

C. COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND CHARACTER

Summary of Planning Issues

There are many factors that affect the quality of life in any community. Paramount among these factors is the appearance and stability of the community's neighborhood's and commercial areas. The Public Opinion Survey and the Community Workshops provided an opportunity for Town residents to express concerns they had regarding the quality of life in the Town of Ramapo. Central to many of the quality of life issues raised by the public was preservation of the single-family residential development pattern that characterizes a large portion of unincorporated Ramapo. The top two reasons provided for why people moved to the Town were the "suburban lifestyle" and the "scenic beauty" of the Town. Similarly, two of the top factors cited as reasons that may cause residents to leave Ramapo were the "area becoming over-developed" and "changes in unique local character." Also central to many of the concerns raised was the appearance of recent residential construction in the Town. The "loss of small town or suburban atmosphere" was cited by a majority of the survey respondents as one of the most important issues to consider when planning for the future of Ramapo. Similar sentiments were raised at each of the various Community Workshop meetings held regarding each area of the Town. Strong preference in this regard was expressed regarding Hillcrest and the northern and western portions of Monsey, in particular. Residents of western Ramapo, the Route 202 and the northeastern portion of the Town expressed a strong preference in maintaining the open, rural-suburban character of those areas of the Town. Another issue of concern was the appearance and vitality of the Town's commercial areas, particularly the commercial-strip type development that characterizes Route 59.

Another important factor affecting the quality of life in any community is the quality of community services, including the quality of the local school districts, availability of park and recreational facilities, public safety services, and the capability of its infrastructure systems such as public water supply and sanitary sewer. Various concerns were raised at the Community Workshop meetings with regard to the quality of community services in the Town. Paramount among these concerns was the potential impact of additional development on the quantity and quality of water supply in the Town.

The automobile is the predominant mode of transportation for the majority of Ramapo workers (70 percent of workers in the Town commute by car). In addition to commuting to work, transportation by car is needed in the Town for most functions of daily living including shopping, attending school or place of worship, or even visiting family and friends. As population in the Town and surrounding area continues to increase additional

demands will be placed on the Town's roadways. The Basic Studies document and the Public Opinion survey identified a number of roadways and intersections currently experiencing traffic congestion, including reduced speeds. These include segments of Route 59, Route 202, Route 45, Route 306, Maple Avenue, and College Road. Many of these roadways are two-lane roadways and the traffic congestion identified during peak hours was typically at or near signalized intersections. Traffic congestion on these roads is typically related to school traffic or commuter traffic, or in and around commercial establishments.

Goal and Objectives

Goal: Maintain the quality of life in the Town by enhancing and preserving the character of Ramapo's neighborhoods and commercial corridors, maintaining the high quality of community services and facilities provided to Town residents, and providing an integrated and efficient transportation network.

- 1. Objective:** Preserve the quality, character and stability of the Town's neighborhoods by preventing the intrusion of incompatible uses in residential areas and distributing land uses in such a manner that potential conflicts between uses are minimized.
- 2. Objective:** Ensure that such additional development occurs at a scale and in a manner that is appropriate to the area and that serves to preserve and enhance the character and diversity of Ramapo's neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- 3. Objective:** Support new businesses, facilities, programs and events that serve the social, religious and cultural interests of the Town's residents.
- 4. Objective:** Provide an appropriate range of recreational and social facilities of such type and in such locations that are needed, wanted and accessible to the widest possible range of Town residents.
- 5. Objective:** Maintain the high quality utility systems that serve the residents of the Town, including public water supply and sanitary sewer.
- 6. Objective:** Encourage improvements to meet existing and future transportation needs in the Town including: improvements to the roadway network that relieve areas of specific traffic congestion and/or that mitigate specific traffic hazards;

improvements to scheduling, service and facilities of existing mass transit systems so as to promote the use of mass transit by Town residents, support of alternative means of transportation including the construction of sidewalks particularly in areas of the Town with high levels of pedestrian traffic; and support of land use patterns that will use transportation systems most effectively and minimize potential additional congestion.

Planning Recommendations and Implementation Strategies

1. *Neighborhood Character.* The following implementation measures are encouraged in order to maintain and enhance the character and stability of the Town's residential neighborhoods:

- a. Preservation of Existing Residential Zoning Patterns

The vast majority of the Town is located within one of the Town's single-family residential zoning districts. Generally, the overall pattern of residential density consists of the highest densities in Monsey (particularly in proximity to Route 59) with decreasing levels of density in roughly concentric circles around this area. The highest density residential zone in the Town (i.e., the R-15C District) is located in the central part of Monsey. The next highest density zone (the R-15 District) is located in Monsey and Hillcrest, usually surrounds the R-15C District and generally acts a transition to the lower density areas to the north and west. The lower density single-family residential zones (e.g., the R-25, R-35, and R-40), generally form a ring around the higher density residential zones that are located Monsey. The outer-ring is comprised of the lowest density residential zones (i.e., the RR-50 and RR-80) and overlays the most rural and environmentally-sensitive areas of the Town including the western and northeastern portions of the Town.

This Plan recommends the continuation of this existing overall pattern of residential density. To that end, this plan recommends that the vast majority of the residential areas of the Town retain their current zoning district designations and recommends measures that should be taken to maintain the existing character of the Town's neighborhoods. The recommended zone changes in the Monsey area (e.g., from R-15 to R-15C) are consistent with this overall pattern of residential density.



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[Note: Refer to the “Future Land Use” section and, specifically, the “Land Use Plan” map that recommends the continuation of this existing overall pattern of residential density.]

b. The R-15C District

As indicated in the “Housing” chapter, the Town Board has reacted to the continual and growing need for housing in the Town over the last decade or so through the creation, amendment and expansion of the R-15C zoning district. The R-15C District, which permits 1-, 2- and 3-family detached and semi-attached dwellings on lots of varying size, has provided additional housing in the Monsey area at densities up to approximately 12 units per acre, which are comparable to densities permitted in standard multi-family districts found in other communities similar to the Town of Ramapo. However, numerous concerns have been raised regarding the appearance of developments constructed in accordance with the requirements of the R-15C District. Most of these concerns result from the fact that the R-15C District allows relatively high-density residential development through the subdivision process so that the development is comprised of numerous separately-owned lots with: no common design or architectural theme from lot to lot; no central responsibility regarding property maintenance and refuse collection; and no requirements regarding the provision of open space and recreation facilities and other facilities and services commonly required of higher density residential development.



Concerns regarding the appearance of developments constructed the R-15C District result from the fact that the R-15C District allows relatively high-density residential development through the subdivision process so that the development is comprised of numerous separately-owned lots with no common design or architectural theme. Design standards, including minimal architectural standards and minimal landscaping requirements, are recommended. For example, limitations regarding the construction of decks in front of buildings should be considered.

- (1) This Plan recommends extension of the R-15C District in the future only in certain areas so as to allow the construction of new 2 and 3-family dwellings, or the conversion of existing homes into 2 and 3-family dwellings, to address housing needs in existing neighborhoods. The Plan recommends against the extension of the R-15C District onto large undeveloped properties or properties proposed for redevelopment (where a standard multi-family district that allows townhouses or garden apartment buildings would be more appropriate as described in the “Housing” chapter).
- (2) In addition, the Plan recommends that design standards be created to address some of the particular issues raised regarding the appearance of multiple unit dwellings constructed in the R-15C District including minimal architectural standards and minimal landscaping requirements.



Through the use of attractive architecture and landscaping, three-family homes can be constructed in the R-15C District in a manner that blends in with the surrounding neighborhood.

[Note: The “Housing” section recommends the creation of standard multi-family zoning districts that would permit multi-family residential developments such as garden apartments and townhouses in lieu of extending the R-15C district onto large undeveloped properties or large properties proposed for redevelopment. It also recommends accessory apartment regulations that would permit the construction of a small accessory apartments in certain zoning districts.]

Consideration should also be given to adjusting the bulk requirements for the different permitted dwelling types so as to require smaller minimum lot sizes for the lower density dwelling types and larger minimum lot sizes for the higher density dwelling types. Currently, single-family detached dwellings in the R-15C District are required to be on 15,000 square foot lots, whereas three-family semi-attached units may be located on 10,000 square foot lots. This does not make sense. Consideration should be given towards allowing one- and two-family dwellings on smaller lots than is required for three-family dwellings, for example.

c. Places of Worship and Private Schools.

(1) *Places of Worship.* The Town of Ramapo is a very diverse place and contains residents observing various faiths. Places of worships and schools (public and private) are an integral part of the fabric of any community and the Town of Ramapo is certainly no different. Therefore, the zoning requirements regarding places of worship and schools should be revised in order to create a proper balance between the ability of worshipers to practice faith-related activities and the community’s interest in minimizing

impacts resulting from the placement of places of worship and private schools in residential neighborhoods.

Adjustments in the applicable bulk requirements for places of worship in certain zoning districts may be appropriate considering that the places of worship within the Town vary greatly in size and considering the requirements of certain sects of the Jewish faith that they walk to worship. For example, the Zoning Code currently contains the same minimum lot area requirement (i.e., 2 acres) for places of worship in the R-40 District (a low density single-family area) as it does for places of worship in the R-15C District (a much higher density area of the Town with a tremendous amount of pedestrian activity and a higher percentage of residents that walk to worship). A “sliding scale” wherein smaller lot area and less stringent bulk requirements would be required for places of worship in the more dense residential districts with larger lot area requirements and more stringent bulk requirements in the lower density areas of the Town should be considered. This “sliding scale” should be related to the size of the proposed place of worship building (i.e., the smaller the place of worship – the smaller the required lot area).

In addition, considering the vastly differing nature of places of worship in the Town, it is recommended that the off-street parking requirements be revised so as to provide the Planning Board with greater discretion at the time of site plan review as to the appropriate number of required parking for places of worship.

Finally, in order to encourage places of worship that blend in with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, appropriate architectural standards, more specific buffer requirements, and required pedestrian enhancements should be incorporated into the Zoning Code. More flexible lot area requirements would be particularly appropriate for smaller, neighborhood places of worship without significant parking needs.



Places of worships and schools (public and private) are an integral part of the Ramapo community. The Town’s zoning requirements regarding places of worship and schools should be revised in order to create a proper balance between the ability of worshipers to practice faith-related activities and the community’s interest in minimizing impacts resulting from the placement of places of worship and private schools in residential neighborhoods.

- (2) *Schools.* Similar to requirements for “places of worship,” the Zoning Code currently contains the same minimum lot area requirement (i.e., 80,000 square feet) for schools in the R-40 District as it does for places of worship in the R-15C District. A “sliding scale” with respect to schools (wherein smaller lot area and less stringent bulk requirements would be required for schools in the more dense residential districts with larger lot area requirements and more stringent bulk requirements in the lower density areas of the Town) should also be considered. It is noted, however, that this approach may be limited with the respect to primary and secondary schools that typically require a certain minimum amount of land for recreational purposes.

Some communities have based the minimum lot area for schools on the number of students in the school – thus larger schools would require larger pieces of land, but smaller schools would be permitted on smaller pieces of land. Considering the prevalence of small private schools (many of which serve older teens and young adults not requiring the active recreational facilities of primary and secondary-school age children) in certain portions of unincorporated Ramapo such an approach may be particularly appropriate.

The Town should investigate whether it would be appropriate to have different zoning standards for the different types of schools prevalent in the Town. For example, as noted above, schools serving post-high school area students would generally not be expected to require the land needed for active recreational facilities usually required for schools serving primary and secondary-school age children. In addition, special consideration should be given towards the appropriate off-street parking requirement for the different types of schools in the Town.

Finally, like for places of worship, the Town should consider specific requirements that would encourage schools that blend in with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, including appropriate floor area ratio requirements, minimal architectural standards, more specific buffer requirements, and required pedestrian enhancements.

- (3) *Student Housing.* The Town recognizes the need for married student housing within the Town and recognizes that an appropriate solution to this issue needs to be addressed. The Town should develop an appropriate approach to address this issue. A specific analysis of how to implement any zoning changes should be undertaken. Providing a proper balance between the need for married student housing and the community's interest in minimizing impacts to neighboring areas would be a critical consideration.

- d. Reevaluation of Permitted Uses and Dimensional Requirements in Residential Districts. The Town should review the permitted uses in the Town's residential zoning districts as listed in the *Table of General Use Requirements – Part I: Residential Districts* in the Town's Zoning Code. The Town may find that it would no longer be appropriate to permit certain uses, such as hospitals or sanitoriums, in residential areas of the Town.

The Town should also reevaluate the applicable dimensional requirements for uses permitted in residential districts (as indicated by the applicable "use group" in the table referenced above). For example, the dimensional requirements for "outdoor recreation facilities, including golf courses," which permit such uses on lots as small as 2 acres should be reevaluated in light of the realistic availability of land for such purposes.

2. *Commercial Character.* The following implementation measures are encouraged in order to maintain and enhance the character and vitality of the Town's commercial areas:

- a. Site Design Standards. Many form their opinion of a community based on what they see through their car windows as they drive through the community. One of the most noticeable aspects of a community is its commercial corridors (e.g., Route 59, and portions of Route 202 and Route 45). Many of the commercial areas of the Town could use a facelift. Insufficient landscaping and excessive signage in commercial areas affect the community's image. Many communities are taking aggressive efforts to improve the appearance of their commercial strips. The Town should consider a number of measures to improve the appearance and vitality of its commercial areas.
- (1) The Town should review its site design standards in order to determine whether the requirements within it are specific and sufficient enough to ensure attractively-designed commercial and multi-family developments. Many communities have chosen to upgrade their site design standards so as to include:
- Traffic circulation and access management provisions, including requirements encouraging or requiring cross-access and shared entrance drives between adjacent properties;
 - Detailed provisions regarding perimeter landscape buffering, internal parking lot landscaping, detailed provisions as to required minimal landscaping quality, quantity and size;
 - Specific lighting standards that prescribe the type, height and power of lighting fixtures and overall illumination levels permitted within commercial and multi-family developments; and,
 - Provisions regarding architectural design of structures, including standards related to such design elements as facades, roof lines, windows, architectural detailing, materials and color.



Parking lots can be attractively landscaped and conveniently located and designed to encourage people to park their vehicles then walk to various shops, restaurants and commercial establishments.

- (2) The Town should also evaluate the existing sign regulations in the Town to identify options for standards that will improve the visual image of the business districts through the application of appropriate requirements pertaining to scale, style, illumination and other features for signs.
 - (3) Obviously, a critical component of improving the appearance of such developments is enforcement. The Town's Building Department should aggressively enforce the site plan requirements approved by the Town, including follow-up inspections for compliance and maintenance. For example, the Town's enforcement of site plan landscaping requirements should continue to identify whether the required trees, shrubs, plantings, berms and property line buffers have been installed and maintained within development projects.
- b. Reevaluation of Permitted Uses and Dimensional Requirements in Non-residential Districts.
- (1) The Town should review the *Table of General Use Requirements – Part II: Nonresidential Districts* and the *Table of Bulk Requirements* in the Town's Zoning Code in order to determine whether the Zoning Code reflects the type and intensity of development appropriate within the different nonresidential districts in the Town. For example, the Town should consider whether it would be appropriate to amend the list of uses permitted in the Laboratory Office (LO) District so as to eliminate certain uses (e.g.,

hotels and motels, industrial uses, wholesaling and warehousing business, and manufacturing) that may not be appropriate in this zone. The only LO District in the Town is a large LO-zoned area located in the northeast portion of Ramapo along Route 45 near its intersection with the Palisades Interstate Parkway (PIP). Considering that the PIP prohibits truck traffic and the residential character of the surrounding area, consideration should be given towards prohibiting such light industrial uses in this zone. One means of achieving this would be to rezone this area from the LO District to the LO-R (Laboratory Office-Restricted) District – a zone that does not permit the light industrial uses mentioned above.



A significant portion of the Route 45 corridor in the northeast portion of the Town is located within the Laboratory Office (LO) District, a district that allows certain uses (e.g., hotels and motels, industrial uses, wholesaling and warehousing business, and manufacturing) that may not be appropriate in this area of the Town.

In addition, the Town may find that it would no longer be appropriate to permit certain uses such as outdoor flea markets or amusement parks in non-residential districts in the Town.

- (2) While the Town of Ramapo does not currently have a proliferation of adult-oriented businesses, regulation of such uses in other communities presents a potential that such uses may wish to locate in the Town. The Zoning Code currently does not have provisions that sufficiently regulate the potential location of such uses in the Town. Given the potential impacts that adult-oriented businesses could have on the quality of life in the Town, special regulations regarding adult uses should be incorporated into the Town Zoning Code. Such regulations should include locational restrictions specifying allowance only in certain zoning districts and requiring that such

uses be located a certain minimal distance from residential districts, places of worship, schools, public parks and other such sensitive land uses.

- (3) With regard to dimensional requirements, the Town should review the applicable dimensional requirements (i.e., “use groups”) for uses permitted in the Town’s nonresidential districts in order to determine whether they appropriately protect surrounding properties (e.g., are the required buffers and setbacks sufficient?) and whether they require consistent and appropriate development intensities between different uses permitted in the same zone.

3. *Maintain and Enhance Community Services that Contribute to Ramapo’s Quality of Life.*

a. Increase Active and Passive Recreation Opportunities

(1) *Establish Additional Linear Open Space.*

The Town should seek to improve and expand the walking and biking trails in Ramapo especially those that provide connections between major open space areas and populations centers.

- (a) The “Land Use Plan” map and “Monsey Area Plan” map identify the following proposed linear open space connections in the Town (their potential routes are depicted with green arrows):
 - Between Welder Park and the Town-owned “Mitch Miller” property in the western portion of the Village of Wesley Hills;
 - The “Route 59 bypass” property to be purchased from the New York State Department of Transportation in central Monsey; and
 - The abandoned rail line that runs generally parallel and to north of Route 59 in central Monsey.

The open space connection proposed between Welder Park and the “Mitch Miller” could be accomplished through a variety of means including public acquisition, easements, or dedication at the time of subdivision through the use of “average density.”

- (b) In addition to the potential railways mentioned above, the Town should continue to evaluate opportunities for other such open space connections. An opportunity for another such railway exists in the Village of New Hempstead, connecting parks in this area of the Town. In the past, the Town has also pursued creation of another trail in the western portion of the Town from the Mahwah border to the border with Orange County; and should continue to do so.



Above are examples of walking and biking trails that could be constructed in the Town of Ramapo.

- (2) *Continue to upgrade and expand park facilities and recreation programs, where necessary, to provide additional recreational opportunities for current and future populations.*
- (a) The Town of Ramapo has a significant proportion of open space and recreational lands within its borders. However, most of this land is located in the less densely populated sections of the Town. The center of the Town, where the development density is highest and where the greatest building activity is taking place, contains relatively little open space and parks. Increasing the amount of open space and parks within the more heavily populated sections of the Town will enhance the recreation opportunities of residents and lessen the environmental impacts of dense development. Thus, the Town should continue to investigate the acquisition of sites for additional active recreation with particular attention paid towards the acquisition of lands of suitable size and characteristics for the use of active recreation in Monsey, Hillcrest and other areas that would benefit from construction of small neighborhood park(s). Considerations in the design and operations for

such parks would include security, maintenance, hours of operation, and facilities to be provided (i.e., they should match the needs of the surrounding population). Such parks should also be sensitive to surrounding area in terms of lighting, tree removal, and traffic activity and should be easily accessible to surrounding residents (e.g., sidewalks). The Town should continue to elicit the input of the Town's residents in the design of parks. The improvement of Orchard Hills Park, where citizens participated in the selection of playground equipment, could serve as an example of this open process.



Strong recreational services are an important component of a community's quality of life. The Reisman Sports Complex, built on the site of the former town incinerator on Route 45 in Pomona, provides Ramapo residents with a state of the art athletic facility that includes a soccer fields, lighted little league and baseball/softball fields, basketball courts, and other recreational opportunities. Additional recreational facilities in the form of small neighborhood parks, however, are needed in the more heavily populated areas of the Town such as central Monsey and Hillcrest.

- (b) The Town should also continue to use the average density procedure to acquire lands for the purpose of small neighborhood parks and should continue to utilize recreation fees collected through the subdivision process, other town funds, outside grants to support the recreation program, and should seek outside funding for the acquisition of open space lands and recreation sites.
- (c) The Town has recently created a Park Foundation that would investigate the acquisition of properties and enhancements to existing open space with no cost to taxpayers. The Park Foundation has started to investigate a number of potential projects, including the preservation of the "Mobray-Clark" property in the northeast portion of the Town, the

improvement of the Mitch Miller property into a botanical garden/arboretum, and the protection of historic buildings.

[Note: The “Natural Resources and Open Space” section identifies a number of additional properties that are being investigated for preservation largely for natural resource protection and public water purposes.]

- (d) Making effective and efficient use of existing recreation facilities and open space resources, such as the recreational and athletic facilities associated with middle and secondary schools, and colleges is an obvious way of increasing open space and recreation opportunities in the Town. One way to do this might be for the Town to negotiate and enter into joint use agreements with local school districts, and/or with colleges.

Other municipal uses could also be investigated for potential recreational use. For example, the Town should investigate whether the closed Torne Valley landfill could be reutilized for recreational purposes.

[Note: The “Natural Resources and Open Space” section identifies an array of methods that can be used to set aside lands for public purposes, including fee-simple purchase (and a number of potential funding sources therefore) and dedications of land during subdivision.]

- (3) *Increase Dedicated Parkland.*

The Town owns a number of undeveloped parcels scattered throughout the Town that are not put to any particular use or protected in any particular manner. Such lands consist primarily of those lands identified as “other open space” in Figure IV-4, *Parks and Open Space* in the Basic Studies document. The Town should evaluate these existing undeveloped Town-owned lands and determine which, if any, such lands should be dedicated as public parklands. One such property that had been identified as one that may be appropriate for public parkland dedication, the “Mitch Miller” property in the western portion of the Village of Wesley Hills has already been dedicated. It had been discussed as a potential site as a botanical gardens within the Town of Ramapo. Dedication of a property as public parklands would restrict the

future use of such properties for park purposes in perpetuity – providing a far greater level of protection than currently exists over these properties.

b. Maintain the High Quality Utility Systems and Community Services that Serve the Town.

(1) *Public Water Supply and Sanitary Sewage Facilities.*

The “Natural Resources and Open Space” section recommends a number of approaches to address public water supply issues. These include:

- *Elimination of Planned Industry (PI) Zoning Existing in the Torne Valley;*
- *An aquifer protection overlay zone that would be applied to the portions of the Town underlain by the Ramapo-Mahwah Aquifer;*
- *Local Wetland and Watercourse Protection Laws;*
- *Watershed Protection Law/Well-Field Protection Program;*
- *Designation of the Torne Valley Area of Western Ramapo as a “Critical Environmental Area” ;*
- *Rezoning of the Sterling Mine Road Property to a New Zoning Classification to Permit the Creation of an Age-Restricted (over 55) Active Adult Community;*
- *Addition of “Public Parkland Dedication Development” as a Special Permit use in the R-40 District Which Would Apply to the Wrightman Plateau Property;*
- *“Average Density (or “Cluster”) Subdivision; and*
- *Upzoning of the Pierson Lakes Subdivision.*

Implementation of these recommended measures would represent a significant step towards meeting the Town’s responsibilities with regard to

water supply, particularly water quality. In addition to those measures, the following additional measures regarding public water supply and sanitary sewage facilities should be pursued:

- (a) Construction of an advanced wastewater treatment facility (level III tertiary treatment) serving the western portions of unincorporated Ramapo and the Villages of Hillburn and Sloatsburg.
 - (b) The Town should identify and seek to have corrected localized problems with insufficient water supply and water pressure and localized problems with insufficient capacity of sanitary sewer lines, especially where located in areas of the Town that will experience an increase in population density (e.g., central Monsey). Developers should be required to pay/construct their fair share for improvements to existing infrastructure proportional to the anticipated increase in water demand and sewage generation. The Town should work with/ push United Water towards addressing current and future infrastructure needs within the Town.
 - (c) The Town should work with developers to design land use projects that meet the existing and/or programmed capacity of the water and sewer systems in the Town.
 - (d) The town should adopt rules requiring applicants for subdivisions and site plans to provide proof regarding the adequacy of water supply and water distribution to service proposed projects in the form of a report with supporting documentation from a licensed professional engineer or other qualified independent expert.
- (2) *Public Safety.*
- (a) The Town should consider the availability of sufficient water supply for fire-fighting purposes in the Town. Continued growth in the Town has lead and will continue to lead to many homes being expanded or replaced with much larger buildings (e.g., where a single-family home is replaced with a larger two- or three-family home. Where permitted densities are increased, water mains should be increased in sufficient size and water flow, as needed, to provide adequate water for firefighting purposes. The Town should pursue necessary increases with United Water. A water pressure and water supply study should be

conducted so that needed improvements to ensure adequate fire protection can be identified.

- (b) The Town should review its off-street parking requirements to ensure that potential increases in the amount of on-street parking would not impede access for fire-fighting purposes.
- (c) The Town has recently received a grant to help pay for a new Traffic Safety Division within the Police Department that is dedicated to reduce speeding and aggressive driving.
- (d) The Town should designate specific roadways and routes for commercial traffic including more signage restricting commercial traffic and greater enforcement. The Town should continue to strictly enforce its Commercial Vehicle Laws in order to restrict commercial vehicles from using the Town's local roads as shortcuts. The Town should use its portable weight scale to stop, weigh, inspect and fine illegal commercial traffic on the Town's local roads.

c. Transportation

- (1) *Improvements to the roadway network that relieve areas of specific traffic congestion and/or that mitigate specific traffic hazards.*

The Town should evaluate opportunities to improve traffic circulation within the Town through improvements that would improve specific areas of traffic congestion and/ or that would reduce specific traffic safety conditions. Since many of the roadways in the Town currently experiencing congestion are either State or County roads, the Town should coordinate with, and express its traffic capacity concerns to, the respective State or County transportation agency. Specific examples of roadway improvements that should be pursued include the following:



Many of the roadways in the Town currently experiencing congestion are either State or County roads. Thus, the Town should coordinate with, and express its traffic capacity concerns to, the respective State or County transportation agency.

(a) The Route 59 Preliminary Corridor Study.

The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) has completed a preliminary study of traffic conditions along a portion of the Route 59 Corridor. The study identifies traffic problems at specific intersections and proposes short term and long term improvement strategies at these locations. Short term strategies generally consist of signal coordination between intersections, addition of protected turning movements and other phasing strategies. Long term strategies generally incorporate geometric improvements. These improvements would serve to improve traffic conditions along the Route 59 intersection and should be pursued.

Study area intersections within the unincorporated Town of Ramapo are listed below, along with the specific jurisdiction, and short-term and long-term improvement strategies. No long term strategies are indicated where none are proposed in the study.

(i) *Route 59 & Airmont Road intersection:*

Short term strategies:

- Change to common cycle length
- Coordinate with neighboring signals
- Implement time of day plans

- Remove northbound left turn phase
- Change from lagging to leading left turn phases

Long term strategies:

- Construct DeBaun Avenue extension (eastern section)
- Signalize Route 59 & DeBaun Avenue intersection
- Signalize Airmont Road & DeBaun Avenue intersection

(ii) *Route 59 & Spook Rock Road/Cherry Lane intersection:*

Short term strategies:

- Change to common cycle length
- Coordinate with neighboring signals
- Add northbound advance phase

Long term strategies:

- Widen east side of Cherry Lane to add northbound left turn lane
- Widen east side of Spook Rock Road to add southbound left and right turn lanes

(iii) *Route 59 & College Road/South Monsey Road intersection:*

Short term strategies:

- Change to common cycle length
- Coordinate with neighboring signals
- Eliminate westbound protected left turn phase
- Change eastbound protected left turn from lagging to leading phase

(iv) *Route 59 & Remsen Avenue intersection:*

Short term strategies:

- Change to common cycle length
- Coordinate with neighboring signals
- Add eastbound advance phase
- Add southbound advance phase

Long term strategies:

- Re-stripe westbound approach to add right turn lane

(v) *Route 59 & Route 306/Saddle River Road intersection:*

Short term strategies:

- Change to common cycle length
- Coordinate with neighboring signals
- Implement time of day plans
- Change east/west left turns from lagging to leading phases

Long term strategies:

- Add northbound right turn lane
- Increase right turn radii on eastbound and westbound approaches
- Add pedestrian island in southwest quadrant
- Add channelized eastbound right turn lane*

This proposed improvement has evolved into a proposed slip ramp (the general alignment of which is shown on the *Monsey Area Plan*) that would allow eastbound traffic on Route 59 to access the southbound lanes of Saddle River Road without entering the Route 59/ Route 306 intersection, helping to relieve congestion there. At the Town's insistence, this project would also include a number of additional beneficial features for the area, including:

- Replacement of the traffic signal at the Route 59 & Route 306/ Saddle River intersection;
- Pedestrian improvements including: sidewalk along Route 59 in the project area; a new sidewalk on the west side of Saddle River Road from Route 59 to the parking lot entrance to Monsey Glen County Park; a sidewalk along the new slip ramp from Route 59 to Saddle River Road; and inclusion of pedestrian buttons at each corner of the Route 59 & Route 306/ Saddle River intersection to allow for a cycle for pedestrians to cross the roadway;
- Reconstruction/ improvement of Glen Hill Road;
- Planting of trees and other landscaping with the project limits and other aesthetic improvements such as “rustic” guiderails and placement of a stone cap on the top of the concrete parapet on the bridge over the railroad tracks.]

(vi) *Route 59 & Pathmark Drive/Robert Pitt Drive intersection:*

Short term strategies:

- Change to common cycle length
- Coordinate with neighboring signals
- Change east/west left turns from lagging to leading phases

(b) Thruway interchange(s) in Monsey.

The Town should pursue the construction of a new Thruway interchange(s) near central Monsey, with emphasis placed on providing an exit ramp from the northbound lanes and an entrance ramp to the southbound lanes. Such an interchange(s) could improve local access to the Monsey area and would likely reduce the amount of Monsey-based traffic that access/exit the Thruway at other interchanges and travel along Route 59 and other local roads in between. Such an interchange could reduce the amount of traffic created by Monsey drivers that currently use the Airmont Road interchange, thereby reducing pressure on surrounding intersections.

The following potential opportunities for such an intersection(s) should be pursued:

- *An on-ramp to the southbound lanes of the Thruway - from Saddle River Road just south of the Thruway overpass over Saddle River Road. At this location there currently exists a service road off that could potentially be converted into a full service on-ramp to the southbound lanes of the Thruway;*
- *An off-ramp from the northbound lanes of the Thruway - in the area currently occupied by a self-storage facility located to the immediate west of Remsen Avenue. An interchange at this location would provide the benefit of direct access to Route 59;*
- *An on-ramp to the southbound lanes and off-ramp from the northbound lanes of the Thruway - at the self-storage facility mentioned above. Considering that the New York State Thruway Authority is more likely to provide a single interchange than it is to provide multiple interchanges to serve an area, this scenario is likely more feasible than the potential interchanges described above. As mentioned above, an interchange at this location would provide the benefit of direct access to Route 59*

The New York State Thruway Authority does not currently have any plans, short or long term, to construct any interchanges in this area (between Interchanges 14 and 14B). Before the New York State Thruway Authority would consider constructing a new interchange, a desirability and feasibility study would be needed to determine the benefits of constructing an interchange and to determine how such an interchange could be constructed. For example, it would need to be demonstrated that construction of an interchange in this area would reduce traffic on Route 59 and have a benefit to the Town. Thus, while this concept may be desirable, appropriate traffic studies would be necessary to determine the feasibility and benefits of constructing such an interchange(s). One study that would be needed is an origin/destination study that would determine the levels of through traffic and local traffic on the roadways. Demonstrating that through traffic could be removed from sections of Route 59 as a result of a new interchange would help toward the feasibility of constructing an interchange.

- (c) Improved alignment of Interchange 13 of the PIP so as to provide a new southbound entrance ramp directly from Route 202 onto the PIP should be pursued with the Palisades Interstate Park Commission and the New York State Department of Transportation.
- (d) The Town should continue to investigate additional roadway improvements (e.g., modifications in roadway alignment, addition or modification of lane assignment, signal timing improvements, etc.) that would relieve more localized areas of specific traffic congestion and/or traffic hazards, including those listed below:
 - Evaluate future traffic levels on Sterling Mine Road (County Route 72) and its interchange with Route 17. This two-lane roadway carries potentially higher volume of traffic destined for Orange County and Towns and Villages to the north of this section of road in the Town of Ramapo;
 - Monitor traffic conditions along College Road (County Route 81) from the intersection with Route 59, including Highview Road (County Route 64), Rockland Community College access drives and the Viola Road intersection (County Route 74);
 - Monitor traffic conditions at the Route 306/Viola Road (County Route 74) intersection to determine if modifications to the existing traffic signal and/or additional turning lanes are needed in the future;
 - Monitor Route 306 north of Route 59 to the intersection of Grove Street to determine if modifications to the roadway are necessary to accommodate increasing traffic volumes and reduce traffic congestion;
 - Evaluate traffic conditions on Maple Avenue in the vicinity of Monsey Boulevard and Park Lane to evaluate traffic congestion. Modifications may include providing turning lanes and improved traffic control; and

- Monitor traffic and pedestrian activity along Eckerson Road Modifications may require additional turning lanes, on-street parking restrictions and an improved traffic control;
- (2) *Support improvements to scheduling, service and facilities of existing mass transit systems so as to promote the use of mass transit by Town residents.*
- (a) The Town should continue to work with the County in their efforts to promote Park-and-Ride lots to reduce the number of vehicles on major commuter roads. Park-and-Ride Lots (especially in heavily populated areas such as Monsey and Hillcrest) should be pursued to accommodate the expected future need for regional bus service to employment centers outside of Rockland County and to increase use of carpooling. Good pedestrian access to Park-and-Ride should be an important consideration especially in those areas of the Town with higher population densities where persons would be more likely to walk to Park-and-Ride lots in order to commute to work by public transportation.
 - (b) The Town should evaluate streets and residential areas near transit services (e.g., bus stops) to make sure that there are sufficient sidewalks and other pedestrian connections. If there are gaps in the pedestrian walkways needed for easy connections, funding sources should be pursued for needed improvements.
 - (c) The Town should support initiatives to improve public transportation opportunities in the higher density residential areas of the Town including those in Hillcrest and Monsey. Improvements that should be investigated include improvements to scheduling and location and distribution of bus stops.
- (3) *Support alternative modes of transportation, such as biking and walking.*
- (a) The Town should encourage the construction of sidewalks along existing and future streets, particularly in areas of the Town with high levels of existing or anticipated pedestrian activity (e.g., central Monsey, mixed-use developments, etc.). The Town should work with the other agencies (County Highway Department, New York State Department of Transportation) to construct sidewalks in areas where they are most needed. For example, the Town should demand that highway work conducted in such areas include the addition of new

sidewalks. Funding sources are available and should be pursued to make this important community resource happen.



Many of the major roads in the Town, like Route 59, are also major pedestrian corridors. Yet, many of these roads do not offer sidewalks along major portions. As a result, pedestrians must either walk in the shoulder of the roadway or make a path of their own.

While certainly not an exhaustive list, the following areas have a high level of pedestrian activity and lack sidewalks in major portions and/or require improvements to sidewalks:

- The Route 59 corridor especially between Route 306 and Kennedy Drive;
- The Route 306 corridor, including between Viola Road and Grandview Avenue;
- Portions of the Route 45 corridor; and
- Portions of Maple Avenue.

Less major streets that also experience a high level of pedestrian activity (e.g., streets with a significant number of synagogues) should also be considered for construction of sidewalks.



The photographs above, one from the Route 59 corridor in Ramapo (on the left) and two on the right from another community, show what should be done along Route 59 and other pedestrian corridors in the Town to improve pedestrian safety and to encourage people to walk. In addition to sidewalks, pedestrian corridors like Route 59, should contain street trees and other streetscape elements in order to make walking a more attractive alternative.

- (b) The Town should explore opportunities for the construction of bicycle and pedestrian trails and the designation of bicycle routes along certain roadways. Included in this effort should be coordination with the efforts of those of the Rockland County Department of Planning, including those outlined in the recently completed “Mid-Hudson South Region - Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan.” The plan defines a vision for bicycling and walking in the Westchester, Rockland and Putnam tri-county region and identifies needs, define strategies and recommend projects that would improve conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- (4) *Promote land use patterns that will use transportation systems most effectively and minimize potential additional congestion.*

The mixed-use and residential development patterns envisioned to occur in the “Planned Residential Development” and “Mixed-Use Development” areas identified on the “Land Use Plan” map should, through the concentration of residential development, result in greater potential for use of public transportation. The zoning for such areas should include design standards that allow for the proposed movements of buses, that require areas to be aside for bus stops, and that require convenient pedestrian access between bus stops and the residential areas of the development.

(5) *Monitor the Progress of Planned Transportation Infrastructure Projects That May Affect the Town of Ramapo.*

There a number of planned or anticipated transportation infrastructure projects that may affect transportation issues in the Town of Ramapo. Paramount among these are the upgrading or replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge and construction of the Secaucus Transfer Station (expected to be completed sometime next year) which is anticipated to significantly improve rail access to midtown Manhattan and has been projected to double the ridership in the Bergen/Main (Port Jervis) and Pascack Valley line in Rockland County. According to the Rockland County Department of Planning, the increased ridership resulting from the Secaucus Transfer Station will require improved access to existing station along these lines (e.g., Spring Valley, Suffern and Sloatsburg) and will require new regional and local park-and-ride commuter parking lots.

As the Secaucus Transfer Station has begun weekend service, the town should continue to monitor the impacts related to increased level of commuters using the railroad as the Station ramps up for full service by the end of the year. The improved access to Manhattan and other employment centers will foster increased use of rail facilities over time. The Town should coordinate efforts with the County and other communities regarding the anticipated increase in need for parking and other opportunities to facilitate access to the Spring Valley, Suffern and Sloatsburg stations such as improved access and accommodations for pedestrian and cyclists, shuttle bus services, and park and ride lots.

In addition, the Town should monitor and seek to participate in the plans related to the upgrading or replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge, and the effects of such action on the Town.

5. *Other Quality-of-Life Measures*

- a. New York State's Empire Zone program. The Town should continue to attract and assist businesses within the Town. One means of accomplishing this is participation in New York State's Empire Zone program. New York State's Empire Zones are designated areas throughout the State that offer special incentives to encourage economic development, business investment and job creation. Certified businesses located within a designated zone are eligible to receive significant tax credits and benefits. Empire Zones consist of areas

comprised of abundant vacant land, existing prime industrial and commercial buildings, skilled workers and ample power and water resources.

Businesses locating and expanding in such zones are eligible for sales tax exemption, real property and business tax credits. The purpose of the Empire Zones Program is to give companies increasing their employment the opportunity to operate on an almost “tax-free” basis for up to 10 years, with additional savings available on a declining basis in years 11 through 15. Such businesses are granted a 10-year exemption from State sales tax on purchases of goods and services (including utility services and owned vehicles) used predominantly in the zone. In addition, the businesses are allowed a refundable credit against their business tax equal to a percentage of real property taxes paid based upon increased employment in the zone. Further, the businesses are allowed a credit against their tax equal to a percentage of taxes attributable to the zone enterprise. Other benefits include tax credits for the creation of new jobs and new investments in production, property and equipment.

- b. Scenic Roads Protection. The most visible and frequently seen parts of communities are the areas that people see along highway corridors. These views are important, because the impressions people form of communities and places are largely shaped by what they see through the car window as they drive through communities. The PIP, for example, is for the most part beautifully landscaped, and is remarkably successful in screening from view the fact that the Town is densely developed. The open space character of this parkway corridor is carefully managed and protected. However, other highway corridors in the Town that also have scenic qualities are not afforded such a degree of protection.

Studying and inventorying the aesthetic and scenic qualities that are encountered along highway corridors, and formally nominating and designating certain corridors as “Scenic Roads” is a useful first step toward preserving and protecting the open space character of such areas. Official State designation of a road as a “Scenic Road” is a way of formally recognizing the unique environmental and aesthetic qualities of particular roadways. It also alerts state and county agencies, such as the NYSDOT and County and local Highway Departments of the need to proceed with special care when considering possible roadway improvements. However, it is important to understand that state designation as a “Scenic Road” does not assure that the scenic qualities of properties adjoining the road will be maintained.

The most effective way for communities to preserve the valued qualities of scenic roads is to adopt overlay zoning regulations specifically designed to preserve and

protect those scenic qualities. Locally adopted overlay zoning applied to the corridor of a scenic road could, for example:

- Require that existing natural vegetation along the sides of the road be preserved wherever possible and that trees and shrubs be densely planted along roadsides to hide views of development.
- Require a permit for cutting down any trees larger than a certain size.
- Prevent the removal or breaching of stone walls without permission.
- Require that new buildings be sited so as to minimize their visual impact (e.g. prevent the construction of buildings on the tops of ridgelines and hills where they would be highly visible).
- Prevent the placement of structures that block scenic views.

Johnsontown Road, Seven Lakes Drive and portions of Route 202 should be considered for designation as scenic roads.

- c. Historic Preservation. Historic places are valuable to the Town of Ramapo. Because the Town's continued development will, naturally, occur partly on land previously used by humankind during historical or pre-historical times, the Town might see some of its historic buildings, sites and places lost to redevelopment. The Town should act affirmatively to prevent such loss.

The Town of Ramapo should declares it a public policy to preserve the buildings, structures, historic districts, areas, and sites within the Town that are significant in the history, architecture, archeology or culture of the nation, this State and its communities.

To accomplish this goal to the fullest extent possible, the Town should enact local law enabling it to carry on local historic preservation activities consistent with General Municipal Law § 119-dd.

After that prerequisite step, the Town should arrange to be designated a certified local government (CLG) under the statewide historic preservation program of the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). Certified local government (CLG) status will enhance the Town's historic preservation

efforts because OPRHP provides CLGs with information, technical assistance and grants of money. OPRHP manages all nominations to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

To help plan its preservation efforts, the Town should also undertake an inventory of historic places within its jurisdiction.

- d. Noise Regulation. The creation of excessive and unreasonable noise is a detriment to the comfort of residents and enjoyment of their properties. Restricting excessive and unreasonable noise that disturbs the quiet, comfort or repose of a reasonable person of normal sensitivities is a legitimate exercise of a municipality's police power. The most commonly mentioned sources of excessive noise in a community like Ramapo include noise associated with lawn maintenance (e.g., lawn mowers, leaf blowers, etc.), public address systems associated with schools and camps, and construction activity. Communities most commonly address such issues through limitations on noise levels and limitations on the hours of operation of noise producing activities. The Town should review its existing regulations to ensure that they adequately protect the public from excessive and unreasonable noise.
- e. Community Identity. The Town should secure funding for new gateway signs and plantings at the key entrances to the Town to create a positive image upon entrance into the community. Local civic groups, businesses and residents should be encouraged to sponsor the purchase and maintenance of the gateway sign and plantings, once installed.
- f. Public Lighting. The Town should coordinate efforts to improve lighting for illumination of sidewalks, walkways and pedestrian street crossings, public spaces and buildings in the Town. Lighting should be at the appropriate levels of illumination to address safety and security concerns, without causing unnecessary glare (for pedestrians and drivers) and/or competition among light levels.
- g. Utility Wires. The Town should work with the utility companies, State Department of Transportation and County Department of Public Works to bury existing utility wires, remove the utility poles and require underground placement for new utility lines in the along major roads in the Town.
- h. Telecommunication Towers. The Town should continue to reduce the impacts of telecommunications towers through the appropriate use of its telecommunication ordinance and through coordination with the County and other municipalities in

order to facilitate the co-location of telecommunications facilities where possible and to reduce potential visual impacts of telecommunication towers.

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