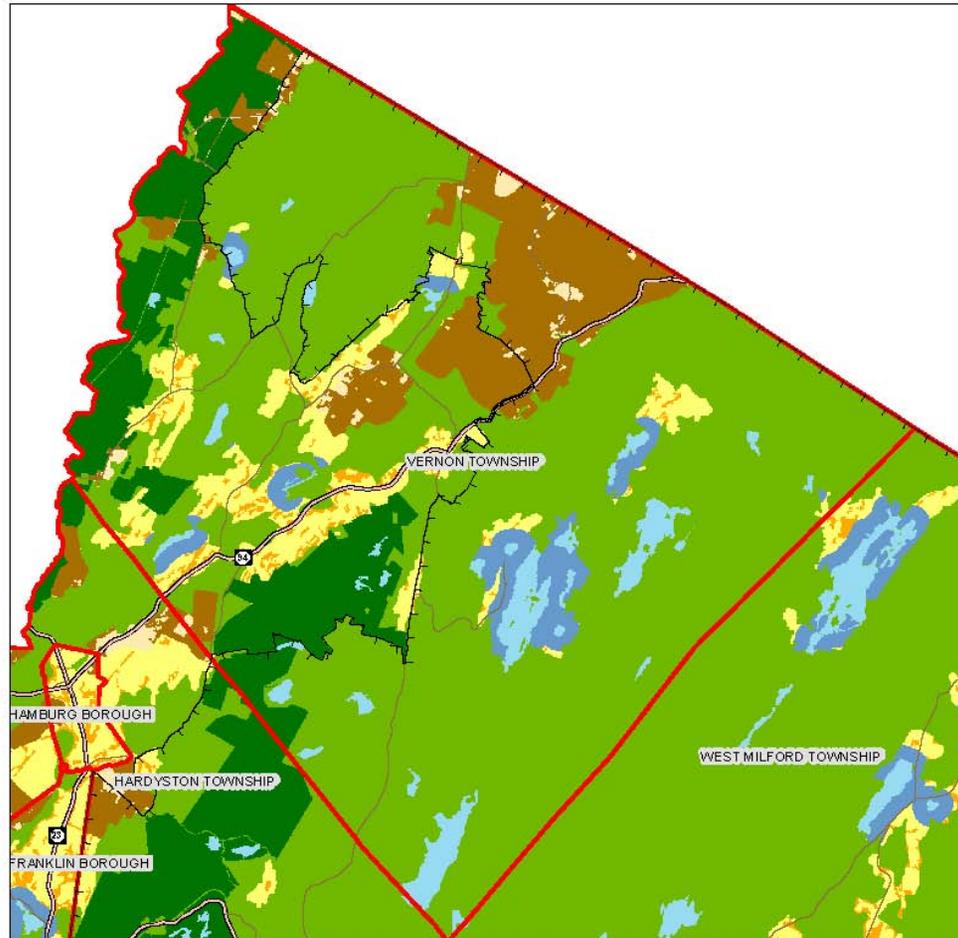
Vernon Township covers 70.8 squares miles across the northeastern corner of Sussex County. Sussex County is bordered by Pennsylvania to the northwest, New York State to the northeast, Passaic County to the east, Morris County to the southeast and Warren County to the southwest. Vernon shares borders with Wantage Township to the west, Hardyston Township to the south, West Milford Township in Passaic County to the east, and Warwick Township in New York State to the north. The entire municipality is located within the New Jersey Highlands with the majority of the Township in the Highlands Preservation Area. The Township has 15,689,000 square feet of residential development and 34,085 acres of vacant land according to the municipal tax assessor's office. The Township is in the process of updating its zoning map into a digital format. A digital copy will be provided to the Office of Smart Growth when the map is complete.

The maps on the following pages provide the municipal boundaries and location; State Planning Area Designations; Highlands Land Use Capability Map and Land Use / Land Cover for the Township.





Land Use Capability Zone Map

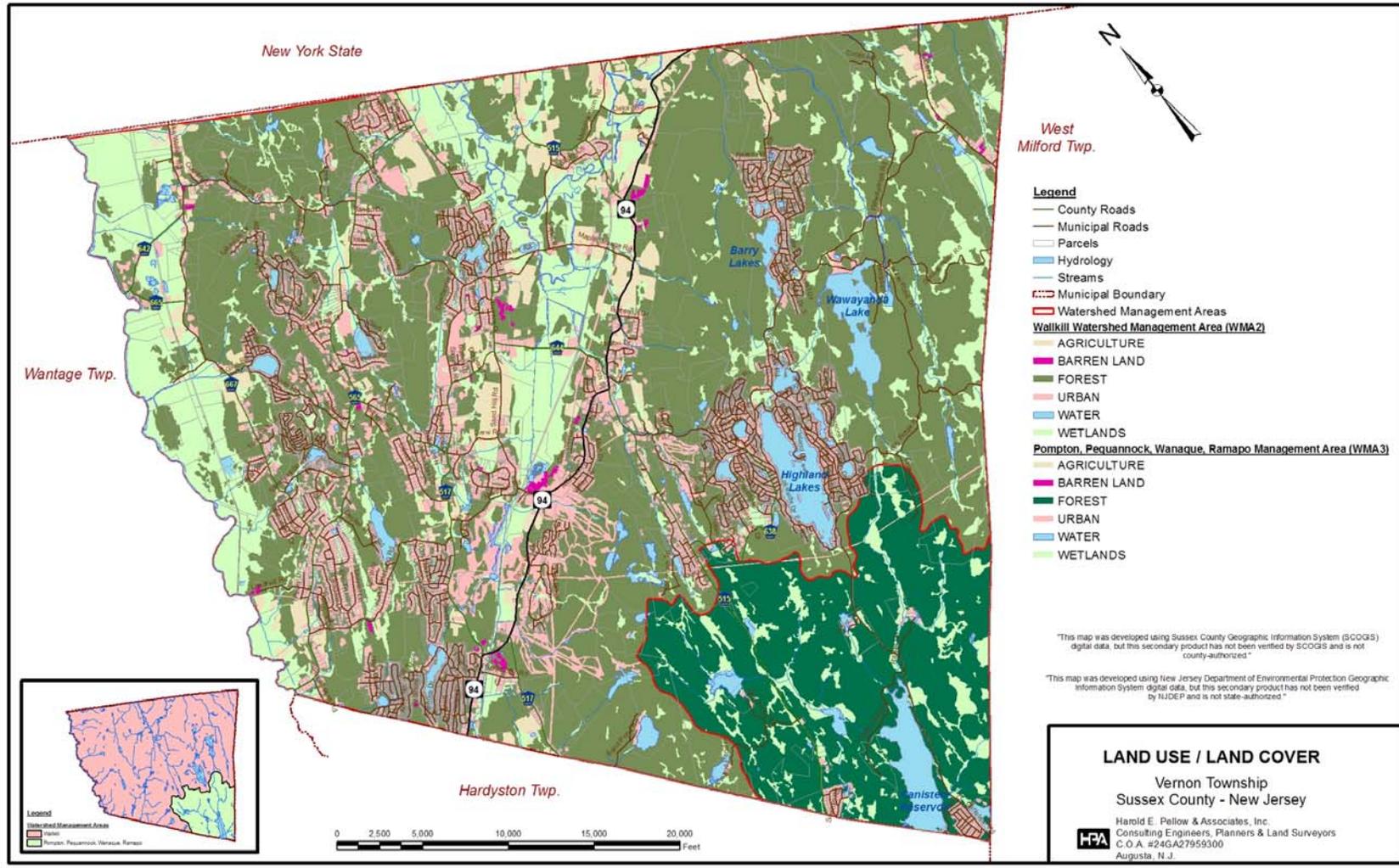


Legend

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Municipal Boundaries | PROTECTION |
| Interstate Highways | CONSERVATION |
| U.S. Routes | EXISTING COMMUNITY |
| State Routes | CONSERVATION ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSTRAINED |
| County Routes | EXISTING COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSTRAINED |
| Lakes Greater Than 10 acres | LAKE COMMUNITY |
| | WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT |

1 inch equals 1.57 miles





Natural & Cultural Features

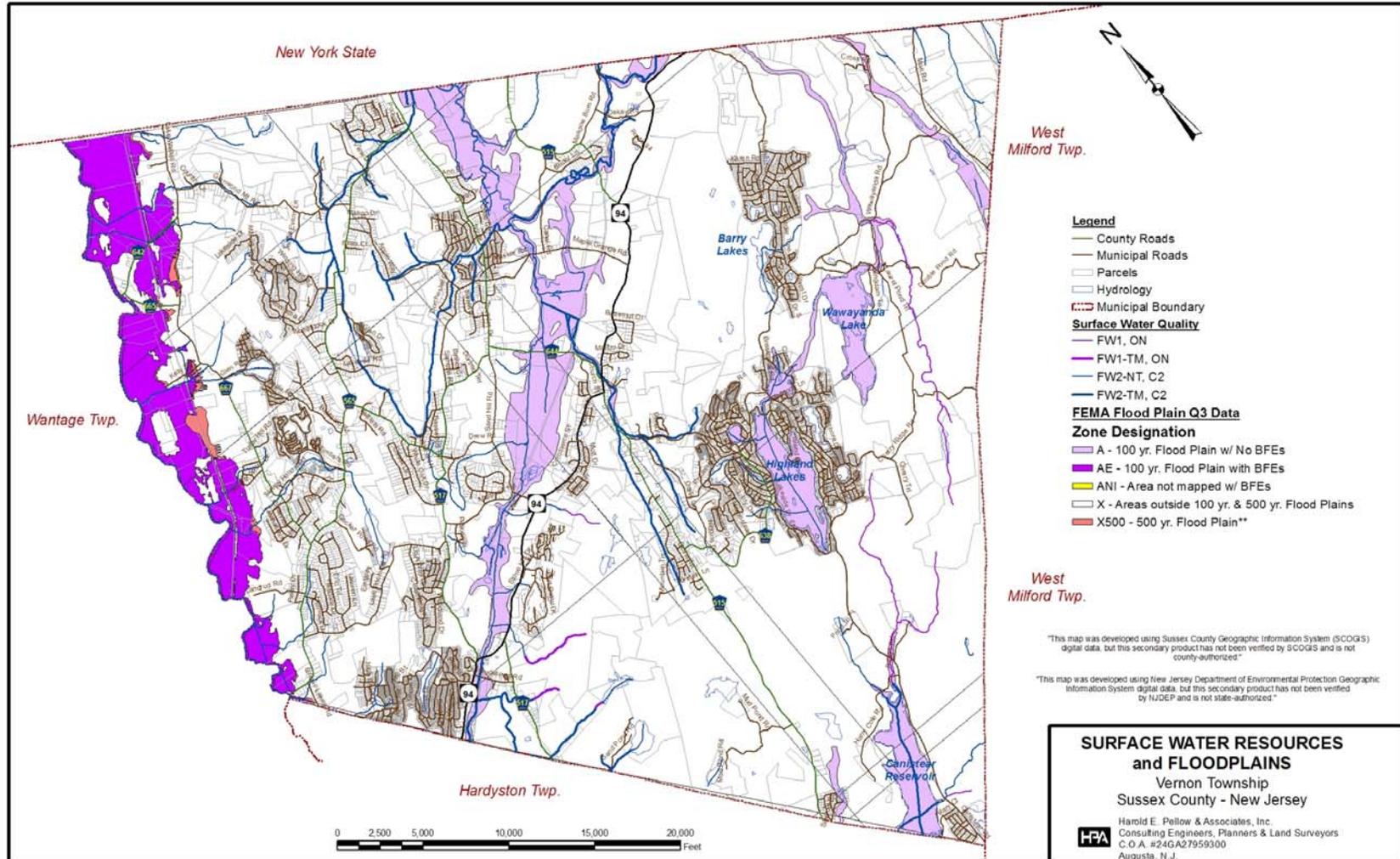
Natural Features

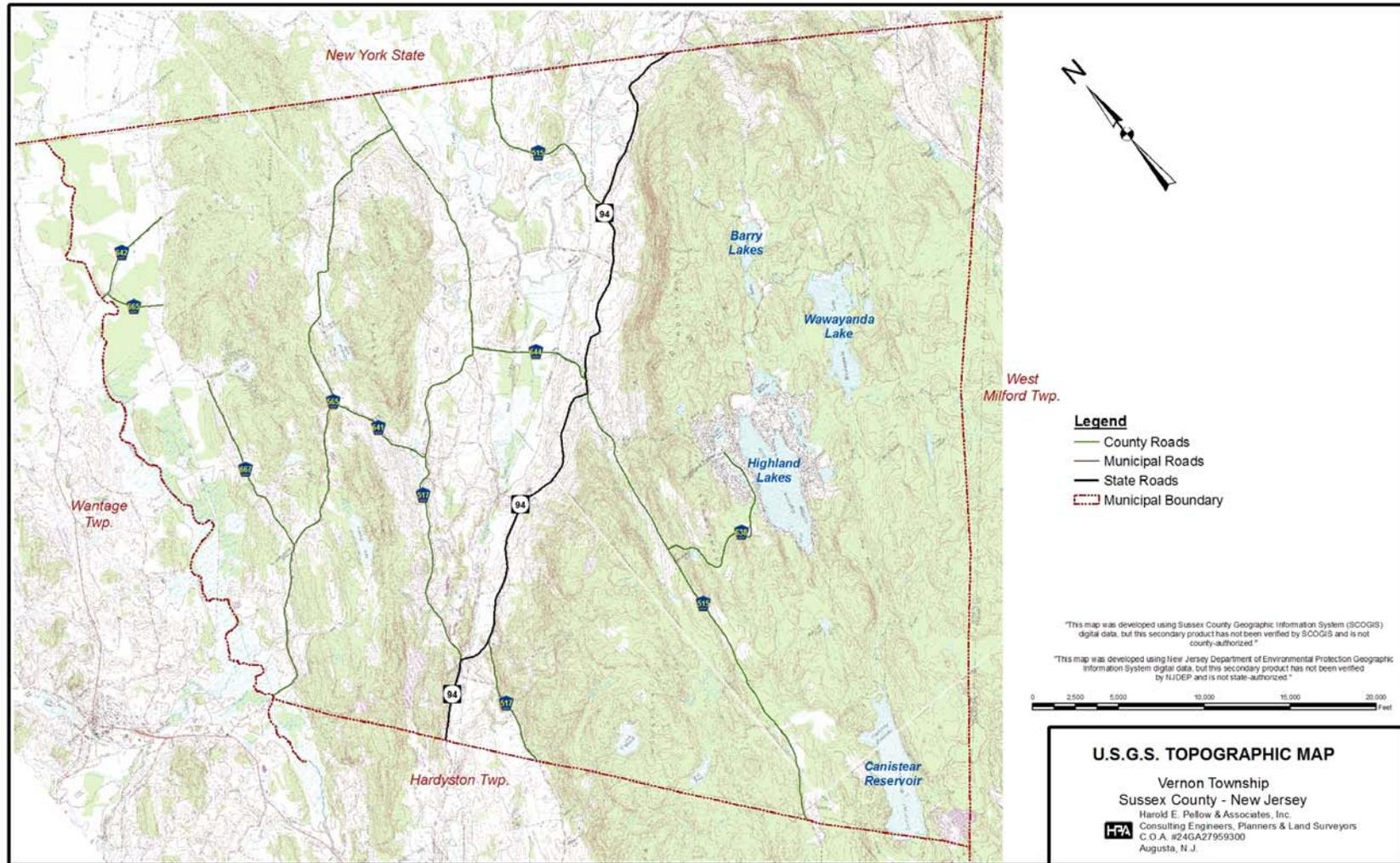
Vernon Township is characterized by the ridges and valleys that run southwest to northeast through the Township. The Pochuck, Hamburg, and Wawayanda mountains direct large amounts of water into the valleys creating large expanses of wetlands, stream, and river systems, the largest of which is the Walkkill River, which runs south to north, defining the western border of Vernon Township. Approximately 18 percent of the Town, or 8,297 acres, is covered with wetlands. Approximately 2,000 acres of the Township is covered with lakes and ponds, many of these lakes are the center of communities including; Highland Lakes, Barry Lakes, and Pleasant Valley Lake. The land in this area has very limited amounts of development due to these environmental constraints. The mountains, state lands, and protected watershed lands throughout the township are primarily forested. Approximately, 85 percent of the Township is covered with forests. Development in these areas has also been limited with relatively low densities due to steeper slopes and state or private entity ownership. The USDA Soil Survey identifies the following soil series within the Township: Alden silt loam, Alden mucky silt loam, Catden mucky peat, Chatfield-Hollis-Rock outcrop, Farmington-Rock outcrop, Farmington-Wassaic-Rock outcrop, Fluvaquents, loamy, Fredon Halsey complex, Hazen-Hoosic complex, Hibernia loam, Hollis-Rock outcrop Chatfield complex, Hoosic-Hazen complex, Hoosic-Otisville complex, Pompton sandy loam, Rock outcrop Farmington-Galway complex, Rockaway loam, Rockaway-Chatfield-Rock outcrop complex, Rockaway-Urban land complex, Scio silt loam, Swartswood loam, Urban land-Farmington-Rock outcrop complex, Udortents, Udorthents-Urban land complex, Venango silt loam, Walkkill silt loam, Wurtsboro-Swartswood complex. In general, most of the soil types in the Township are very rocky and have a shallow depth to bedrock. Vernon also has a large aquifer system, which the Township Environmental Commission has voiced concern about. Through the Plan Endorsement process the Township will likely adopt a wellhead protection ordinance to assist in aquifer protection. The process of Plan Conformance will also result in the adoption of water resource protection ordinances.

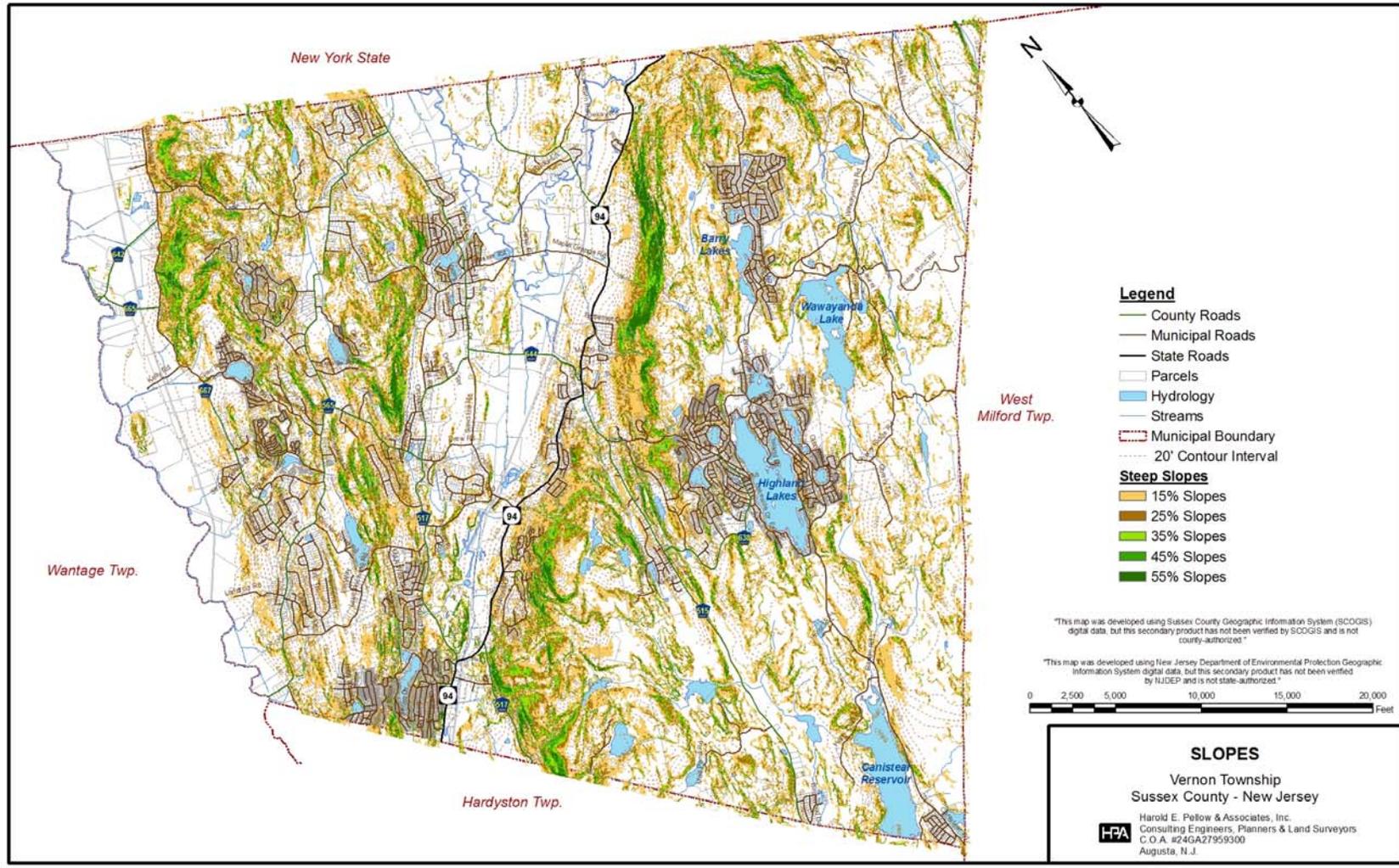
Historic and Cultural Features

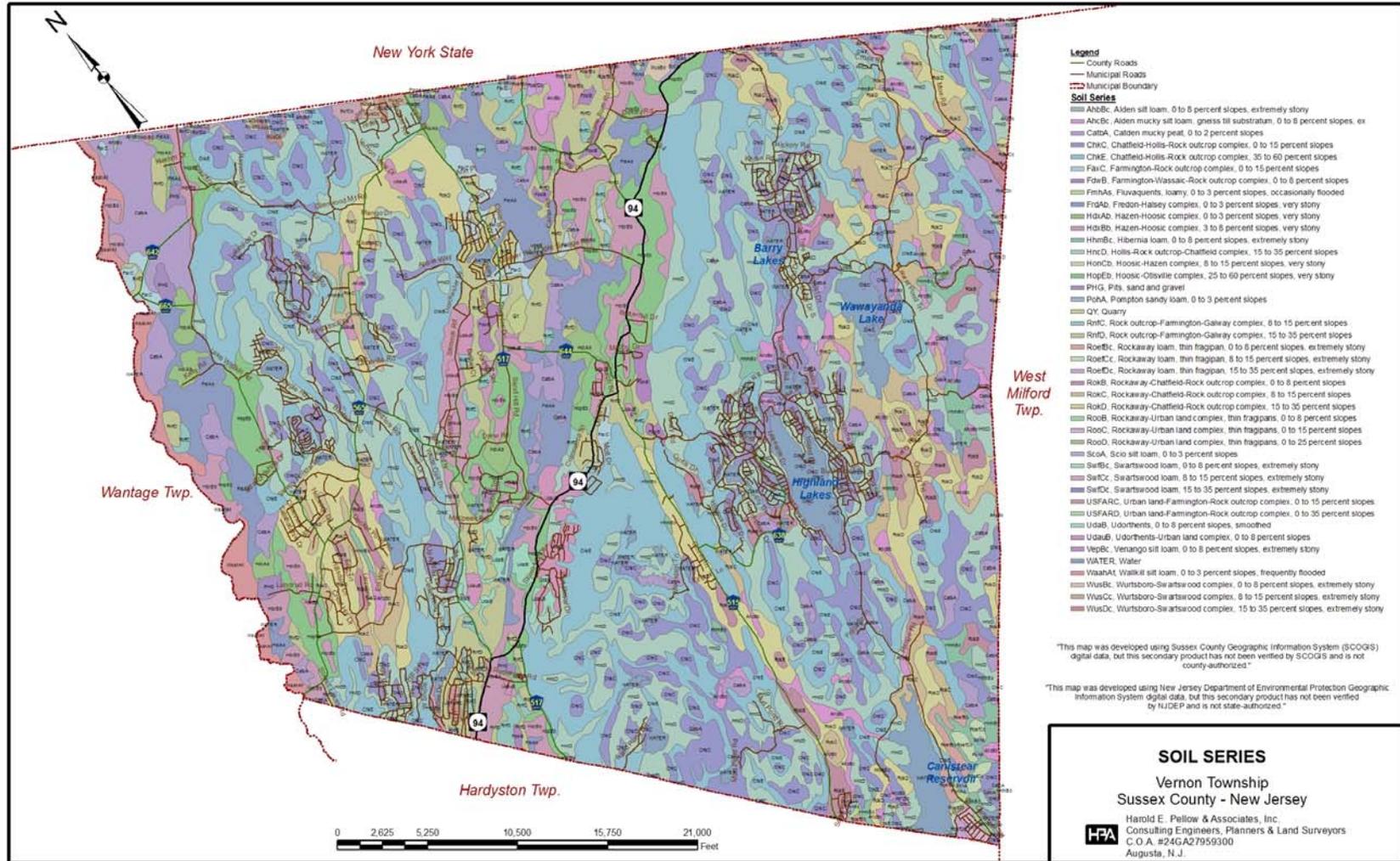
Vernon Township was incorporated in 1792 and the borders of the municipality have not changed since its creation. Iron Mining was prevalent in this area in the 1800's with mines such as the Canistear and Pochuck. These mines brought commerce to the Township along with railroad service. The following sites are listed on the New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places: the Black Creek site, High Breeze Farm, and Meadowburn Farm. The Vernon Township Historical Society has been instrumental in the preservation of historical sites since its inception in 1970. They have an office at the Township Municipal Building and run a museum in Highlands Lakes. They also maintain the one-room school house on Price's Switch Road.

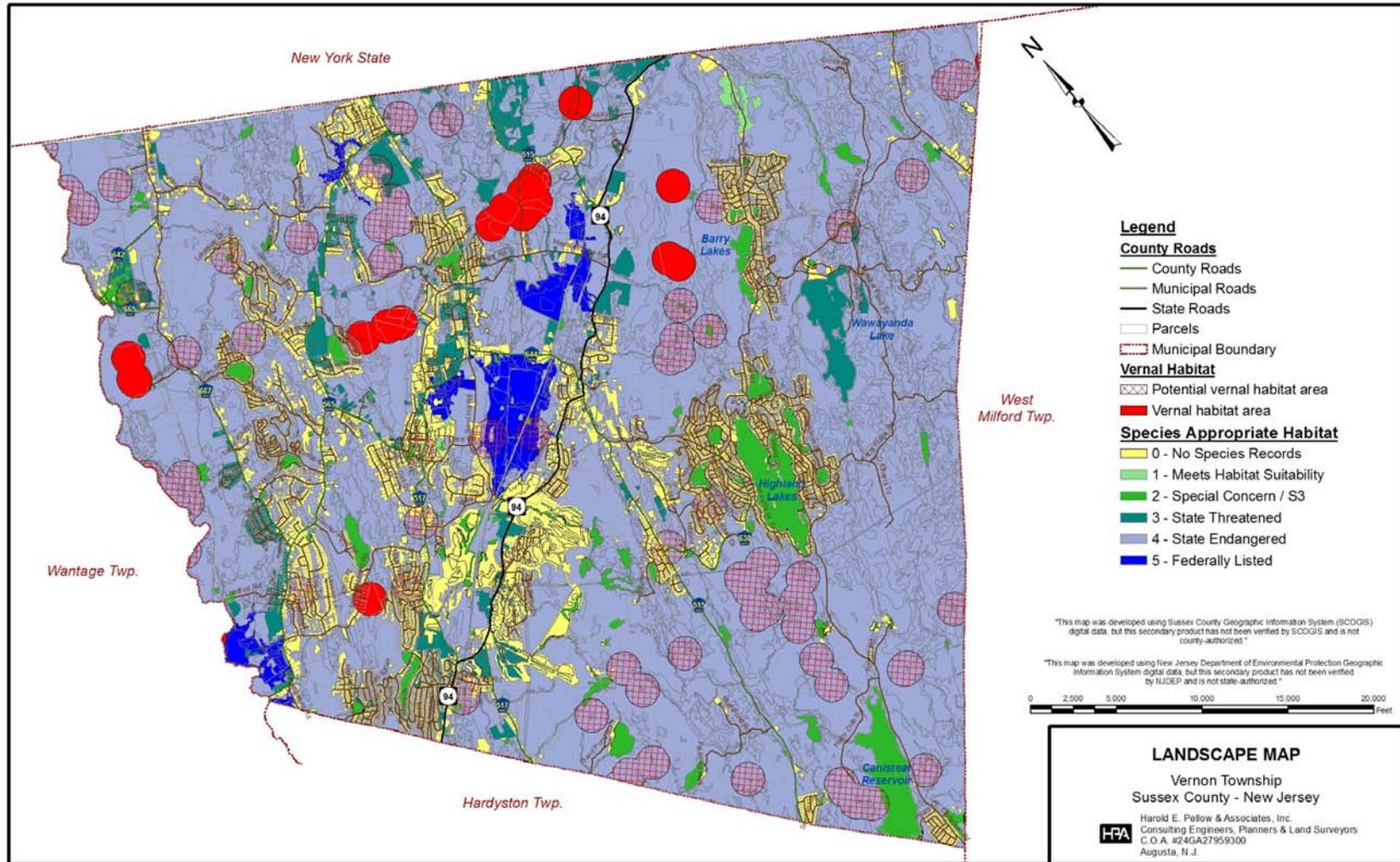
The maps on the following pages include: Wetlands Map, Surface Water Resources and Flood Plains, USGS Topographic Map, Critical Slopes, Soil Series Map, and NJDEP's Landscapes Map.











Community Facilities

Public and Private Schools

The Vernon Township Public School District is a kindergarten through 12th grade district with an enrollment of approximately 5,200 students in six public schools: Walnut Ridge Primary School (grades K-1), Cedar Mountain Primary School (grades 2-4), Rolling Hills Primary School (grades 2-4), Lounsberry Hollow Middle School (grades 5-6), Glen Meadow Middle School (grades 7-8), and Vernon Township High School.

Day Care Centers

Vernon has three day care facilities that typically offer full-time day care, pre-school and after school programs. The facilities include: Little Kids Place Too, the Discovery Years, and Fields of Green Montessori School. Little Kids Place Too offers reduced cost day care for low income single mothers and is NORWESCAP/CCRS approved.

Social Service Providers

The Center for Families with Special Needs is located in the Vernon Township Board of Education building. The Center is a non-profit parent run information and referral center. The Center's mission is to provide parents with connections to already existing services that will benefit families of children with special needs in Northern New Jersey.

Government Buildings and Public Services

Vernon Township owns and operates its Municipal Building, Department of Public Works, Police Department, Animal Control, and Recycling Center. The Rescue Squads and Fire Departments are privately run volunteer organizations.

There are four fire departments in the Township: Highland Lakes, Vernon, Pochuck, and McAfee. Highland Lakes has four trucks; one ladder truck, one pump truck, one tanker truck, and one Chief's truck. Vernon has six trucks; one ladder truck, one pump truck, one tanker truck, one Chief's truck, one rescue truck, and one crew cab pick up. Pochuck has four trucks; two pump trucks, one tanker truck and one Chief's truck. McAfee has five trucks; one pump truck, one ladder truck, one tanker truck, one rescue truck, and one Chief's truck.

There are two rescue squads located within three buildings. The Vernon Squad has 2 buildings: the Vernon Mountain Building and the Vernon Valley building. The Glenwood/Pochuck squad has one building.

There are four post offices located in Vernon Township: Vernon, Highland Lakes, McAfee, and Glenwood.

The Dorothy Henry Memorial Library is located on Route 94 in the Township. It is the Vernon branch of the Sussex County Library System. The library is one of six branches which includes the main library in Frankford Township.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

Vernon Township has three parks covering approximately 154 acres which include; Veterans Memorial Park (67 acres), Old Orchard Park (11 acres) and Maple Grange Community Park (48 acres). Vernon Township has a Recreation Department that runs the recreation facilities throughout the Township. Veterans Memorial Park contains two basketball courts, two baseball fields, one soccer field, one football field, one softball field, one pavilion, one tot lot, and a handicap accessible playground. Old Orchard Park contains little league fields and soccer fields. Maple Grange Community Park has walking/ biking paths, two artificial turf fields for lacrosse, soccer, and field hockey, a great lawn, and an artificial turf multi-purpose field with two softball fields and one soccer/football field.

Besides the Vernon Township owned parks there are more than 16,000 acres of federal and state owned lands within the municipality. These include 12,742 acres of Wawayanda State Park, and Hamburg Mountain Wildlife Management Area, approximately 903 acres of the Appalachian Trail, and 2,552 acres of the Walkkill River Wildlife Refuge. The Township Environmental Commission has been active in efforts to purchase open space through out the Township, which will likely result in additional preservation in the future.

Infrastructure

Railway

The New York, Susquehanna and Western Railway (NYS&W), is a Class III American freight railway which runs north to south through the Township. The line includes over 500 miles of track in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The New Jersey section of the line travels through Bergen, Passaic and Sussex counties. The beginning of the line passes through downtown Paterson and westward to Stockholm, where it reaches a peak elevation of 1,013 feet, before traveling down Sparta Mountain, after which the line makes an abrupt northeastern turn at Sparta Junction as it switches to use the former right of way of the Lehigh & Hudson River Railway. From Sparta, the line travels through Hamburg Borough and into Hardyston Township before entering Vernon Township adjacent to NJSH Route 94. The line then travels parallel to NJSH Route 94 through Vernon crossing County Routes 644 and 515, before entering Warwick Township, New York.

Roadways

New Jersey State Highway (NJSH) 94, the only state road in Vernon, runs at total of 8.6 miles from north to south through the Township. There are nine County roads running approximately 47 miles through the Township. The majority of roads in

Vernon are Township roads covering a total of 85 miles. Approximately 26 miles of private roadways are located within lake communities in the Township. NJSH 94 and County Route 515 are classified by the NJDOT as minor arterial collectors. Most of the remaining County roads are classified as collectors. Several Township roads are also listed as collectors. Following are major roadways within the Township and their NJDOT designations:

Street Name	Classification
NJSH Route 94	Urban Minor Arterial/ Rural Minor Arterial
County Route 515	Rural Major Collector/Rural Minor Arterial/Urban Minor Arterial
County Route 517	Rural Major Collector/Urban Collector
County Route 565	Urban Collector/Rural Major Collector
County Route 641	Urban Collector
County Route 642	Rural Minor Collector/Rural Local
County Route 638	Urban Collector
County Route 644	Urban Collector
County Route 665	Rural Minor Collector
County Route 667	Urban Collector/Rural Minor
Barry Drive North	Rural Local/Urban Local
Breakneck Road	Urban Collector/Urban Local
Glenwood Mountain Road	Rural Local
Lake Walkkill Road	Rural Minor Collector
Warwick Turnpike	Rural Major Collector

Sewer Service Areas

As shown on the Sussex County Wastewater Management Plan, there are a number of privately owned sewer service areas in Vernon Township. The current plan shows adjustments to the Sussex County Proposed Sewer Service Area by the NJDEP. The Township is seeking assistance from the County and State Office of Smart Growth to maintain its existing sewer service areas in the Township.

Water Supply Franchises.

There are a number of water supply franchises that serve the many developments in Vernon Township. All of these franchises draw water from wells located here in the Township. Homes and Businesses that are not on these systems depend on individual wells for there water.

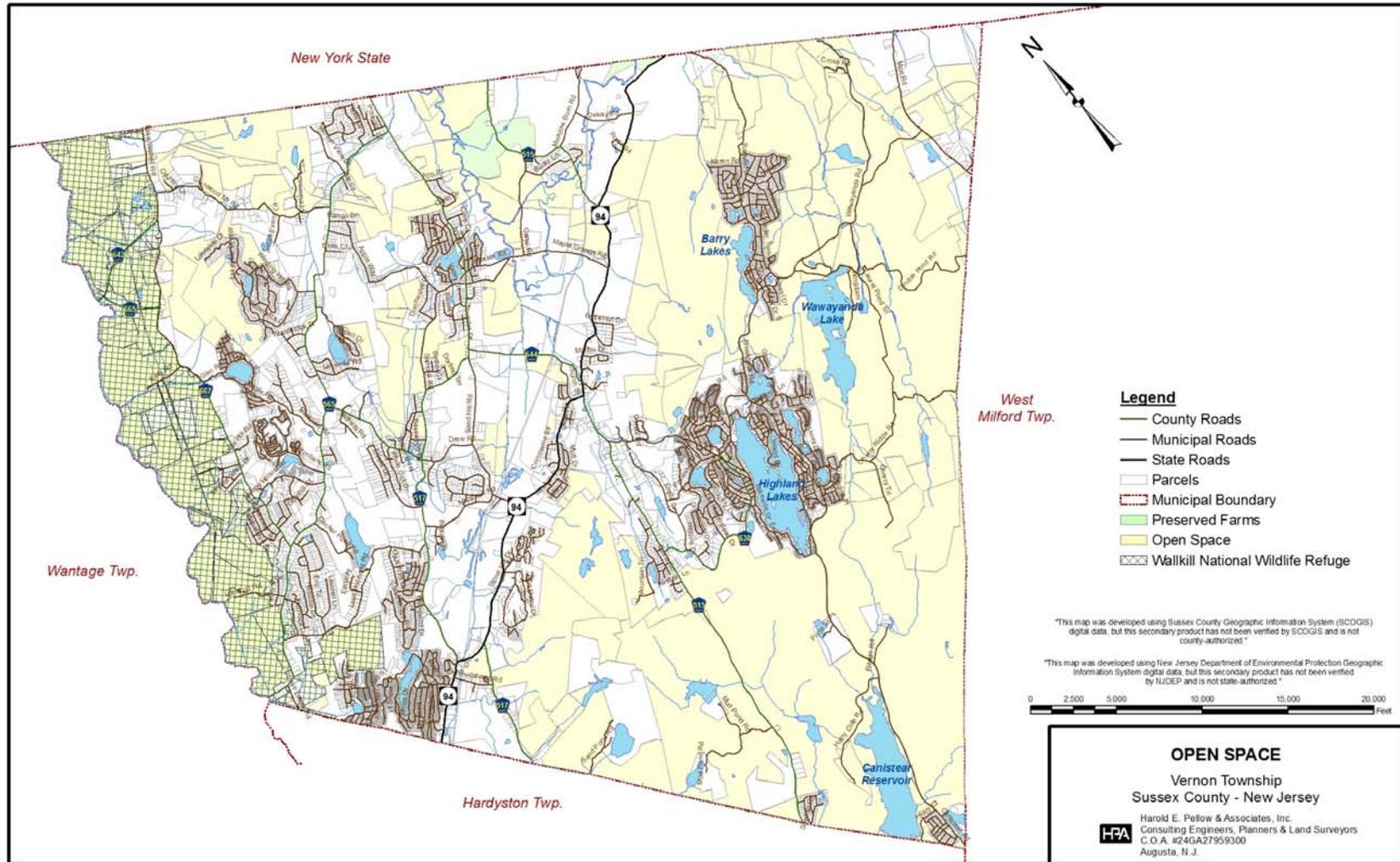
High Tension Wires

Jersey Central Power and Light has high tension wires which run southwest from Hardyston Township Northeast across the middle of the municipality into New York State.

Natural Gas Main

Tennessee Gas Transmission Company has a transmission main that runs northwest from Wantage Township, Southeast to Passaic County.

The maps on the following pages show Proposed Sewer Service Areas and Existing Open Spaces in the Township:



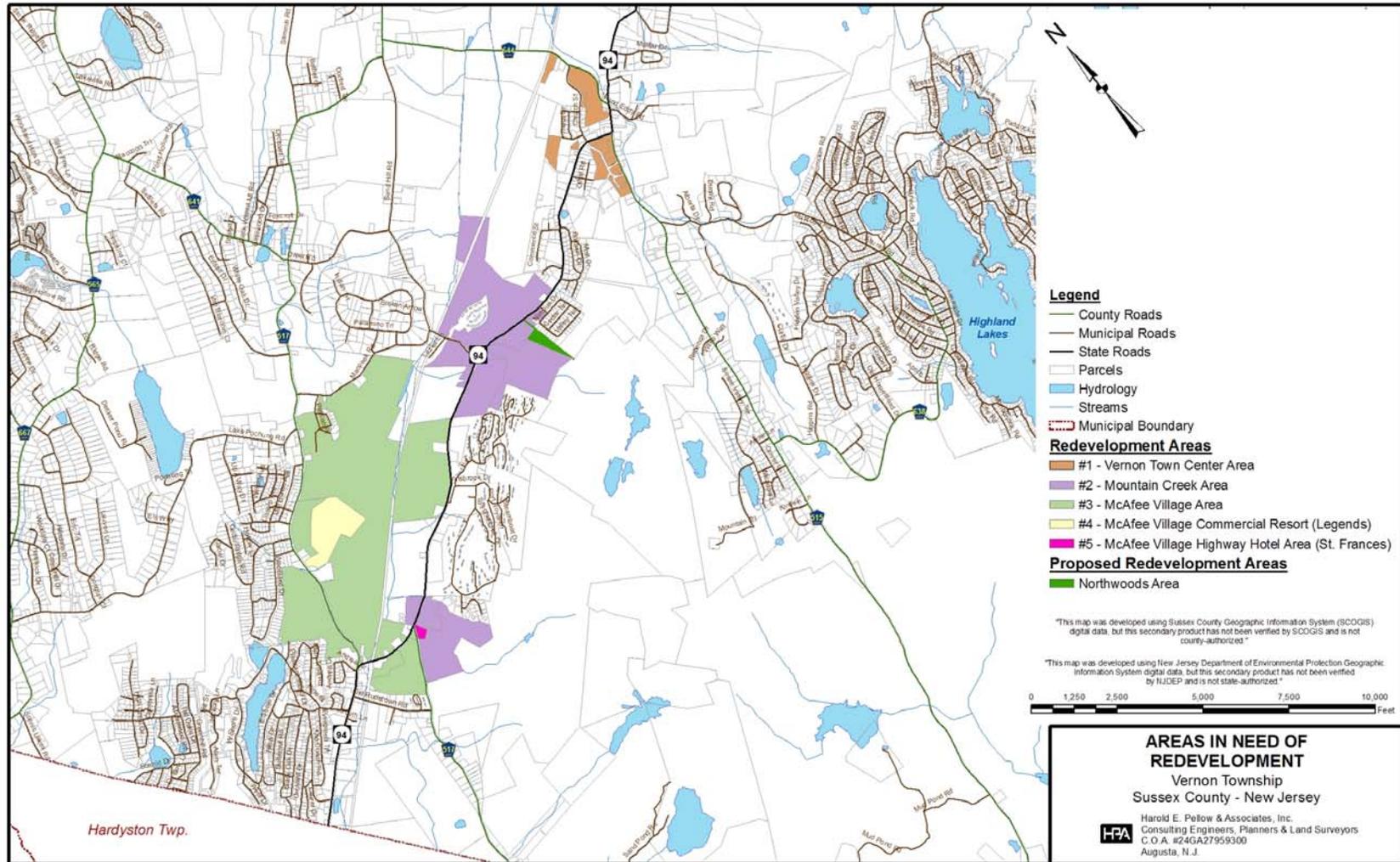
Underutilized Land

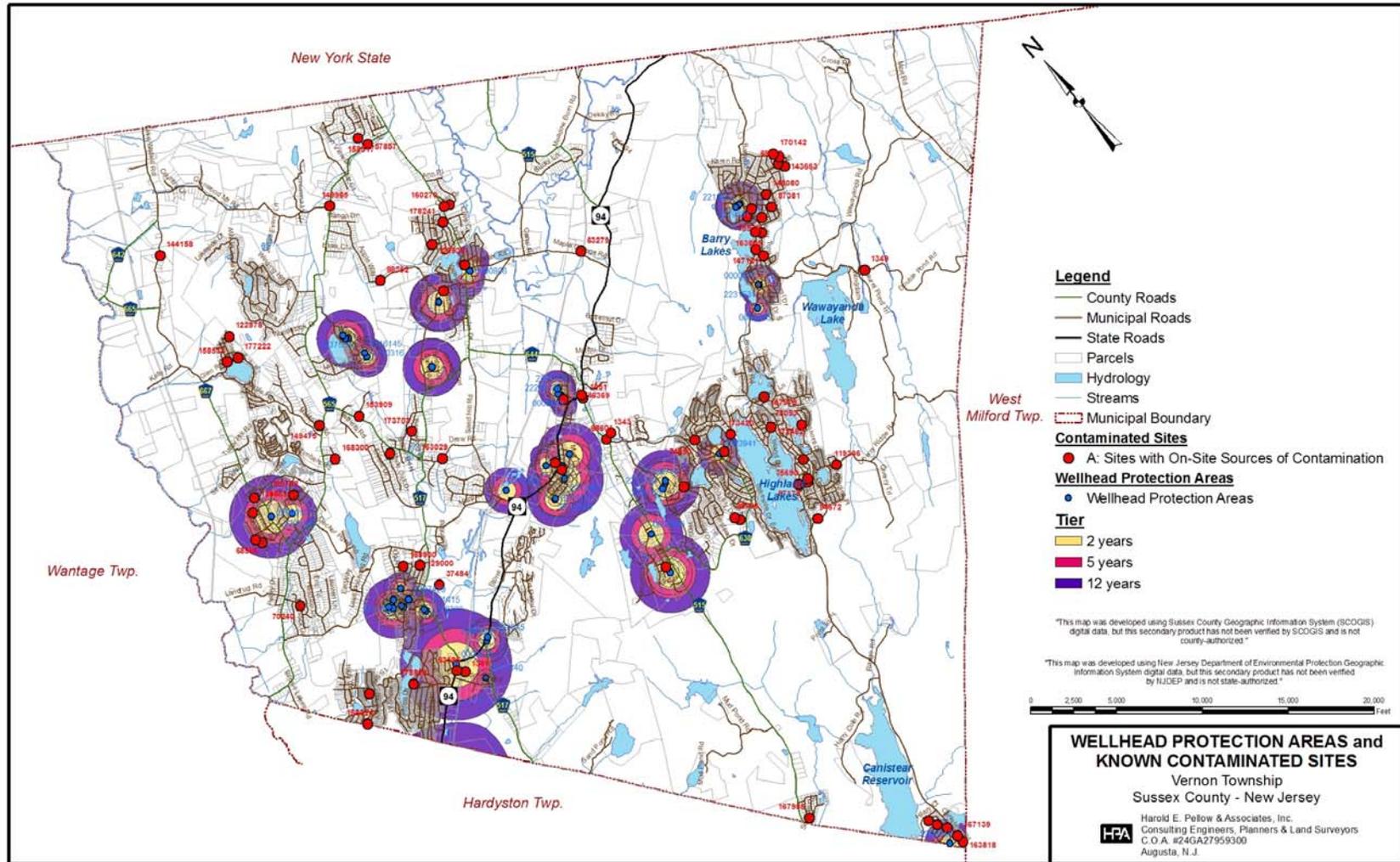
The Township has declared five areas in need of redevelopment: the Vernon Town Center Area covering 62 acres; the Mountain Creek Village Area encompassing 523 acres; the McAfee Village Mixed Use Redevelopment Area consisting of 590 acres; the McAfee Village Commercial Resort Area (Legends Resort) covering 42.76 acres; and the McAfee Village Highway Hotel Area (St. Frances Site) encompassing 2.05 acres. The initial investigation of the areas to determine if they qualified as areas in need of redevelopment was conducted in the fall of 2005. A supplemental study was completed in April 2006 and the areas were declared as areas in need of redevelopment by the Township Council and ordinances were prepared and adopted for all of the areas, with the exception of the St. Frances Site, which is currently in draft form.

The Township is currently investigating an area to determine if meets the criteria to be declared an area in need of redevelopment. The site consists of 6.72 acres and is comprised of an abandoned section of condominiums located behind the Appalachian Lodge in Mountain Creek; however it is not owned by the Mountain Creek Resort.

The Township has some known hazardous sites as identified by the NJDEP. There are no known superfund sites in the Township. Wellhead protection areas are identified by the NJDEP and the Highlands Council for the Township.

The maps on the following pages identify the Areas in Need of Redevelopment and Wellhead Protection Areas and Known Contaminated Sites.





COMMUNITY VISION & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Vernon Township has an active and involved citizenry that has participated in numerous public participation events for the Town Center planning processes as well as other planning activities. The vision for the Town Center dates back to the 1995 Master Plan Update which articulated the goal to balance growth with resource protection by creating a multi-core center. In 1997, the Town Council appointed a Vernon Town Center Advisory Committee (VTCAC) to develop a strategy for implementing the goal of creating a Town Center. The VTCAC hosted public visioning sessions to develop the vision for the Center. From this session, the VTCAC developed the Town Center Implementation Plan. The VTCAC worked with the Glynwood Center to organize an additional visioning session for the Center (date) which became known as the Countryside Exchange. Following these visioning sessions, the Township hired Looney Ricks Kiss to develop the concept plans for the Town Center and prepare the application for Center Designation with the State Planning Commission. Vernon received Center Designation from the State Planning Commission for the Two Core Center on July 16, 2003.

Because the Town Center plans are still being implemented and changing the vision dramatically at this point in the development process is counter productive, the Township is requesting a waiver from conducting three visioning sessions. The Township would like to hold one visioning session to revisit the center as it relates to changes in the overall Township due to Highlands designation, and other regulatory changes, while focusing on the vision for the environs of the Township. The result will be a vision statement that addresses the Township as a whole and focuses on the Center only from the perspective of how the vision might need to change to accommodate changes in the regulatory framework impacting the Township.

STATUS OF MASTER PLAN AND OTHER RELEVANT PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Vernon's current Master Plan was originally adopted in 1995 and the most recent Master Plan Update was in 2003. The Township is considering a complete update of its Master Plan in 2009. Vernon Township filed a notice of intent to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan on November 13, 2008 and subsequently requested an extension of the COAH deadline to submit petitions for Substantive Certification to December 8, 2009. The Township will be preparing an updated Housing Element and Fair Share Plan for submission to COAH by the December deadline. The Township is also required to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan by December 8, 2009 for the preservation areas and may optionally comply in the planning areas at any time. The notice of intent filed by the Township identifies both the Planning and Preservation Areas and the Township is currently completing an Initial Assessment to determine the impacts of conformance. The Township will be preparing a petition for Plan Conformance in the Preservation Areas for submittal to the Highlands Council by December 8, 2009. The Township is also planning on petitioning for Plan Endorsement in the Planning Areas in order to achieve an extension of its Center Designation. The Township may elect to pursue Center Designation through the Highlands Council in the future.

RECENT AND UPCOMING DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Following are major site plan and subdivision applications, which have been approved in the Township over the last five years:

Listing of Major Development Site Plans & Subdivision Approvals –Vernon, NJ

-Mountain Creek Resort General Development Plan (GDP)

PB#1-07-1

Approved 5/9/07

Block 183 Lots 12 & 13

Block 184 Lots 10, 12-16, 18, 25 & 25.01

Block 190 Lots 9, 10 & 10.01

Village Area:

595 Recreational Housing Units

66, 788 SF Speciality Retail

Appalachian Area:

399 Recreational Housing Units

21,082 SF Speciality Retail

20,175 SF Day Lodge

Hotel & Conference Center Area:

572 Recreational Housing Units

244 Hotel Rooms/Conf. Center

6,940 SF Speciality Retail

-Appalachian "A"

Block 190 Lot 9

PB#6-04-8

100 units

9,000 sq. ft. of commercial space

Approved 7/25/01

-Appalachian "B"

Block 190 Lot 9

PB#6-04-8

77 Hotel Units

8,600 sq. ft. of commercial space

Approved 7/28/04

-Sussex National Development (Sammis Farm)

Block 231 Lots 9 & 11

Block 233.05 Lots 5 & 6

PB#2-05-03

132 Hotel Rooms

3 Recreation Fields

Recreation Building (indoor – 40,396 sq. ft.)

Forty Seat Restaurant (2,376 sq. ft.)

Approved 8/10/05

-Highlands Bank Site Plan

Block 144 Lot 28

PB#7-04-9

24,722 sq. ft. Bank Building

Approved 7/14/04

-James Lombardo Preliminary Site Plan

Block 145 Lot 1.01

PB#8-05-9

13,935 Office Building

Approved 2/26/06

-Crystal Springs Builders, LLC

Block 270 Lots 11 & 26

PB#6-06-8

Approved 9/27/06

Construction of 3 Golf Holes @ Tissington Estates and 13 single-family residential lots.

-Glenwood Management, LP Site Plan

Block 231 Lot 14

ZB#9-05-18

Approved 5/3/06

133 Units Age Restricted Housing with 27 units set aside as COAH rental units.

-Spa @ Crystal Springs Site Plan

Block 199.68 Lot 99

PB#1-01-3

50,000 sq. ft. addition to existing hotel facility.

178 new hotel rooms and conference center.

Approved 4/25/01
(Built)

-Weichert Realtors

Block 145 Lot 5
PB#12-04-16
10,000 sq. ft. Office Building

Approved 4/13/05

-Black Creek Sanctuary

Block 184 Lots 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 25 and 25.01
PB#4-00-12
133 Vacation Type Housing Units

Approved 5/11/00

-Sally Rinker, Sunset Ridge (Major Subdivision)

Block 122 Lot 1
ZB#10-06-17
16 single family homes
New road & storm infrastructure

Preliminary Approval 3/07/07

-Woodmont Homes, Whispering Woods (Major Subdivision)

Block 192 Lots 9 & 10
Block 192.04 Lot 5
PB#10-06-14
22 single family homes
New road & storm infrastructure

Approved 5/09/07 (Amendment)

Originally approved in 2003

-Ed Talmo - Cedars @ Black Creek Reserve (Major Subdivision)

Block 141 Lot 12.04

Approved 8/08/07

PB#8-07-12
6 units of multi-family
New road & storm infrastructure

-Pat Turzi - PRJ Properties (Major Site Plan)

Block 141 Lot 6 Approved 8/08/07
PB#8-07-11
2,141 sq. ft.
2,255 sq. ft
4,396 sq. ft. retail/office

-Bruce Zaretsky (Site Plan)

Block 141.04 Lot 6 Approved 9/4/07
PB#5-07-8
3 two bedroom apts.
+ 1,773 sq. ft. retail comm.

-Tall Timbers (Site Plan)

Block 171.02 Lot 5 Approved 8/2/06
ZB#5-06-9
Maintenance Bldg
2,400 sq. ft.

-Susan Kubie (Major Subdivision)

Block 134 Lot 17 Approved 1/23/08
PB#8-07-10
13 single family homes

Site plan use Variance for Hair
Salon

-Sally Rinker (Site Plan)

Block 190.06 Lot 8
PB#9-06-11

Single Family converted to
retail commercial
office

Approved 10/25/06 (Prelim);
1/24/07 (Final)

1,438 sq ft.

1400 sq. ft.

2,838 sq. ft.

STATEMENT OF PLANNING COORDINATION

Vernon Township has been coordinating with Sussex County at least since 1995 when planning began for the Town Center. The County has been an important part of the planning process in coordinating the connection of Main Street to County Route 515 and working with Sussex County Municipal Utility Authority to develop plans for the sewer for the Center. The Township has also been working with the County on the County Wastewater Management Plan in attempts to maintain the sewer service areas in the Township. The Township has shared services agreements with the County to conduct GIS mapping services and for Health Department services.

As mentioned previously in this report, the Township is beginning the process of working with the Highlands Council to comply with the Highlands Regional Master Plan. Vernon filed its Notice of Intent to comply with the Highlands Regional Master Plan on November 13, 2008. The Township is completing an initial assessment to determine what actions need to be taken to petition for Plan Conformance in the Preservation Areas and possibly the Planning Areas.

Vernon's 1995 Master Plan reviewed Vernon's land use and zoning with those of surrounding municipalities, the County and the State Plan and found them to be substantially compatible. The municipalities surrounding Vernon are West Milford Township, Warwick Township, Wantage Township and Hardyston Township. While it has been 14 years since the plan was developed, land use patterns remain substantially similar and the review is still valid. The border along West Milford Township consists largely of lands in either Wawayanda State Park or the Newark Watershed. The remainder of the border area is zoned for low density residential development both in Vernon and West Milford Township, with the exception of a small area of neighborhood commercial located in West Milford. All of West Milford Township is located in the Highlands Preservation area and the lands in Vernon along the border with West Milford are also in the Highlands

Preservation area and therefore have limited development potential. The common boundary between Wantage and Vernon is the Walkill River, located within the Walkill River Wildlife Refuge, which spans the border and is located in both Townships. Hardyston borders Vernon to the south and has predominantly similar zoning to Vernon along the border areas. Much of the zoning is low density residential with the exception of the commercial and industrial areas located near the NJSH Route 94 corridor. Warwick Township to the north of Vernon is zoned for either low density residential or is located in State or Federal Parks. Zoning on the Vernon side is primarily low density residential as well.

STATE, FEDERAL & NON-PROFIT PROGRAMS, GRANTS AND CAPITAL PROJECTS

This following table lists the grants and capital projects that Vernon has undertaken in the last five years:

Program Name	Project Name	Agency	Brief Description	Geographic area covered	Project amount (\$)	Project start date	Project finish date
Bike Path	Bike Path	N.J.D.O.T.	2001& 2002	Vernon	\$250,000	2003	2005
Child Safety Passenger	Child Safety Passenger	NJ Dept. of Law and Public safety	Training expenses for police officers	Vernon	\$,1238.00	2000	2000
SGP Rt. 94 Access Man. Plan	SGP Rt. 94 Access Man. Plan	D.C.A.	Engineering analysis to develop an access management plan for Rt 94	Vernon	\$140,000	2004	2008
Black Crk Watershed Restoration	Black Crk Watershed Restoration	N.J.D.E.P.	Study of the Black Creek watershed in Vernon	Vernon	\$385,000	2005	2008
Planning Assistance		NJ Dept. of Consumer Affairs		Vernon	\$7,500	2005	2005
Bulletproof vest program	Federal Body Armor	Bureau of Justice		Vernon	\$3,309	1/1/08	12/31/08
USEPA	Vernon Sewers	USEPA	Funding to assist Vernon with const. of sanitary sewer collection system	Vernon	\$1,500	2005	2008
Safe & Secure	Safe & Secure	NJ Division of Criminal Justice	To reimburse police officers salary	Vernon	\$55,478	2/1/08	12/31/08

Program Name	Project Name	Agency	Brief Description	Geographic area covered	Project amount (\$)	Project start date	Project finish date
Municipal Alliance	Substance Abuse Prevention	County of Sussex		Vernon	\$22,178	1/1/08	12/31/08
Recreational Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities	Recreational Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities	NJ Dept. of Community Affairs	Therapeutic horse back riding	Vernon	\$6,500	1/1/08	12/31/08
Local Aid	Sandhill Road/Macpeek	NJDOT	Re-Paving of Sandhill & MacPeek Roads	Vernon	\$150,000	2007	2008

INTERNAL CONSISTENCY IN LOCAL PLANNING

Vernon's plans are currently consistent with each other and zoning and other regulations are consistent with the Master Plan and the Town Center vision. The plans are however; beginning to become outdated and will require an update in the near future. The Township is planning on updating its Master Plan in the next year or so and will likely need to update ordinances as well as part of that process. The Township is also in the process of petitioning for Plan Endorsement for the Center and Plan Conformance for the Preservation Areas in the Township. These two processes will require updates to the Master Plan as well as creation of additional elements. The Plan Conformance process will require updates to the full spectrum of plans and ordinances. Vernon envisions completion of these updates and ordinance revisions over the next three years.

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

“Sustainability” or “Sustainable Development” has been defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” - The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (The Brundtland Commission, 1987).

Since the adoption of the Township’s first Master Plan in 1970, Vernon has been planning with the intent of preserving environmentally sensitive lands while providing for growth that resulted in economic development of the Township. As planning has evolved in Vernon, the community began to plan for a more compact center to allow for future growth while reducing sprawl and increasing preservation efforts in the environs. The Vernon Two Core Center was the result of those planning efforts. Now, with the Highlands designation, the Township’s conservation efforts will be increasing again, further necessitating the need for sustainable growth in the community. For Vernon, the challenge will be to provide not only for environmental sustainability but also economic sustainability in the community. Vernon is committed to addressing these issues via the Center Designation provided by the State Planning Commission. The Township’s efforts to create economic development will be focused in the Town Center. On the same vein, Vernon also faces the challenge of balancing the preservation efforts set forth in the Highlands with the needs of existing residents who live in and own property in those areas. Providing for environmental protection and sustaining existing communities in the environs is another goal for the Township in addressing long term sustainability.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLAN - GOALS, POLICIES & INDICATORS

The State Plan is made up of 8 Goals and Strategies and 19 Statewide Policies that are complemented by a State Plan Policy Map. This section discusses consistency with regard to goals relevant to the Township’s Petition, along with related policies and indicators.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 1: Revitalize the State’s Cities and Towns</p> <p>STRATEGY: Protect, preserve and develop the valuable human and economic assets in cities, towns and other urban areas. Plan to improve their livability and sustainability by investing public resources in accordance with current plans which are consistent with the provisions of the State Plan. Leverage private investments in jobs and housing; provide comprehensive public services at lower costs and higher quality; and improve the natural and built environment. Incorporate ecological design through mechanisms such as solar access for heating and power generation. Level the playing field in such areas as financing services, infrastructure and regulation. Reduce the barriers which limit mobility and access of city residents, particularly the poor and minorities, to jobs, housing, services and open space within the region. Build on the assets of cities and towns such as their labor force, available land and buildings, strategic location and diverse populations.</p>	<p>Policy on Urban Revitalization - Prepare strategic revitalization plans, neighborhood empowerment plans and urban complex strategic revitalization plans that promote revitalization, economic development and infrastructure investments, coordinate revitalization planning among organizations and governments, support housing programs and adaptive reuse, improve access to waterfront areas, public open space and parks, and develop human resources with investments in public health, education, work force readiness and public safety in cities and towns.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 5. Progress in socioeconomic revitalization for the 68 municipalities eligible for Urban Coordinating Council assistance</p> <p>Indicator 6. Percent of jobs located in Urban Coordinating Council municipalities</p> <p>Indicator 22. Percent of building permits issued in Urban Coordinating Council municipalities</p> <p>Indicator 27. Number of Neighborhood Empowerment Plans approved by the Urban Coordinating Council</p>

Goal 1 Analysis

Goal 1 does not apply to Vernon Township as it is not an urban area as defined for the purposes of Goal 1.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 2: Conserve the State's Natural Resources and Systems</p> <p>STRATEGY: Conserve the State's natural resources and systems as capital assets of the public by promoting ecologically sound development and redevelopment in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas, accommodating environmentally designed development and redevelopment in Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas, and by restoring the integrity of natural systems in areas where they have been degraded or damaged. Plan, design, invest in and manage the development and redevelopment of Centers and the use of land, water, soil, plant and animal resources to maintain biodiversity and the viability of ecological systems. Maximize the ability of natural systems to control runoff and flooding, and to improve air and water quality and supply.</p>	<p>Policy on Water Resources - Protect and enhance water resources through coordinated planning efforts aimed at reducing sources of pollution and other adverse effects of development, encouraging designs in hazard-free areas that will protect the natural function of stream and wetland systems, and optimizing sustainable resource use.</p> <p>Policy on Open Lands and Natural Systems - Protect biological diversity through preservation and restoration of contiguous open spaces and connecting corridors; manage public land and provide incentives for private land management to protect scenic qualities, forests and water resources; and manage the character and nature of development for the protection of wildlife habitat, critical slope areas, water resources, and for the provision of adequate public access to a variety of recreational opportunities.</p> <p>Policy on Coastal Resources - Acknowledge the statutory treatment of the coastal area under federal and State legislation, coordinate efforts to establish a comprehensive coastal management program with local planning efforts, undertake a regional capacity analysis, protect vital ecological areas and promote recreational opportunities.</p> <p>Policy on Special Resource Areas - Recognize an area or region with unique characteristics or resources of Statewide importance and establish a receptive environment for regional planning efforts. The Highlands region has been recognized as the first Special Resource Area in New Jersey.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 2. The amount of land permanently dedicated to open space and farmland preservation</p> <p>Key Indicator 3. Percent of New Jersey's streams that support aquatic life</p> <p>Indicator 11. Conversion of wetlands for development</p> <p>Indicator 26. Percent of land in New Jersey covered by adopted watershed management plans</p>

Goal 2 Analysis

Vernon Township has a long history of conservation. As a regional agricultural and outdoor tourism destination, it has long been in Vernon's best interest to protect the natural resources within the Township. The primary goal for Land Use in Vernon's Master Plan is "to achieve balance between continued development and the preservation of the extensive natural resources of the community." Vernon's objectives for this goal mirror the policies related to Goal 2 as follows:

- Upgrade zoning in appropriate areas in order to protect ground water quality, steep slopes and scenic vistas.
- Create new land use categories and apply zoning techniques that permit development of land while preserving environmentally sensitive areas.
- Recognize and protect the Appalachian Trail through cluster or density zoning techniques.
- Maintain low density zoning in that area adjacent to the Walkkill National Wildlife Refuge.
- Utilize the Farmland Preservation Program to preserve farmland on a voluntary basis.
- Avoid location of intensive land uses in wetland and buffer areas.

Vernon's Conservation Plan Element's goal is to preserve and protect Vernon's natural resources utilizing the following objectives:

- Develop policies to preserve, protect and maximize the utility of natural resources in the Township.
- Recommend specific changes to the Township's Land Use Ordinance, and propose new Township ordinances to implement these initiatives.
- Restrict development in critical environmental areas, such as flood plains, wetlands and steep slopes.
- Minimize the impacts of development on environmentally sensitive areas including wetlands, stream corridors, and aquifer recharge areas.
- Preserve existing woodland areas.

- Preserve the quality of both groundwater sources and surface water bodies.
- Provide a continuous network of open space along streams, scenic areas and critical environmental areas.
- Encourage lot averaging or cluster development techniques which preserve natural amenities, farms, woodlands, scenic views, and open space.
- Preserve and protect open space areas having scenic views and/or important historical, cultural, or agricultural significance.

Vernon completed a Natural Resource Inventory in May 2005. The Township's environmental commission utilizes the document for reviews of development proposals in the Township.

Vernon is located within the Highlands Region and has filed a notice of intent to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan. Conformance in the preservation areas will require amendments to Vernon's Master Plan, Natural Resource Inventory and Land Use Ordinances as well as in-depth studies on topics such as a water deficit study. Plan Conformance in the Preservation Areas will naturally further the Goal 2 and its policies.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 3: Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of New Jersey</p> <p>STRATEGY: Promote socially and ecologically beneficial economic growth, development and renewal and improve both the quality of life and the standard of living of New Jersey residents, particularly the poor and minorities, through partnerships and collaborative planning with the private sector. Capitalize on the State’s strengths—its entrepreneurship, skilled labor, cultural diversity, diversified economy and environment, strategic location and logistical excellence—and make the State more competitive through infrastructure and public services cost savings and regulatory streamlining resulting from comprehensive and coordinated planning. Retain and expand businesses, and encourage new, environmentally sustainable businesses in Centers and areas with infrastructure. Encourage economic growth in locations and ways that are both fiscally and environmentally sound. Promote the food and agricultural industry throughout New Jersey through coordinated planning, regulations, investments and incentive programs—both in Centers to retain and encourage new businesses and in the Environs to preserve large contiguous areas of farmland.</p>	<p>Policy on Economic Development - Promote beneficial economic growth and improve the quality of life and standard of living for New Jersey residents by building upon strategic economic and geographic positions, targeting areas of critical capital spending to retain and expand existing businesses, fostering modern techniques to enhance the existing economic base, encouraging the development of new enterprises, advancing the growth of green businesses, elevating work force skills, and encouraging sustainable economic growth in locations and ways that are fiscally and ecologically sound.</p> <p>Policy on Agriculture - Promote and preserve the agricultural industry and retain farmland by coordinating planning and innovative land conservation techniques to protect agricultural viability while accommodating beneficial development and economic growth necessary to enhance agricultural vitality and by educating residents on the benefits and the special needs of agriculture.</p> <p>Policy on Equity - It is the position of the State Planning Commission that the State Plan should neither be used in a manner that places an inequitable burden on any one group of citizens nor should it be used as a justification for public actions that have the effect of diminishing equity. It is also the position of the Commission that the achievement, protection and maintenance of equity be a major objective in public policy decisions as public and private sector agencies at all levels adopt plans and policies aimed at becoming consistent with the State Plan.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 1. New development, population and employment located in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas or within Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas</p> <p>Indicator 1. Average annual disposable income among New Jerseyans</p> <p>Indicator 2. Unemployment</p> <p>Indicator 3. Conversion of farmland for development</p> <p>Indicator 5. Agricultural output</p> <p>Indicator 7. Economic output per unit of energy consumed</p> <p>Indicator 21. Municipalities with median household incomes of less than \$30,000 per year (in 1990 dollars)</p> <p>Indicator 22. Number of census tracts with more than 40% of the population living under the poverty level</p>

Goal 3 Analysis

Vernon's economic development hinges on its status as an "agric-eco tourism" destination. The Township has developed plans to promote economic development in appropriate locations, i.e. centers served by sewer, while preserving the "environs" to maintain the character of the Township and preserve the agricultural based economy through farmland preservation. The 1995 Master Plan outlines the following economic development and related goals and objectives, which are consistent with Goal 3:

- To provide for economic development through commercial, light industrial and commercial recreational zones by implementing the following objectives:
 - In areas without infrastructure, to permit environmentally compatible economic development using the carrying capacities of the natural system.
 - For large scale non-residential uses, select areas for economic development free of environmental constraints.
 - Support the resort industry and recognize it as a positive factor for the economic development of the community.
 - Establish an Agri-Eco Tourism District along the northeastern section of Route 94.
- To insure adequate infrastructure to accommodate the projected level of intensity of development.
 - Protect groundwater resources – the source aquifer- through proper septic management.
 - Residential development, other than single family, should be served by utilities.
 - Major commercial development should be encouraged in designated centers which should be served by utilities.
 - Major commercial development should be encouraged in designated centers which should be served by utilities.
- To encourage commercial development in appropriate locations and governed by modern planning techniques.
 - Avoid strip commercial along NJSH Route 94 by designating a two core center.
 - Establish neighborhood commercial centers along CR 515 and 517 to serve adjacent residential areas.
 - Establish a two core center for the McAfee areas as primary commercial area for the immediate region and a regional commercial recreation center extending to Vernon Valley Ski area.
 - Establish a Vernon Town Center and commercial area in Vernon.
- To achieve balance between continued development and the preservation of the extensive natural resources of the community by implementing the following objective:
 - Utilize the Farmland preservation program to preserve farmland on a voluntary basis.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 4: Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution</p> <p>STRATEGY: Develop standards of performance and create incentives to prevent and reduce pollution and toxic emissions at the source, in order to conserve resources and protect public health. Promote the development of businesses that provide goods and services that eliminate pollution and toxic emissions or reduce resource depletion. Actively pursue public/private partnerships, the latest technology and strict enforcement to prevent toxic emissions and clean up polluted air, land and water without shifting pollutants from one medium to another; from one geographic location to another; or from one generation to another. Promote ecologically designed development and redevelopment in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas and accommodate ecologically designed development in Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas, to reduce automobile usage; land, water and energy consumption; and to minimize impacts on public health and biological systems, water and air quality. Plant and maintain trees and native vegetation. Reduce waste and reuse and recycle materials through demanufacturing and remanufacturing</p>	<p>Policy on Air Resources - Reduce air pollution by promoting development patterns that reduce both mobile and stationary sources of pollution, promoting the use of alternative modes of transportation, and supporting clean, renewable fuels and efficient transportation systems.</p> <p>Policy on Energy Resources - Ensure adequate energy resources through conservation, facility modernization, renewable energy and cogeneration; to continue economic growth while protecting the environment; and to modify energy consumption patterns to capitalize on renewable, domestic energy supplies rather than virgin extraction and imports.</p> <p>Policy Waste Management, Recycling and Brownfields- Promote recycling and source reduction through product design and materials management and by coordinating and supporting legislative, planning and facility development efforts regarding solid and hazardous waste treatment, storage and disposal. Capitalize on opportunities provided by brownfield sites through coordinated planning, strategic marketing and priority redevelopment of these sites.</p>	<p>Indicator 4. Percent of brownfield sites redeveloped</p> <p>Indicator 7. Economic output per unit of energy consumed</p> <p>Indicator 8. The generation of solid waste on a per capita and per job basis</p> <p>Indicator 9. Number of unhealthful days annually caused by ground-level ozone, particulate matter and carbon monoxide</p> <p>Indicator 10. Greenhouse gas emissions</p> <p>Indicator 13. Changes in toxic chemical use and waste generation (non-product output or NPO) by New Jersey's manufacturing sector</p> <p>Indicator 15. Vehicle miles traveled per capita</p>

Goal 4 Analysis

Vernon's efforts to promote Goal 4 have focused on protection of the environment and prevention of pollution. These goals are illustrated in Vernon's Conservation Element and environmental constraints ordinances. Vernon has some polluted areas from past industrial uses, underground oil tanks, etc., that will require clean-up efforts in the future. Vernon has designated three areas in the Township as areas in need of redevelopment as part of an effort to focus development in existing developed areas, within existing population centers, to decrease the need for added infrastructure and to promote compact development. The following objectives from the 1995 Master Plan apply to Goal 4:

- Upgrade zoning in appropriate areas in order to protect ground water quality, steep slopes and scenic vistas.
- Create new land use categories and apply zoning techniques that permit development of land while preserving environmentally sensitive areas.
- Recognize and protect the Appalachian Trail through cluster or density zoning techniques.
- Maintain low density zoning in that area adjacent to the Walkkill National Wildlife Refuge.
- Utilize the Farmland preservation program to preserve farmland on a voluntary basis.
- Develop policies to preserve, protect and maximize the utility of natural resources in the Township.
- Recommend specific changes to the Township's Land Use Ordinance, and propose new Township ordinances to implement these initiatives.
- Restrict development in critical environmental areas, such as flood plains, wetlands and steep slopes.
- Minimize the impacts of development on environmentally sensitive areas including wetlands, stream corridors, and aquifer recharge areas.
- Preserve existing woodland areas.
- Preserve the quality of both groundwater sources and surface water bodies.

- Provide a continuous network of open space along streams, scenic areas and critical environmental areas.
- Encourage lot averaging or cluster development techniques which preserve natural amenities, farms, woodlands, scenic views, and open space.
- Preserve and protect open space areas having scenic views and/or important historical, cultural, or agricultural significance.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 5: Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost</p> <p>STRATEGY: Provide infrastructure and related services more efficiently by supporting investments based on comprehensive planning and by providing financial incentives for jurisdictions that cooperate in supplying public infrastructure and shared services. Encourage the use of infrastructure needs assessments and life-cycle costing. Reduce demands for infrastructure investment by using public and private markets to manage peak demands, applying alternative management and financing approaches, using resource conserving technologies and information systems to provide and manage public facilities and services, and purchasing land and easements to prevent development, protect flood plains and sustain agriculture where appropriate.</p>	<p>Policy on Infrastructure Investments - Provide infrastructure and related services more efficiently by investing in infrastructure to guide growth, managing demand and supply, restoring systems in distressed areas, maintaining existing infrastructure investments, designing multi-use school facilities to serve as centers of community, creating more compact settlement patterns in appropriate locations in suburban and rural areas, and timing and sequencing the maintenance of capital facilities service levels with development throughout the State.</p> <p>Policy on Transportation - Improve transportation systems by coordinating transportation and land-use planning; integrating transportation systems; developing and enhancing alternative modes of transportation; improving management structures and techniques; and utilizing transportation as an economic development tool.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 4. Meet present and prospective needs for public infrastructure systems</p> <p>Indicator 14. The percent of all trips to work made by carpool, public transportation, bicycle, walking or working at home</p> <p>Indicator 16. Number of pedestrian fatalities in vehicular accidents on State roads</p> <p>Indicator 17. Increase in transit ridership</p> <p>Indicator 18. Percent of potable water supplies that meet all standards</p> <p>Indicator 19. Percent of development on individual septic systems</p>

Goal 5 Analysis

Vernon Township worked with Mountain Creek and the Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority (SCMUA) on plans to expand the Walkkill water treatment plant to service the proposed future sewer allocations for the Vernon Town Center and additional growth of the Mountain Creek Resort. The Township currently has installed sewer infrastructure for the Town Center. The Sussex County proposed sewer service area includes: the Vernon Town Center, Mountain Creek, Hidden Valley, Minerals Resort, and the McAfee area. The proposed sewer service area will guide where future

development and infrastructure will be located. With the establishment of the Vernon Town Center, the Township is working on creating a pedestrian friendly Main Street district that will allow mixed-use residential and commercial uses within easy walking distance from each other. The following objectives from the 1995 Master Plan apply to Goal 5:

- Establish a Vernon Town Center and commercial area.
- In areas without infrastructure, to permit environmentally compatible economic development using the carrying capacities of the natural system.
- For large scale non-residential uses, select areas for economic development free of environmental constraints.
- Protect groundwater resources – the sole source aquifer – through proper septic management.
- Major commercial development should be encouraged in designed centers which should be served by utilities.
- Maintain appropriate emergency services for Township residents.
- Continue to monitor the facility needs of Vernon's public schools.
- Provide a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths which link residential neighborhoods with open space, community facilities, and commercial areas.
- Restrict development in critical environmental areas, such as flood plains, wetlands, and steep slopes.
- Preserve the quality of both groundwater sources and surface water bodies.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>GOAL 6: Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost</p> <p>STRATEGY: Provide adequate housing at a reasonable cost through public/private partnerships that create and maintain a broad choice of attractive, affordable, ecologically designed housing, particularly for those most in need. Create and maintain housing in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas and in Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas, at densities which support transit and reduce commuting time and costs, and at locations easily accessible, preferably on foot, to employment, retail, services, cultural, civic and recreational opportunities. Support regional and community-based housing initiatives and remove unnecessary regulatory and financial barriers to the delivery of housing at appropriate locations.</p>	<p>Policy on Housing - Preserve and expand the supply of safe, decent and reasonably priced housing by balancing land uses, housing types and housing costs and by improving access between jobs and housing. Promote low- and moderate-income and affordable housing through code enforcement, housing subsidies, community-wide housing approaches and coordinated efforts with the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing.</p> <p>Policy on Design - Mix uses and activities as closely and as thoroughly as possible; develop, adopt and implement design guidelines; create spatially defined, visually appealing and functionally efficient places in ways that establish an identity; design circulation systems to promote connectivity; maintain an appropriate scale in the built environment; and redesign areas of sprawl.</p>	<p>Indicator 20. Percent of New Jersey households paying more than 30% of their pre-tax household income towards housing</p> <p>Indicator 24. Annual production of affordable housing units</p>

Goal 6 Analysis

The Township’s Housing Element & Fair Share Plan was amended from the 1995 Master Plan in December 2005 to address changes in COAH regulations. The December 2005 Plan provided growth projections and affordable housing projections which matched the State’s projections for the Township. The Plan addressed COAH regulations through the Round 3 Growth Share rule adoption. The proposed Town Center will incorporate commercial and residential in a concentrated area, creating mixed use housing opportunities which are currently not available in the Township. Along with the proposed Town Center, existing single-family residential, condo, and townhomes provide a variety of housing types for

residents. The Town Center will be designed in a way that exhibits a cohesive architecture that is visually appealing and establishes an identity of place. The following objectives from the 1995 Master Plan apply to Goal 6:

- Establish a Vernon Town Center and commercial area.
- Rehabilitate existing substandard housing with state or federal funds.
- Provide a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths which link residential neighborhoods with open space, community facilities, and commercial areas.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 7: Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value</p> <p>STRATEGY: Enhance, preserve and use historic, cultural, scenic, open space and recreational assets by collaborative planning, design, investment and management techniques. Locate and design development and redevelopment and supporting infrastructure to improve access to and protect these sites. Support the important role of the arts in contributing to community life and civic beauty.</p>	<p>Policy on Historic, Cultural and Scenic Resources - Protect, enhance, and where appropriate rehabilitate historic, cultural and scenic resources by identifying, evaluating and registering significant historic, cultural and scenic landscapes, districts, structures, buildings, objects and sites and ensuring that new growth and development is compatible with historic, cultural and scenic values</p>	<p>Key Indicator 2. The amount of land permanently dedicated to open space and farmland preservation</p> <p>Indicator 12. Conversion of land per person</p>

Goal 7 Analysis

Vernon’s 1970 Master Plan promoted an evaluation of all historic sites in the Township and prompted a completion of a historic sites survey. In 1992, the historic sites survey was updated and expanded to a list of 50 historic sites recommended for preservation. The 1995 Master Plan calls out 116 historical sites throughout the Township ranging from buildings, to mines, to prehistoric Native American sites. The Township’s Historical Preservation Commission has been very active in the preservation of Vernon’s historical sites.

The Township’s Open Space & Recreation Plan was amended from the 1995 Master Plan in May 2003 to address updates to the open space plan element. These updates developed more refined goals and objectives from the 1995 Master Plan. Along with a statement of goals and objectives the 2003 Plan also includes an Action Plan, which details steps for

the Township to take over several years to ensure the systematic implementation of the Open Space Plan. The following objectives from the 1995 Master Plan apply to historical items in Goal 7:

- Recognize the many identified historical structures by petition for placement on the State and Federal Historic Register.
- Ensure protection of former Indian mining and tool manufacturing areas as subdivision development occurs.
- Explore the potential of a historical district in the Vernon Village area.
- Examine the potential of establishing a Historic Preservation Commission.

The following goals and objectives from the 1995 Master Plan and the 2003 Municipal Open Space and Recreational Plan Element apply to open space items in Goal 7:

- Provide adequate recreation facilities for all age groups including: sports fields, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and senior citizen recreation facilities.
- Preserve adequate open space for the future through preservation of farmland, creation of greenways, and acquisition of land by the Municipality.
- To balance the provision of open space with economic development in appropriate areas.
- Maintain an ecologically strong community for the people of Vernon Township.
- To educate non-participating farmers and land owners about open space and farmland preservation mechanisms.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 8: Ensure Sound, Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide</p> <p>STRATEGY: Use the State Plan and the Plan Endorsement process as a guide to achieve comprehensive, coordinated, long-term planning based on capacity analysis and citizen participation; and to integrate planning with investment, program and regulatory land-use decisions at all levels of government and the private sector, in an efficient, effective and equitable manner. Ensure that all development, redevelopment, revitalization or conservation efforts support State Planning Goals and are consistent with the Statewide Policies and State Plan Policy Map of the State Plan.</p>	<p>Policy on Comprehensive Planning - Promote planning for the public's benefit, and with strong public participation, by enhancing planning capacity at all levels of government, using capacity-based planning and Plan Endorsement to guide the location and pattern of growth and promoting cooperation and coordination among counties, municipalities, State, interState and federal agencies.</p> <p>Policy on Planning Regions Established by Statute - The State Plan acknowledges the special statutory treatment accorded the New Jersey Pinelands under the Pinelands Protection Act, and the Hackensack Meadowlands under the Hackensack Meadowlands Reclamation and Development Act. The State Planning Commission is explicitly directed to "rely on the adopted plans and regulations of these entities in developing the State Plan." In the State Plan, these areas are considered Planning Regions Established by Statute.</p> <p>Policy on Public Investment Priorities - It is the intent of the State Plan that the full amount of growth projected for the State should be accommodated. Plan Strategies recommend guiding this growth to Centers and other areas identified within Endorsed Plans where infrastructure exists or is planned and where it can be provided efficiently, either with private or public dollars. (Designated Centers are included in the category of communities with Endorsed Plans.) Public investment priorities guide the investment of public dollars to support and carry out these Plan Strategies.</p>	<p>Key Indicator 6. The degree to which local plans and State agency plans are consistent with the State Plan</p> <p>Indicator 25. Municipalities participating in comprehensive, multijurisdictional regional planning processes consistent with the State Plan</p>

Goal 8 Analysis

The purpose of this Self Assessment Report is to show that Vernon's plans are consistent with the State Plan and that they represent comprehensive, long range documents, which are focused on capacity planning, and developed with considerable citizen participation. With its large population, Vernon is aware of the importance of planned development to prevent sprawl and protect natural resources. With the extension of the Vernon Town Center Designation, Vernon hopes to promote continued development of mixed-use commercial and residential development in the Town Center.

Vernon is also looking to the Plan Endorsement and Plan Conformance processes as opportunities to update the Township's Master Plan and related planning documents. The following objectives from the 1995 Master Plan apply to Goal 8:

- Establish a Vernon Town Center and commercial area.
- Avoid strip commercial along Route 94 by designating two commercial centers.
- Rehabilitate existing substandard housing with State or Federal funds.
- Establish a two core center for the McAfee area as a primary commercial area for the immediate region and a regional commercial recreation center extending to Vernon Valley Ski area.
- Establish neighborhood commercial centers along Route 515 and 517 to serve adjacent residential neighborhoods.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLAN - CENTER CRITERIA & POLICIES

Vernon's Town Center was approved by the State Planning Commission on July 16, 2003 and since that approval the Township has fulfilled the intent of the PIA in producing a compact two core center that is consistent with the State Plan. Vernon's Town Center utilizes a mixture of mixed-use buildings, commercial structures and residential buildings to create a diverse walkable community that provides jobs and housing opportunities within a compact core. Vernon's application for Center Designation identified that the "overarching goal of Vernon's planning efforts is to protect these environs and alter the patterns of growth. The Township has recognized the need to concentrate the compact development and redevelopment in order to best maintain its rural and natural landscape. Vernon has begun to utilize planning processes and mechanisms, including this center petition, proposed down-zoning and open space acquisitions, to accomplish this end. Among the township's planning goals are ending sprawl development patterns in the environs and retrofitting existing sprawling development patterns within the boundaries of the Regional Center, while balancing the need for locally-based economic opportunities for the community." In addition, the purpose and goal of creating a center for the Township was to provide a sense of identity and place for a very large and diverse community. The center was created to be the place for people in the community to gather, interact and strengthen the community as whole. The Township remains committed to the original intent and goals related to the Center and re-affirms this commitment through its pursuit of Plan Endorsement as follows:

- Maintaining the characteristics of a rural environmentally-sensitive area while accommodating economic growth;
- Providing a concentrated center to absorb the effects of increased agri-eco tourism in the region;
- Maintaining the rural/mountain character within the Center;

- Acquiring and preserving open space and farmland in the environs to ensure that new development is directed to the Center;
- Providing local jobs and housing to compliment the regional draw of the resorts;
- Implementing the vision and plans that have been conceived through an active public participatory process;
- Utilizing infill and redevelopment within the Center to increase business opportunities and employment; and
- Providing a mix of housing types to allow for the construction of affordable housing in the Center.



Concept Layout of Vernon Center Core, Looney Ricks Kiss, 2003

Criteria	State Plan Criteria: Town Center	Proposed Township Center Baseline	Proposed Township Center (20 years forward)
<i>Land Use</i>			
Function	Mixed-use core and diverse housing.	Yes	Yes
	Identified as a result of a strategic planning effort.	Yes	Yes
Land area	< 2 sq mi	1.63	1.63
Housing units	500 to 4,000	1,638	1,800
Housing Density	> 3 du/acre	1.13	3.17
<u>Population</u>			
Number of people	1,000 to 10,000	2,392	2,809
Density	> 5,000 per sq mi	1,467	1,723
<i>Economy</i>			
Employment	>500 to 10,000	4,028	4,359
Jobs-housing ratio	1:1 to 4:1	2.46:1	2.34:1
<i>Infrastructure</i>			
Capacity (general)	Sufficient existing or planned infrastructure.	Yes*	Yes*
Transportation	Arterial highway or public transit.	Arterial highway	Arterial Highway/Public Transit
* The NJDEP has proposed to reduce the sewer service area in the Town Center and that would limit capacity within the Center.			

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLAN – PLANNING AREA POLICY OBJECTIVES

Policy Objectives –Rural Planning Area 4, Rural Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area 4B, and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area 5

The State Plan provides the following Policy Objectives to guide the application of the State Plan’s Statewide Policies in the Rural Planning Area 4, Rural/ Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area 4B and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area 5, the criteria for designation of existing or new Centers, the policies for delineating Center Boundaries, and local and State agency planning. *An explanation of Vernon’s consistency follows each policy objective in italics.*

1. **Land Use:** Enhance economic and agricultural viability and rural character by guiding development and redevelopment into Centers. In the Environs, maintain and enhance agricultural uses, and preserve agricultural and other lands to form large contiguous areas and greenbelts around Centers. Development and redevelopment should use creative land use and design techniques to ensure that it does not conflict with agricultural operations, does not exceed the capacity of natural and built systems and protects areas where public investments in farmland preservation have been made. Development and redevelopment in the Environs should maintain or enhance the character of the area.

Vernon’s center designation and preservation of the environs is consistent with this policy. Vernon has also designated three redevelopment areas in pursuit of efficient re-use of lands within the center of the Township. Vernon actively seeks to preserve open space and farmland through volunteer acquisition programs.

2. **Housing:** Provide for a full range of housing choices primarily in Centers at appropriate densities to accommodate projected growth, recognizing the special locational needs of agricultural employees and minimizing conflicts with agricultural operations. Ensure that housing in general—and in particular affordable, senior citizen, special needs and family housing—is developed with maximum access to a full range of commercial, educational, recreational, health and transportation services and facilities in Centers. Focus multi-family and higher-density, single-family housing in Centers. Any housing in the Environs should be planned and located to maintain or enhance the cultural and scenic qualities and with minimum impacts on agricultural resources.

Vernon submitted a Housing Element and Fair Share Plan to the Council on Affordable Housing in 2005. The Township has requested an extension of time from filing to fulfill the recently revised Round 3 rules in order to allow sufficient time to study the impacts of the Highlands designation on housing and growth in the Township. The Township's deadline for filing is December 8, 2009.

3. **Economic Development:** Promote economic activities within Centers that complement and support the rural and agricultural communities and that provide diversity in the rural economy and opportunities for off-farm income and employment. Encourage tourism related to agriculture and the environment, as well as the historic and rural character of the area. Support appropriate recreational and natural resource-based activities in the Environs. Any economic development in the Environs should be planned and located to maintain or enhance the cultural and scenic qualities and with minimum impacts on agricultural resources.

Vernon's economic development plans mirror this policy in that the Township focuses its economic development on building an agri-eco-tourism based economy that seeks to preserve farmland and environmentally sensitive lands while maintaining access to services for visitors in the locations within the Township which are served by sewer.

4. Transportation: Maintain and enhance a rural transportation system that links Centers to each other and to the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas. Provide appropriate access of agricultural products to markets, accommodating the size and weight of modern agricultural equipment. In Centers, emphasize the use of public transportation systems and alternatives to private cars where appropriate and feasible, and maximize circulation and mobility options throughout. Support the preservation of general aviation airports as integral parts of the State's transportation system.

Vernon seeks to maintain efficient use of its system of state, county and local roads to link the Township with other areas in New Jersey and New York. The Township has identified a plan for mass transit and is working with the county and NJDOT on possibilities for implementing the plan. The Township has also created a center that is pedestrian friendly and will encourage less use of the personal automobile.

5. Natural Resource Conservation: Minimize potential conflicts between development, agricultural practices and sensitive environmental resources. Promote agricultural management practices and other agricultural conservation techniques to protect soil and water resources. Protect and preserve large, contiguous tracts and corridors of recreation, forest or other open space land that protect natural systems and natural resources.

Vernon is completely located within the Highlands Region and the Township will be conforming in the Preservation Areas of the Highlands Region, creating consistency with this policy.

6. Agriculture and Farmland Preservation: Guide development to ensure the viability of agriculture and the retention of farmland in agricultural areas. Encourage farmland retention and minimize conflicts between agricultural practices and the location of Centers. Ensure the availability of adequate water resources and large, contiguous tracts of land with minimal land-use conflicts. Actively promote more intensive, new-crop agricultural enterprises and meet the needs of the agricultural industry for intensive packaging, processing, value-added operations, marketing, exporting and other shipping through development and redevelopment.

Vernon guides development through its zoning and center designation and encourages the protection and preservation of open space and farmland through acquisition at the county and state level as well as by implementing the Highlands rules in the Preservation Area.

7. Recreation: Provide maximum active and passive recreational and tourism opportunities at the neighborhood and local levels by targeting the acquisition and development of neighborhood and municipal parkland within Centers. Provide regional recreation and tourism opportunities by targeting parkland acquisitions and improvements that enhance large contiguous open space systems and by facilitating alternative recreational and tourism uses of farmland.

Vernon actively seeks to expand recreational facilities and access to recreation wherever possible, consistent with this policy.

8. **Redevelopment:** Encourage appropriate redevelopment in existing Centers and existing developed areas that have the potential to become Centers, or in ways that support Center-based development to accommodate growth that would otherwise occur in the Environs. Redevelop with intensities sufficient to support transit, a broad range of uses, efficient use of infrastructure, and design that enhance public safety, encourage pedestrian activity, reduce dependency on the automobile and maintain the rural character of Centers.

Vernon has declared three areas in need of redevelopment in the Township, two of which are located within the two core center, thereby promoting this policy.

9. **Historic Preservation:** Encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic or significant buildings, Historic and Cultural Sites, neighborhoods and districts in ways that will not compromise either the historic resource or the ability for a Center to develop or redevelop. Outside Centers, coordinate historic preservation needs with farmland preservation efforts. Coordinate historic preservation with tourism efforts.

Vernon has a Historic Commission that actively works to preserve and encourage adaptive re-use of historically significant sites where appropriate.

10. **Public Facilities and Services:** Phase and program for construction as part of a dedicated capital improvement budget or as part of a public/private development agreement the extension or establishment of public facilities and services, particularly wastewater systems, to establish adequate levels of capital facilities and services to support Centers;

to protect large contiguous areas of productive farmlands and other open spaces; to protect public investments in farmland preservation programs; and to minimize conflicts between Centers and surrounding farms. Encourage private investments and facilitate public/private partnerships to provide adequate facilities and services, particularly wastewater systems, in Centers. Make community wastewater treatment a feasible and cost-effective alternative.

Vernon has made a significant financial commitment to providing wastewater facilities for its center and to create public/private partnerships in doing so.

11. Intergovernmental Coordination: Coordinate efforts of various State agencies, County and municipal governments to ensure that State and local policies and programs support rural economic development, agriculture, and the rural character of the area by examining the effects of financial institution lending, government regulation, taxation and other governmental policies and programs.

Vernon works closely with both the County and the State to promote economic development within its Center and to take advantage of all available taxation and other governmental policies and programs to promote positive economic development within Vernon in order to better serve the larger region of Sussex County. Vernon has evaluated its zoning plan with those of adjacent municipalities and found it to be compatible. Vernon has coordinated with Sussex County to share services such as utilizing the County for Health Department purposes and GIS capabilities.

State Plan Recommended Activities

To achieve consistency with State Plan Goals, the State Plan recommends municipalities undertake several planning activities related to the State Planning Area Policy Objectives. Vernon has undertaken or plans to undertake the following recommended policy objectives:

- Map and protect Critical Environmental Sites and Historic and Cultural Sites.
- Identify strategies for linking Centers with the region and accommodating seasonal travel and tourism demands.
- Coordinate permitting and land-use approval requirements that encourage development and investment in Centers.
- Identify strategies to protect natural systems and their functions.
- Identify strategies to enhance tourism and recreation-based activities.
- Identify opportunities to assemble and connect open space networks and large contiguous areas of undisturbed habitat.
- Ensure that areas critical to water supply and quality are protected.
- Identify opportunities to accommodate growth and development in Centers through provision of infrastructure, particularly wastewater systems in Centers.
- Recognize and facilitate the participation of the private sector in achieving the objectives of the State Plan in the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area.
- Capitalize on the opportunities for redevelopment in Centers afforded by redevelopment laws and brownfields redevelopment programs. Establish and maintain a publicly accessible inventory of sites recommended for redevelopment.

STATE AGENCY ASSISTANCE

Vernon Township is interested in State financial and/or technical assistance for the following planning initiatives and projects:

Transportation, Streetscape, Pedestrian and Alternative Transportation Improvements

- Public transportation which ties into existing county and state mass transit systems.
- Create a walking mall within the Town Center Main Street area with a shuttle going to and from parking lots.
- Create a bike path traversing the entire Township.
- Further development and promotion of a canoe trail and launch sites.
- Provide funding to complete streetscape projects in the Town Center, i.e. street furniture, lighting, sidewalks, etc.
- Provide funding to increase pedestrian connections throughout the Town Center.
- Provide coordinated review of proposed parking area for the Appalachian Trail boardwalk.
- Provide funding for gateway beautification.

Water & Sewer Improvements

- Provide assistance in maintaining sewer service areas in the Town Center.
- Provide assistance in water allocation issues related to the Center.
- Provide Vernon access to the NJDEP Small Water System Technical Assistance Program for the proposed water system in the Town Center.

Economic Development

- Construction of a Performing Arts Center.
- Higher visibility in state tourism advertising campaigns.
- Development of Historic Sub-District within the Town Center Redevelopment Area to include a self-guided walking tour.
- Promotion of special events which will bring people to Vernon and consequently fill now vacant hotel rooms.
- Construction of a Welcome Center.
- Provide funding and technical assistance to increase access to state parks, publicly preserved open space and wildlife management areas for recreation activities.
- Provide funding and technical assistance to provide way finding signage throughout the Township.
- Provide funding and technical assistance for creation of scenic routes through the Township.
- Provide funding and program assistance for creating a façade, signage and landscaping improvement program.
- Provide assistance in obtaining a Main Street designation.

Grants and Planning Assistance

- Provide Smart Growth Grants to Assist with Plan Endorsement Action Plan Items.
- Provide funding and/or technical assistance for the visioning process.
- Provide funding and technical assistance for open space acquisition and farmland preservation.
- Provide funding and technical assistance to create a website for promotion of tourism in Vernon with links to other tourism related websites in the state.
- Provide funding and technical assistance for web marketing of Vernon as a tourist destination.

- Provide assistance in coordinating reviews with state and federal park agencies for amenities in the parks in Vernon, i.e. access points and parking areas, etc.

CONCLUSION

The Township of Vernon is a regional agricultural and outdoor tourism center, with a two core Town Center which was designated by the State Planning Commission in 2003. The Township of Vernon is located within the Highlands Region and will face challenges in balancing the need for growth and economic development with the enhanced environmental protection mandated by the Highlands Act. The Township has filed its notice of intent to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan and is participating in the Plan Conformance process. The Township promotes smart growth principles by planning for a compact town center area and restricting development in the environs. The Township has designated areas within and around the Town Center as areas in need of redevelopment to further promote compact mixed-use development adjacent to the major transportation corridors in the Township. Vernon coordinates with Sussex County and shares services to promote the efficient use of government resources and create plans which are consistent with each other. Vernon is committed to working with the State Planning Commission and the Office of Smart Growth to achieve Plan Endorsement and Center Designation.