

TOWNSHIP OF VERNON Sussex County, New Jersey

MASTER PLAN



July 2010
Updated December 2011*
Updated July 2016*
*(Historic Properties List Only)



MASTER PLAN UPDATE

VERNON TOWNSHIP, SUSSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

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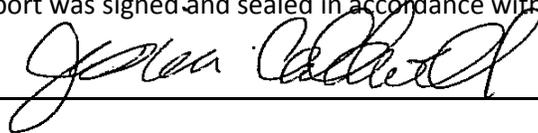
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The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12



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INTRODUCTION



Vernon is unique in northern New Jersey. The Wawayanda and Pochuck Mountains line the Township from north to south, separated by stream-lined valleys and dotted with mountain lakes. The scenic landscape is the backdrop for a thriving tourist industry but also is a key factor in the quality of life enjoyed by residents. With only one state highway running through Vernon, and the physical barriers of the mountains to the east and the Walkill River to the west, the Township is somewhat isolated from surrounding municipalities. This punctuates the unique identity of the Township.

Founded in 1793, when it separated from Hardyston Township, Vernon has grown from just under 2,200 people in 1860 to approximately 27,000 in 2009. Vernon covers over 70 square miles, with just over two square miles of lakes. Historically, settlements in Vernon began as small villages, including McAfee, Glenwood and the Village of Vernon, which grew primarily surrounding farming communities and mining operations. In the 1930s, resort communities began to develop around the lakes as summer bungalow communities. From the 1950s on, suburban residential growth began, much as it did across the United States. Suburbanization spawned fairly rapid population growth as the population in Vernon grew 17 times larger during the period from 1950 to 2000. Today, Vernon is the largest municipality by population in the County.





Resort development began in the 1970s, with the development of Vernon Valley, Great Gorge North and Hidden Valley ski resorts. Growth and development has been balanced with the preservation of open



space in the Township, with over half of the Township preserved as open space. With the passage of the Highlands Act in 2004, approximately two-thirds of the Township was placed in the Highlands Preservation Area, which strictly limits development. As a result, the remaining one-third of the Township, which is designated as Highlands Planning Area, will need to accommodate nearly all of the Township's future growth.



This Master Plan, the first revision in nearly 15 years, is intended to provide direction to elected and appointed officials, the general citizenry, landowners, developers, and other area governmental entities for short-term and long-term growth and development within Vernon. It is a policy guide for community

development decisions, community facility planning and budgeting, and a comprehensive guide for the future development of housing, employment, and cultural and educational opportunities for the Vernon community. The plan must be able to respond to changing conditions such as increased population and demand for public services, housing supply, legislative policies, technological development, and economic circumstances.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The Municipal Land Use Law, NJSA 40:55 D-1 et. seq., sets forth the authority for local municipalities to develop and maintain a Master Plan to guide the use of land within the municipality. The municipality's planning board, or in Vernon's case, Land Use Board, is responsible for preparing and adopting the Master Plan, as well as reviewing it every six years.

HISTORY OF PLANNING IN VERNON

Vernon Township has been engaged in the planning process for nearly 40 years. The Township's first master plan was adopted in December 1970 and remained valid for 15 years. The update of that plan, adopted in September 1985, remained in place for 10 years. The Township's last complete master



plan update was adopted in December 1995. A Master Plan Amendment was adopted in November 2003. This is the first update of the Master Plan since 1995 and will revisit the plan's goals and objectives, relationships to other plans, the Land Use Element and Recycling Element. Other elements of the plan will be updated over time as various state legislative initiatives are addressed, including the Highlands Act and the Council on Affordable Housing Substantive Rules. Elements of the 1995 Master Plan that are not addressed here will be addressed in a re-examination report being prepared concurrently with this plan.



*Town Center Concept -
Looney Ricks Kiss*

Vernon has engaged in smart growth planning by working with the State Planning Commission to establish a Town Center designation with a plan for mixed-use and higher density development within the center of Vernon. The Town Center Designation was approved by the State Planning Commission on July 16, 2003. The Center Designation expired on July 16, 2009. The Township is currently engaged in both Plan Endorsement with the State Planning Commission and Plan Conformance with the Highlands Council. Either process can provide an extension of the Township's Center Designation beyond the 2010 expiration date. Plan Conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan will be an ongoing process required in the Preservation Area of the Township. Vernon Township has decided not to opt in to Plan Conformance in the Planning Areas of the Township at this time. The Land Use Board recommended against it and the Township Council elected not to submit a petition for Plan Conformance in the Planning Areas at this time. Plan Conformance in the Planning Areas is voluntary and the Township Council can elect to conform at any time.

MASTER PLAN VISION & GOALS

VISION STATEMENT

"Our sense of place defines our future. Vernon: A four season recreational community that is a great place to live, work and play."



Vernon Township is unique in northern New Jersey. Set apart by the Hamburg and Wawayanda Mountains to the east and the Walkkill River to the west, the Township is home to the two major ski resorts in New Jersey. The unique and rugged, scenic ridgelines and stream-lined valleys provide for year-round recreation opportunities amidst the rich natural environment. Vernon residents enjoy a high quality of life with scenic beauty, clean air and water, a diverse community, an excellent school system and a high standard of living.

Tourism has been the primary industry in Vernon and the Township strives to be a four season recreational community. The appeal of the Appalachian Trail, Wawayanda State Park, the Hamburg Mountain Wildlife Refuge and the Walkkill River Wildlife Refuge, draws visitors year-round. While outdoor activities are the centerpiece to Vernon's tourism industry, the Township seeks to develop a balance with indoor fun and excitement, to promote a sustainable four season recreational community. Resorts, hotels and bed and breakfasts also need to be augmented by dining and shopping opportunities in order to provide more reasons for visitors to stay and enjoy the Township.

Residents of Vernon share a strong interest in civic participation to promote the ideals of the community: natural resource, open space and farmland protection;

beautification; access to recreation; economic development; tax stabilization; government efficiency; and a high quality public school system.

In order to preserve their rich traditions and quality of life, Vernon residents strive to effectively manage change. The community works to enhance the Township's identity and foster a strong local economy, making Vernon an attractive place to work or run a business. Township leaders work to preserve open space for recreation, farmland and environmental preservation and make development decisions based upon sound planning principles, making Vernon an enjoyable place to live and visit.

All that Vernon is—its scenic landscapes, unique sense of place, economic self-sufficiency, strong community participation and leadership – reflects not only the positive investments of the past, but paves the way for a thriving future.

MASTER PLAN GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives implement the Township's Vision Statement and address the various elements of the Master Plan by topic area.

Township Identity

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

Land Use

1. To achieve a balance between continued development and the preservation of the extensive natural resources of the community.
 - a. Review ordinances to ensure that well-heads, steep slopes and scenic vistas are adequately protected.
 - i. Ensure that ridgeline protection ordinances provide a clear definition and mapping of what is protected along with methods for ensuring protection of the resource.
 - b. Review ordinances to ensure that environmentally sensitive areas are protected using best management practices for development in those areas.
 - c. Review zoning to ensure that adequate clustering and density transfer options exist to protect natural resource areas.

- d. Participate in state and county open space and farmland preservation programs in order to preserve lands within the Township.
 - e. Review ordinances to ensure that desirable development is encouraged and fostered.
2. To preserve the existing residential neighborhoods and Lake Communities.
- a. Review residential zoning standards to ensure that bulk standards and other requirements are sufficient for the zone.
 - b. Maintain current zoning standards including the Private Lake Community Zone and its Filed Community Plan features within the Highlands Preservation Area to protect existing residential development.
3. To provide for economic development through the Commercial, Light Industrial, Commercial-Recreation and Agri-Eco Tourism Zones.
- a. Review locations and permitted uses in non-residential zones to ensure that appropriate development can occur that supports the tourism industry.
 - i. Identify opportunities to improve the diversity of industry in the Township.
 - ii. Identify opportunities to support the development of indoor recreational facilities.
 - iii. Identify opportunities for alternative energy production within non-residential zones.
 - iv. Identify opportunities to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities which are developed with minimal impact to neighboring properties.
 - b. Review densities and setbacks in non-residential zones to ensure that development is maximized on available developable lands and encourages adaptive re-use and redevelopment of existing underutilized commercial properties.

4. To ensure adequate infrastructure to accommodate the projected level of intensity of development.
 - a. Evaluate options for providing water service to the Town Center.
 - b. Work within the Plan Endorsement and/or Plan Conformance processes to ensure maintenance of a sewer service area in the Town Center.
 - c. Protect groundwater resources – the sole source aquifer – through proper septic management and avoid excessive intrusions onto private property.

5. To encourage commercial and mixed-use development in a form, location and design that preserves and enhances the unique character and identity of Vernon Township.
 - a. Continue and expand upon design guidelines for commercial and mixed-use development in the Township.
 - b. Identify opportunities for beautification, renovation and other improvements to existing non-residential development.

6. To direct the majority of future growth in the Township to the Vernon Center, Redevelopment Areas and appropriate existing resort areas of the Township.
 - a. Review densities and sub-zone designations in the Town Center to ensure appropriate development at densities sufficient to accommodate future growth.
 - b. Identify and prioritize open space and farmland for preservation efforts.

7. To ensure that land use and development activities within the Highlands Preservation Area of the Township occur only in a manner and location that is consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan.
 - a. Pursue Plan Conformance for the Preservation Areas in the Township.

8. To create land use and development plans, policies and ordinances that are predominantly consistent with the goals and policies of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
 - a. Pursue Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission.

Housing

1. To encourage the development of a variety of housing types including workforce housing and affordable housing to meet the needs of the population within the Township of Vernon.
2. To provide opportunities for rehabilitation and redevelopment of existing housing stock within the Township.
 - a. Continue the Township's housing rehabilitation program and improvements to property maintenance and quality of life regulations.
 - b. Identify opportunities for gut rehabilitation of existing multi-family development for affordable housing.
 - c. Evaluate zoning in areas with sewer service to ensure that development is permitted at appropriate densities.
 - d. Support cost effective upgrades to ensure marketability of Private Lake Community housing and continued economic viability of those communities.
3. To promote energy efficient construction, green building, sustainable design and alternative energy sources for housing in the Township to decrease long-term energy consumption and the cost of housing in the Township.
 - a. Develop green building and sustainable design guidelines for new development.
 - b. Review the Township's ordinances to ensure that alternative energy sources are permitted where appropriate.
 - c. Encourage energy efficient construction within the Township.

- d. Pursue a Sustainable New Jersey certification to raise awareness of sustainability issues in the Township.

Transportation/Circulation

1. To develop and improve a coordinated road system which enables the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.
 - a. Establish preferred road cross sections based on zoning to encourage appropriate utilization of the rights of ways.
 - b. Evaluate methods for improving utilization of the existing roadways through a variety of options including traffic calming, encouraging alternate modes of transportation, increasing efficiency of intersections and increasing capacity.
 - c. Identify dangerous intersections and roadways and evaluate options for improving safety.
 - d. Identify high congestion areas and evaluate methods for alleviating congestion.
 - e. Propose streetscape improvements in appropriate locations in the Township.
 - f. Identify opportunities to improve the pedestrian and public realm adjacent to streets including addition of landscaping, street trees, street furniture and public art.
2. To separate local and through traffic to the maximum extent possible.
 - a. Identify an appropriate street hierarchy and propose design options to identify methods for separating through and local traffic.
 - b. Develop "safety by design" techniques to improve actual and perceived safety for pedestrians.
 - c. Explore options for creating truck routes through the Township.
3. To encourage use of alternate transportation modes (e.g. pedestrian, bicycles, local transit, commuter buses, rail) to lessen congestion and air pollution.
 - a. Identify locations for bicycle paths throughout the Township.

- b. Identify locations where sidewalks are missing and/or inadequate and need to be improved.
 - c. Identify options for improving transit in the Township, including the addition of commuter bus service with a park and ride.
 - d. Identify opportunities to provide trail connections and off-street pedestrian connections in the Township.
 - e. Identify appropriate street tree species and establish planting guidelines and potential locations to plant additional street trees.
- 4. To support the use of rail service for passenger and freight purposes.
 - a. Explore options for improving freight rail service in the Township and supporting industrial uses adjacent to rail service.
 - b. Identify opportunities to provide passenger rail service to the Township or in close proximity with transit connections.
 - 5. Preserve the ability of the Private Lake Communities to maintain their road systems.

Economic Development

- 1. To create a comprehensive economic development plan for the Township that promotes Vernon as a four season recreation community while also identifying opportunities to diversify Vernon's economy including the Private Lake Communities.
- 2. To provide for economic development through the Commercial, Light Industrial, Commercial-Recreation and Agri-Eco Tourism Zones.
 - a. Review locations and permitted uses in non-residential zones to ensure that appropriate development can occur that supports the tourism industry.
 - i. Identify opportunities to improve the diversity of industry in the Township.
 - ii. Identify opportunities to support the development of indoor recreational facilities.

- iii. Identify opportunities for alternative energy production within non-residential zones.
 - iv. Identify opportunities to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities which are developed with minimal impact to neighboring properties.
- b. Review densities and setbacks in non-residential zones to ensure that development is maximized on available developable lands and encourages adaptive re-use and redevelopment of existing underutilized commercial properties.

Parks/Open Space & Recreation

1. To provide adequate recreation facilities for all age groups in Vernon Township.
 - a. Develop and maintain fields to be used for active recreation, such as soccer, football and baseball.
 - b. Provide recreation facilities for Vernon's senior and disabled population.
 - c. Encourage lot clustering and similar techniques which will result in the development of a greenway system through the Township as well as dedication of land along the Appalachian Trail.
 - d. Provide a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths which link residential neighborhoods with open space, community facilities, and commercial areas.
 - e. Create linkages between existing parks and open space areas and create greenway connections along major stream corridors and the Appalachian Trail.
 - f. Improve opportunities to access public lands for recreational uses such as hiking, canoeing, fishing, cross country skiing, etc.
 - g. Preserve the ability of the Private Communities to maintain, expand or develop member recreational facilities.

Historic Preservation

1. To preserve the rich and varied historical heritage of Vernon Township.
 - a. Recognize the many identified historical structures by petition for inclusion on state and federal registers.
 - b. Continue to evaluate properties for inclusion on the Township's historic preservation list.
 - c. Ensure protection of former Native American mining and tool manufacturing areas as development occurs.

Community Facilities

1. To plan community facilities which meet the needs of Vernon's population.
 - a. Maintain appropriate emergency services for Township residents.
 - b. Continue to monitor the facility needs of Vernon's public schools.
 - c. Review the condition and capacity of the library and senior center for improvements as needed.
 - d. Identify opportunities to develop a community center and remote emergency shelters from weather related situations.

Conservation

1. To preserve and protect Vernon's Natural Resources.
 - a. Review existing environmental ordinances to ensure they are adequate to preserve environmentally sensitive areas.
 - b. Adopt necessary protections in the Highlands Preservation Area to be consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan.
 - c. Encourage clustering techniques for developments in order to preserve open space and farmland.
 - d. Identify, preserve and protect open space areas with significant scenic views and/or important historical, cultural, environmental or agricultural significance.
 - i. Ensure that ridgeline protection ordinances provide a clear definition and mapping of what is protected along with methods for ensuring protection of the resource.

- e. Minimize the impacts of development on environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands, stream corridors, and aquifer recharge areas.
 - f. Minimize the economic impact on the Private Lake Communities to ensure their continued viability.
- 2. Vernon Township recognizes that it has the unique responsibility to adopt and implement land use and development regulations that will ensure the protection and enhancement of the New Jersey Highlands Region, including but not limited to the Pequannock Watershed; Wawayanda State Park; Hamburg Mountain Wildlife Management area; the Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge; the Appalachian National Scenic Trail Corridor; the Four Seasons Greenway; and other similar natural areas such as the Black Creek Marshes and Pochuck Mountain, in conjunction with other planning and development regulatory agencies at county, regional, state, and federal levels.
- 3. To protect and enhance the New Jersey Highlands Region in Vernon Township.
- 4. Vernon Township shall endeavor to create a continuous network of passive trails in the Four Seasons Greenway. Vernon Township will acquire all the lands and easements necessary to effectively create the Four Seasons Greenway.
- 5. To protect and maintain potable water supplies, particularly with respect to the Township's sole source aquifers including the Highlands, Wallkill and Pochuck aquifer systems. The EPA defines a Sole Source Aquifer as one that is the only water supply for a community and for which no cost-efficient alternative water supply exists. The quality and quantity of ground water within Vernon Township's aquifers should be monitored and protected from discharges of pollutants in order to maintain potability.

6. To protect and maintain air quality by studying a potential ban of outdoor wood burning furnaces in the Township.

Recycling

1. To plan consistently with the New Jersey Statewide Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Act of 1987 as implemented by the NJDEP through the Sussex County Solid Waste Management Plan.

Farmland Preservation

1. To update the comprehensive farmland preservation plan to ensure that farmland is identified and prioritized for preservation using county and state programs and available funding sources to purchase easements.
2. To identify opportunities to support farming as a viable industry in the Township.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

Vernon Township's Master Plan must fit into a local, regional and state framework of land use plans. As part of Sussex County, the Highlands Region and the State of New Jersey, the comprehensive plans of each entity have an impact on the Township's Master Plan and each plan has been reviewed in conjunction with this planning process to ensure continuity, where appropriate, between the plans.

Sussex County Strategic Growth Plan

The Sussex County Strategic Growth Plan was adopted in February 2006, and endorsed by the State Planning Commission in May 2007. The Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) was based on the landscapes of Sussex County including: rural agricultural; highlands; traditional centers; job creation centers; parks and wildlife management areas and lake communities. Vernon Township has elements of all of the landscapes within the county. The SGP promoted the reorganization of development patterns to emphasize walkable, mixed-use centers that would promote existing agricultural and commercial development, while protecting, preserving and limiting development outside of centers. The SGP recognized the Vernon Town Center as a viable and appropriate planning tool for promoting the goals of the SGP, along with the preservation and acquisition of open space. This Master Plan seeks to continue these principals of focusing development within the center and preserving large tracts of open space and farmland.

Highlands Regional Master Plan

The Highlands Regional Master Plan (RMP) was adopted by the Highlands Council on July 17, 2008, and became effective on September 8, 2008. The RMP is the implementing document for the 2004 Highlands Act and establishes goals, policies and objectives to guide land use, development and resources in the Highlands Area. Vernon is approximately two-thirds Preservation Area and

approximately one-third Planning Area. In the Preservation Area, the Township submitted a petition to conform to the RMP on December 8, 2009. In the Planning Area, Plan Conformance is optional and can be completed at any time. The Township is currently working on its petition for Plan Conformance. The development of this Master Plan dovetails with this process by maintaining the land use designations that apply in the preservation area for pre-existing development and by promoting center-based development in the Planning Area. As Plan Conformance continues, the Township will adopt a Highlands Element of the Master Plan to further define and promote consistency with the RMP.

New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State 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 State Plan divides developable land within 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. The Center Designation expired on July 16, 2009. The Township is in the Plan Endorsement process to reinstate the Center Designation. This Master Plan continues the policies of creating a compact center to guide future development and encourage preservation and appropriate development patterns outside of the center.

Benefits of Center Designation and 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 includes 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 provided 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 and to continue to pursue the development of its Town Center.

Planning Coordination

There are several planning processes within which Vernon is engaging in order to achieve planning coordination with Sussex County, the Highlands Council and the State Planning Commission.

Sussex County coordinates directly with local municipalities on two primary planning processes: solid waste management planning and wastewater management planning. As part of this plan, the Township is revising its Recycling Element to be in compliance with the Sussex County's most recent Solid Waste Management Plan, which was certified by the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) in August 2007. The Township has been working with the County Planning Department and the NJDEP on the Wastewater Management Plan update for the County, which includes significant new planning restrictions that will reduce the size of the existing sewer service areas and limit septic system densities based on new nitrate dilution standards adopted by the NJDEP. Septic system densities will severely limit subdivision in Sussex County as any subdivision

with more than five lots will require an amendment to the Wastewater Management Plan and specific approval the NJDEP. The Township is working closely with the County and NJDEP to try to ensure that the sewer service area for Vernon's Center continues to allow center-based development.

Highlands Plan Conformance is the process by which planning coordination takes place between Highland's municipalities and the Highlands Council in order to ensure implementation of the goals, policies and objectives of the Highlands Regional Master Plan. Plan Conformance is required in the Preservation Areas of the Highlands and is optional in the Planning Areas. Approximately two-thirds of the Township is in the Preservation Area and therefore, the Township is actively engaged in the Plan Conformance process for the Preservation Area. The Township has chosen not to opt in to Plan Conformance for the Planning Area. The Township submitted a petition for Plan Conformance in the Preservation Area of the Township on December 8, 2009. The petition was deemed complete and is currently being reviewed by the Highlands Council.

Plan Conformance is broken down into two steps, Basic Plan Conformance and Full Plan Conformance. Basic Plan Conformance work was primarily completed in 2009 and documents from this process are slated to be adopted sometime in 2010-2011. Basic Plan Conformance involves the preparation and adoption of a model Environmental Resources Inventory, model Highlands Master Plan Element and model Highlands Ordinances, among other items, to implement what the Highlands Council believes to be the minimum protections necessary for the resources of the Highlands Region. Full Plan Conformance is the process by which the Highlands Regional Master Plan will be fully implemented within each conforming municipality through the development of individualized comprehensive plans to address items such as water conservation and management, natural resource inventories, septic system management and so on. Full Plan Conformance is expected to begin following completion of Basic Plan Conformance, however it does not have a specific timeline and is expected to take several years.

The State Planning Commission utilizes a process known as Plan Endorsement to achieve consistency between municipal and county plans and the State Plan. This process is voluntary and provides an option for extending the Township's Center Designation. Plan Endorsement involves a ten step process whereby the Township's municipal plans are reviewed for consistency with the State Plan. Where consistency is lacking, the Township must agree to develop plans and ordinances that are consistent with the State Plan. This includes achieving Substantive Certification from the Council on Affordable Housing. The Plan Endorsement process includes two milestone events by which special status is granted to the municipality to achieve the benefits of Plan Endorsement: the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the municipality and the State Planning Commission and actual Plan Endorsement. The process to enter into the MOU usually takes about two years and includes an action plan of items that the municipality must complete in order to achieve Plan Endorsement. The action plan usually takes about two years to complete, and once finished, results in Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission. Vernon submitted a Municipal Self Assessment package, which was deemed complete by the Office of Smart Growth on September 1, 2009. The Township received an Opportunity and Constraints Analysis from the Office of Smart Growth on November 6, 2009. The Township will be required to go through a visioning process as the next step in the process. When visioning is completed, the Township will enter enter into an MOU with the State Planning Commission and begin work on an action plan. At the point of entering into the MOU with the State Planning Commission, the Township will be granted an extension of its Center Designation.

COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS & 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 also has the largest population of any municipality in the county with approximately 27,054 residents, making up nearly 18 percent of the County's total population of 151,174 people. The average household size in Vernon is 2.90 people, slightly higher than both the County average of 2.72 people and the State average of 2.70 people.

Median household income in Vernon is \$77,081, only three percent less than the County median income of \$79,434 and about 14 percent higher than the State median income of \$66,509. The homeownership rate in Vernon is 86 percent and is consistent with County homeownership rates of just above 84 percent. Statewide homeownership rates are much lower at 67.4 percent. Vernon's housing vacancy rate is roughly equivalent to the State and County rates at 8.8 percent for the Township, 8.7 percent for the County and 9.5 percent for the State.

The poverty rate in Vernon is 6 percent, higher than the County rate of 4.9 percent and lower than the State rate of 8.7 percent. Unemployment in the Township was estimated to be 5.3 percent in 2005-2007. The County unemployment rate was 5.2 percent for the same timeframe and the State was 6.2 percent. Due to current economic conditions, 2009 unemployment rates are higher. The current State unemployment rate is 9.8 percent and the current County unemployment rate is 8.5 percent.

Table 1.1: Demographic Summary Table

Source: 2005-07 Census Estimate

	Vernon Township	Sussex County	New Jersey
Land area (sq mi)	70.8 square miles	536 square miles	7,417 sq. miles
Population	27,052	151,174	8,669,815
Households	9,318	54,811	3,064,645
Average Household Size	2.90	2.72	2.70
Housing Units	9,994	60,086	3,310,275
Home Ownership Rate	86%	84.1%	67.4%
Vacancy Rate	16.3%	8.8%	7.4%
Median Household Income	\$77,081	\$79,434	\$66,509
Per Capita Income	\$31,3	\$32,997	\$27,006
Poverty Rate	6%	4.9%	8.7%
Unemployment Rate	5.3%	5.2%	6.2%
Unemployment Rate (NJDOL 2009)	N/A	8.5%	9.8%

POPULATION

The U.S. Census collected data from 2005 to 2007 for geographic areas with populations of 20,000 or greater and provided averages of the characteristics for the three year time period. The data in this section is primarily from the 2005-2007 Census estimates. Where noted, some information may be from the 2000 Census.

Table 1.2: Selected Social Characteristics

Source: 2005-2007 Census Estimate

Relationship	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percentage
Population in Households	27,052	+/- 1,138	100%
Householder	9,318	+/- 341	34.4%
Spouse	6,017	+/- 404	22.2%
Child	9,735	+/- 748	36.0%
Other relatives	1,292	+/- 447	4.8%
Non-relatives	690	+/- 237	2.6%
Unmarried partner	434	+/- 181	1.6%

Vernon Township's population steadily declined between 1860 and 1930. Both Sussex County and Vernon Township showed a significant population increase between 1950 and 1990. Vernon's population percentage increase was even more pronounced, being double that of the County's from 1970 to 2007.

Table 1.3: Historic Population					
Source: 2005-2007 Census Estimate					
Year	Vernon Township	Sussex County	Vernon as a % of County Population	% Change Vernon Township	% Change Sussex County
1860	2,190	23,816	9.20%		
1870	1,979	23,168	8.54%	-9.63%	-2.80%
1880	1,811	23,539	7.69%	-8.49%	1.60%
1890	1,756	22,259	7.89%	-3.04%	-5.44%
1900	1,738	24,134	7.20%	-1.02%	8.42%
1910	1,675	26,781	6.25%	-3.62%	10.97%
1920	1,433	24,905	5.75%	-14.45%	-7.00%
1930	1,279	27,830	4.60%	-10.75%	11.74%
1940	1,407	29,632	4.75%	10.00%	6.48%
1950	1,548	34,423	4.50%	10.02%	16.17%
1960	2,155	49,255	4.38%	39.21%	43.09%
1970	6,059	77,528	7.81%	181.16%	57.40%
1980	16,302	116,119	14.04%	169.05%	49.78%
1990	21,211	130,943	16.20%	30.11%	12.77%
2000	24,686	144,166	17.12%	16.38%	7.81%
2007	27,052	151,174	17.80%	8.75%	4.7%

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

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. The MPO's 2005 projection of 26,690 is in keeping with the 2005-2007 Census population estimates of 27,052. The 2010 and on projections are likely to be high given that they did not take into account development restrictions implemented as a result of the Highlands Act. With two-thirds of the Township in the Highlands, the overall capacity to build in the Township is reduced by approximately 60 percent. If restrictions on development equally impact the ability for population growth to occur, then potential growth as projected below would be reduced by up to 60 percent.

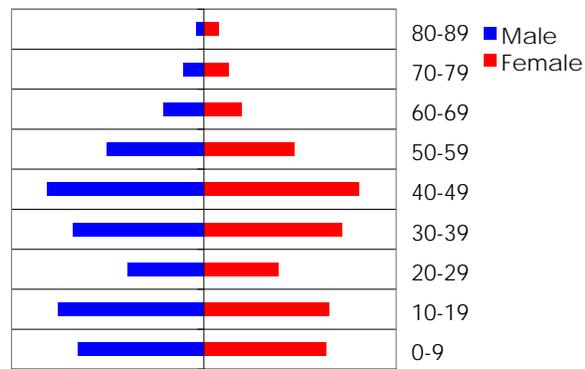
Table 1.4: Population Projections
Source: Metropolitan Planning Organization

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

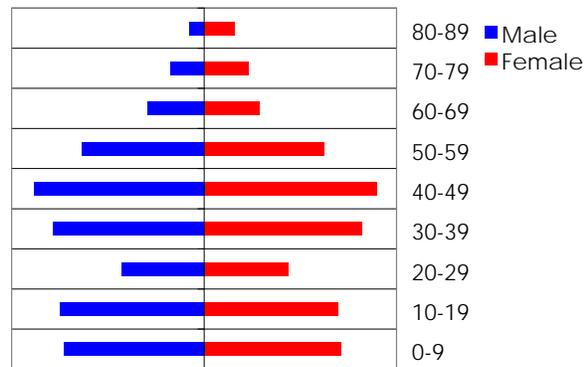
AGE AND GENDER CHARACTERISTICS

Vernon Township is similar to Sussex County with respect to age distribution with a few small differences, male and female cohorts over 70 years of age are smaller in Vernon. The overall male and female breakup is about even with 50.6% male and 49.4% female. The majority of the population is in the age ranges of 0 to 19 and 30 to 49, these ages make up 60% of the total Vernon Population.

Vernon Township Age Distribution



Sussex County Age Distribution



Source: 2000 Census Data

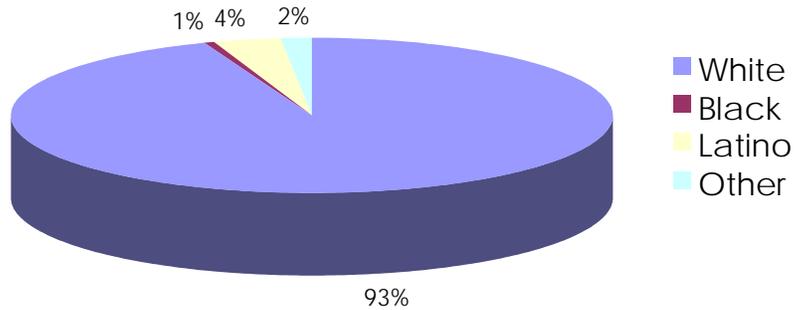
Table 1.5: Age and gender Characteristics
Source: 2000 Census

	Number			Percent		
	Both sexes	Male	Female	Both sexes	Male	Female
Total population	24,686	12,505	12,181	100	100	100
Under 5 years	1,643	829	814	6.7	6.6	6.6
5 to 9 years	2,228	1,138	1,090	9.0	9.1	8.9
10 to 14 years	2,416	1,299	1,117	9.8	10.5	9.2
15 to 19 years	1,814	976	838	7.3	7.8	6.9
20 to 24 years	1,103	567	536	4.5	4.5	4.4
25 to 29 years	1,241	623	618	5.0	5.0	5.1
30 to 34 years	1,727	827	900	7.0	6.6	7.4
35 to 39 years	2,472	1,210	1,262	10.0	9.7	10.4
40 to 44 years	2,693	1,324	1,369	10.9	10.6	11.2
45 to 49 years	2,171	1,124	1,047	8.8	9.0	8.6
50 to 54 years	1,787	914	873	7.2	7.4	7.2
55 to 59 years	1,137	601	536	4.6	4.8	4.4
60 to 64 years	688	374	314	2.8	3.0	2.6
65 to 69 years	523	256	267	2.1	2.0	2.2
70 to 74 years	408	202	206	1.7	1.6	1.7
75 to 79 years	290	118	172	1.2	0.9	1.4
80 to 84 years	201	80	121	0.8	0.6	1.0
85 and over	144	43	101	0.6	0.3	0.8

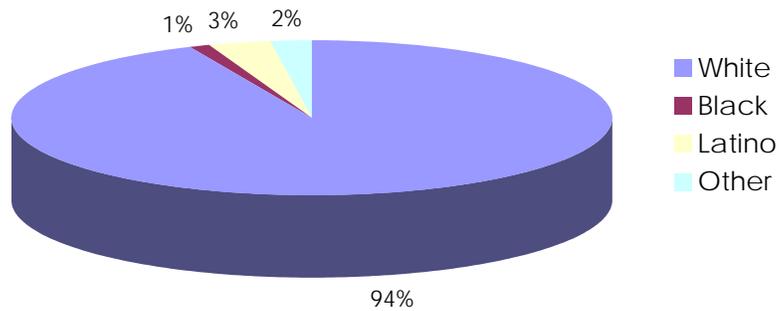
RACIAL COMPOSITION

Vernon Township's racial composition is almost exactly the same as Sussex County's. This differs greatly from New Jersey's racial composition of 66% White, 13% Black, 13% Latino, and 8% other.

Vernon Township Racial/Ethnic Breakdown



County Racial/Ethnic Breakdown



Source: 2000 Census

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

The US Census defines a household as all related and unrelated people occupying a housing unit. A family is defined as people related by birth, marriage, or adoption who reside together. The following table indicates the household and family income distribution for the Vernon Township in 2007. The largest groupings for both households and families are between \$50,000 and \$149,999. Approximately 66% of the total households and families are within this range.

Table 1.6: Household and Family Income in 2007		
Source: 2005-2007 US Census Estimate		
Income Level in Dollars	Households	Families
0 – 10,000	205	107
10,000 – 14,999	105	51
15,000 – 24,999	630	375
25,000 – 34,999	426	226
35,000 – 49,999	757	522
50,000 – 74,999	2,383	1,619
75,000 – 99,999	1,529	1,272
100,000 – 149,999	2,166	1,966
150,000 – 199,999	795	691
200,000 or more	322	297
TOTAL	9,318	7,126
MEDIAN INCOME	\$90,095	\$86,657

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Household size in Vernon was estimated at 2.90 people in 2000, down from 2.95 people in 2000 and 3.15 in 1990. The Township has experienced a decrease in household size over time reflecting a trend toward smaller household sizes. Vernon Township remains higher than both the County and the State, which have essentially leveled out around 2.7 persons per household.

Table 1.7: Persons Per Household Vernon, Sussex County, and New Jersey
Source: US Census

	Persons Per Household		
	1990	2000	2007
Vernon Township	3.15	2.95	2.90
Sussex County	2.91	2.80	2.72
New Jersey	2.70	2.68	2.70

The following table shows the numbers of various types of households within Vernon Township, including family and non-family households based on the make up of the household. Family households account for 76.5 percent of the households in the Township.

Table 1.8: Household By Type for Vernon Township
Source: 2005-2007 Census Estimate

Households by Type	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percentage
Total Households	9,318	+/- 341	100%
Family Households	7,126	+/- 428	76.5%
With own children under 18 years	4,102	+/- 368	44.0%
Married Couple Family	6,023	+/- 409	64.6%
With children under 18 years	3,357	+/- 337	36.0%
Male Householder, no wife present	412	+/- 189	4.4%
With own children under 18 years	266	+/- 158	2.9%
Female Householder, no husband present	691	+/- 209	7.4%
With own children under 18 years	479	+/- 168	5.1%
Non-Family Households	2,192	+/- 392	23.5%
Householder living alone	1,831	+/- 386	19.7%
65 years and over	287	+/- 132	3.1%
Average household size	2.90	+/- 0.11	
Average family size	3.39	+/- 0.13	

HOUSING

Vernon Township has 10,222 housing units, a third of which were built between 1980 and 1989. The vast majority of housing units are single family detached, at 76 percent. The next largest category is in the five to nine unit range, at about 10 percent. Vacant housing units comprise approximately nine percent of the total housing stock. The following tables provide an inventory of Vernon's housing stock.

Table 1.9: Year Structure Built Source: 2005-2007 Census Estimate		
Year Built	Number of Units	Percentage
2005 or later	116	1.1
2000-2004	223	2.2
1990-1999	847	8.3
1980-1989	3,174	31.1
1970-1979	2,909	28.5
1960-1969	1,267	12.4
1950-1959	841	8.2
1940-1949	225	2.2
1939 or earlier	660	6.1
TOTAL	10,222	100

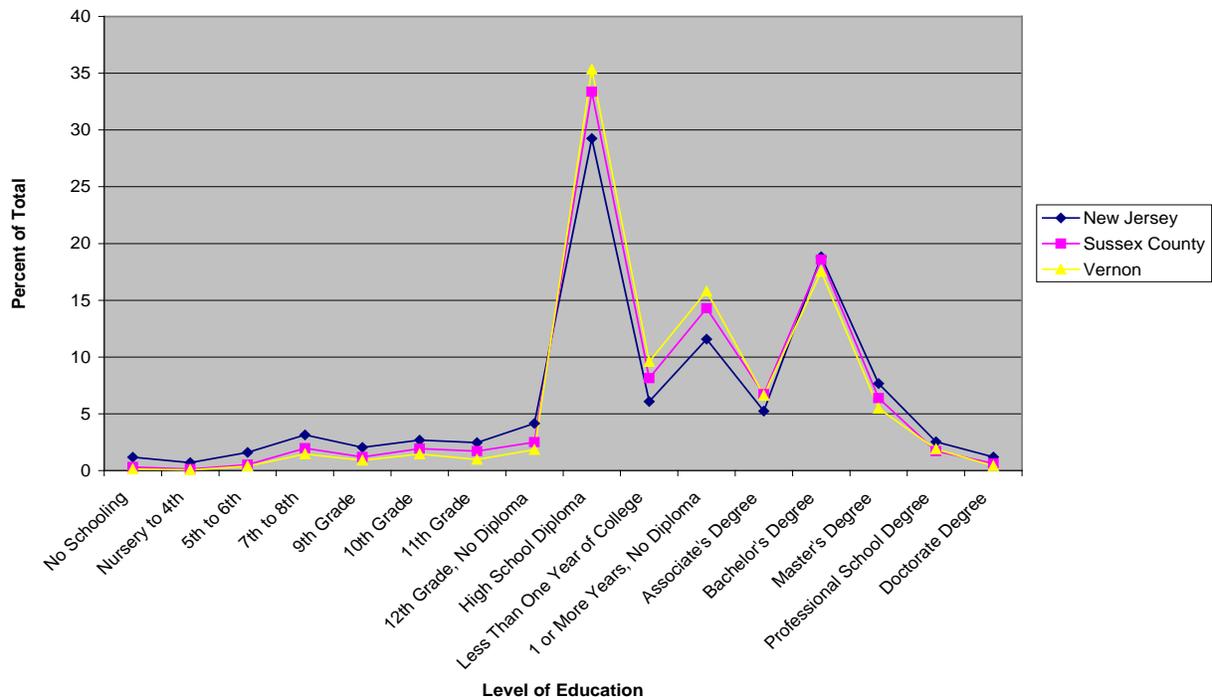
Table 1.10: Types of Structures Built- Source: 2005-2007 Census Estimate		
Type	Number of Units Built	Percentage
Single, detached	7,812	76.4
Single, attached	132	1.3
Duplex	223	2.2
Three & Four Units	49	0.5
Five to Nine Units	1,009	9.9
Ten to Nineteen Units	819	8.0
Twenty or more	86	0.8
Mobile Homes & Trailers	73	0.7
Other	19	0.2
TOTAL	10,222	100

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The following tables illustrate educational attainment for Vernon Township and provide a comparison of the Township with Sussex County and New Jersey as a whole. The data shows that Vernon residents have a relatively high education level in comparison to Sussex County and New Jersey, 95% of the population has an education level of a high school degree or higher in comparison to 82.1 percent of the State and 75.6 percent of the County. Vernon is only lower than the State and County in master's, professional, and doctorate degrees.

Table 1.11: Vernon Township Educational Attainment Source: 2005-2007 Census Estimate	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percentage
Population 25 years and older	16,952	+/- 688	100%
Less than 9 th grade	298	+/- 135	1.8%
9 th to 12 th grade, no diploma	487	+/- 178	2.9%
High school graduate	6,356	+/- 692	37.5%
Some college, no degree	3,748	+/- 493	22.1%
Associate's degree	1,511	+/- 335	8.9%
Bachelor's degree	3,219	+/- 484	19.0%
Graduate or professional degree	1,333	+/- 301	7.9%

Educational Attainment - New Jersey, Sussex County and Vernon



EMPLOYMENT

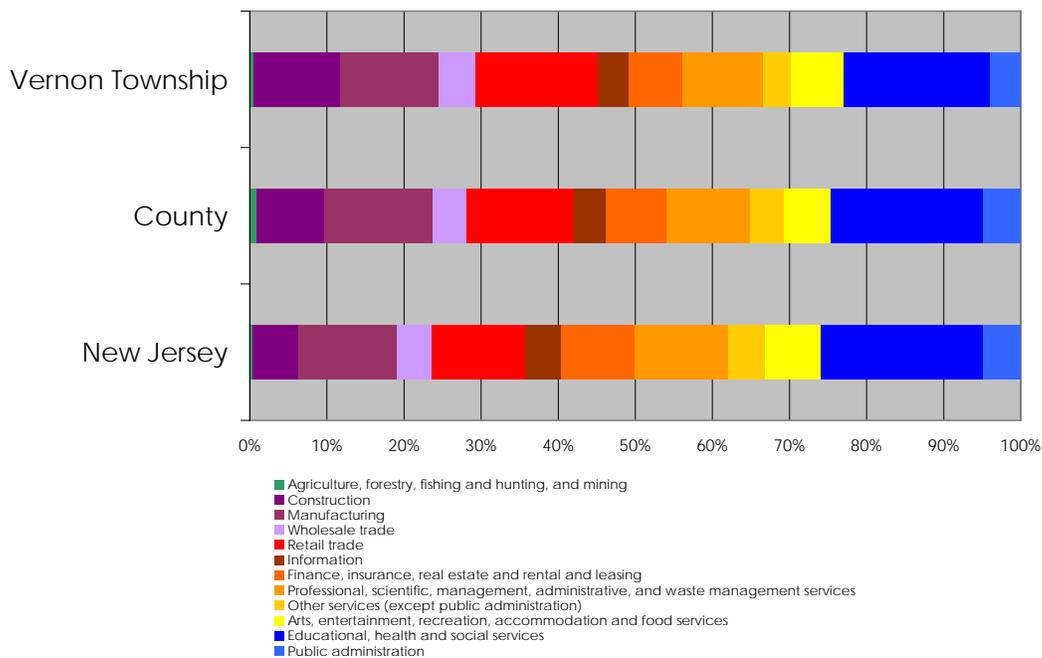
The largest industries in Vernon in 2003, by number of employed, were the construction and retail trade industries. Vernon's workers by industry, closely resembles that of the County and the State but with more construction and retail jobs.

Table 1-13: Labor Force & Employment in Vernon from 2000-2008

Source: New Jersey Department of Labor

Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
2008	13,837	13,233	604	4.4%
2007	13,744	13,286	458	3.3%
2006	13,897	13,396	501	3.6%
2005	13,762	13,298	464	3.4%
2004	14,392	13,519	873	6.1%
2003	14,421	13,387	1,034	7.2%
2002	14,204	13,236	967	6.8%
2001	13,837	13,131	706	5.1%
2000	13,679	13,118	202	3.7%

Workers by Industry



LAND USE ELEMENT

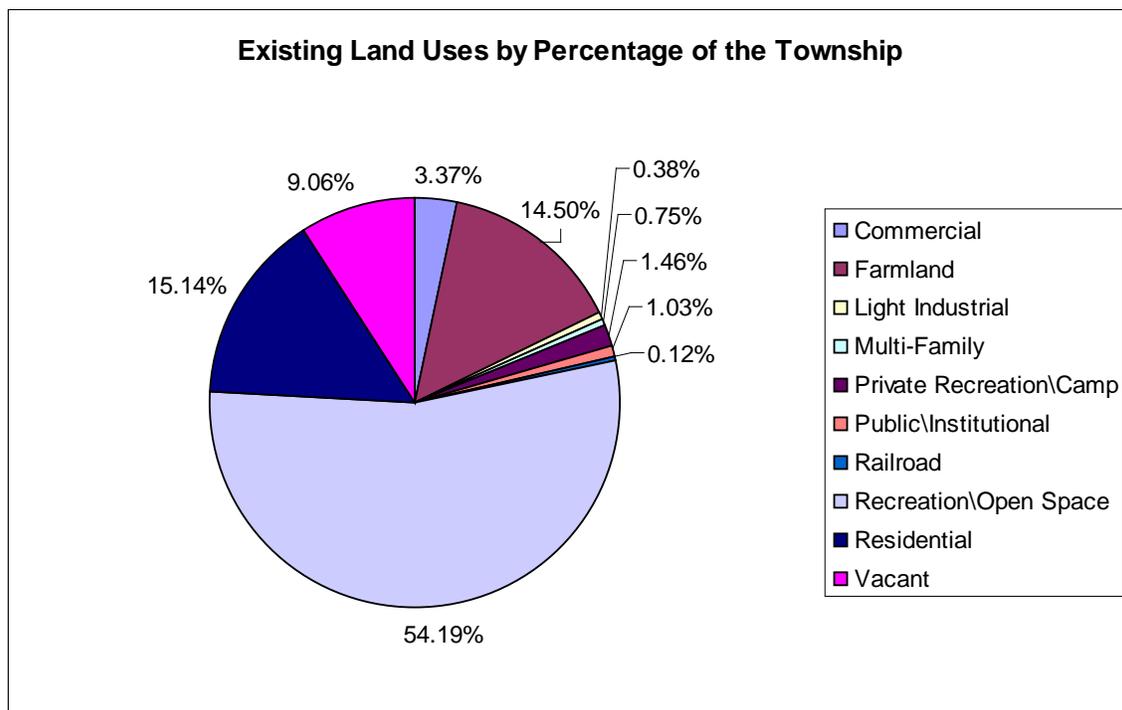
INTRODUCTION

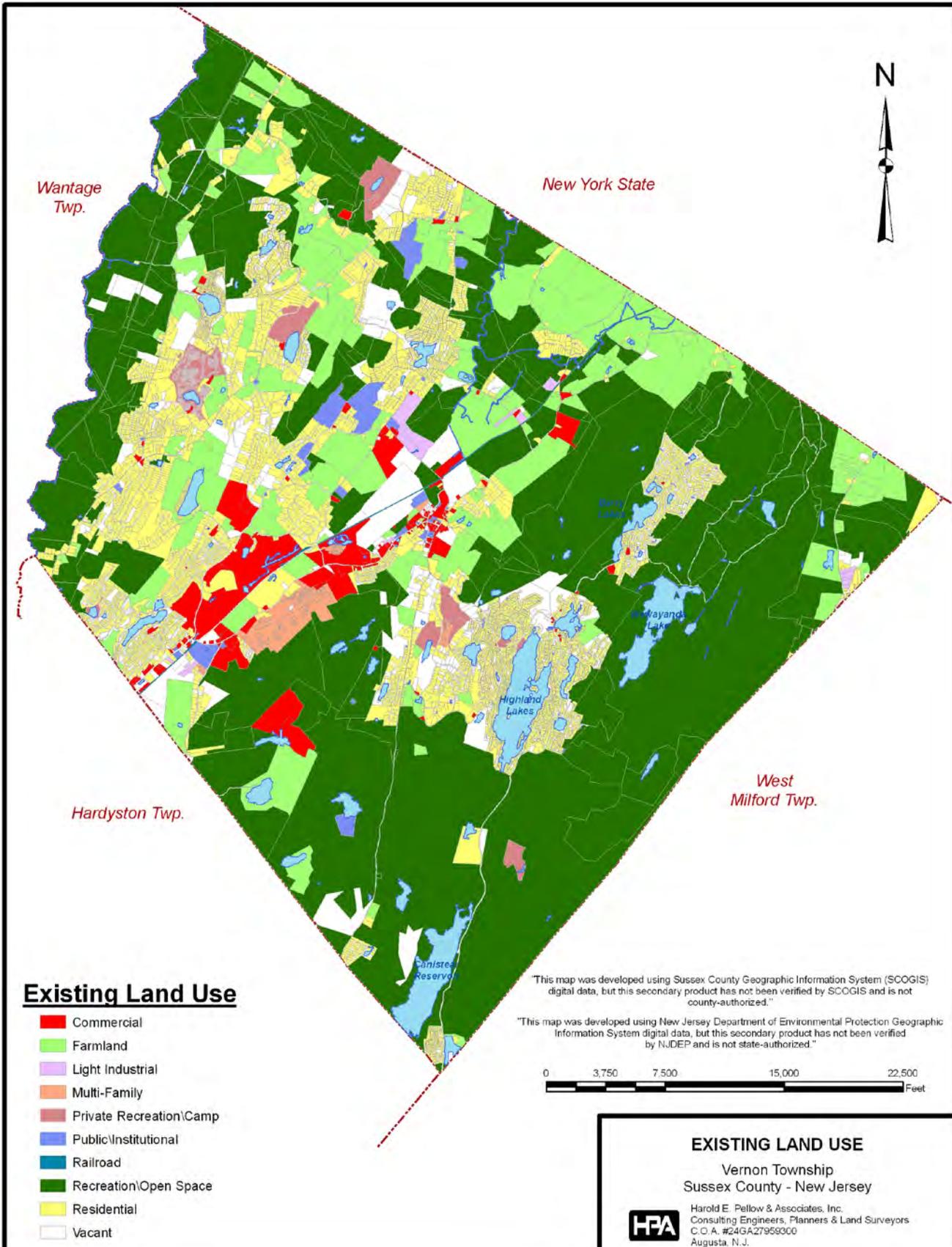
The intent of the land use element of the Master Plan is to establish locations and intensities of development within the Township and to provide specific development policies to be used in the evaluation of development proposals. In addition to addressing specific areas and land uses, desired changes in policies toward zoning and land development ordinances are addressed.

EXISTING LAND USES

Vernon's existing land use pattern has been greatly impacted by geography as well as zoning. Residential uses line the valleys and lakes of the Township. Farmland is also prevalent along the valleys and plateaus between mountain ranges. NJSH Route 94 is the primary commercial corridor for the Township. The resort areas, such as Mountain Creek and Minerals Resort and Spa anchor the commercial development along the highway corridor. High density residential is also primarily found near Mountain Creek at Great Gorge Village.

Recreation and open space is the single largest existing land use category in the Township, with 54.2 percent. Farmland covers 14.5 percent of the Township's existing land use. Single family residential land use accounts for 15.1 percent of existing land uses, while multi-family residential accounts for ¾ of a percent. Commercial accounts for 3.4 percent of the total land uses and Industrial covers just under half a percent. Vacant land covers 9 percent of existing land uses.





NATURAL AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS



Vernon Township covers 70.8 square 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 two-thirds of the Township in the Highlands Preservation Area.

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, streams, and river systems, the



largest of which is the Walkkill River, which runs south to north, defining the western border of Vernon. The Township has two watershed management areas, with the largest being the Walkkill River Watershed Management Area, where waters drain into the Walkkill River. The remainder of the Township drains into the Pequannock River Watershed Management Area. NJDEP designates several streams within preserved park lands within the Township as Freshwater One or FW-1, signifying waters that are not subject to human-made wastewater discharges and are predominantly maintained in their natural state. Many other streams within the Township are designated as Category One streams or C-1, which are identified for protection because of several identified ecological resources in and around the stream. C-1 streams have designated 300 foot buffers where development is not permitted. Approximately 18 percent of the

Township, or 8,297 acres, is covered with wetlands. Wetlands are dispersed along riparian corridors and in the low lying areas of the valleys of the Township. Large wetland areas can be found along the Walkill River in the eastern portion of the Township, along the eastern section of Wawayanda State Park, and along the low lying areas of Vernon Valley. Wetlands are regulated by the NJDEP and typically are provided with 150 foot buffers for wetlands of significant value and a 50-foot buffer for other 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, Scenic Lakes, Vernon Valley Lakes and Pleasant Valley Lake. Lake Pochung is believed to be one of the first lakes settled in Vernon, with development around the lake dating back to the 1930s.



Vernon has large areas of land which are preserved as parks and open space including: Wawayanda State Park, Hamburg Mountain Wildlife Management Area, 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 mountains, state lands, and protected watershed lands throughout the Township are primarily forested. Approximately 85 percent of the Township is covered with forests.



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

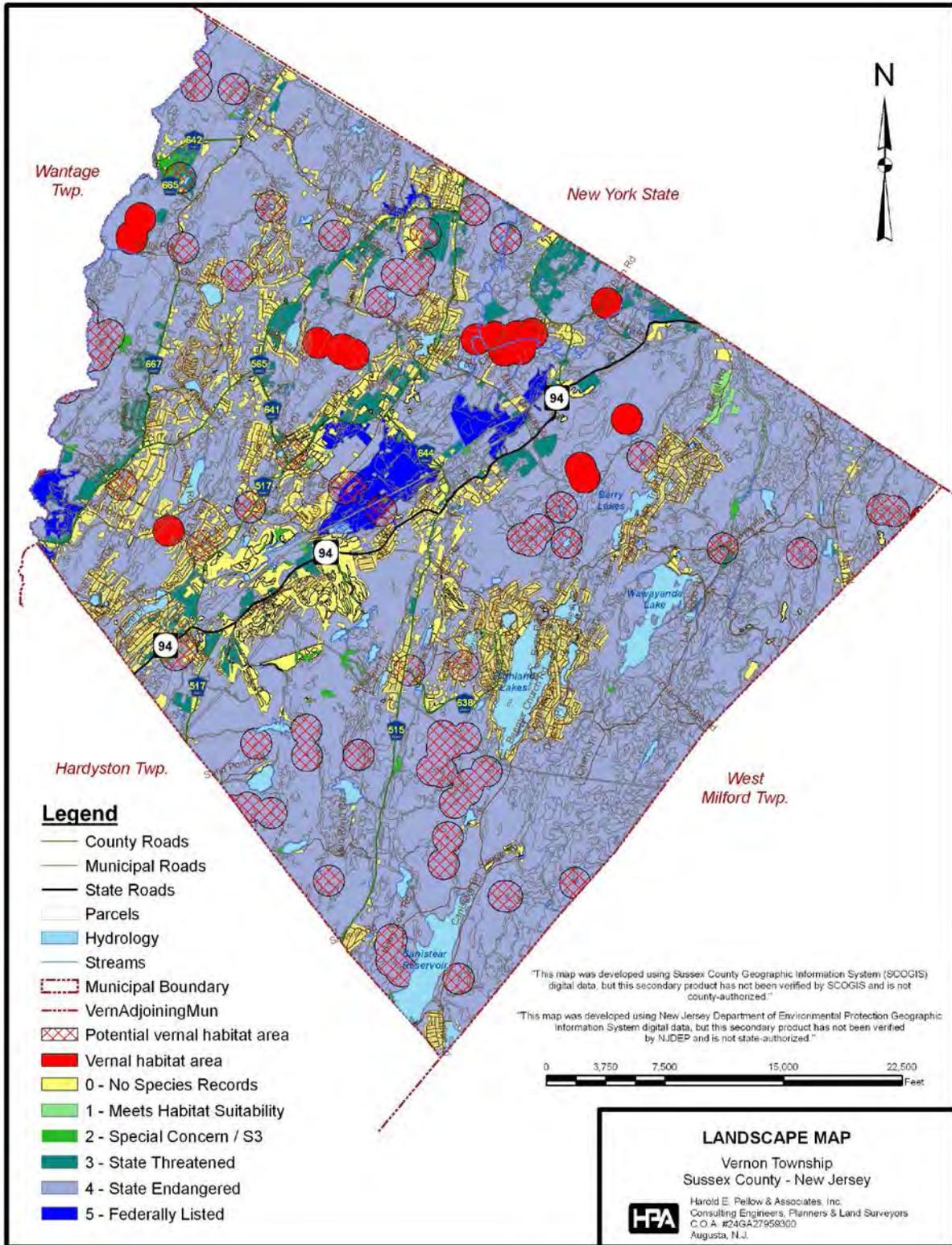
loam, Rockaway-Chatfield-Rock outcrop complex, Rockaway-Urban land complex, Scio silt loam, Swartswood loam, Urban land-Farmington-Rock outcrop complex, Udortents, Udorthents-Urban land complex, Venango silt loam, Wallkill silt loam and Wurtsboro-Swartswood complex. In general, most of the soil types in the Township are very rocky and have a shallow depth to bedrock. The Township has large areas of carbonate rock, which need to be further studied to identify if protection measures during development and for existing development are warranted.

Vernon also has a large sole source aquifer system, which is designated by the State as the Northwest New Jersey Sole-Source aquifer. This designation means that the aquifers contribute more than 50 percent of the drinking water to the area and there are no other replacement sources for the water if contamination occurs. Many of Vernon's residences rely on these aquifers to feed their private wells. Water availability and net water resources in Vernon Township have been called into question by the Highlands Regional Master Plan, which designated many of the Township's sub-watersheds as having net water deficits. This issue will continue to be studied through the Plan Conformance process with the Highlands Council to determine if mitigation measures are needed. Aquifer recharge, wellhead protection areas and groundwater recharge are all important issues that need to be evaluated further through the Plan Conformance process.

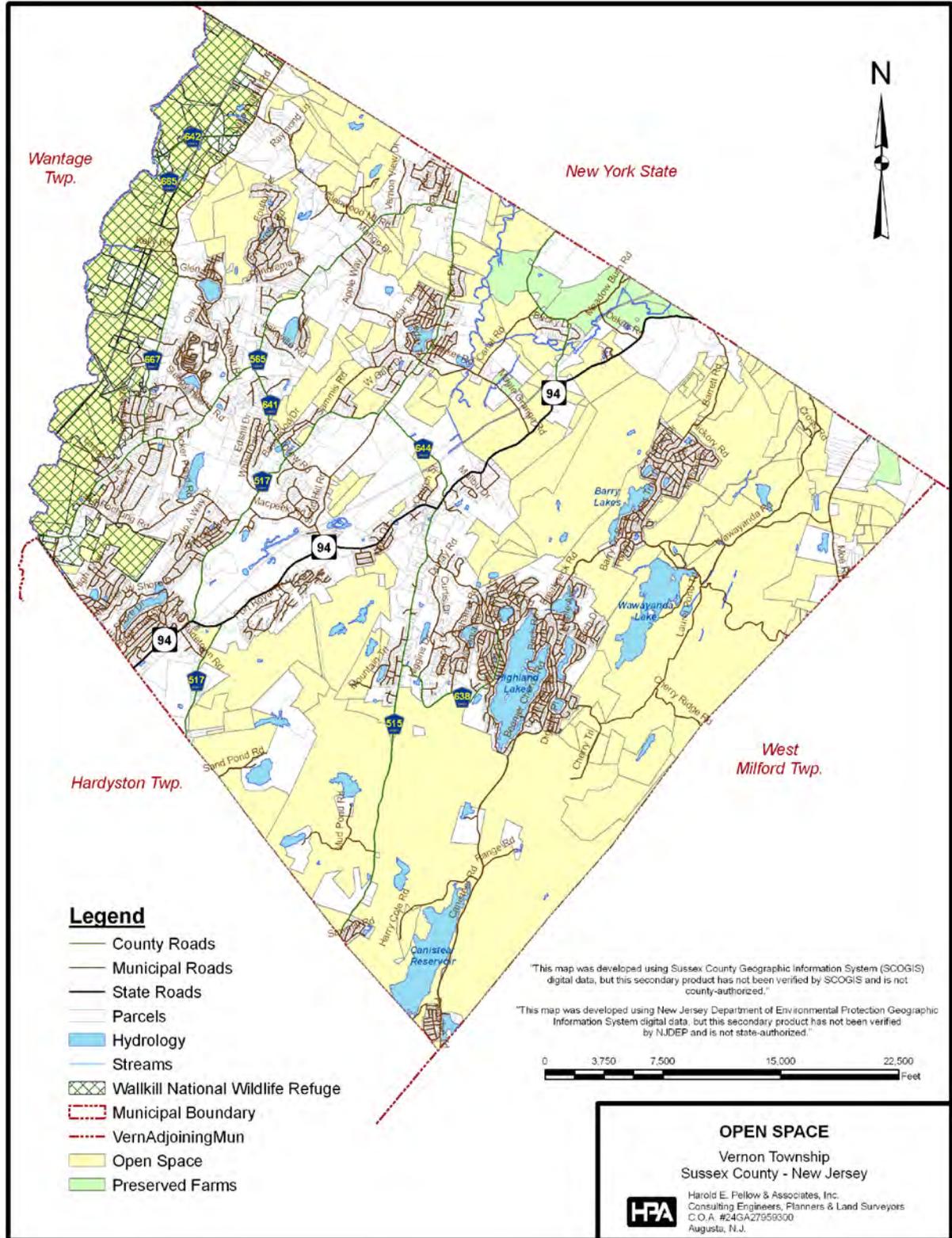
Flood hazard areas, or floodplain areas, are generally located along the major waterways within the Township including Black Creek, the Wallkill River and the Pequannock.

The maps on the following pages show various natural resources and features in the Township including endangered species habitat, open space and protected farmland, steep slopes, soils, surface water resources, wetlands, wellhead protection areas and known contaminated sites.

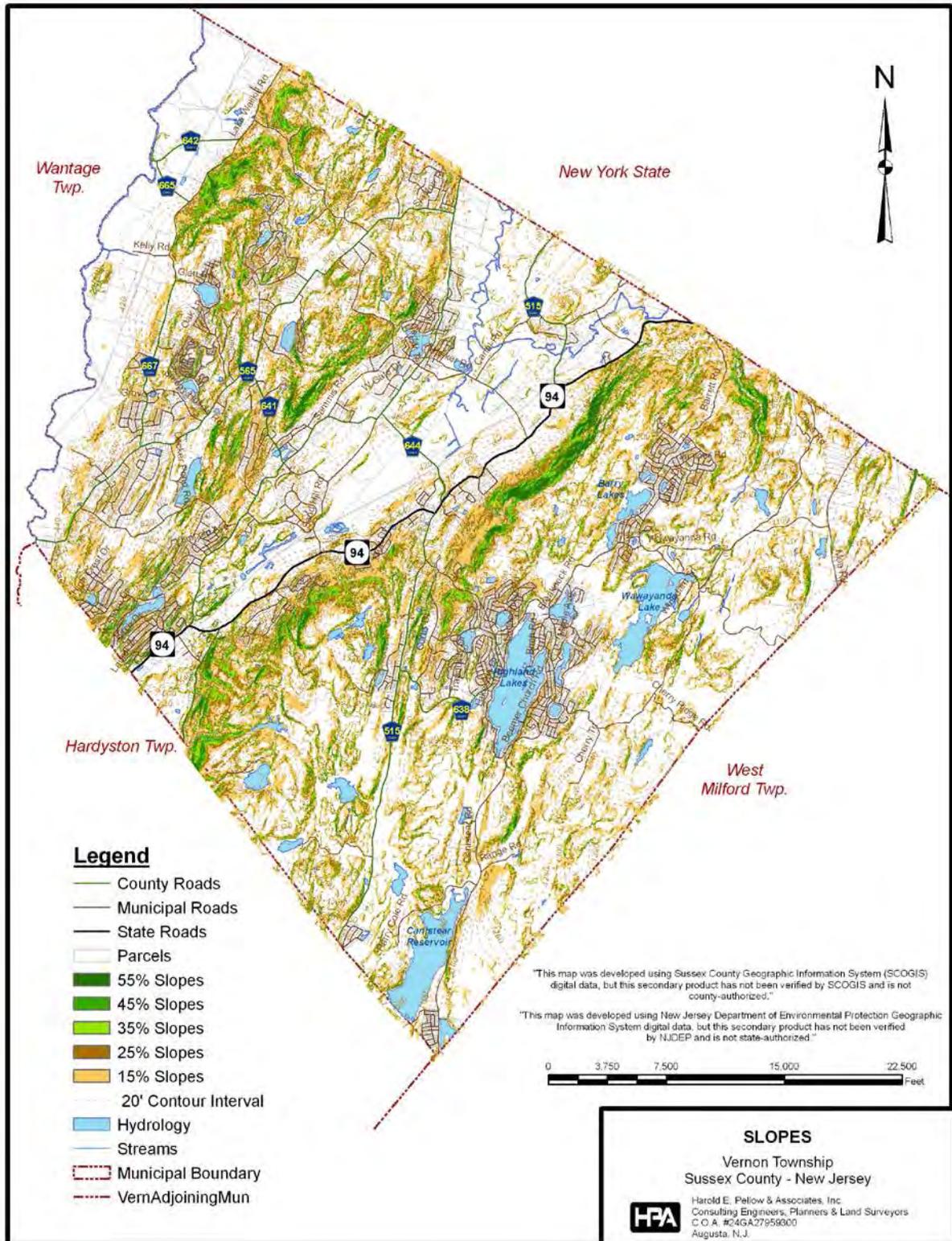
The following map shows information from the New Jersey Landscape Project, which is an effort to protect imperiled species and their important habitat in New Jersey. Vernal habitats, like wetlands, are considered important habitat for a number animal species and are state protected areas.



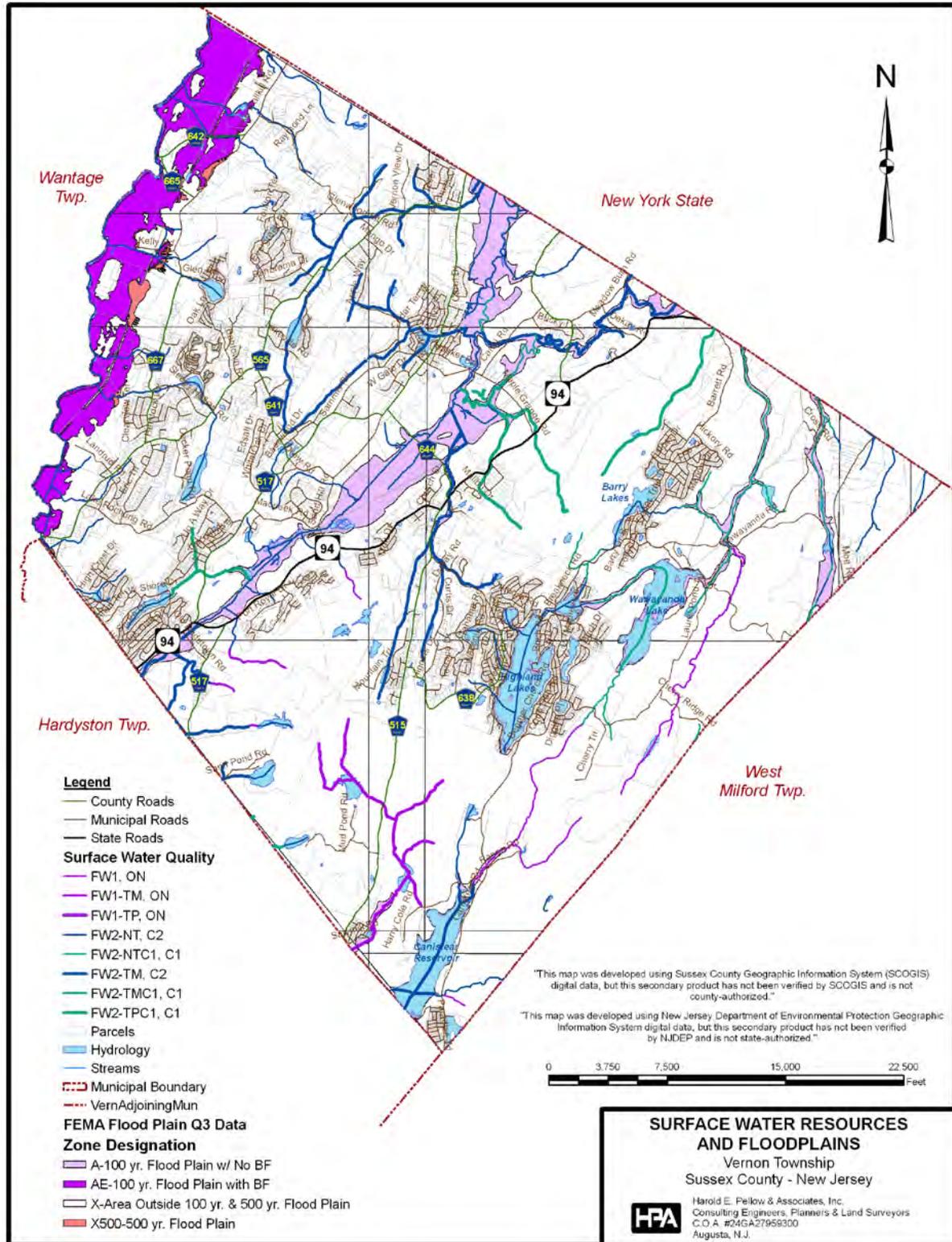
Over 50% of Vernon is designated as open space. Wawayanda State Park, the Newark Pequannock Watershed, Hamburg Mountain Wildlife Management Area, and the Walkill River National Wildlife Area are a few of the designated open space areas within the Township.



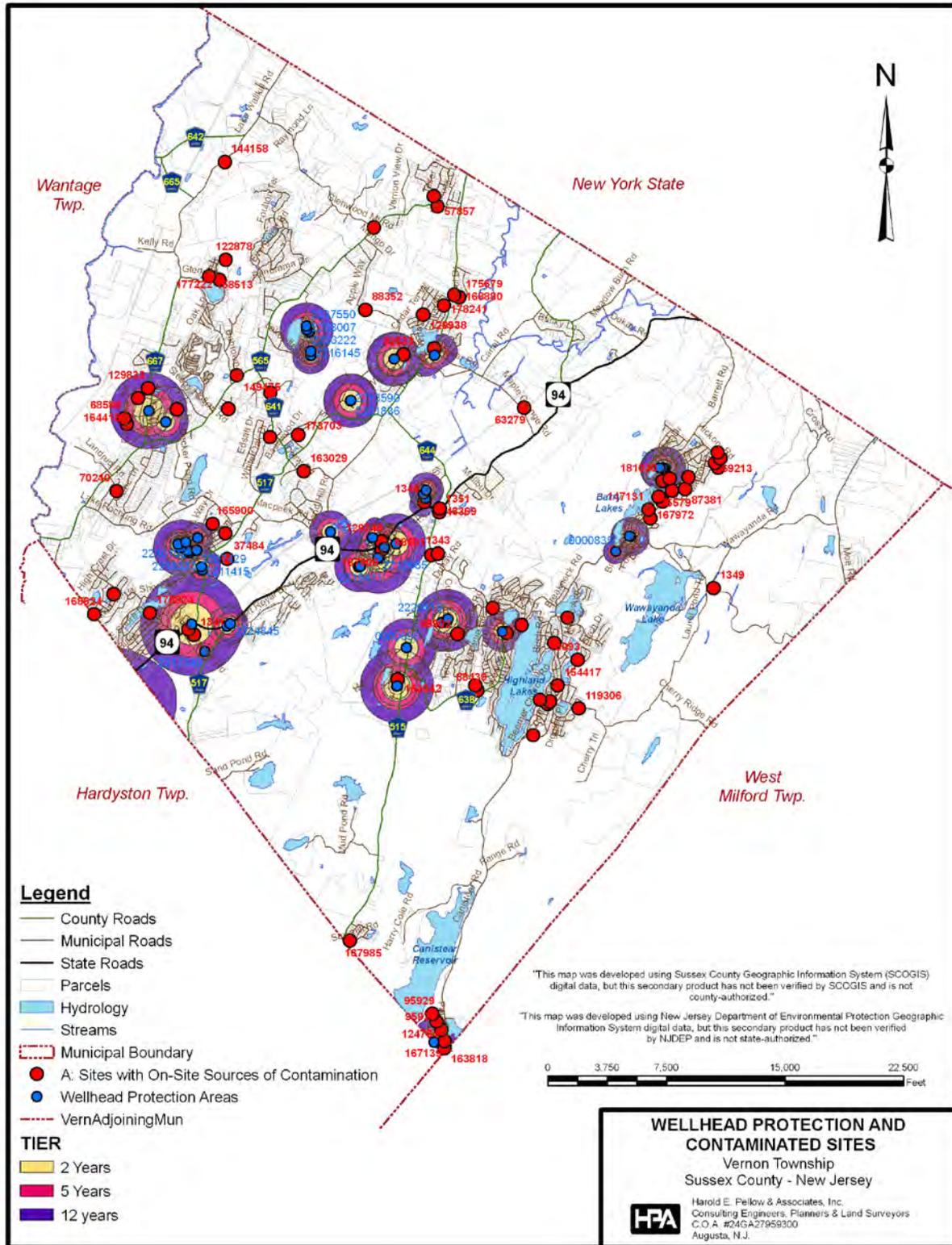
Vernon is predominated by mountain ridges and valleys as can be seen in the slopes map below:



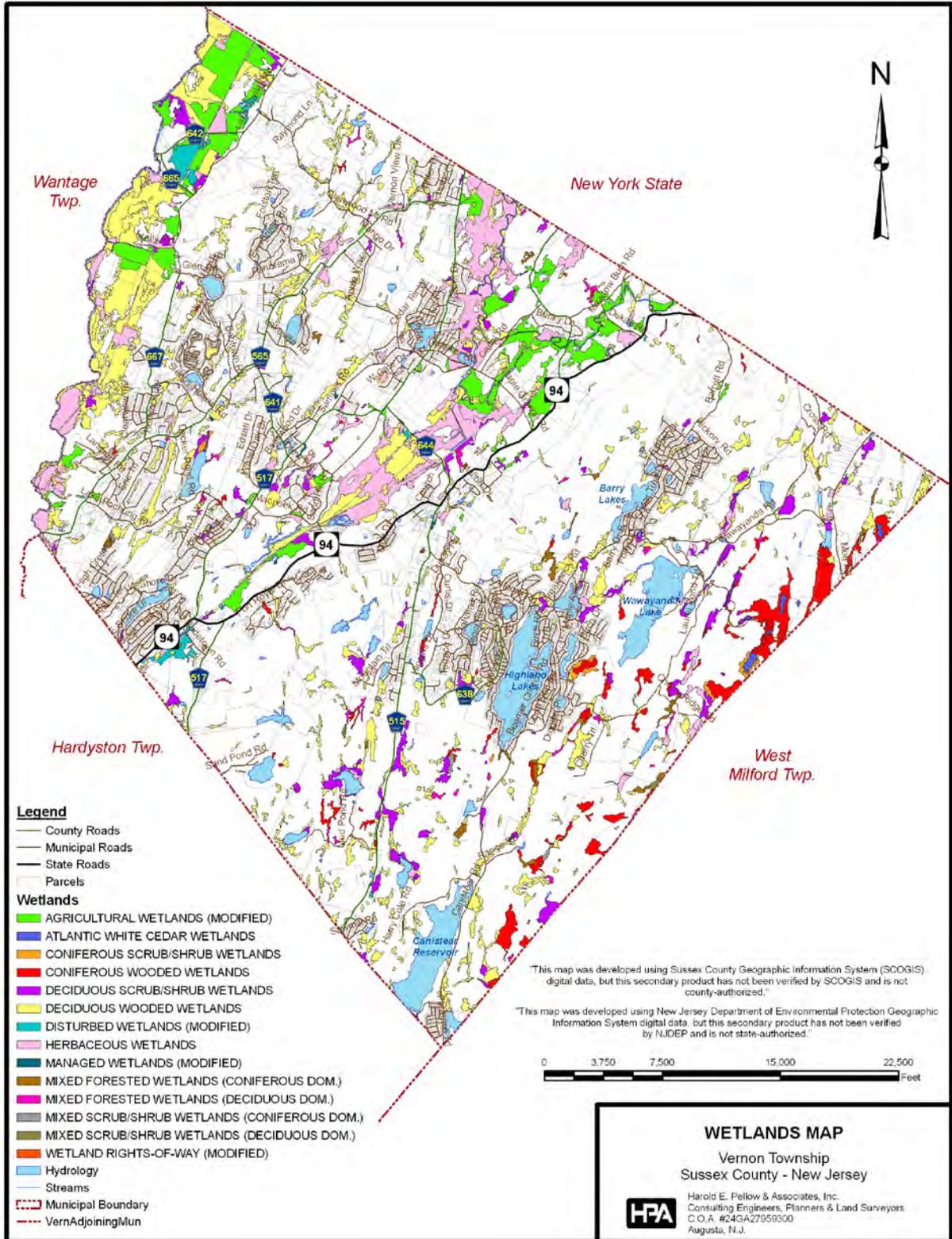
In an effort to protect surface water resources The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection classifies streams and rivers according to their quality. The following map shows stream classifications and FEMA floodplains.



The following map shows areas of wellhead protection and contaminated areas designated by the NJDEP.



The following map shows the locations of wetlands with their various classifications as mapped by the NJDEP.



REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

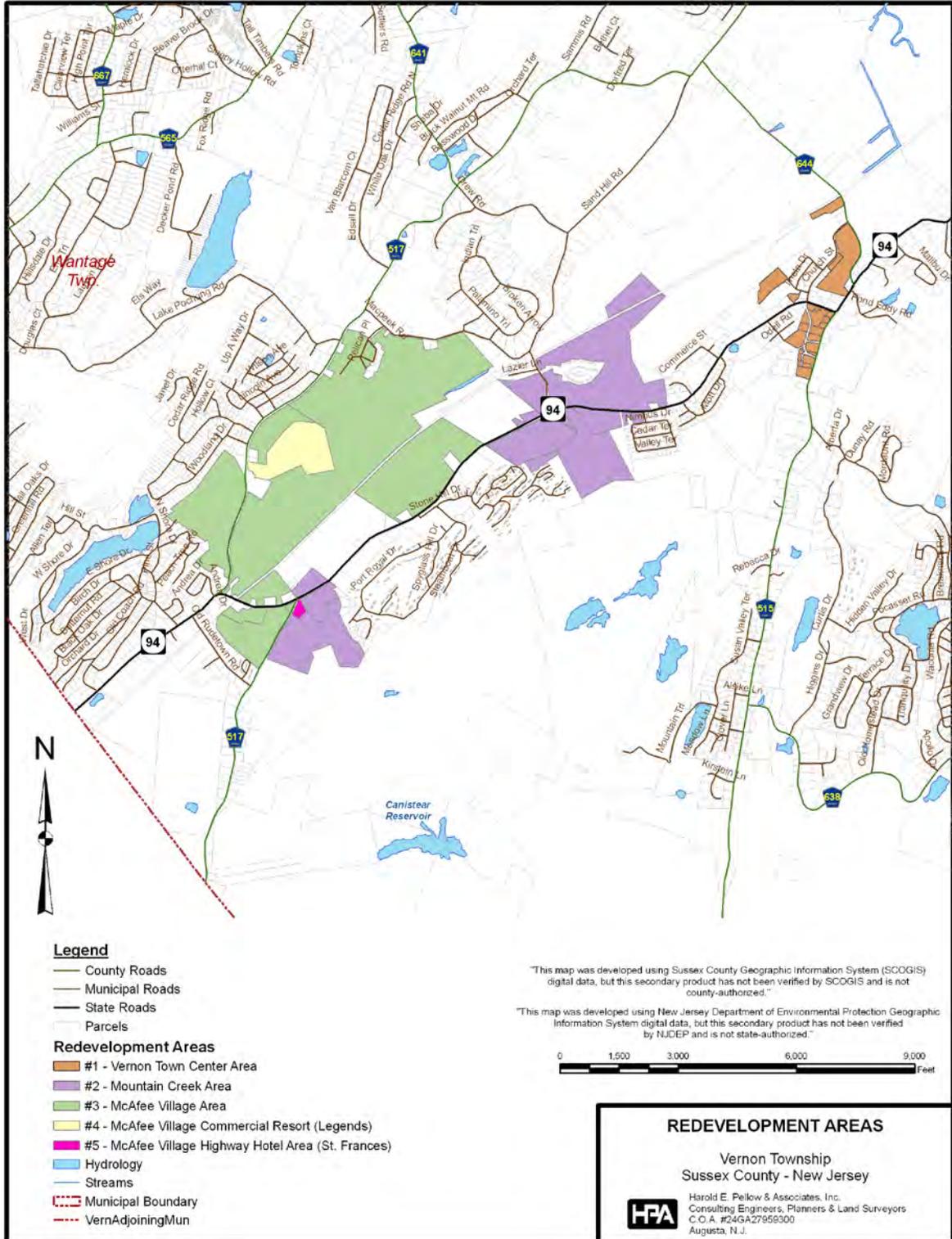
Vernon Township has declared five areas in need of redevelopment: the Vernon Town Center Area covering 62 acres; the Mountain Creek Village Area encompassing 523 acres; the McAfee Village Mixed Use Redevelopment Area consisting of 590 acres; the McAfee Village Commercial Resort Area (Legends Resort) 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, except the St. Frances site. An ordinance was adopted for that site in 2009.

The Township is currently investigating an area, known as Northwoods, to determine if it 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's redevelopment areas lie along the NJSH Route 94 corridor and are predominantly resort-oriented areas, with the exception of the Town Center, that when developed will have a dramatic impact on the economic development of the Township. In general, permitted development includes resort housing, hotels, resort-oriented commercial uses and an indoor water park. The Town Center Redevelopment Area has the potential to serve a dual-purpose of augmenting the resort-oriented commercial development in the Township and providing a downtown commercial center for the residents of Vernon Township.

All of the redevelopment areas are located within the Highlands Planning Area of the Township. The Highlands Regional Master Plan also includes a process for creating Highlands Redevelopment Areas within the Preservation Area of the Township. This process may be of interest to the Township as pre-existing non-

residential uses age in the Preservation Areas and would benefit from redevelopment. The Highlands Element of the Master Plan provides a process and criteria for designating a Highlands Redevelopment Area.



CENTERS OF PLACE

Vernon Township has identified a two-core center, which was designated as a Town Center by the State Planning Commission in July 2003. The center designation expired in July 2009. The Township began the Plan Endorsement process to extend the center designation in 2008; however, it is still currently in the process of Plan Endorsement. The Township expects the center to be reinstated sometime in 2011 but the final boundary of the center will most likely be determined through a negotiation process with the Office of Smart Growth and NJDEP.

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

Both cores are redevelopment areas and have redevelopment plans that have established center-based design standards. Sub-districts were originally established in the Vernon Core; however this Master Plan recommends eliminating the sub-districts in favor of a form-based code. A form-based code should be based on the current design standards for the Vernon Core while providing more flexibility of uses within the structures regulated by the form-based code. A form-based code is a means of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form based on preferred design standards. Form-based codes create a predictable public realm by controlling physical form primarily, with a lesser focus on land uses.

The purpose of the two-core center, from a land use perspective, is to provide a higher density growth area within the Township. Development in areas outside of

the Town Center will be limited by the designation of the Highlands Preservation Area and environmental constraints and preserved open space in the remainder of the Township. There are neighborhood centers within the Township that while not slated for high density development, will provide neighborhood services to existing residential areas. The State Plan has identified several villages and hamlets within Vernon Township that are centers of place within the more rural residential areas of the Township. They are as follows:

Identified Villages

1. Barry Lake
2. Cliffwood Lake
3. Glenwood
4. Highland Lakes
5. Lake Panorama
6. Pleasant Valley Lake
7. Vernon Valley Lake
8. McAfee

Identified Hamlets

1. High Breeze
2. Lake Conway
3. Lake Glenwood
4. Lake Walkkill

Unidentified Centers/Places

1. Independence Corner
2. Vernon Crossing

Locally Recognized Centers

The State Plan does not recognize all of the centers of place that the Township itself recognizes as villages or hamlets. Several lake communities that were not mentioned in the State Plan that are recognized as villages and hamlets by the Township include:

1. Laurel Lake
2. Lake Wanda
3. Scenic Lakes
4. Lake Pochung
5. Sunset Ridge Lake

Neighborhood Centers

The Township's neighborhood centers, identified in the State Plan as Villages and Hamlets, merit special consideration as population centers, each with their own unique sense of place. These areas include both private lake communities and mountain villages. Development in these areas should take into consideration the unique character of the place.

The Village of McAfee is on the southernmost end of the NJSH Route 94 in the Township and creates the commercial connection between Hamburg and Hardyston to the south of Vernon and the Vernon Town Center. McAfee includes three redevelopment areas: the McAfee Village Mixed Use Redevelopment Area, the McAfee Village Highway Hotel Area and the McAfee Village Commercial Resort Area. These three redevelopment areas encompass the Legends Resort Hotel, the Legends Golf Course and the St. Frances Hotel site. The redevelopment areas abut the commercial core of the McAfee Village, which covers approximately 250 acres and consists of small-scale commercial development. The Village of McAfee is also the southern gateway to the Township and as such merits gateway treatments to the streetscape including lighting, sidewalks, pedestrian amenities and traffic calming measures. Architectural design standards may also be warranted in this area to foster the unique identity of the Village of McAfee.

LAND USE PLAN

Vernon Township currently has 21 zoning districts, which include five redevelopment areas. An effort is being made through this Master Plan Update to streamline land use districts to eliminate redundancies and for ease of use. With two-thirds of the Township in the Preservation Area of the Highlands, land use districts within that area, will only apply to existing development. To that extent, provided that setbacks remain the same for existing development, the land use districts could be simplified. Outside of the Preservation Area, it makes sense to review both uses and setbacks to create more efficient land use districts that both protect and preserve desirable land use patterns and provide for ease of use and application.

Public Lands, Preserved Open Space and Conservation District

This land use category is comprised of public and privately held permanently preserved lands including parks, refuges, and preserves such as the Wawayanda State Park, the Appalachian Trail, Hamburg Mountain Wildlife Management Area, and the Walkkill River Wildlife Refuge. This category previously only held public lands and is currently proposed to also include privately held lands which are preserved from development, including the Mountain Conservation District and the Conservation District. The Conservation District has historically covered two primary areas in the Township slated for conservation. The first area is the Newark Watershed property within which development is very limited in order to preserve the area's function as a watershed and reservoir for the City of Newark. A second area within this category is the Walkkill River Wildlife Refuge, which includes areas surrounding the refuge that have not yet been purchased for preservation. The majority of the Conservation District within the Newark Watershed Area is in the Preservation Area and development will be limited to exempt development on pre-existing lots or within the septic system constraints of the Highlands Preservation Area.

Residential Districts

Low Density Residential District

The Low Density Residential District combines the Rural Residential District with the pre-existing Low Density Residential District. The zones are virtually identical except for lot size. The Rural Residential District mostly encompasses lands within the northern portion of the Township and is primarily covered by the Preservation Area. For this reason the two areas could be combined and given a minimum lot size of 3 acres without impacting the current rural residential area. The purchase of farmland preservation easements should be actively sought to provide landowner equity in the Highlands Preservation Area. Permissible uses include conservation and preservation of land, agricultural and farm uses, public and private recreation, and residential development at one unit per three acres. If residential subdivision does occur, cluster development should be encouraged to preserve open space and/or farmland.

Medium-Density Residential District

The Medium Density Residential District primarily covers two areas on the edges of lake communities and provides a moderate density of one unit per 30,000 square feet. A small section of the medium density residential area is in the Highlands Preservation Area and will therefore only apply to existing development in those areas. Permissible uses include conservation and preservation of land, agricultural and farm uses, public and private recreation, and single family residential development.

Residential High Density District

The Residential High Density District permits development at a density of one unit per 10,000 square feet. Townhouses, multi-family housing and planned adult communities are permitted within the District.

Private Lake Communities District

The Private Lake Communities are single family residential areas surrounding private lakes that have a 10,000 square foot lot minimum. Uses customary to private lake communities, such as private recreation facilities and clubhouses are also permitted.

Private Lake Leasehold Communities District

The Private Lake Leasehold Communities are pre-existing communities where land is leased for residential development surrounding a private lake. Land is owned by the lake association and leased for use by single family residential development.

Seasonal Residential District

This District covers an existing seasonal recreational community surrounding Sleepy Hollow Lake east of Glenwood Road. The area is designated seasonal recreation and year-round occupancy is not permitted.

Economic Development Districts

There are several districts in the Township that provide for mixed-use, commercial, resort and light industrial uses including: the Town Center, Neighborhood Commercial, General Business, Office Professional, Commercial Recreation, Light Industrial, Mountain Resort, McAfee Village Mixed-Use and Commercial Resort Areas and the Agri-Eco Tourism Area.

Town Center District

The Town Center District includes the Vernon Town Center and Town Center areas, portions of which have been declared as an area in need of redevelopment. The redevelopment plan for the area included several sub-

districts, each with a specific list of permitted uses and standards. This master plan recommends revisiting the redevelopment plan and zoning for the Center. Changes are likely with respect to the sewer service area for the center and the center boundary may also be shifted as part of the Plan Endorsement process. These factors, along with a lack of development in the area over the last several years, suggest that the current zoning could be improved to better produce center-based development. This area would benefit from the development of a form-based code that is more flexible in terms of uses and location of uses, while promoting a design standard and form for development that fits the center.

Form-based codes are a new response to the modern challenges of urban sprawl, deterioration of historic neighborhoods, and neglect of pedestrian safety in new development. Form-based codes are a tool to address these deficiencies, and to provide the Township the regulatory means to achieve development objectives with greater certainty. Form-based codes emphasize the form and location of the building and put a lesser emphasis on the use. The result is greater clarity in the ordinance with respect to the architecture and orientation of the buildings and more of a market-based approach to the uses permitted within the buildings.

Mountain Resort District

The Mountain Resort District covers the Mountain Creek Redevelopment Area and is governed by the Mountain Creek Redevelopment Area Plan.

McAfee Village District

The McAfee Village District covers the McAfee Village redevelopment area which is governed by two redevelopment area plans, the McAfee Village Commercial/Resort Redevelopment Area and the McAfee Village Mixed-Use Redevelopment Area.

Neighborhood & Village Commercial District

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

Commercial Recreation District

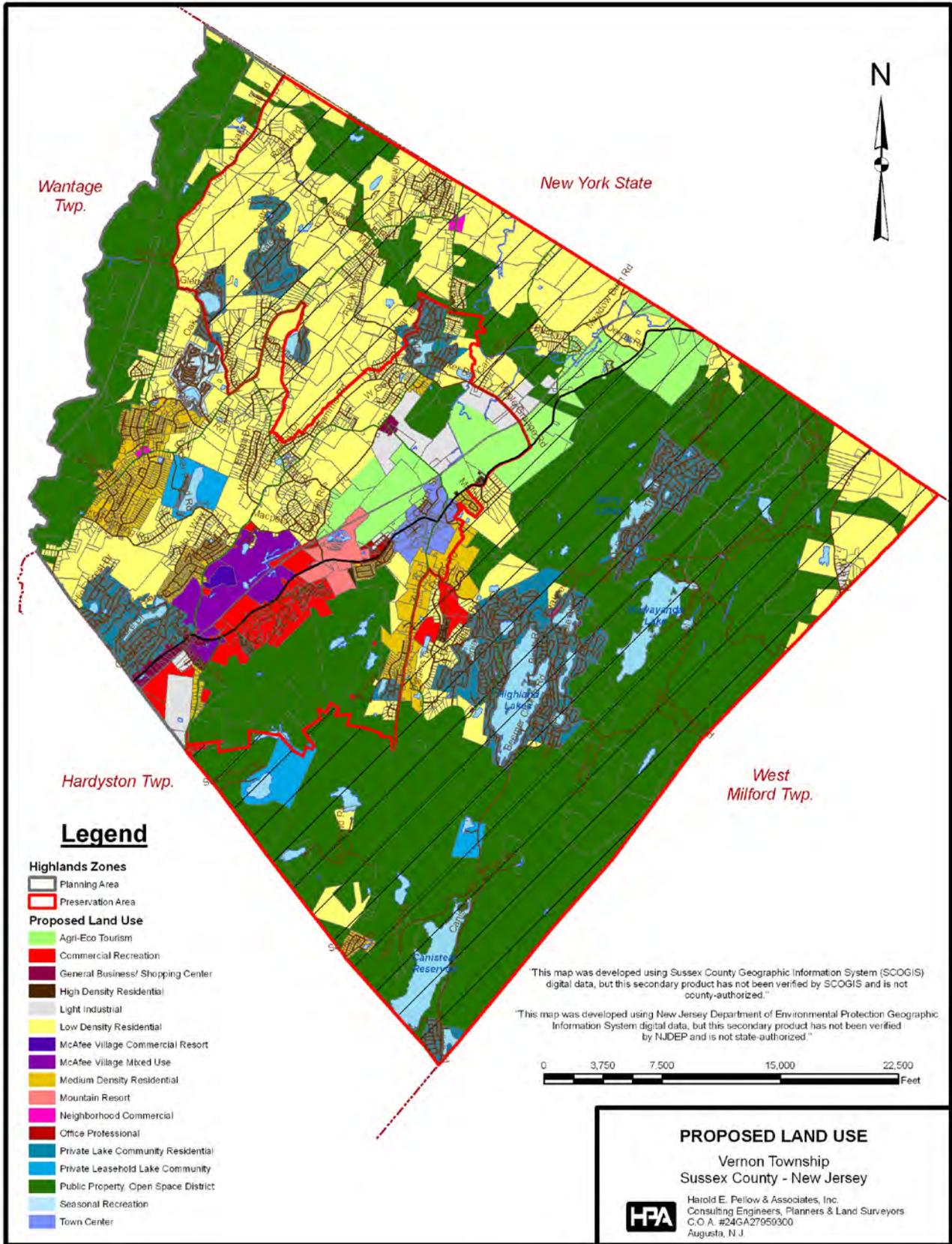
The Commercial Recreation District encompasses the resort areas primarily along NJSH Route 94 and generally permits active recreation, commercial resort and related retail and commercial uses.

Light Industrial

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

Agricultural Eco-Tourism District

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



RELATIONSHIP TO ADJOINING MUNICIPALITIES

Vernon Township is located in the northeastern corner of Sussex County and 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.

Wantage Township

Wantage Township lies to the west of Vernon Township with the Wallkill River forming the border between the townships. Zoning adjacent to Vernon in Wantage Township is primarily R-5 (Residential Environs) with a 5-acre minimum lot size. Much of the land along the border in Wantage is preserved in the Wallkill River Wildlife Refuge, the Appalachian Trail or is preserved farmland. There is one parcel along the southernmost border with Vernon where Wantage has Highway Commercial Zoning. This is the Franklin Sussex Auto Mall parcel. Otherwise development along the border with Vernon will be very limited due to environmental constraints and preserved lands. The proposed land use in Vernon is almost entirely public lands, conservation and open space along the border with Wantage, which is compatible with Wantage's low density residential zoning and preserved open space.

Hardyston Township

Hardyston Township borders Vernon Township to the south. Hardyston Township is also located in the Highlands with both Preservation and Planning Areas, similar to Vernon Township. The Preservation Area extends south from Vernon into Hardyston Township and therefore Preservation Area lands within Vernon Township are bordered with Preservation Area lands within Hardyston Township. Development will be similarly limited in both Townships in the Preservation Area and very little development is expected. Along the NJSH Route 94 corridor, Vernon's proposed land uses mirror Hardyston's with Commercial Recreation zoning being the primary use in the area. Further west in Hardyston Township zoning includes a Minimum Impact Development District with a five acre minimum lot size and further west, a Minimum Impact Development District with

a 10 acre minimum lot size. Both minimum Impact Development District's typically allow single family residential and farming. Further west, the zoning in Hardyston is Open Space and Government Use. Proposed land uses in Vernon mirror Hardyston with Open Space and Conservation furthest west, followed by Rural Residential with a three acre minimum lot size. The only area where the proposed land use differs is in the Private Lake Community surrounding Pleasant Valley Lake and Scenic Lakes. This is a pre-existing lake community and therefore is not incompatible with the surrounding low density residential zoning in Hardyston.

West Milford Township

West Milford Township in Passaic County borders Vernon Township to the west. West Milford Township is entirely in the Preservation Area of the Highlands. The area along the border of West Milford in Vernon Township is likewise in the Preservation Area of the Highlands. Development will be similarly limited in both Townships within the Preservation Area and very little additional development is expected.

Town of Warwick, New York

The Town of Warwick in Orange County, New York borders Vernon Township to the north. Zoning in the Town of Warwick along the border of Vernon consists of Agricultural Industry, Rural, Mountain and Conservation zones. The permitted uses in these zones primarily consist of single family residential and agricultural uses, including agricultural industry. Lot sizes are based on the proposed use. The majority of Vernon Township along the border with Warwick is in the Preservation Area of the Highlands. A small section of the Planning Area borders Warwick and is proposed for Rural Residential or Public Open Space and Conservation. Development within Vernon along the Warwick Town border is expected to be very limited due to the Preservation Area designation and is therefore likely to be less intense than in the adjacent community.

RECYCLING ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

One of the negative effects of growth and development is the generation of ever increasing amounts of solid waste. The disposition of this waste has become an increasing and serious problem facing the state and its political subdivisions. In an effort to mitigate the problem the legislature passed the "New Jersey Statewide Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Act of 1987".

SUSSEX COUNTY WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Under the statute, the NJDEP has the overall authority to regulate recycling in the state. The statute is implemented through the county, with Sussex County being required to adopt a county-wide Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Once the SWMP is certified by the NJDEP, all municipalities in the county are required to update their Recycling Plans and Ordinances to be consistent with the SWMP. This Recycling Element has been developed to be consistent with Sussex County's SWMP as amended through August 2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As required by the SWMP, Vernon Township's appointed Municipal Recycling Coordinator must do the following:

1. The Township Recycling Coordinator shall have all those duties as enumerated in the Vernon Township Recycling Plan Ordinance, as well as those duties enumerated under N.J.S.A. 13:1E-99.16; and designate one or more persons as the municipal recycling coordinator.
2. The Township Recycling Coordinator shall notify all generators of their source separation responsibilities at least twice annually. The Township

must notify all occupants of residential, commercial and institutional properties of the requirements of the Township Recycling Ordinance.

3. The Township Recycling Coordinator is encouraged to provide any person applying for a construction/demolition (C&D) permit with an information sheet including the following:
 - a. Locations and hours of relevant recycling facilities.
 - b. Money saved by separating recycling C&D.
 - c. It may be noted that the zoning officer/construction official would be encouraged to include this information sheet in the construction & demolition permit package.
4. The Township Recycling Coordinator must attend at least one County-hosted Recycling Coordinators meeting annually.
5. The Township Recycling Coordinator shall also be responsible to perform in a timely manner, those duties and functions as enumerated in the Sussex County District Solid Waste Management Plan and amendments thereto.
6. It is recommended that The Township Recycling Coordinator attend Rutgers Recycling Certification Courses and achieve certification.
7. The Township Recycling Coordinator is encouraged to promote recycling as part of the general public consciousness in the municipality.
8. The Township Recycling Coordinator is encouraged to educate schools and institutions concerning recycling within the municipality.

In addition to the responsibilities of the Recycling Coordinator, Vernon Township is also required to do the following:

1. Update its mandatory source separation and recycling ordinance. This ordinance must include, at a minimum: the designation of materials mandated for source separation and recycling from all residential,

commercial and institutional generators; responsibilities of generators for the collection and recycling of those materials; method of enforcement for the mandate, including delegation of enforcement powers and penalties for non-compliance.

2. Periodically review and update municipal land use master plans and development regulations. The master plan and development regulations shall require, at a minimum, provisions for the storage and collection of designated recyclable materials in any development requiring site plan approval that involves the construction of 50 or more units of single family residential housing, any construction of multi-family residential construction, or commercial or industrial development for the utilization of 1000 square feet or more of land.
3. Require site plans to show adequate storage for all solid waste between garbage pickups and recycling pickups.
4. Enforce the Township's Recycling Ordinance: Vernon Township shall act on recycling violation occurrences by either investigating and enforcing them in accordance with their local recycling and/or separation ordinance, or referring them to the Sussex County Department of Health for action in accordance with the County's regulations.
5. Submit an annual municipal recycling tonnage report to the NJDEP. The NJDEP provides an annual guidance document and on-line reporting forms for this requirement. This report must detail all recycling that occurred in the Township, from all sectors (residential, commercial and institutional) subject to the ordinance. Those municipalities which do not report are barred from receiving a recycling grant, may jeopardize receiving other NJDEP grants, and will be referred to NJDEP Enforcement for appropriate action.

6. Prohibit, by ordinance, the placement of leaves for disposal as solid waste. The ordinance may either specify the on-site composting of leaves and grass (for residential generators only), or the placement of leaves for collection and composting as provided in the ordinance.

In order to comply with both the State and County mandates the Township¹ adopted a recycling ordinance on March 28, 1988 with subsequent applicable amendments. Because the County has amended its SWMP, which has subsequently been certified by the NJDEP, the Township is now required to update its ordinances where deficient to reflect the provisions of the SWMP as outlined in this element.

¹ The state and federal government are responsible for conducting the recycling programs on the lands that they administer.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT

The Township of Vernon has an active Historic Preservation Commission that is working toward establishing a complete inventory of the Township's historic places. The Township has a Historic Preservation Ordinance by which properties can be designated as Historic. The following list of Historic Properties in the Township includes properties that have either been designated as historic on the National, State and/or Township Register of Historic Places. The Historic Preservation Commission also has an inventory of several properties it is researching for possible preservation. The Highlands Regional Master Plan also identified places of cultural and historic significance that should be further evaluated for inclusion on the Township's inventory of historic places.

VERNON TOWNSHIP HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPERTIES LIST

Site	Lot and Block	Description	Date Adopted as Landmark	New Jersey/ National Register Listing?
Meadowburn Farm	Block 32, Lot 9	Built in 1760, Vernon's first settler William DeKay and his descendants lived here until 1853; principal building of a commercial farm operating since 1881; site includes gardens of Helena Rutherford Ely, well known write of books on gardening	March 25, 1998	Yes
St. Thomas Episcopal Church	Block 140, Lot 4	Built in 1847; Oldest existing church structure in Vernon Township; very early Neo-Gothic-Carpenter, Gothic Architecture	March 25, 1998	No
Simonson House	Block 184, Lot 2.03	Built in 1770, this structure reflects the economic and social history of the community and contains elements of design and detail characteristics of a period	April 22, 1998	No
Ring Quarry	Lot 31, Block 11	Owned by federal government; a prehistoric mining district, this site yields information about regional stone tool making practices and extraction procedures employed to remove and utilize material from bedrock from the prehistoric era	May 1998	Currently Pending with New Jersey Historic Sites Council

VERNON TOWNSHIP HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPERTIES LIST

Site	Lot and Block	Description	Date Adopted as Landmark	New Jersey/ National Register Listing?
Mastodon Lake	Block 191, Lot 15	Archaeological and Paleontological significance, 11,000 – 8,000 B.C.; In 1954, the skull and full skeleton of a mastodon was found in the lakebed. The fully erected mastodon is on permanent display at the New Jersey State Museum.	May 27, 1998	No
Pleasant Valley Quarry	Block 264, Lot 1	Cultural resource, American Indian chert quarry; likely to yield information important in prehistory	July 28, 1999	No
Baxter Homestead	Block 30, Lot 1.01	significant to the township for its association with John C. Baxter, a regionally prominent farmer of means whose children went on to prominence in other fields; also significant because homestead embodies characteristics of prosperous Civil War era farm residence	February 8, 2006	No
Longwell Drew Cemetery	Block 141, behind Lot 2.02	Early 1800s, Post-Colonial Historic Cemetery, persons of township significance interred there	February 8, 2006	No

VERNON TOWNSHIP HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPERTIES LIST

Site	Lot and Block	Description	Date Adopted as Landmark	New Jersey/ National Register Listing?
Denton-Wallace House	Block 148, Lot 5	Built 1851, associated with persons of significance to Vernon Township-Postmasters and prominent Vernon merchants	March 2006	No
Price's Switch School	Block 11, Lot 33.01	Period of significance: 1840-1958; last one-room schoolhouse to remain in operation in Sussex County; also significant because all of its outbuildings and interior furnishings are still intact, none of which are reproductions or reconstructions	June 2008	No
Vernon Township Board of Education Building	Block 144, Lot 31	Significant because of its continuous use for public service in Vernon Township; served as first municipal center and one of first schools; no other municipal structure in the township has been in longer use	February 2009	No
High Breeze Farm	Block 42, Lot 12 Block 43, Lot 4	Owned by State of New Jersey; part of Wawayanda State Park; Period of significance: 1810-1935; Significant for its contributions to agricultural and architectural history of the township	Approved as town landmark May 13, 2010	No

VERNON TOWNSHIP HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPERTIES LIST

Site	Lot and Block	Description	Date Adopted as Landmark	New Jersey/ National Register Listing?
Black Creek Site	Block 93, Lot 2	Owned by State of New Jersey; part of Wawayanda State Park; Prehistoric occupation of American Indian cultures dating from 8,000 BC to the Contact Period, as evidenced by 15,000 artifacts found at site	State Owned/ not within township jurisdiction	Yes
Cemetery	Block 20.01, Lot 8	Glenwood Baptist Cemetery	December 12, 2011	
Cemetery	Block 31, Lot 20.01	Glenwood Cemetery	May 13, 2013	
Cemetery	Block 41, Lot 7.01 Block 32, Lot 9	DeKay Cemetery #1 DeKay Cemetery #2	December 12, 2011	

VERNON TOWNSHIP HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPERTIES LIST

Site	Lot and Block	Description	Date Adopted as Landmark	New Jersey/ National Register Listing?
Cemetery	Block 148, Lot 3	Episcopal Church Cemetery	December 12, 2011	
Cemetery	Block 201.01, Lot 29	Williamsville Cemetery	December 12, 2011	
Edsall Farm	Block 32, Lot 7	Edsall Farm	May 13, 2013	
Cemetery	Block 33.01, Lot 1	Edsall Slave Cemetery	May 13, 2013	

VERNON TOWNSHIP HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPERTIES LIST

Site	Lot and Block	Description	Date Adopted as Landmark	New Jersey/ National Register Listing?
Cemetery	Block 42, Lot 3.01	McCamly Cemetery	May 13, 2013	
Cemetery	Block 210, Lot 1	Cherry Ridge Cemetery	May 13, 2013	
Cemetery	Block 202, Lot 1	Canistear Cemetery	May 13, 2013	
Cemetery	Block 148, Lot 2	United Methodist Cemetery	June 13, 2016	