

Borough of Rocky Hill
County of Somerset, State of New Jersey



**2019 MASTER PLAN
RE-EXAMINATION REPORT**

Adopted: December 11, 2001
Amended: October 8, 2002
Amended: February 10, 2004
Amended: December 14, 2004
Amended: November 15, 2005
Amended: October 10, 2006
Re-examination: July 8, 2008
Amended: November 11, 2008
Amended: June 21, 2018
Amended: September 20, 2018
Re-examination: March 21, 2019

**Prepared by
The Borough of Rocky Hill Planning Board**

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I. Introduction

The Municipal Land Use Law strongly encourages municipalities to make planning decisions through a thoughtful, deliberate process that includes public dialogue. That process begins with writing and adopting a master plan, which outlines the planning policies for the community. In accordance with State statutes, the Planning Board is the designated entity authorized to generate master plans. Those plans must be re-examined at least every ten years, though towns may elect to do so more often. Upon adoption by the Planning Board, a copy of the Report and Resolution shall be sent to the County Planning Board and to the Municipal Clerk of each adjoining municipality.

The last time Rocky Hill adopted a new master plan was in 2001. Since then the Rocky Hill Planning Board has adopted one re-examination report in June 2008. There were master plan amendments adopted in October 2002 to reflect demographic changes; in February 2004 for Open Space and Recreation and matrix revisions; in December 2004 for Land Use revisions; in November 2005 for the addition of a Stormwater Management Plan; in October 2006 and November 2008 for Housing Element & Fair Share revisions, in June 2018 for Cottage Zoning and in September 2018 for Historic Preservation. The amendments are different from re-examination reports in so far as they tend to focus on a single planning policy and make recommended changes to that policy only.

This re-examination report is an assessment of all Borough planning policies as they have evolved since 2008. In accordance with Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89, as quoted below, this report considers the following:

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.*
- b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.*
- c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.*
- d. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.*
- e. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992, c. 79 (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.) into the land use plan element of the*

municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

II. Background

Before discussing the Municipal Land Use requirements for a Master Plan Re-examination, a brief discussion of the underlying geography of the Borough and the external entities with jurisdictional interest in its land development is warranted.

The Millstone River, the neighboring Delaware and Raritan Canal, and the Georgetown-Franklin Turnpike (CR 518) were pivotal factors in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in establishing a commercial and residential community in Rocky Hill, as well as making it a transportation nexus. These same factors in the twenty-first century also account for a number of land use problems and external parties interested in land use matters.

The floodplains of the Millstone River and Van Horne Brook, as well as some agricultural and deciduous wooded wetlands, present flooding problems to existing property owners. In addition, the development of the Borough's few remaining undeveloped lots in the Borough is subject not only to Borough oversight but also to the Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection regulations (See Appendix, **Figures 1 and 2**).

Washington Street, part of the Georgetown-Franklin Turnpike (CR 518), bifurcates the northern and southern parts of the Borough due to its high traffic volume. Not only is CR 518 pivotal to east-west traffic in the region, but traffic calming measures and new development along its length is subject to County oversight and approval. Crescent Avenue (CR 605), as a county road, is likewise subject to County oversight and approval of any new development along its length.

The Borough of Rocky Hill comprises about 397 acres, or about 0.62 of a square mile, with 146 acres in public and park land. An Historic Preservation overlay zone protects the July 8, 1982 National Register of Historic Places designation and the January 14, 1982 State Register designation for the village center. The nearby Princeton Airport adds another overlay zone for Airport Safety in the Borough, limiting the types of development suitable for land within its borders and is under joint jurisdiction with New Jersey Department of Transportation.

In summation, despite the Borough of Rocky Hill being a relatively small municipality with very few undeveloped lots, it functions in a very complex multi-jurisdictional environment. It bears the burden of serving as a nexus for a regional roadway transportation system that brings an average daily car and truck traffic well in excess of 10,000 vehicles through the heart of its residential historic district with no primary traffic control such as stop signs or traffic lights (See Appendix, **Figures 3**). Maintaining the traditional residential character of Rocky Hill, the first goal of our Master Plan, is indeed problematic.

III. History and Progress

This section will address the requirements set forth in paragraphs “a” and “b” of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89:

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.*
- b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.*

Technically, the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) only requires a municipality to examine the planning policies outlined in its last re-examination report. But this type of analysis tends to focus only on policies highlighted in the previous re-examination – the policies that needed updating at that time. Other policies, which might have remained unchanged and so were not mentioned in the previous re-examination report, tend to get overlooked. Yet as time passes, these older policies may lose their relevance.

Therefore, the Rocky Hill Planning Board has elected to conduct a more comprehensive review than is required by the MLUL, by reiterating the 2001 Master Plan goals and objectives, considering their relevance, updating them as appropriate, and noting what, if any, progress has been made since the 2008 Re-examination Report. In so doing, the Planning Board believes the following analysis and recommendations will make the 2018 Re-examination Report an effective guide for future development in the community. To facilitate the analysis, the goals and objectives have been numbered in accordance with their position in the 2001 Master Plan and do not reflect any priority ranking.

Goal 1: Retain the Traditional Residential Character of Rocky Hill

Objective #1.1: The Borough is and should continue to be a predominantly single-family residential community.

Since the 2008 Re-examination Report, the Planning Board has approved the design and construction of two new single-family homes in the Historic Preservation District. In addition, three subdivisions were approved in the R-1 and R-1A zoning districts creating six new residential lots, including two lots with existing residential structures and four lots as yet undeveloped.

Objective #1.2: Infill residential development should be undertaken consistent with zoning and the residential densities of surrounding neighborhoods.

Both the 2004 Land Use Plan Amendment and the 2008 Re-examination Plan anticipated the completion of the Pulte Development of an age-restricted housing community on what was referred to as the 15.7-acre Schafer Tract or R-1C zone (See Appendix, **Figure 4**). The development had been given memorialized approval on September 12, 2006; however, the Planning Board’s approval was contested in court (see *Rocky Hill Citizens for*

Responsible Growth v. Planning Board of the Borough of Rocky Hill) with the Planning Board's approval being upheld by the Appellate Division on April 8, 2009. To date, there has been no construction on the site.

Objective #1.3: *The development of remaining vacant or underdeveloped parcels should be undertaken in a manner that will be compatible with surrounding development.*

The 2004 Land Use Plan amendment has a substantive analysis of the potential development of the 14.5-acre Scassera tract that had been a farm since the mid-1850s and is in the Historic Preservation District. According to the analysis, the development of the property was problematic since a considerable portion of the tract is in the Airport Safety Zone which prohibits most residential development and limits the types of commercial development. Since the 2008 Re-examination Report, the tract was sold, and the Planning Board approved the subdivision of the tract, part of which is in the R-1 zone with the larger portion of it in the VO zone with the Airport Safety Zone.

In addition to the analysis of the site in the 2004 Land Use Plan amendment, Figure 3 of the Appendix of this report documents that the traffic on the Georgetown-Franklin Pike (CR 518) is now particularly congested at what would be the vehicle access point on Washington Street from the VO portion of the site. From the western intersection of Crescent Avenue and the Georgetown-Franklin Pike (CR 518) to the Route 206 intersection, the Annual Average Daily Traffic is categorized as 10,001-25,000 vehicles. The Route 206/CR 518 intersection was identified in the November 2011 Circulation Plan of Somerset County as requiring a "loop road" capital improvement to mitigate traffic congestion.

Final subdivision of the Scassera tract was approved in January 2018 and memorialized in February 2018. The new subdivision will be comprised of two new 1.016-acre residential lots (lots 7.02 and 7.03) and one 1.548-acre residential lot containing the existing buildings, including the 1860 farmhouse mentioned in the Land Use Plan Amendment (lot 7.01) in the R-1 zone and Historic Preservation District. The new 10.937-acre flag lot (lot 6.01) is presently zoned as VO, although it has been purchased by Somerset County as an addition to Van Horne Park. Additional analysis regarding this parcel appears below.

Goal 2: Preserve and Protect the Historic Character of the Village

Objective #2.1: *A defining feature of the Borough is its village Historic District and its surrounding undeveloped area. The perpetuation and protection of this character is of utmost importance to the planning goals of the Borough.*

Development Regulations Ordinance

In November 2013, the Borough of Rocky Hill amended the Historic Preservation component of its development regulations to clarify the ordinance and promote the preservation of the Historic Preservation District (HPD) by encouraging property owners to maintain and improve their properties. Moreover, the amendment exempted from

regulation changes to properties that do not affect streetscape views and thus do not detract from the 19th century village streetscape view presented in the National Register of Historic Places application.

To assist property owners in the HPD, the amendments clearly distinguished between ordinary maintenance, minor changes, and major changes so that homeowners can more easily understand what type of projects require Planning Board approval, and the criteria that would be applied by the Board. Further, changes were made to demolition restrictions, with requirements that older buildings be thoroughly documented before total or partial demolition is allowed.

In December 2014, the Borough of Rocky Hill codified the Development Regulations and added them to the General Ordinances being maintained by ecode360 so that the Development Regulations could be more easily accessible and searchable by current and prospective residents.

In February 2017, the Planning Board revised its application procedures in its bylaws and posted the bylaws on the Borough website so that applicants would be aware of the review process to be used. The Planning Board also revised the application forms to reflect the process.

All of the above actions were undertaken to increase public awareness of the Historic Preservation process and confirm the Planning Board's commitment to preserving and protecting the historic character of the historic village areas of the Borough.

Historic Preservation District Website (<http://historicrockyhill.net/>)

With a grant from the Somerset County Planning Board, a Borough website was developed to facilitate researching the buildings in the Historic Preservation District. The properties may be searched by address, block/lot numbers, or house style. The official website of the Borough of Rocky Hill has a link to this website. The primary data source for the website is the National Register of Historic Places application research. The website allows interested parties to upload photographs or additional documentation to the specific property's file.

Objective #2.2: Open space adjacent to or near the village core should be preserved to form a "greenbelt" around the village, thereby retaining its historic development pattern and character.

The 2004 Land Use Plan amendment has a substantive analysis of the potential development of the 7.66-acre Hayden tract, R-1A zone, 38 Washington Street, stipulating the following guidelines:

“• Development should be comprehensively planned based on an overall density consistent with R-1 zoning and the requirements and provisions of the Historic Preservation District.

- The existing dwellings should be preserved in their setting. New dwellings should be clustered toward the rear of the site in order to retain the open field near Washington Street.
- The undeveloped area between the street and the main residence and the open field area should be preserved to maintain the integrity of the streetscape.
- Access and circulation to serve new development should be designed to minimize the impact on the streetscape and open field. If possible, the existing driveway should provide access to new development.
- Flexibility should be encouraged in housing types and yard setbacks, including small single-family or attached housing, in order to achieve planning objectives.”

The Planning Board, at its December 21, 2017 meeting, approved a subdivision at 38 Washington Street, the site of the historic Vanderveer-Vreeland-Hayden Farm considered as Pivotal in the National Register of Historic Places Application since it was part of a farm dating to the 1700s. The approved subdivision met all the guidelines set forth in the 2004 Land Use Plan Amendment. The property was subdivided into four lots. A conservation easement was established over the land from the street to the existing building line prohibiting new construction on the front portion of the site. Further, the entire parcel is prohibited from any further subdivision. All construction on the site has been and will continue to be subject to the historic preservation process with the goal of preserving the property’s contribution to the Borough’s history and the Village’s National and State Registry status.

In addition, the Planning Board, at its November 19, 2015 meeting, approved a major historic preservation permit for disassembling, moving and rebuilding a barn on the property, thus preserving the look of the farm from the streetscape. The property owner also agreed to preserve the silo on the site. The property owner and the Planning Board worked together over a number of hearings to preserve the historic structures and maintain the look of the farm.

Objective #2.3: Renovation or redevelopment in the Historic District should be undertaken consistent with the pedestrian orientation and scale of the village and the character of its existing building stock.

Since the 2008 Re-examination Report, a Washington Street sidewalk project was completed adding a new section of sidewalk (and, in parts, decorative retaining walls at high-sloped properties) to the northern side of Washington Street. The funding for this project came primarily from a NJDOT Local Aid grant that was supplemented by a Borough appropriation. Pedestrians can now safely walk from the eastern end of Rocky Hill abutting the Delaware and Raritan Canal Park to a connecting Montgomery Township sidewalk and then on to the Route 206/CR 518 intersection where public transit (bus stop)

is available. The southern side of Washington Street has a sidewalk from the Montgomery Township Princeton North Shopping Center to only Panicaro Park.

Objective #2.4: Traffic calming road improvements should be undertaken in a manner consistent with the historic character of the village.

Delaware & Raritan Canal Bridge 2016-2017

The eastern border of the Borough of Rocky Hill abuts the State Delaware & Raritan (D&R) Canal Park so, while the State rebuilt the structurally deficient (see below) Canal Bridge over the course of nearly a year, traffic on Washington Street was substantially reduced. The community business loss due to the lack of through traffic caused layoffs and the loss of our local pottery studio. This recent experience with diminished traffic demonstrates that although traffic through the Borough is problematic for residents, it is advantageous for local businesses. Accordingly, the methods used in future traffic calming plans need to address both apparently conflicting goals.

According to the NJDOT FY2016 Transportation Capital Program, the CR 518 (Georgetown-Franklin Rd.) Bridge over the D&R Canal required “emergency superstructure replacement and substructure rehabilitation.” The Technical Memorandum 2 (November 2011) to the Somerset County Circulation Master Plan stated in Table 2.17.2-2 that this same bridge was “Structurally Deficient.”

According to NJDOT, “The \$2.75 million state-funded reconstruction was much-needed for the 67-year-old bridge, which was originally constructed in 1950. The project was necessary because of severe deterioration of the support beams.” The bridge was closed from July 2016 to May 2017 during which time Creosote was discovered in the ground along the water near the project and required remediation.

Finishing details of the construction project included the installation of updated pedestrian crossing signs and reflective crosswalk paint at the point where the D&R canal trail crosses CR 518. These improvements increase drivers' awareness of pedestrians and bikers utilizing the canal path.

Millstone River Bridge 2017

While the State-owned canal bridge was closed on CR 518, Somerset County did some ordinary maintenance on the CR 518 County-owned Bridge over the Millstone River.

2014-2015 Beautification Grant

As part of continuing efforts for traffic calming (mentioned in the 2008 Re-exam), this beautification project introduced elements such as accented, colored, patterned concrete; improved handicap accessible crosswalks; street furniture; and one flashing light assisted crosswalk. These features were incorporated to accentuate the Borough center and to begin to establish pedestrian priorities in the Borough's business core. Improving the pedestrian

experience along the street corridor is the first step in an effort that should ultimately calm vehicular traffic through town and make the Borough center more pedestrian friendly. The funding for this project came primarily from a NJDOT Local Aid grant that was supplemented by a Borough appropriation.

New Speed Display Board

The Borough added a new smaller speed display board when the canal bridge was closed so that traffic diverted from Washington Street to the narrower Crescent Avenue would be more aware of its speed. Since the bridge was reopened, the sign has been moved to various locations around the Borough.

Rocky Hill Signage

Since the 2008 Re-examination Report, the Borough of Rocky Hill refurbished the Municipal Building sign and the Welcome to Rocky Hill road signs. Since the project was completed, the nearby municipalities have also installed larger, more visible signs at their entry points.

Utility Infrastructure Improvements

PSEG, after power losses due to 2012 Hurricane Sandy, improved its energy grid by repairing and replacing substations, installing taller utility poles, and adding pole-attached solar panels. Although the new higher utility poles are not aesthetically pleasing, the maintenance of power to the community and public safety interests need to be considered in evaluating their contribution to the Borough. The Borough is now served by Xfinity(Comcast) and Verizon FIOS for high speed internet TV, and digital voice: other New Jersey municipalities have only one provider since Verizon FIOS is not offered statewide.

Goal 3: Provide Areas for Nonresidential Development and Redevelopment

Objective #3.1: *Commercial uses should be limited to the business districts.*

The sale of the VO zone to the County as additional parkland removed a potentially important future ratable from the Borough's tax base. Coupled with increasing costs associated with an aging infrastructure and ongoing municipal management responsibilities, it is becoming increasingly more important for the Borough to consider a financial strategy that will help to stabilize the Borough's future tax base. Accordingly, it may no longer be prudent to limit commercial uses to the existing business district.

Objective #3.2: *New or redeveloped commercial uses in existing commercial zones and bordering or near residential neighborhoods should be developed in a manner that protects adjacent properties from the potential negative impacts associated with nonresidential land uses.*

The Planning Board at its April 16, 2015 meeting granted a use variance to the property at 10 Princeton Avenue to have a financial investment company replace the architectural firm that had been operating at that location. Although this property is in the R-2 Village Residential area, the commercial use is long standing. Built in 1870 as a Methodist Church, the building at times was a movie theater, factory, and warehouse; it is commonly referred to as Lyric Hall. The former owner had restored the exterior of the structure (RH National Registry of Historic Places Application classified the structure as Contributing), and the new owner's interior renovations did not affect the exterior architectural elements. The Board viewed the use variance to be in keeping with the Master Plan since the use did not intrude negatively on the residential district and did not significantly affect traffic or parking conditions in the area. The financial services firm is a low impact commercial use.

Goal 4: Expand Opportunities for the Open Space and Recreation Needs of the Community

Objective #4.1: Additional active and passive recreation should be provided in strategic locations to meet local needs.

At the time of the 2008 Re-examination Report, 91.67-acre Van Horne Park was still being completed. The park now includes 1.25-mile path loop, three Lacrosse fields, two softball fields, two basketball courts, Bocce courts, playground, picnic/pavilion area, gazebo, and restroom facility. The park is limited to 25% active recreation facilities so that the natural woodlands and meadows can be preserved (See Appendix, **Figure 5**). The County of Somerset recently purchased a 10.9-acre addition to the park that will be discussed later in this report.

The Borough's commitment to open space is documented by **Figure 6** in the Appendix which shows that approximately one-third of the Borough is in dedicated open space.

In 2011, the Borough constructed a 9/11 Memorial Meditation Garden area in Panicaró Park. Although the project was undertaken as a memorial, its proximity to CR 605-Crescent Avenue makes it, in part, a residential gateway element from the River Road entrance to Rocky Hill. The memorial presents Panicaró Park as a park rather than an empty field, since the playground area is not yet visible to vehicles traveling north on Crescent Avenue.

Objective #4.2: Open space should be preserved in order to promote a system of "greenways" along the river and to connect larger open space and recreation areas.

The 27.5-mile loop Millstone Valley Scenic Byway passes through the Borough of Rocky Hill incorporating Montgomery Avenue, portions of Washington Street (CR 518), Reeve Road, portions of Crescent Avenue (CR 605), and Kingston Road (See Appendix, **Figure 7** and **Figure 8**).

The NJDOT installed a number of colorful Millstone Valley Scenic Byway street signs in Rocky Hill. In October of 2009 the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway was designated a "National Scenic Highway" by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). New Jersey

is part of the National Scenic Byway program which was established in 1991 through the Intermodal Transportation Efficiency Act and recognizes transportation corridors with regionally outstanding significance and scenic, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational, and natural qualities.

The goals of the Scenic Byway program are to improve the quality of the byways, provide quality locations for recreational endeavors, expand public awareness of the corridors and foster state and local partnerships with the federal government. The importance of the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway as a regional resource encompassing natural, historic and cultural assets was noted in Somerset County's Circulation Plan. These efforts are intended to help manage growth and protect the Byway's assets and resources while "spurring tourism, recreation and economic benefits for the area." (*Making Connections, Somerset County's Circulation Plan Update, November 2011, p. 36*)

Objective #4.3: Pedestrian linkage between the village and open space or recreation areas should be encouraged.

When Van Horne Park opened, the Princeton Avenue vehicular and pedestrian access to the Park was offset from Hickory Court because the park did not include the residential lot on the west side of Princeton Avenue that is across from Hickory Court. The Borough negotiated with the property owner to lay a small section of asphalt to connect the pedestrian entrance to a spot where a crosswalk could be delineated to the existing sidewalk on the eastern side of Princeton Avenue at the Hickory Court intersection. Given that Princeton Avenue connects through a small section of Montgomery Township to Princeton Township and another access point to US Route 206, the traffic on Princeton Avenue, especially at rush hours, makes the need for a safe pedestrian crossing even more crucial and the new demarked crosswalk addresses that public safety concern.

The Crescent Avenue pedestrian link to Van Horne Park recently became unusable. The Borough had negotiated an easement along the western side of the Princeton Industrial Park to connect Van Horne Park to Crescent Avenue. The originally designed connection through wetlands has not been maintained and now there is no pedestrian access to the park from Crescent. Considering the density of the residential neighborhood in this area, this situation impacts many residents. The Borough should work to restore pedestrian access from Crescent Avenue, either by designing a maintenance-free, wetlands-sensitive pathway or re-negotiating the maintenance agreement for Van Horne Park to include this accessway on the easement.

Goal 5: Encourage Beneficial Intergovernmental Relationships

Objective #5.1: Establishing and enhancing relationships with the two adjoining municipalities could benefit each community, help in meeting overall community planning goals, and aid in the resolution of land use issues of joint concern

At the time of the Master Plan and the 2008 Re-examination Report, the Borough of Rocky Hill and the Township of Montgomery had a joint agreement for sewer treatment and

maintenance of Van Horne Park. Snow removal, recycling, street repair (even of Borough roads) has been provided by agreement with the County of Somerset.

Since the 2008 Re-examination Report, Rocky Hill has entered into agreements with Montgomery to provide Health Services and Animal Control Services for the Borough. In addition, the Borough now has an agreement with the Township of Franklin for supplemental traffic policing; the State Police continue to provide primary police services for the Borough.

Objective #5.2: Consideration should be given to continued participation in the state planning process. Seeking cooperation from the State Planning Commission may provide increased priority for funding projects such as traffic calming plans and other transportation improvements and open space preservation.

The 2008 Re-examination Report noted that the Borough had lost its status as a Designated Center of the State Plan. Through a series of extensions requested by the Office of State Planning, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 5:85-7.21, the Borough continues to have that designation even though the State does not current have a fully constituted State Planning Commission.

The current draft of the State's Proposed Final Strategic Plan issued by the State Planning Commission (see: <http://www.nj.gov/state/planning/spc-state-plan.html>) contains the following comment on center designation:

“While center-based development was, and remains, a preferred development pattern of the State Plan, the regulatory process that was created to “designate” centers failed to recognize that centers exist regardless of whether they are designated. Further complicating matters is that existing regulations include a sunset provision for center designation. The result is that many true centers around the State are not currently designated as such.

“Current State Planning Rules require that centers are designated through a complex and expensive process known as “Plan Endorsement.” The intention of Plan Endorsement was to provide private and public development projects in designated centers a streamlined regulatory path and preference for funding for such things as infrastructure. These benefits, however, have not truly materialized. To date, only 17 municipalities and three “regions” have approved petitions. Stakeholder input suggested a minimum cost of \$100,000 to receive Plan Endorsement with costs in some cases escalating to over \$300,000. State funding previously available to offset some of this expense is no longer available.

“Engaged local government feedback in response to a recent OPA survey (*see Supporting Document D*) shows a clear commitment to good planning yet reluctance to participate in Plan Endorsement due to the time, complexity and expense of the process.”

Until such time as the State's Planning Commission is re-constituted in full, the Borough should maintain its center designation through formal extensions. If and when the State Planning Commission reconvenes and re-establishes a strategic planning process, the Borough should assess the cost effectiveness and potential benefits of undertaking a plan endorsement certification and determine if the State's process would be advantageous to Rocky Hill.

Goal 6: Comply with the constitutional fair housing mandate

Objective #6.1: Maintain COAH credit for the units implemented as part of the Borough's prior round certified affordable housing plan (2 group homes) and cooperate with a sponsor of Special Needs Housing to provide the opportunity for additional housing in the Borough for persons with special needs.

Rocky Hill's prior round approval included certification of two group homes: the Eden House, established in 1996 and the Somerset Arc Group Home established in 2002. Each was subject to a twenty-year affordable housing deed restriction. The Borough's initial Round Three approval included plans to expand these facilities in exchange for renewing the deed restrictions. Unfortunately, the Eden House suffered a devastating fire in early 2018 and the group home's administrators have not yet indicated whether or not they will rebuild. The Somerset ARC Group Home still operates on Young Drive, although the Borough no longer has funds with which to underwrite an expansion. Therefore, once the deed restriction for the Somerset ARC Group Home has expired, this facility will cease to be a part of the Borough's affordable housing plan. The Eden House deed restriction expired in 2016.

Objective #6.2: Provide opportunities for new affordable housing to be constructed in the Borough as part of an accessory apartment program.

In the ten years since the Borough's accessory apartment ordinance was adopted, there has been no interest in the program and no accessory apartments have been developed. Therefore, the Borough now assumes that this is not a viable alternative for generating affordable housing in Rocky Hill.

Objective #6.3: Provide funding for residential rehabilitation in the Borough.

Under the current assumptions regarding municipal affordable housing obligations presented by the Fair Share Housing Center, the Borough has satisfied its present need, otherwise known as the residential rehabilitation obligation. Consequently, no funding is required for this component of the Borough's obligation.

Objective #6.4: Comply with applicable fair housing regulations enabling COAH to grant substantive certification to the Borough's fair share plan.

In 2009 the Borough was certified under Round Three. The regulations under which the certification was granted were later nullified by the New Jersey Supreme Court. The

Borough voluntarily participated in the Court's transitional process, filing a Complaint for Declaratory Judgment in accordance with Mount Laurel IV. Though initially the Borough was optimistic that it could develop an affordable housing plan that would both satisfy the Borough's obligation and be compatible with the character of the Town, circumstances changed and the prospects for an acceptable plan seemed to dissipate. At that point the Borough of Rocky Hill withdrew from the Declaratory Action to pursue affordable housing planning independent of the judiciary. A builders' remedy suit was filed shortly thereafter. Presently the Borough is in the process of responding to that lawsuit.

Goal 7: Comply with NJDEP Stormwater regulations and best practices

Objective #7.1: Reduce flood damage, including damage to life and property.

Any flooding that might impact the Borough will occur along the Millstone River, Van Horn Brook and their tributaries (See Appendix, **Figure 1**). In general, the flood prone areas are confined to the stream corridors by steep slopes that separate the waterways from adjacent development. Local and state regulations do not permit development in the floodway. Protecting the floodways from development minimizes damage to property and preserves the capacity of the stream corridor to contain high volumes of storm runoff.

Objective #7.2: Minimize, to the extent practical, any increase in stormwater runoff from any new development.

New development within the Borough is required to manage all increases in the rate of stormwater runoff from the site. It is not permissible to increase the rate of runoff from a site nor substantially change the direction of stormwater flow from a site. When appropriate, applicants are required to submit plans and applications to the State Department of Environmental Protection where State stormwater regulations govern. Applications which disturb five thousand square feet or more require review by Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission (DRCC) and are conditioned upon a review and approval by that agency.

Due to the size of the lots in the Borough, stormwater management is generally performed using subsurface stormwater controls such as seepage pits and drainage trenches which restrict the outflow to acceptable peak flows. When new construction is proposed, every effort is made to avoid increasing the rate of stormwater flow to roadways, neighboring properties, and the existing storm sewer system.

Objective #7.3: Reduce soil erosion from any development or construction project.

All development applications and construction projects exceeding five thousand square feet require review and approval by the Somerset Union Soil Conservation District to insure all necessary soil erosion mitigation techniques are employed to reduce and control soil erosion.

Objective #7.4: *Assure the adequacy of existing and proposed culverts and bridges, and other instream structures.*

The D&R Canal Bridge was recently reconstructed by the State to eliminate the structural deficiencies of this bridge. The Millstone River Bridge is a county structure that was repaired during the shutdown of the DRCC Bridge in 2016-17. Local culverts are maintained on an ongoing basis as the need arises.

Objective #7.5: *Maintain groundwater recharge.*

Within the Borough, the preference is to minimize impervious cover and discourage development proposals that exceed lot coverage limits. This is the best way to maintain pervious cover and thereby protect groundwater recharge. The use of pervious pavement is a recommended best management practice by New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection when the construction of parking lots and sidewalks cannot be avoided. When used in place of impervious pavements, pervious systems improve groundwater recharge. Proper maintenance of pervious pavement is essential.

When onsite stormwater storage is required, vegetated drainage swales, detention basins and rain gardens are recommended. In some cases, seepage pits and subsurface drainage are unavoidable though these mechanisms are not preferred. While they help to recharge groundwater, underground drainage facilities lose their effectiveness over time when deposits of debris and soil, carried by the surface water, are captured by the device. Units of this type only remain effective when they are properly maintained; however, maintaining a facility built below the ground is more difficult than surface facilities like basins, ponds and swales.

Objective #7.6: *Prevent, to the greatest extent feasible, an increase in nonpoint source pollution.*

Nonpoint source pollution is minimized by encouraging the use of vegetated swales and stormwater basins. When these types of stormwater management systems are in place, waterborne pollutants are effectively contained on site. The long retention times that these devices employ cause pollutants, suspended in the runoff, to drop out of the water and settle to the bottom of the facility. Solids deposited on the bottom of the facility are then further filtered through root systems of surrounding vegetation and the underlying soils. This type of stormwater management is also known as a bioretention. Whenever possible, the runoff from new impervious cover should be directed through a bioretention system. These systems are also known as biofilters.

Objective #7.7: *Maintain the integrity of stream channels for their biological functions, as well as for drainage.*

Local ordinances and State statutes prohibit, in most cases, the placement of new developments within the floodplains of local streams. This helps to maintain and promote healthy floodways so that they can continue to function to moderate the stormwater runoff

from storms that are increasing in both intensity and frequency. However, increased storm activity in recent years is taking a noticeable toll on stream channels despite the Borough's efforts to limit nearby development. More proactive efforts may be required to stabilize the channels of local rivers and streams in the near future.

Objective #7.8: Minimize pollutants in stormwater from new and existing development to restore, enhance, and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the waters of the state, to protect public health, to safeguard fish and aquatic life and scenic and ecological values and to enhance the domestic, municipal, recreational, industrial, and other uses of water.

The Borough will minimize installation of new impervious cover, encourage the use of pervious pavement, and require adequate on-site stormwater management systems. The cumulative impact of these efforts will help to enhance the integrity of local waterways and protect the viability of the stream corridor ecosystem.

Objective #7.9: Protect public safety through the proper design and operation of stormwater basins.

Most development in Rocky Hill is fairly limited and stormwater basins are not required often. When they are, best management practices are used to insure proper design and maintenance. Care is taken to insure basins are as shallow as good engineering will allow with side slopes that are safe and not too steep. However, it is most important that they drain efficiently and effectively to avoid standing water, which creates other problems including conditions suitable for unwanted mosquito breeding.

IV. Current Circumstances and New Planning Policies

This section will address the requirements set forth in paragraphs “c” and “d” of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89:

c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.

d. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.

The previous section addressed what has happened in the Borough of Rocky Hill since the 2008 Re-examination Report in relation to the goals and objections as set forth in the Master Plan. Such an analysis has its limitations because it does not allow for cross-cutting issues that affect, or are affected by, more than one goal or objective. Further, such an analysis does not lend itself to considering the underlying or external factors that must be addressed in order to provide a firm foundation for land use planning. In this section of the report, the analysis will consider the major internal and external driving forces that will need to be examined for potential benefits or possible conflicts. Included in each topic will be an assessment of present conditions, potential impacts of known future events, and recommendations for future improvements.

1. Preservation and Stewardship: Historic Preservation and Open Space

1.1 Background: Changes in State and Somerset County Policies and Objectives

In November 2014, nearly two-thirds of the votes cast in that State-wide election approved a constitutional amendment dedicating 6% of the Corporation Business Tax revenue from 2016 to 2045 for open space, farmland, and historic preservation. The implementing legislation, *Preserve New Jersey Act* (N.J.S.A. 13:8C43, *et seq.*) signed on June 30, 2016, mirrored current land use planning concerns that preservation must be partnered with active stewardship:

N.J.S.A. 13:18C-44(2)(a): Enhancing the quality of life of the citizens of New Jersey is a paramount policy of the State, and the acquisition, preservation, and stewardship of open space, farmland, and historic properties in New Jersey protect and enhance the character and beauty of the State and provide its citizens with greater opportunities for recreation, relaxation, and education;”

N.J.S.A. 13:18C-45: “Stewardship activity” means an activity, which is beyond routine operations and maintenance, undertaken by the State, a local government unit, or a qualifying tax exempt nonprofit organization to repair, or restore lands acquired or developed for recreation and conservation purposes for the purpose of enhancing or protecting those lands for recreation and conservation purposes.

The 2017 Green Acres Program listing of grants included stewardship projects for the first time:

“For the first time, the Preserve New Jersey Act established funding for stewardship activities by local governments and nonprofit organizations on lands held for public recreation and conservation purposes... In developing this new funding program, Green Acres solicited input from local governments, nonprofits, and natural resource professionals. Based on these discussions, Green Acres decided to focus the limited Stewardship funds on natural resource and conservation projects and not active recreation facilities. Stewardship grants are in the form of a 50% matching grant for most local projects and all nonprofit projects.”

Source: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Green Acres Program, 2017, *Grants and Loans to Local Governments and Nonprofit Organizations for Open Space Acquisition, Park Development, and Stewardship Projects*

Somerset County is presently updating the 2008 Farmland Preservation Plan and the 2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan components of the County Master Plan. In addition, Somerset County is creating the first county Historic Preservation Plan in the country. These three standalone reports will be published as one document with the goal of maximizing the synergy of these related land use elements. In addition to providing land use, funding, and partnership strategies for preservation in Somerset County, this Plan will also identify linkages between the three programs related to duality of uses, economic development, natural resource conservation, and tourism. At a January 2018 Somerset County public hearing on the Somerset County Preservation Plan, members of the public addressing the County’s consultants and freeholders asked that the County’s stewardship responsibilities be included in the plan: they remarked that the County had an excellent record of preserving lands, but the County needed to actively manage the lands through appropriate signage and efforts to curtail invasive flora and fauna.

In conclusion, the New Jersey constitutional amendment, the implementing of State legislation, and Somerset County’s planning initiatives are changes in State and County policy that this Re-examination Report must address. These State and County efforts to treat open space, farmland and historic properties in an integrated manner, as well as to include stewardship of preserved areas as both an objective and a basis for funding, fully complement the Borough’s local objectives. The Borough should adopt a similarly integrated approach to planning when it comes to open space and historic properties.

1.2 Borough of Rocky Hill: Planning Assets and Potential Improvements

With its considerable local resources, the Borough of Rocky Hill could be a model or microcosm of the State’s and Somerset County’s new integrated approach toward preserved spaces/properties. The Borough’s adjacency to Delaware and Raritan (D&R) Canal State Park (See Appendix, **Figure 9**) is one of the Town’s underappreciated nearby open space assets. Within the Borough, the Historic Preservation District, the Town’s place in the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway, and its considerable parkland acreage provide venues through which to address local stewardship responsibilities and promote eco-tourism and economic development.

1.2.1 Delaware and Raritan (D&R) Canal State Park

Although Franklin Township is our municipal neighbor, the eastern border of the Borough of Rocky Hill is the Millstone River which abuts the D&R Canal State Park, a State-owned park in Franklin Township. The D&R Canal Commission responsible for the park produced a Master Plan in 1989 with principles, goals, and objectives including the following principle:

“The Canal Park is a connector.

“Nearly every principle and objective held by the Canal Commission for the development of the Canal Park is derived from the Commission’s understanding of the peculiar shape of the park. The Canal Park is over sixty miles long, yet in places is less than 100 feet wide. A park with this configuration is usually referred to as a linear park, meaning that it is narrow and long like a line. The Commission believes that the most important quality possessed by a linear park is the role it can perform as a connector. The canal was, of course, originally built to serve as a connector; it connected the two great metropolises that neighbor New Jersey – New York City and Philadelphia. The Canal Park does not connect these cities, but it does connect communities in central New Jersey; it connects different land forms and different kinds of natural areas; it connects historic and recreational sites; and it connects present-day New Jersey with its nineteenth century heritage.”

Source: http://www.dandrcanal.com/pdf/DRCC_MasterPlan_2ndEd_1989.pdf

With a few infrastructure improvements Rocky Hill could build on the above-stated D&R Canal Commission’s principle of connecting communities. With improvements to the Borough’s circulation plan, the Borough’s streets and byways can be made more appealing for pedestrians and bicyclists to stop at town businesses. Throughout the length of the D&R Canal Park, both pedestrians and bicyclists need to leave the towpath to cross roads such as CR 518 that intrude on the towpath. A number of those crossings are not in populated areas or close to restaurants. The view from the towpath crossing at CR 518 can be seen in the photograph in the Appendix, **Figure 10**. For those on the towpath and unfamiliar with the area, the Borough of Rocky Hill and its amenities are not clearly apparent, so either stopping by when crossing or coming back later with their vehicles is not likely.

In addition, the connectivity between the D&R Canal Park and the Rocky Hill town center falls short. The County bridge over the Millstone River is barely visible as a bridge to those crossing CR 518 to continue on the towpath. The County bridge has a sidewalk (actually just a poured concrete slab – see Appendix, **Figures 11 and 12**) leading into Rocky Hill only on the northern side of CR 518; the southern side of the bridge has only a guardrail and no sidewalk. On the Franklin Township/D&R Canal side of the County bridge, there is a sidewalk in disrepair that connects the D&R Canal Park parking lot to the County bridge: it is unclear if that section of the sidewalk was placed there by the County, the D&R Canal Commission or Franklin Township. Further, most vehicle drivers entering Rocky Hill through the CR 518/CR 603 intersection are likely unaware that they are passing through a State park or going over two bridges and entering a town center.

An infrastructure improvement that would not only encourage towpath users to stop in Rocky Hill, but also assist in traffic calming by making the entrance to a populated area more visible, is a redesign of the Somerset County bridge guardrails as a new and enhanced gateway element. Please note that the recommendation is for a replacement of the guardrails, not the bridge itself; repaving of CR 518 is under consideration by Somerset County for 2019 and the guardrail improvement project could be done at the same time. In addition, it's worth noting that speed limits east of the Borough are greater than 35 mph and without a significant gateway element, motorists have no warning that they are leaving sparsely populated areas and entering the village center until they are well within the Borough limits. **Figure 10** in the Appendix to this report presents examples of design alternatives that the Borough could pursue with Somerset County to redesign their bridge over the Millstone River.

At the County Preservation Plan hearing mentioned earlier, it was noted that the County has some 40 bridges which could be used in the County's eco-tourism initiative to give an identity to Somerset County in its efforts to highlight historic sites. A complaint expressed at the hearing was that tourists go from Princeton to Morris County on Revolutionary War site pilgrimages, traveling through Somerset County, but not stopping at the Somerset County locations because they are not as well known. The 2011 Somerset County Public Works Handbook specifies that "...The use of aesthetic treatments (tinted concrete, concrete form liners, stone facing, landscaping) shall be considered in the design of bridges."

The Appendix of this Report includes examples of enhanced bridges that could create an effective gateway. The first two sample alternatives presented in **Figure 13** in the Appendix were selected as homage to Rocky Hill's terracotta works. Further, a combination of decorative concrete and metal railings would provide better visual access to the Millstone River with vertical elements, rather than the present horizontal elements (See Appendix, **Figures 8 and 9**) that obscure the watershed areas. The third photograph in **Figure 13** is the Talmage Avenue Bridge in Bound Brook that had a bridge railing replacement in 2007: the railing replacement added faux gaslights that could be a design element appropriate for Rocky Hill, whose historic housing stock is dated from the middle of the nineteenth century through the early twentieth century.

The second infrastructure improvement that would encourage towpath users to have lunch in town would be the availability of bicycle racks where cyclists could lock up their bikes and tour the town. **Figure 14** of the Appendix shows a possible location for a number of bicycle racks, not intrusive to the viewscape or to property owners abutting Panicaro Park but located near the towpath and just off the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway. Green Acres, the funding source for Panicaro Park, allows parking areas. There are a number of State and county grants for biking and scenic byways so the cost to the Borough could be financed by a grant. A combined sidewalk/bike path, also known as a sidepath, would provide a valuable new link to both the MVSB and the local circulation system. This would have the added benefit of completing a pedestrian circulation system for nearby residents in Montgomery townhouse developments, who could walk from their Blue Spring Road neighborhoods just outside Rocky Hill to the canal's towpath via Crescent Avenue.

The Washington Street Beautification Project (See Objective #2.4 above) contained funds to upgrade the intersections to handicapped accessible (HA) standards. The existing crosswalk from the northern side of Washington Street to the southern side (at Crescent Avenue—eastern end) that went from sidewalk to sidewalk was “decommissioned” for lack of sufficient space to upgrade to HA standards on the northern side and a new HA upgraded crosswalk was placed on the Washington/Crescent corner of Panicaro Park.

The L-shaped piece of concrete with red stability inserts is orphaned on a corner (See Appendix, **Figure 15**) where neither the eastern side of Crescent Avenue nor the southern side of Washington has a sidewalk. The County snow plows usually use the area for snow piling because it cannot see any sidewalks. The lack of continuity through this intersection means that cycling from Van Horn Park to the D&R Canal is cumbersome and dangerous. Diverting bicyclists to a more visible sidepath at an official crosswalk would be a public safety improvement.

Washington Street (CR 518) is a high traffic road that effectively bifurcates the northern and southern parts of the Borough. To help pedestrians and cyclists overcome this divide, a sidepath connecting at least the Park Avenue sidewalk to the orphaned intersection should be considered.

Since the Somerset County bridge does not have a sidewalk on the southern side of CR 518, it would be helpful to continue the sidepath on the Washington Street side of Panicaro Park. However, a sidepath on the Washington Street side of Panicaro Park, with a sitting wall (See Appendix, **Figure 16**), would serve as a traffic-calming gateway element by giving visual importance to the site while providing some public seating area for cyclists and pedestrian alike. Possible sources for grant funding are Somerset County, Green Acres (Panicao Park was originally funded by Green Acres), NJDOT Scenic Byway funding, and the NJDOT Bikeway Grant Program

1.2.2 Historic Preservation District

The Historic Preservation District of Rocky Hill extends almost the entire length of Washington Street. Washington Street is also known as the Georgetown-Franklin Turnpike (CR 518) whose authorization as a turnpike occurred on February 16, 1816, making even our main thoroughfare an historic road. The Historic Preservation District also encompasses all of Crescent Avenue, Reeve Road, Kingston Road and Skillman Avenue as well as portions of Princeton Avenue and Montgomery Avenue (See Appendix, **Figure 4**). Although not in the overlay Historic Preservation District, the Rocky Hill Cemetery was incorporated in 1858 and is the final resting place for veterans from the Civil War onward, as well as famous local historic persons such as Thomas J. Skillman, a Borough benefactor.

Whether by happenstance or design (through the historic preservation ordinance), a good portion the housing stock (even those whose “bones” are covered by “modern” siding materials) in the historic preservation district date to the late nineteenth century and early

twentieth century. These historic homes as a group and the “village” parts of the Borough were granted both National and State historic designations in 1982. In 2022, the fortieth anniversary of the designations will occur: January 14, 2022 for the State designation and July 8, 2022 for the federal designation.

Through the years, the Rocky Hill Historic Preservation District has been the site of various events with walking tours of the district. Architecture tourism has become very popular in recent years as a local economic asset. A number of projects undertaken since the 2008 Re-examination Report have provided an excellent start for making the Borough more pedestrian friendly. The light-assisted crosswalk at the Princeton Avenue/Washington Street intersection soon to be partnered by a light-assisted crosswalk at the Montgomery Avenue/Washington Street intersection form a village center pedestrian safety zone that, with a few more capital improvements, could complete the pedestrian circulation system.

Given that Rocky Hill has an historic district, is part of the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway, and abuts the D&R Canal Park, there are various State and County funds supporting such areas that may be available to the Borough. The Somerset County consultants working on the above-mentioned County master plan reports noted that “edge properties” are of particular interest in their endeavors. An edge property is one that borders on more than one interest area. An example would be the parcel in the VO zone recently purchased by the County as an addition to Van Horne Park – that property was part of a farm, is nestled in a historic district, and is being added to our open space inventory. In some ways, Rocky Hill having been originally settled as a farming community, having an historic district, and having a third of its land in open space, could be considered a “edge” town. The Borough has an opportunity to capitalize on this. The multifunctional potential of sites within the Borough should be considered when framing and developing local planning policies.

There are some properties in the historic district that need tending. Although there are no known sources for owner-occupied housing assistance, there is a federal rebate for income producing properties. There is a 20% federal tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic properties that will be used for a business or other income-producing purpose, where a "substantial" amount is spent on rehabilitating the historic building's appearance. Rehabilitation work has to meet the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation](#), as determined by the National Park Service. A local economic development committee could be instrumental in helping to capitalize on such programs if the Borough Council would establish such a committee.

See: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/before-you-apply.htm>

In addition, a number of the commercial buildings in Rocky Hill are historic properties. The multifamily at 7 Princeton Avenue was the first Borough hall, Voorhees Hall, when Rocky Hill separated from Montgomery Township in 1890. The commercial building at 125-127 Washington Street was the Lewis General Store. The multifamily at 182 Washington Street was the Williamson & Griggs General Store. The commercial building at 53 Crescent Avenue was Smalley's Garage and the Borough's first auto dealership

selling Star and Durant cars. All of these buildings are noteworthy and deserving of attention.

The Borough of Rocky Hill recently learned that the Somerset County Library Commission has decided to move its branch, which has been located in Rocky Hill since 1974, to a site in Montgomery Township in 2020. The building presently housing the county branch library is owned by a nonprofit whose plans for the building are still under discussion. The site is presently zoned as Community Land which reflects the library use of the property. The loss of the library will significantly impact the dynamics of the Borough's land use plan. Consideration must be given to mitigating this loss to the community. Without the library, the zoning should be changed to best serve the future needs of the Borough.

1.2.3 Millstone Valley Scenic Byway (MVSb)

Rocky Hill's historic preservation district is one of eleven distinct historic villages that are located directly along the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway (MVSb) route (See Appendix, **Figures 8 and 19**). The MVSb was designated in 2001 as a New Jersey Scenic Byway. In 2009, the Byway was given the prestigious designation of a National Scenic Byway, part of the Federal Highway Administration's "America's Byways Program." The MVSb was recognized for its scenic, natural, historical, recreational and archaeological qualities. The MVSb is one of only two National Scenic Byways in the State of New Jersey. Both NJDOT and Somerset County have specific standards for roads and bridges along the path of scenic byways. As a result of the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway's national designation, Rocky Hill will now need to adhere to changes in federal, State and County regulations regarding scenic byways. However, being part of the nationally designated scenic byway provides access to national, State, and County funding opportunities for scenic byways projects.

The August 2008 *Millstone Valley Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan* prepared by NJDOT and the Millstone Preservation Coalition was subtitled *Preserving and Enhancing New Jersey's Spine of Open Space and History*. This document presents findings from a comprehensive analysis of the Byway and its adjacent communities. The Plan offers overall guidelines for preservation of the Byway, along with specific recommendations for improvement. Rocky Hill Borough endorsed this Plan and its results at the time of its publication in 2008; nearly one decade later, the findings and recommendations remain in line with the goals of Rocky Hill's master plan. One recommendation from the Corridor Management Plan, that the Borough has yet to implement, is to officially "adopt the corridor boundary" by recognizing the Byway route on the Borough's official map. When the Zoning Map is updated the MVSb delineations should be included.

The MVSb Corridor Management Plan outlines the following five comprehensive management strategies:

- Preserve the Byway's significant resources (i.e., structures, historic homes),
- Maintain and enhance the Byway's green roadside corridor,
- Learn more about the Byway's special qualities,

- Promote the Byway's natural and heritage resources, and
- Work collaboratively to manage the Byway over time.

The potential improvements mentioned in the D&R Canal section attract and service both pedestrians and bicyclists and are relevant to the MVSB since the byway path goes along both Washington Street and Crescent Avenue.

There are many historic sites and historic districts in Somerset County so sometimes that which makes Rocky Hill special is lost on the 10,000 plus vehicles that pass through on a daily basis, and even some property owners that find the preservation ordinance troublesome. However, it's often said, to see oneself, one needs a mirror. The following comments about Rocky Hill from materials on the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway are illuminating:

"A mile north of Rockingham, at the intersection with Washington Street, is the reconstructed foundation of the Rocky Hill bridge tender's house and a parking area providing access to the canal and the northern end of the Rocky Hill Branch Loop Trail.

"Nascent Rocky Hill village began about 1712 as Europeans began slowly settling along the Millstone River, which powered their early mills. But it took the coming of the D&R canal and later the railroad to spur the village's strongest growth. But as a decline in Rocky Hill's industrial base took place around the turn of the century, its growth came nearly to a halt. For that reason, the village appears today much as it did a century ago.

"Although only scant remains exist, the area where Washington Street crosses the Millstone River into Rocky Hill was once filled with industrial works including various mills, an engine house, railroad station, lumber yard, and a sash and blind factory. Today the only obvious remnant of the once sprawling mill complex is the pottery shop of John Shedd Designs, which offers magnificent ceramics and custom jewelry."

Source: *All Along the Byway* by Robert Koppenhaver
<http://www.njskylands.com/tour-millstone-scenic-byway>

"Today Rocky Hill is a charming example of a 19th-century village, where visitors can see many architectural styles, including Federal, Greek Revival, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Carpenter Gothic, Italianate, and Bungalow. Travelers in 1748 called it Rockhill, because it was covered with rocks so big it took three men to roll them!

Source: *Millstone Valley Scenic Byway* brochure
www.state.nj.us/transportation/community/scenic/pdf/millstonerivervalley.pdf

1.2.4 Rocky Hill Open Space/Parklands

A. Signage

There are 397 acres in the Borough of Rocky Hill of which 139 acres are in dedicated open space or parkland. As mentioned above, Somerset County has purchased nearly 11 acres adjacent to Van Horne Park. This additional acreage is proposed to be added to the CL zone (See Appendix, **Figure 4**). Although Van Horne Park is actively managed jointly by the Borough of Rocky Hill and the Township of Montgomery and has some signage and parking facilities, the Borough's other parks have minimal maintenance and no signage.

Reflecting the new State and Somerset County policies for an integrated approach for preserved lands and more active stewardship, existing signage in Van Horne Park and the new recommended signage in Millstone River Park and Panicaro Park should reflect an historic context by including information on Philip Van Horne, an American Revolutionary figure (See Appendix, **Figure 20**) and George Panicaro, a local resident who gave his life in World War II.

The Millstone River Park's recommended signage should mention something about the role the Millstone River played in the development of Rocky Hill, first as an agricultural area, or its later role in the D&R Canal industries. By 1860, Rocky Hill had a gristmill, a sawmill, and a woolen mill. At the turn of the 20TH century, the old brick factory became the Excelsior Terra Cotta factory. The signage should highlight this history.¹

In addition to "tagging" signage that names parks, other signage that recognizes adjacent private properties should be considered. For example, although the 2001 Master Plan recommended that a greenbelt for the Millstone River Park be completed by purchasing the river front property of the owners at the eastern end of Washington Street, those properties are still in private ownership and probably will remain so for a variety of reasons. Accordingly, to discourage trespass, the Borough should place signs at the eastern and western ends of the park adjoining private properties (See Appendix, **Figure 17**) stating "Private Property Ahead."

B. Bordering Properties

The Borough of Rocky Hill is a relatively small municipality that has created open space/parkland around private residences. Accordingly, as the Borough takes its active management or stewardship responsibilities for open space and parkland beyond the mere preservation of the land, the Borough must be sensitive to nearby private residences when developing municipal improvements or combatting invasive flora and fauna.

Both Panicaro Park (See Appendix, **Figure 14**) and Millstone River Park (See Appendix, **Figure 17**) are configured around private in-holding, easements, and residences. The new

¹ The State Green Acres Open Space inventory refers to it as Millstone Park. But since the park is on the Millstone River, the Millstone River Park seems a more appropriate name.

Van Horne Park addition, especially with its access to Washington Street, is situated in the middle of a residential/historic preservation zone (See Appendix, **Figure 18**). Part of the Borough's stewardship responsibilities for open space is to ensure that the open space/parklands are delineated sufficiently to minimize trespass on the abutting residential properties.

Millstone Park has an in-holding residence and an entry easement granted by the Borough and acknowledged by NJDEP State property officials. If the Borough were to decide to build a public parking lot in Millstone River Park, then appropriate landscaping would be required to protect both the residence and the easement. Likewise, a bicycle rack or parking area in Panicaro Park needs appropriate landscaping to protect the rights of adjacent property owners and the Trinity Church.

The new Van Horne Park addition, roughly shown on **Figure 18** in the appendix, is nestled between the Knoll Way townhouse development and another section of the existing Van Horne Park. However, the "staff" segment of the flag lot is between two existing residences in the Historic District and borders a few others. Since the "staff" will be the only access to Washington Street from the Van Horne Park and it intersects Washington Street at a point that is highly congested, the park entrance should be for a pedestrians and bicyclists only. Even as parkland, the property needs an effective buffer to protect the neighboring properties from trespass.

The ongoing Somerset County Preservation Plan initiatives hope to highlight "edge" properties. This VO parcel, as a former farm, open space, and part of the historic preservation district, is a true "edge" property whose passive use as a heritage garden or other similar use will be a respite area away from the active recreation areas in Van Horne Park. The Borough should partner with Somerset County in making this nearly 11-acre property into a model for "edge" properties.

Van Horne Park by leasehold agreement must maintain 75% of its area as passive use space, allowing appreciation of the natural features of the land that include the deciduous wooded wetlands along the Van Horne Brook tributary, flowered meadows, indigenous fauna such as deer, foxes and several species of birds. Also, given that a sizeable portion of the park is in the Airport Safety Zone, visitors are treated to seeing small aircraft take off and land. There is, however, no "scenic overlook" area where pedestrians and bicyclists could sit and look out over this bucolic scene. A comprehensive viewshed analysis of all of the Borough's parks should be done to identify appropriate areas for effective overlooks. When people have specific places from which they can appreciate nature, they are less likely to venture out and develop trails on their own. As a result, these overlooks will indirectly help to protect the Borough's natural resources, while at the same time promoting some respect for the natural environment.

C. Master Plan and Development Regulations Considerations

The zoning map should be revised and the development regulations should be amended to delete the VO zone. Land use planning in the 21st century is becoming map driven so

database systems must be accurate. Much of NJDEP and NJDOT are using their GIS systems as bases for analyses and recommendations. If Somerset County does not add this parcel to the State's GIS inventory of open space, then the Borough must relate this addition to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection.

The last Open Space Plan amendment to the Master Plan was done in February 2004. The Borough should review the Open Space Plan to ensure that it is still relevant considering the changes in State and County Open Space policies.

1.3 Conclusion: Preserved Spaces/Properties

The Borough of Rocky Hill is not only a traffic nexus, but also a preservation nexus. Access to the D&R Canal Park is an asset; but being in the D&R Canal Commission's governed areas is an additional jurisdictional restriction to development. The Millstone Valley Scenic Byway runs through Rocky Hill and brings tourists and increased traffic; being a part of MVSB also adds another layer of infrastructure review and standards.

Having both national and State historic preservation status for the Rocky Hill village center is an honor that other municipalities in Somerset County are actively seeking. However, keeping those designations is a responsibility that the Borough in general and the Rocky Hill Planning Board in particular takes seriously but strives continually to enforce thoughtfully as the protected housing stock in the village ages and historic preservation becomes even more costly to homeowners.

Rocky Hill is fortunate to have and to be part of a network of preserved spaces and properties: these assets must be a part of any future development discussion.

2. Circulation: Traffic and Gateways

2.1 Traffic Volumes and Perceived Problems

Rocky Hill is a regional traffic nexus in that traffic from Laurel Avenue (CR 603) adds to the traffic coming from Franklin Township on CR 518 to enter Rocky Hill. River Road (CR 605) and Princeton Avenue traffic feed Crescent Avenue to join with CR 518 (Washington Street) at Crescent Avenue's western end. Both traffic flows join and make the section of Washington Street from the western Crescent Avenue egress to the CR518/US 206 intersection the highest trafficked area of CR 518 in Somerset County (See Appendix, **Figure 3** and **21**).

The New Jersey Department of Transportation does periodic traffic counts at specific mile posts. The data for Rocky Hill is from 2012 and 2015 and is the data used in the NJDOT GIS map system. Given that the D&R Canal Bridge was closed for nearly a year in 2016-2017, NJDOT would not have done other reports in that timeframe.

The data on **Figure 21** show that in 2012 Franklin Township CR 518 (Mile Post 18.03) had average weekday traffic of about 7,000 vehicles (eastbound and westbound total), about 15% non-cars. The eastern segment of Washington Street (Mile post 17.18) during approximately the same period had an average 11,000 vehicles (EB and WB total), a gain fed by Canal Road and Laurel Avenue.

The western segment of Washington Street (Mile Post 16.97) had an average of over 13,000 vehicles (EB and WB total), a gain fed by River Road and Princeton Avenue flowing into Crescent Avenue. The average daily traffic on CR 518 in Montgomery Township after the 518/206 intersection at Mile Post 14.26 dropped back to the 11,000-vehicle volume.

In light of all this traffic and in response to a newly proposed 300,000 square foot shopping center in Montgomery Township, the Somerset County Circulation Plan calls for a loop-road system in Montgomery Township to divert traffic from the 518/206 intersection just west of the Borough. (See Appendix, **Figure 22**) How that new loop road, if built, will affect Rocky Hill is, as yet, undetermined but, like so much development that has happened in the last twenty-five years, this is another example of how intense development that occurs outside Rocky Hill exacerbates the traffic volumes that pass through it.

The high traffic volumes on CR 518, which bisects the Borough's Historic Center, is a major detriment to the residential nature of the Borough. Noise, air pollution, and pedestrian and biker safety are all concerns, especially when the relatively high truck traffic is accounted for. The small business district is also adversely impacted, as business patrons attempt to navigate the bad traffic conditions, especially during rush hour.

Another in-town rush-hour congestion point in Rocky Hill is the intersection of Washington Street and Montgomery Avenue, which has become a *de facto* loop road for motorists avoiding the 518/206 intersection. As mentioned above, the projected change in the 206/518 intersection, especially the loop road for eastbound CR 518 traffic, will probably substantially increase the traffic on Montgomery Avenue. Further, Montgomery Avenue is a part of the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway path, and this cut-through traffic does not enhance the scenic qualities of the Byway. In fact, it detracts from the Byway's appeal.

The reconfiguration of the US206/CR518 intersection traffic patterns would have required a cooperative effort of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, the County of Somerset, and the Township of Montgomery since the intersection is that of a State road and a County road. Given that CR518 is one of the few east-west roads in central New Jersey, solving Rocky Hill's traffic problems will likewise require a regional, multi-jurisdictional solution.

2.2 Potential Traffic Flow and Safety Solutions

Several points outlined in the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan apply to easing the impact of traffic in Rocky Hill. One specific guideline is to implement gateway treatments to enhance the visual appeal of the community. Using gateway treatments would increase driver awareness upon entering the residential zones of Rocky Hill on CR 518, thus reducing traffic speed and increasing safety.

MVSB recommended implementing gateway treatments to enhance the visual appeal of the community. This is especially important at the eastern entrance to Rocky Hill on CR 518. The Borough should prioritize a gateway enhancement to increase the visibility of the eastern entrance to the Borough, as recommended in the MVSB corridor report, and should seek support for the idea from the County. The Borough owns Washington Street frontage property on both the

northern and southern sides of CR 518 (See Appendix, **Figure 21**). Although these properties are in flood plains, some environmentally sensitive gateway treatment is possible, starting with a much larger Welcome to Rocky Hill signage element and some decorative bridge enhancements.

As recommended in the D&R Canal Park above section of this report, the construction of a sidepath extending to the three-way stop at River Rd. and Crescent Ave. will also provide the roadway character enhancements recommended in the MVSB corridor report.

Visual enhancements are also needed at the northern gateway to Rocky Hill on Montgomery near the Toth Lane intersection. Updated elements should include a “Welcome to Rocky Hill” sign at least as large as the surrounding communities’ welcome signage. This would increase awareness of Rocky Hill’s residential neighborhood along Montgomery Avenue, as well as satisfy the MVSB recommendation to visually enhance this portion of the Byway.

The Corridor Management Plan highlighted the intersection treatment at Washington Street and Montgomery Ave. as a good practice for other Byway communities to use as a model for roadway character enhancement and traffic calming, although that characterization is now questionable. The history of the intersection is this. It was redesigned as a result of the 1999 Somerset County traffic calming study. Rocky Hill’s 2001 Master Plan Circulation Plan element recommended Rocky Hill’s endorsing the MVSB assuming that there would be “a potential modest increase in future traffic.” However, while the Circulation Plan was done in 2001, the Corridor Management Plan wasn’t issued until August 2008.

Given the additional housing and commercial developments that sprung up in surrounding communities since those reports were issued, rush hour traffic congestion at that intersection has become much worse and now backs traffic up to the Borough Hall. Perhaps another analysis of that particular intersection in light of current and anticipated traffic patterns is in order. A new traffic light at this intersection could alleviate some of the problem. Similarly, closing Reeve Road to northbound traffic might also help. State and County agencies interested in the design and the funding for infrastructure improvements may be able to provide some assistance since Rocky Hill is part of the MVSB.

The MVSB report also issued several specific locations in Rocky Hill where improvements would enhance the character of the Byway. The Borough agrees with these recommendations:

Location	Suggested Treatment
Washington St. between Montgomery Ave. and the eastern intersection with Crescent Ave.	Village Preservation
Montgomery Ave. between Toth Ln. (south) and Toth Ln. (north)	Visual Enhancements
Southeast gateway on River Rd. approaching Rocky Hill from the south	Roadway Character Enhancements

East gateway on County Rd. 518/Intersection with Canal Rd.	Roadway Character Enhancements
--	--------------------------------

In addition, the intersection of CR 518 and Canal Rd, which is part of Rocky Hill’s eastern gateway, was cited in the report as a high accident incident area. Between 2003 and 2005 there were 18 accidents, 10 of which caused injury, and none of which resulted in fatality. No accidents involved pedestrians.

The report offered additional suggestions for highway safety along the Byway:

- Improve the efficiency of Route 206 to relieve pressure on River Road. This would presumably relieve pressure on other roads through Rocky Hill, as well.
- Keep roadway widths narrow to limit speed along the Byway. Similar recommendations are outlined for intersections.
- Impose traffic size and/or weight limits, specifically on River Rd and Canal Rd. While a size/weight restriction may not be feasible for CR 518 (Washington St.), this type of limitation would certainly enhance the character of the Borough.

3. Waterways, Floodplains, and Public Water

Historically, the borders of geopolitical entities often coincide with waterways. As is seen in **Figure 1** of the Appendix, the southern and eastern boundaries of the Borough of Rocky Hill are along the paths of the Millstone River and the Van Horne Brook and their tributaries. A number of properties in Rocky Hill have portions of their parcels in the floodplains of these waterways.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is currently revising the Flood Insurance Rate Maps for New Jersey. As of this date, FEMA has yet to update Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for Somerset County. However, preliminary data suggest that the new FIRM for the Borough should not be substantially different. In December 2016, the Borough of Rocky Hill repealed and replaced Article XII, Flood Damage Protection, Chapter 80, Development Regulations, of the Code of Rocky Hill to conform to a NJDEP flood damage prevention model ordinance and to adopt the November 4, 2016 Flood Insurance Study and Insurance Rate Map (See Appendix, **Figure 2**).

The October 2018 draft DMA 2000 Somerset County Hazard Mitigation Plan update included in Section 9.18 the following natural hazard risk/vulnerability risk assessment table for the Borough of Rocky Hill:

9.18.4 NATURAL HAZARD RISK/VULNERABILITY RISK RANKING

The table below summarizes the vulnerability risk rankings of potential hazards affecting Rocky Hill Borough (updated in 2018).

Natural Hazard Risk/Vulnerability Risk Ranking				
Hazard type	Estimate of Potential Dollar Losses to Structures Vulnerable to the Hazard ^{a, c}	Probability of Occurrence	Risk Ranking Score (Probability x Impact)	Hazard Ranking ^b
Flood	1% Annual Chance: \$800,000 0.2% Annual Chance: \$1,300,000	Frequent	18	Medium
Severe Storm	100-Year MRP: \$124,796 500-Year MRP: \$568,954 Annualized Loss: \$4,828	Frequent	39	High
Severe Winter Storm	1% of GBS: \$1,151,330 5% of GBS: \$5,756,650	Frequent	27	Medium
Earthquake	500-Year MRP: \$184,516 2,500-Year MRP: \$2,741,855 Annualized Loss: \$2,833	Occasional	12	Low
Drought	Not available	Occasional	16	Medium
Extreme Temperature	Not available	Frequent	27	Medium
Wildfire	Not available	Occasional	28	Medium

Note

- Building damage ratio estimates based on FEMA 386-2 (August 2001)
- The valuation of general building stock and loss estimates was based on custom inventory for Somerset County.
- High = Total hazard priority risk ranking score of 31 and above
Medium = Total hazard priority risk ranking of 15-30
Low = Total hazard risk ranking below 15
- Loss estimates for the severe storm and severe winter storm hazards are structural values only and do not include the value of contents.
- Loss estimates for the flood and earthquake hazards represent both structure and contents.
- The HAZUS-MH earthquake model results are reported by Census Tract.

As the table above shows, in Rocky Hill the natural hazard risk is highest for severe storms and that risk is greatest for the properties in the floodplains. The State of New Jersey established a program entitled Blue Acres that purchases flood-prone properties (including structures), especially those that have flooded repeatedly. Once acquired by the State, the buildings will be demolished and the land will be permanently preserved as open space and serve as natural buffers against future storms and floods. The Blue Acres program has prioritized residences over commercial properties for buyback. This program is beneficial to the property owners, however, local municipalities could lose ratables and potentially, historic properties.

With respect to public water, the Borough's water system is near capacity. While usage fluctuates, the average daily usage in the Borough is approximately 80,000 gallons per day. The system's capacity is approximately 90,000 gallons per day. For future growth, the Borough may need to explore other sources of water.

Given the prevalence of floodplains and wetlands in the Borough as well as local storm damage experiences, the Planning Board must strictly adhere to all NJDEP regulations and best practices in any future development approvals.

4. Municipal Land Use/Tax Base

The purpose of the land use portion of any town's master plan or re-examination report is to integrate the individual planning policies of the municipality with a land use plan that will fulfill the town's goals and objectives. This Re-Examination Report has already described detailed policies for important issues such as retaining and enhancing the residential character of the Borough, preserving historic resources, reducing the impact of vehicular traffic through town, restoring pedestrian priorities, and managing stormwater and other infrastructure systems.

More than any of Rocky Hill's previous master plan documents, this report strives to demonstrate how much more effective the Borough's planning efforts can be if planning policies are pursued in tandem with one another. For instance, preserving historic resources can improve the town's residential character and quality of life and at the same time enhance local economic viability. Likewise, expanding pedestrian connectivity between open space areas and the downtown will create benefits for both business owners and recreational users in Rocky Hill. Reducing vehicular traffic and implementing effective traffic calming techniques will ultimately improve both pedestrian and bicycle circulation while also improving the quality of life in residential neighborhoods and shopping experiences in the downtown.

4.1 A Recent Evolution in Land Use Planning for Rocky Hill

Rocky Hill's 2008 Re-Examination Report indicated that "no major or fundamental changes..." were required. To an extent, this major tenet remains true; no *major* or *fundamental* changes are necessary at this time. However, it is also true that a successful future for Rocky Hill will require more change than was previously thought necessary. Despite all the things that make Rocky Hill a wonderful and special place to live, it's become apparent that some local issues are beginning to adversely impact the community in ways that many residents and the Planning Board cannot ignore.

Because of increased development in the towns surrounding Rocky Hill, regional and commuter traffic through town is intensifying. More than 10,000 cars per day travel through Rocky Hill. This type of traffic does not contribute positively to the Borough. In general, these pass-through vehicles are not stopping to shop in Rocky Hill's stores or slowing down to enjoy the Borough's charm. Just the opposite, this regional traffic is taking its toll on the community, minimizing the quality of life on residential properties and threatening the economic success of the business sector. The Borough needs local traffic that will support the Town's businesses, instead of regional traffic that just passes through.

The Borough's aging infrastructure is another local issue that is adversely impacting life in the community with things like water main breaks that are costly to taxpayers or inadequate parking facilities that create problems for the downtown area. These are critical issues that the Borough must begin to address. And to the extent that local land use policies can be used to create a path

toward resolving these issues, this Re-Examination Report must include land use policies that help eliminate the problems and improve the community's quality of life.

4.2 Community Survey

Rocky Hill is a small town that hasn't seen much change, surrounded by larger communities that are changing rapidly. At a time when circumstances now require Rocky Hill residents to consider some measure of change to maintain the Borough's idyllic character, a recent 2018 community survey generated interesting results. Not surprisingly, most respondents like Rocky Hill "just the way it is." That opinion is fairly evenly split between those who live in the center of town and those who live in the newer, less historic residential neighborhoods around the business district. However, of the respondents who indicated that they do not like the Borough "just the way it is," the vast majority, by a margin of more than 2:1, live in the center of town rather than in the periphery. Reasonable speculation suggests that downtown traffic and parking problems may be the source of much of this discontent.

Regardless of where they reside, most respondents identified open space and walkability as characteristics of the community that are most important to the experience of living in Rocky Hill. This reflects a commonly expressed sentiment that the Borough has a quaint, small town feel. But as unified as respondents were on open space and walkability, they were highly divided over the future of the business district and this division seemed to be mirrored in the opinions of the Borough's Planning Board members as well.

4.3 The Business District

Whether to stabilize the tax base or improve the quality of life in Rocky Hill, there is some growing interest in the idea of enhancing the Borough's downtown area, though no single proposal has overwhelming support in the community or on the Planning Board. During Planning Board discussions about the business district, several possible alternatives were considered including:

- Rezone some of the larger lots in town from residential to commercial,
- Expand the business zone along Washington Street between Princeton Avenue and Montgomery Avenue,
- Expand the business district east of Princeton Avenue to the firehouse and One53, and
- Connect the business district to the Millstone River, capitalizing on the Borough's waterfront and establishing some watercraft service to stimulate more interest in the business district.

Despite some heartfelt thought and deliberation, the Planning Board continues to have a variety of opinions on the subject, ranging from those who advocated for maintaining the status quo to those who prefer significant expansion of the business zone. Some of the reasons expressed for preserving the status quo were:

- A lack of adequate parking to serve the area,
- Under-sized lots that cannot accommodate commercial development,

- Vehicular traffic that makes the area dangerous for pedestrians, and
- A need to preserve historic structures.

Those who favor expanding the business district cited:

- A desire to have a more interesting and vibrant collection of businesses,
- A belief that a critical mass of businesses will increase the customer base for all businesses, thus improving the look, feel and functionality of the entire business district,
- More pedestrian activity will function as a form of traffic calming and
- The local tax base needs more highly valued ratables.

Currently the community and the Planning Board have a wide range of opinions on the subject of the future of the downtown business district. About the only thing that seems apparent is that perspectives are evolving. Even those who want ‘no change’ also want *some* change, at least in terms of reducing traffic and improving parking. In 2008 the planning policy for the business district focused on aesthetic improvements to the village center, like street trees, street lighting and street furniture. Today, a growing part of the community thinks the Borough’s business center needs something more than visual enhancements. Some are beginning to think the downtown needs more stores and a more vibrant collection of shops to both serve the community and stabilize the tax base. Others just want to see less traffic clogging Washington Street. Either way, there is a growing desire to see functional changes in the downtown area and not simply aesthetic improvements like those advocated for in 2008.

Recognizing this evolution, the Planning Board ultimately came together on a few new planning objectives that everyone could agree on. For instance, the Planning Board agrees that the loss of the VO zone as a potential ratable has substantially altered the complexion of the Borough’s future land use plan and potentially its tax base. Also, regional traffic has become so overwhelming that it now affects the quality of life in town in a negative way for both residents and business owners. Lastly, the Planning Board agrees that no substantive changes should be made to the zoning of the downtown business district near Princeton Avenue until after the Borough implements plans that will fix the local parking problems.

4.4 Commercial Zoning

In an effort to respond to the need for a more stable tax base, given the loss of the VO zone and increasing expenses associated providing services within the Borough, there are a few zoning changes that the Planning Board recommends for areas outside the current business district. These changes will begin to address those problems that threaten the Borough’s future and also respond to the growing sentiment within the community for some measure of change.

1. On the west end of Washington Street, in the area of Young Drive and west of Merritt Lane, the Borough should develop and implement a new O-1 Office Zone that would permit a wide variety of general and professional office uses.
2. On both sides of Princeton Avenue, in the vicinity of Grove Street, another, less intense office zone, O-2 Office Zone, should be created consistent in character with the use variance already granted to 10 Princeton Avenue. The only office uses permitted in this

new office zone should be those that do not generate a lot of traffic or adverse impacts on surrounding residential properties.

3. The Mary Jacobs Library site on Washington Street, which may cease to exist in its current form if plans for a library in Montgomery Township come to fruition, should be rezoned to B Business, along with the adjacent parcel to the west — the site of the historic Amy Garrett House owned by the Rocky Hill Community Group. This will create a second business node along Washington Street on lots that have the size and/or facilities to handle commercial uses with the associated traffic and parking. This is the only expansion of the B Business Zone that is recommended. Traffic and parking problems along Washington Street near Princeton Avenue make changes to the B Business Zone near the Post Office inappropriate at this time.
4. The VO Zone should be rezoned to CL Community Lands and the Borough's agreement with Montgomery Township over the administration of local parkland should be updated. This zone change proposal is in response to the recent sale of the property to the County.

4.5 Residential Zoning

Residential neighborhoods throughout the Borough are stable. There is virtually no room for new development, save for an isolated lot here and there. The one exception is the 15.7-acre Schafer property on Princeton Avenue, which is currently involved in litigation. With respect to the other residential zones, the Planning Board recommends that the zoning ordinances be revised to reflect existing land use realities. For instance, the R-1A zone, Planned Residential "A", was granted subdivision approval and now no further subdivisions are permitted. Ultimately, this zone will be developed with four single family lots. Consequently, there is no need for the ordinance to permit two family residences, townhouses and rowhomes. Similarly, the R-3 zone is developed with a townhouse development so it would be appropriate to remove single family residences from the list of permitted uses in that zone. In short, the list of permitted uses for the residential zoning districts should be updated to reflect the existing land uses in those districts and so preserve the existing character of the residential zones.

4.6 General Conditions

In addition to the aforementioned rezoning recommendations, there are a few other initiatives that could be undertaken to help fulfil the Borough's overall planning goals and objectives.

Traffic

The Borough's traffic problems are overwhelming. Unfortunately, they are also rooted in circumstances beyond the control and municipal boundary of the Borough. Therefore, Rocky Hill should ask the County and the State to undertake a traffic study to analyze vehicular movements through and around Rocky Hill. Since the vast majority of the offending traffic is regional in nature, stemming from development in surrounding communities and along nearby State Highway 206, only an interjurisdictional study can solve Rocky Hill's problems.

Ultimately, the solution to Rocky Hill's traffic problems may require a northern and southern bypass around the Borough, again an interjurisdictional response. In theory, New Montgomery Road to the north and Blue Spring Road to the south could be extended to Canal Road and Kingston-Rocky Hill Road respectively and those roads could be redesigned to accommodate trucks and commuter traffic currently travelling along Route 518, between Route 206 and Route 1. Bypasses would have the effect of getting Rocky Hill 'out of the way', allowing regional traffic to move through the area more safely and efficiently so that Rocky Hill residents can reclaim the quiet, peaceful, undivided village center they once enjoyed.

Obviously, the Borough of Rocky Hill cannot stop the traffic from coming into town, but there are probably a few things that could be done to control the traffic better. For instance, a traffic light at the intersection of Montgomery Avenue and Washington Street would help to meter traffic through the business district. If synchronized with another light at Washington Street and Princeton Avenue, the Borough may be able to reclaim some pedestrian priorities in the Borough's downtown area which in turn would enhance the business district. But traffic lights and traffic calming techniques can only do so much. Again, an interjurisdictional traffic analysis should identify potential solutions both in and around the Borough.

Parking

Solving the Borough's parking problems will require a multifaceted approach. Rocky Hill does not have one central location where a sizeable community parking lot can be constructed. However, there may be several smaller sites for small, mini parking lots that could be developed with public or shared parking. Collectively, these smaller parking lots would ease the overcrowded on-street parking situation and potentially distribute parking facilities where they are needed. A parking study should be developed to investigate this.

A system of resident parking only near the business district might also help. It could be instituted on selected streets during certain hours of the day when it would be most effective. This way local residents could regain the ability to park in front of their homes. Of course, a resident only parking program will only work if the Borough also amends its law enforcement agreements.

Another suggestion is to re-examine a program that was used in the 1980's when the Princeton Industrial Park provided shared parking to local businesses. The owners of the industrial park use to collect parking rental fees from business owners on Washington Street who leased after hour parking spaces for use by their employees. A similar arrangement might create parking for patrons after hours behind the Post Office or maybe in local church parking lots. Like the proposed mini parking lots, a collection of shared parking agreements may generate a significant number of available parking spaces downtown. The Borough should work with local businesses who need parking and land owners who have parking to help create mutually beneficial agreements. The Borough should also consider establishing a parking bank to help fund parking studies and subsidize the construction of parking lots where there is space for them. The bank would be funded through fees paid by applicants requiring parking variances.

Bed and Breakfasts

Bed and breakfasts are a growing industry and Rocky Hill's quaint historic character and unique proximity to many interesting local attractions makes it a perfect location for these establishments. But the industry is changing with online services such as Air BNB and VRBO. Even so, bed and breakfasts can be beneficial to the community. They attract potential customers for local businesses. They create an incentive for property owners to maintain their properties. Recent changes to State regulations allows towns to collect fees from B&B's. And yet, some establishments, especially those that are not owner occupied, can create conflicts between neighbors. The Borough should consider the changing nature of bed and breakfast establishments and develop a policy and ordinance to regulate them in a manner consistent with the character of the community.

Local Geology

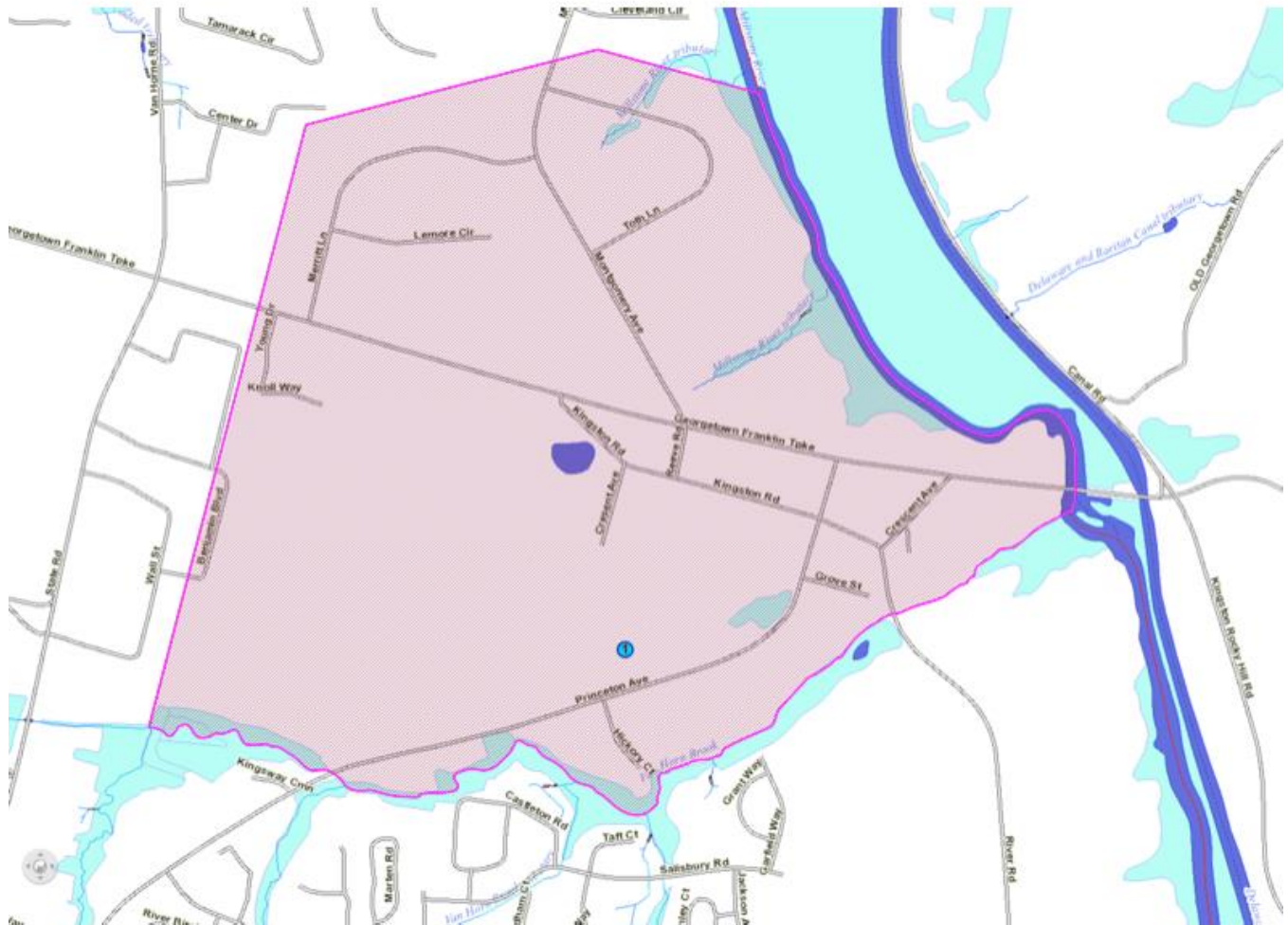
A portion of the Borough is underlain by diabase bedrock geology. This is an exceedingly hard rock formation that cannot be easily excavated. The type of blasting that is required to remove this rock or construct on top of it will most likely cause serious damage to local infrastructure and building foundations. The Borough's water lines date back to 1936 and many of the sewer lines were built in the 1970's. Many of the Town's homes and churches are historic and listed on the National and State Historic Registries. These old structures have old building foundations that are much more vulnerable to blasting than buildings with newer construction. Rocky Hill's old infrastructure systems and structures cannot withstand the degree of vibration that blasting diabase will generate. For the sake of the wellbeing of the Borough, any disturbance of this local rock should be avoided. To the extent that it can, the Borough should institute local regulations to protect the community and its resources from damaged that might be caused by blasting or otherwise disturbing this rock.

V. Redevelopment Policy

The Borough of Rocky Hill is virtually built out and there are no areas of blight or underdeveloped properties. All of the commercial properties contribute positively to the Borough. The industrial park is a thriving commercial center and source of local employment. It is not a candidate for redevelopment. While the Borough should continue to strive to enhance the value of its ratables, there is no apparent need for redevelopment planning.

Appendix

Figure 1
Rocky Hill Waterways



Source: NJ-GeoWeb, map generated on February 14, 2018

Note: The areas shown in light blue above are the Millstone River, Van Horne Brook, and 2012 Wetlands [Agricultural Wetlands (2012 Land Use Code: 2,140) by Princeton Avenue, and Deciduous Wooded Wetlands (2012 Land Use Code: 6,210) and Deciduous Scrub Wetlands (2012 land code: 6,231) along Van Horne Brook and its tributary.

Figure 2 FEMA FLOODPLAIN MAP 11/04/2016

Search Results—Products for **ROCKY HILL, BOROUGH OF**

[Show ALL Products »](#)

The flood map for the selected area is number **34035C0244F**, effective on **11/04/2016** ?

DYNAMIC MAP



PRINT MAP/
FIRMette

MAP IMAGE



DOWNLOAD
FIRM PANEL

Changes to this FIRM ?

- Revisions (0)
- Amendments (0)
- Revalidations (0)

You can choose a new flood map or move the location pin by selecting a different location on the locator map below or by entering a new location in the search field above. NOTE: Please be sure to enable popups for this site.

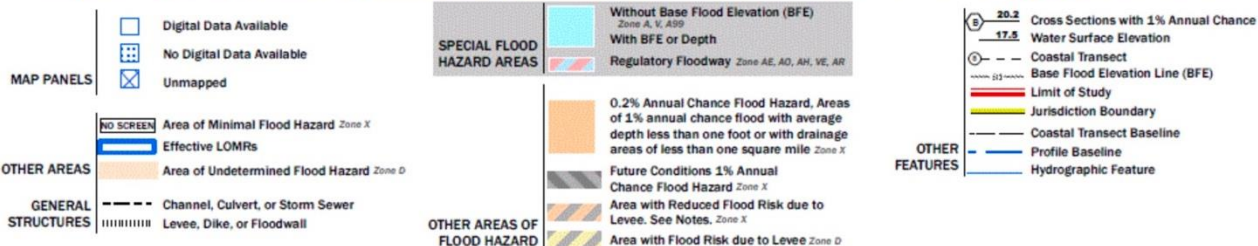
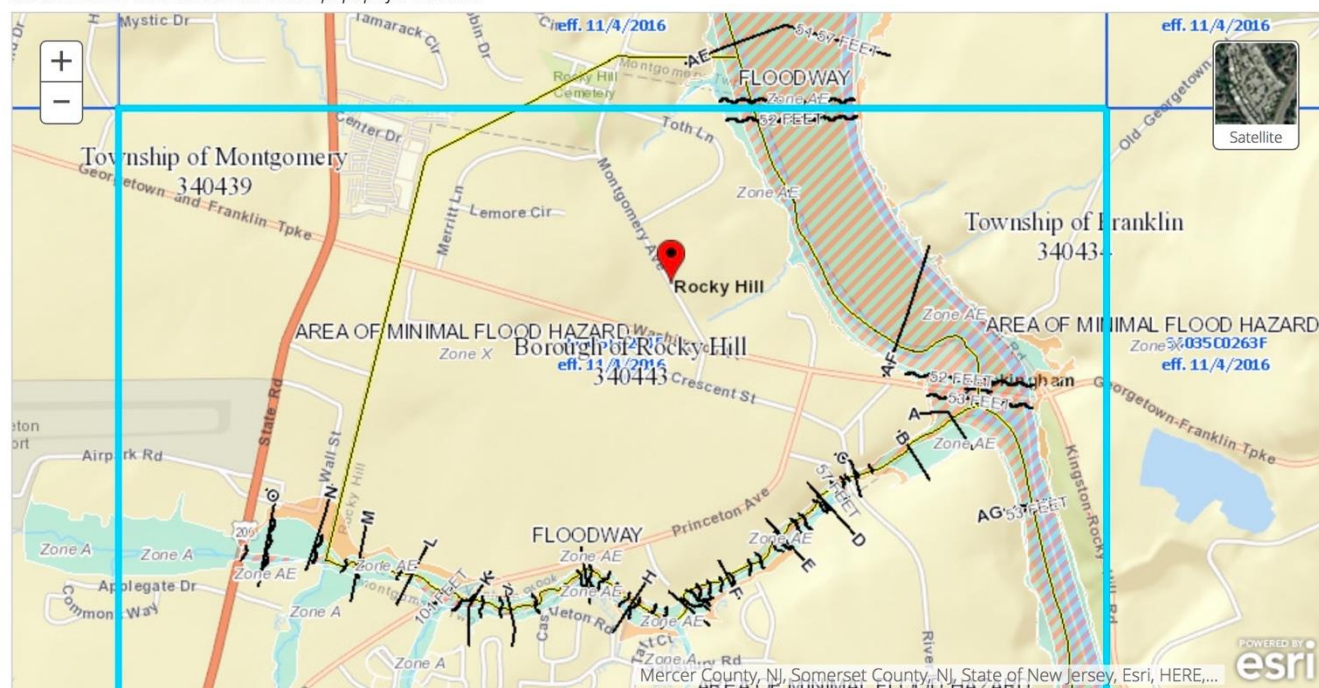
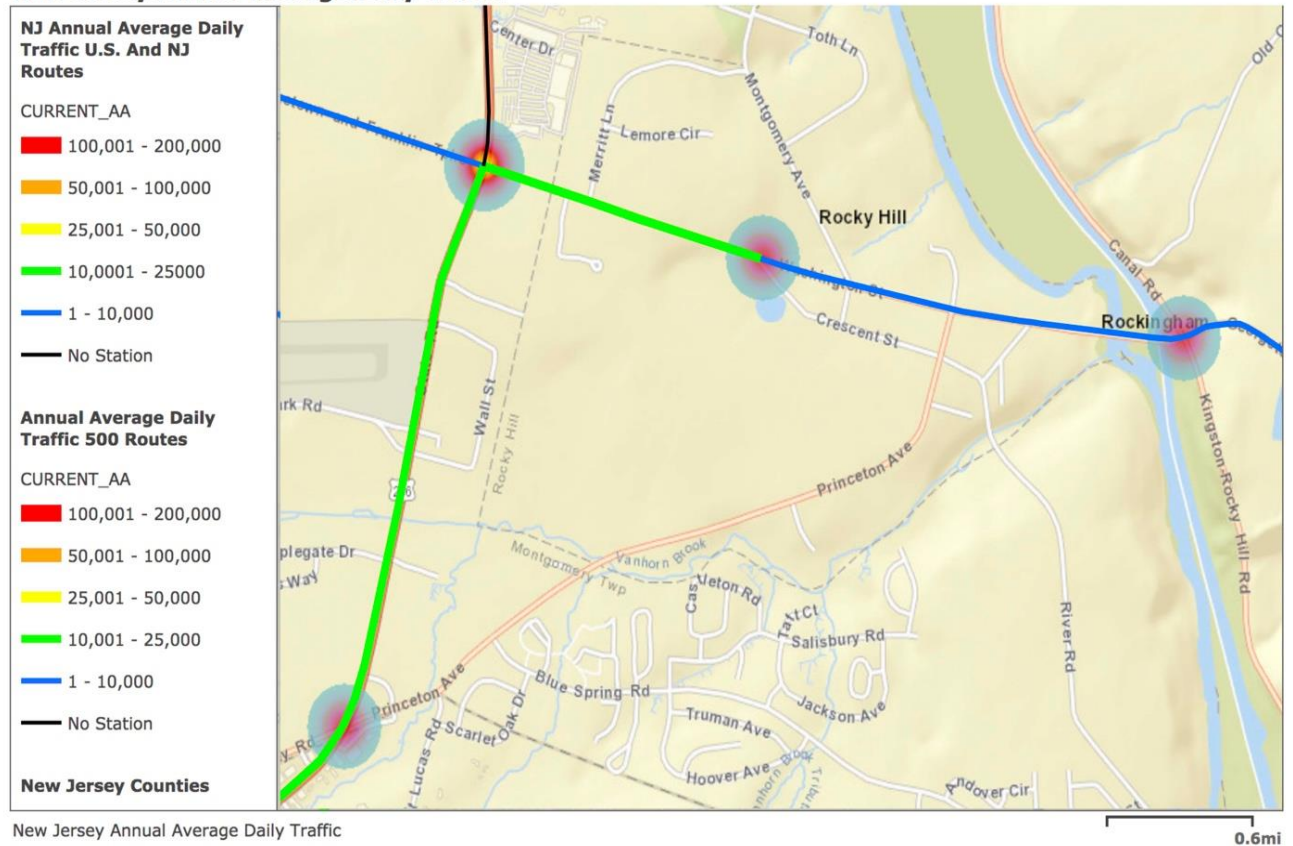


Figure 3
NJDOT Traffic Volume

New Jersey Annual Average Daily Traffic



New Jersey Annual Average Daily Traffic

New Jersey Office of Information Technology (NJGIT), Office of Geographic Information Systems | Mercer County, NJ, Somerset County, NJ, State of New Jersey, Esri, HERE, Garmin, INCREMENT P, NGA, USGS

Note: The circular indicators on the map represent “hot spots” -- showing where additional traffic volume enters the roadway.

Figure 4
Proposed Zoning Map

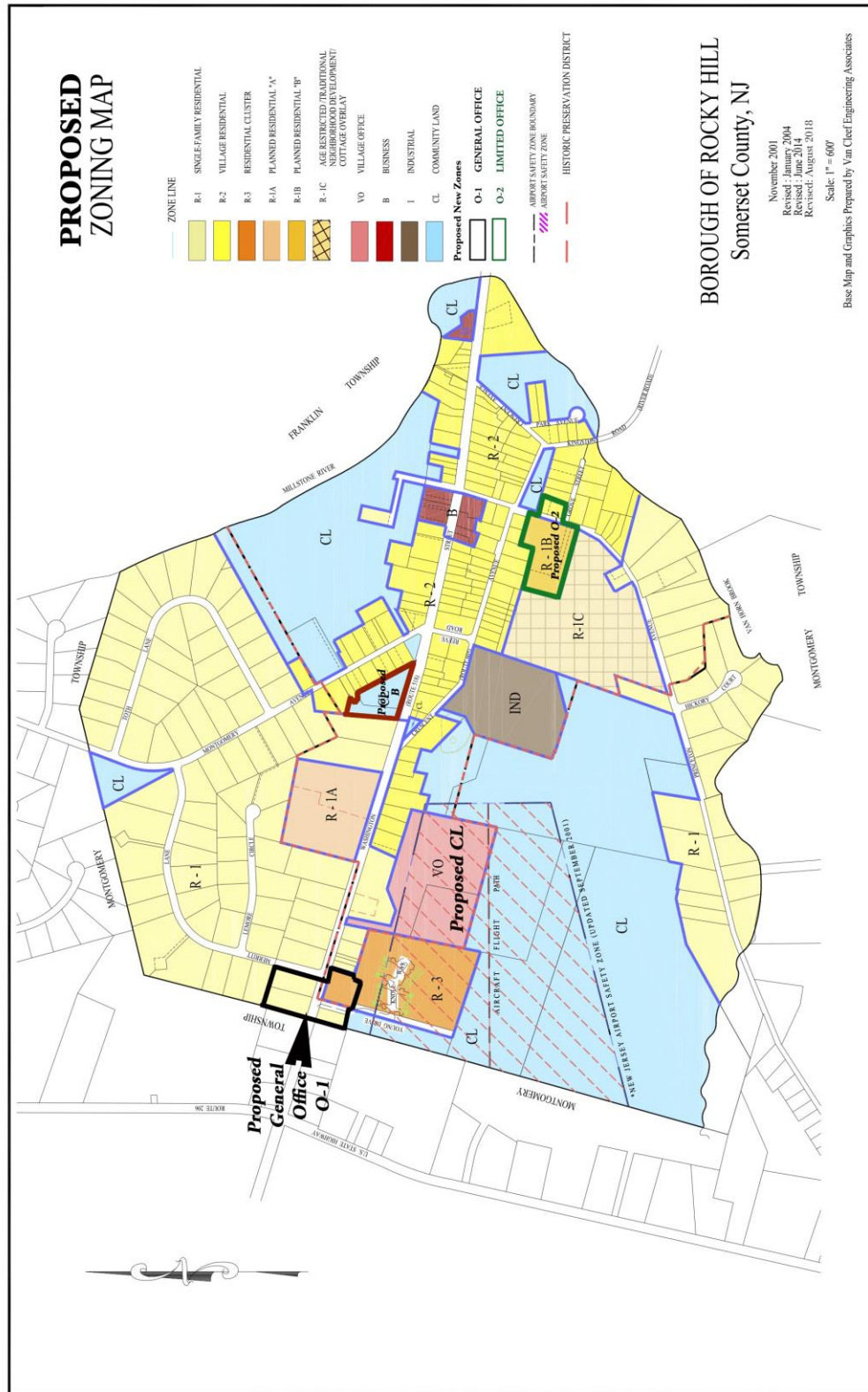


Figure 5
Van Horne Park Facilities

Note: Van Horne Park is primarily located in the Borough of Rocky Hill. Only the portion of land below the blue line (signifying a Van Horne Brook Tributary) in the inset of **Figure 5** is in the Township of Montgomery. Van Horne Park is jointly managed by the two municipalities.

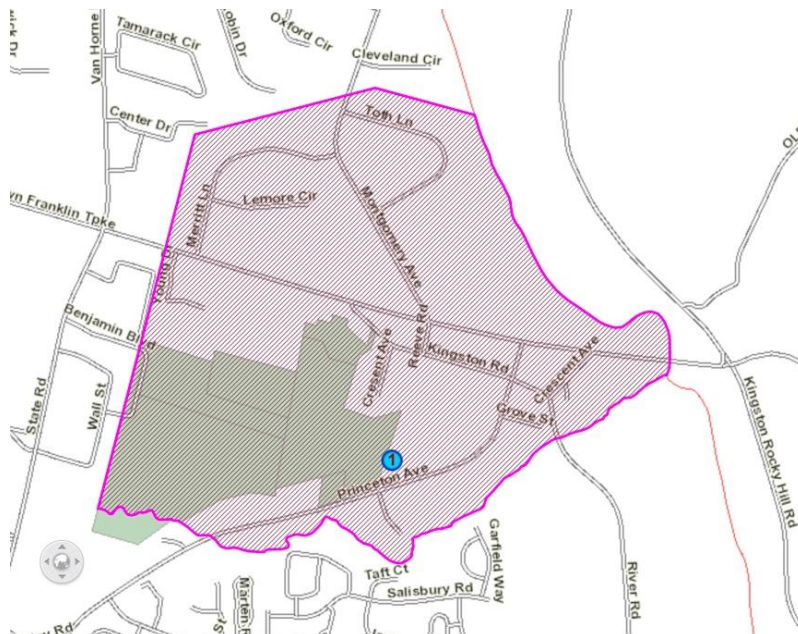
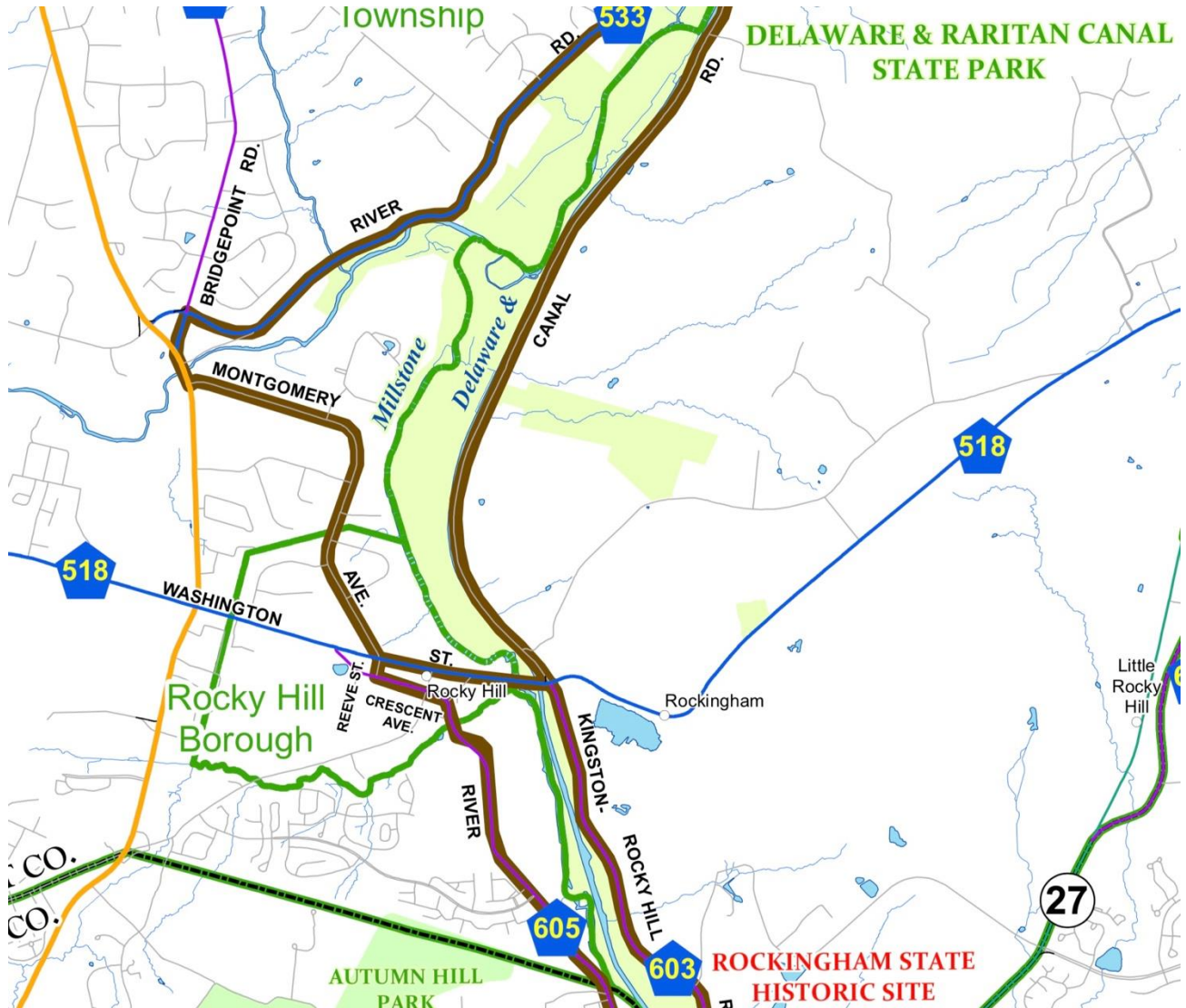


Figure 6
Dedicated Open Space/Community Land
Rocky Hill

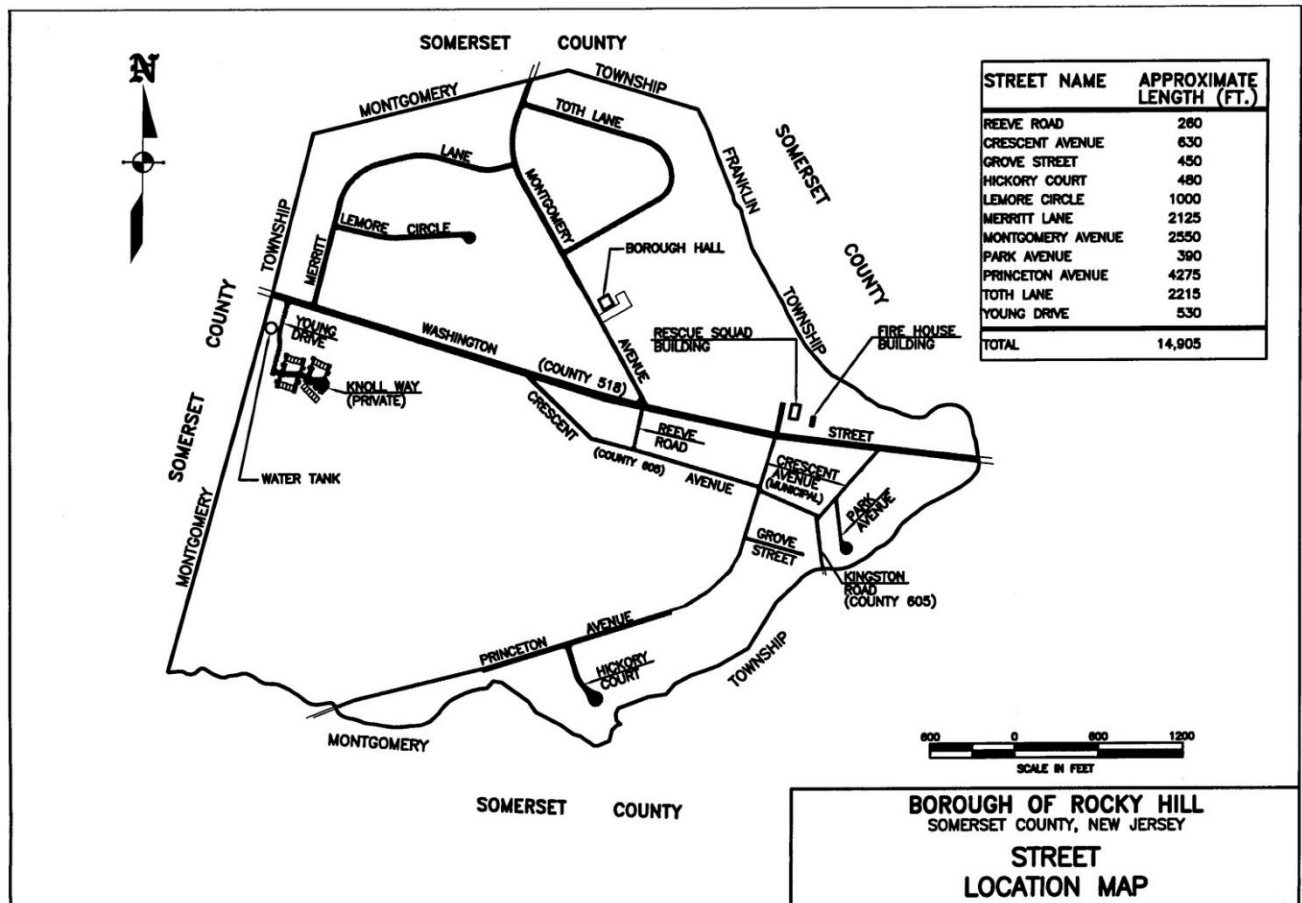
Property	Block	Lot	Acreage
Dedicated Open Space			
1. <i>Van Horne Park</i>	5	16	4.45
	5	20	13.35
	5	21	8.90
	5	26	24.90
	14	1	38.40
	14	9	1.67
	5	6.01	10.94
Total Acreage			102.61
2. <i>Millstone River Park</i>			
Green Acres funded	4	1	25.89
Borough addition	2	1	2.37
Borough addition	4	50	2.20
Borough addition	9	6	.45
Total Acreage			30.91
3. <i>Panicaro Park</i>	9	1	5.20
4. <i>Crescent Park</i>	6	1	0.17
5. <i>Montgomery/Washington Triangle</i>	3	1	0.20
Dedicated Open Space Total			139.09
Other Community Land			
Fireman's Field	11	1	1.14
Borough Hall	4	2	1.84
Library	1	5, 5.01	2.02
Cemetery	1.01	8	2.19
Other Community Land Total			7.15

Figure 7
Millstone Valley Scenic Byway
Rocky Hill Detail



Note: This image was extracted from the Millstone Valley Scenic Byway official brochure. See www.state.nj.us/transportation/community/scenic/pdf/millstonerivervalley.pdf

Figure 8
Streets of Rocky Hill



Note: The above map does not include Skillman Avenue a private street accessed from Princeton into an in-holding homestead in Millstone River Park

Figure 9
Map of the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park



D&R CANAL STATE PARK

LEGEND

- Park Office
- Camping Area
- D & R Canal State Park Corridor
- Other State Park Land
- Canal Lock

0 1 2 3 4
Scale in Miles

Welcome to Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park

The New Jersey State Park Service hopes you will enjoy the many features of this area—including hiking, camping, fishing, boating and canoeing among others. For more information contact:

Park Office
D & R Canal State Park - Main Office
145 Mapleton Road
Princeton, NJ 08540
(609) 924-5705

Feeder Canal Office and Campground
Bull's Island Recreation Area
2185 Daniel Bray Highway
Stockton, NJ 08559
(609) 397-2949

Visit us on the web:
www.njparksandforest.org

7/02

Feeder Canal		
Distance Between Access Points (in Miles)		
		Parking
0.7	12th Street, Frenchtown	No
0.9	Bridge Street, Frenchtown	Yes
1.4	Fairview Road	No
4.8	Point Pleasant	Yes
0.9	Byram Boat Launch	Yes
3.0	Bull's Island	Yes
0.3	Prattville Mill and Lock	Yes
2.4	Stockton	No
1.5	Jimison Farm	Yes
1.1	Lambertville Lock	Yes
0.9	Fremer's Eddy	Yes
1.0	Belle Mountain	No
2.2	Titusville (Church Road)	No
1.2	Washington Crossing (Rt. 546)	Yes
2.4	Scudders Falls (Route 95)	Yes
3.8	Upper Ferry Road	No
3.4	Wilburtha Road	No
0.9	Lower Ferry Road	Limited
1.7	Cadwaller Footbridge	Yes
2.5	Hermitage Road	No
2.8	Calhoun Street	No
0.7	Montgomery Street	No
31.4	Total	
○ Picnic Area		

Main Canal		
Distance Between Access Points (in Miles)		
		Parking
1.2	Mulberry Street	No
1.7	Whitehead Road	No
0.6	Carnegie Road	Yes
0.6	Basin Road	No
0.5	U.S. Route 1	Yes
1.8	Port Mercer (Quaker Bridge Road)	Yes
2.6	Alexander Road	Yes
0.6	Washington Road	No
0.4	Harrison Street	No
2.2	Millstone Aqueduct	Yes
1.9	Kingston Lock (Route 27)	Yes
1.0	Rocky Hill (Route 518)	Yes
1.4	Little Valley	Limited
0.7	Griggstown Lock	Limited
3.5	Griggstown Causeway	Yes
2.1	Blackwells Mills	Yes
2.1	Amwell Road (Route 514)	Yes
0.6	Weston Causeway	Yes
0.8	Zarephath (Pillar of Fire)	No
2.3	10 Mile Lock	No
1.6	South Bound Brook Lock	Yes
1.6	5 Mile Lock	Limited
2.1	Demott Lane	Yes
33.9	Landing Lane Bridge	No
33.9	Total	
○ Picnic Area		

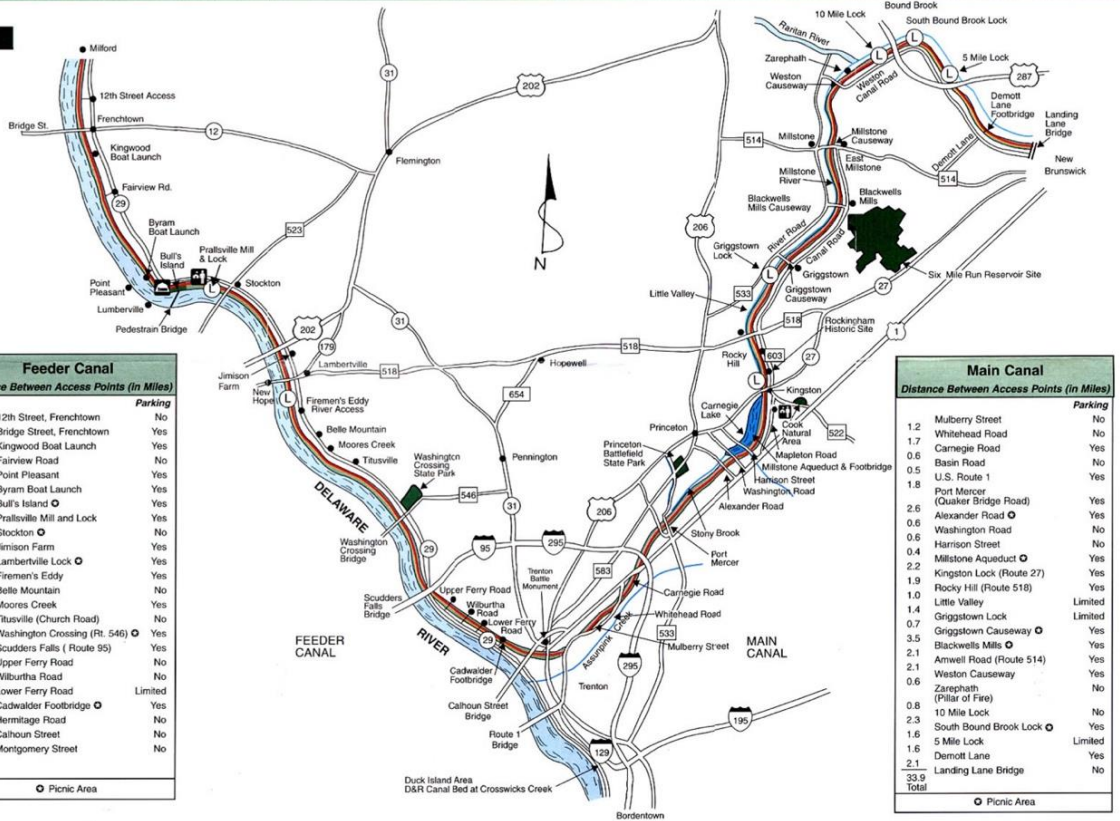


Figure 10
View from D&R Park
Looking West on Georgetown-Franklin Turnpike (CR 518)



Figure 11
Somerset County Bridge over Millstone River (South Side)



Figure 12
Somerset County Bridge over Millstone River (North Side)



Figure 13
Alternative Bridge Ideas



Figure 14
Panicaro Park

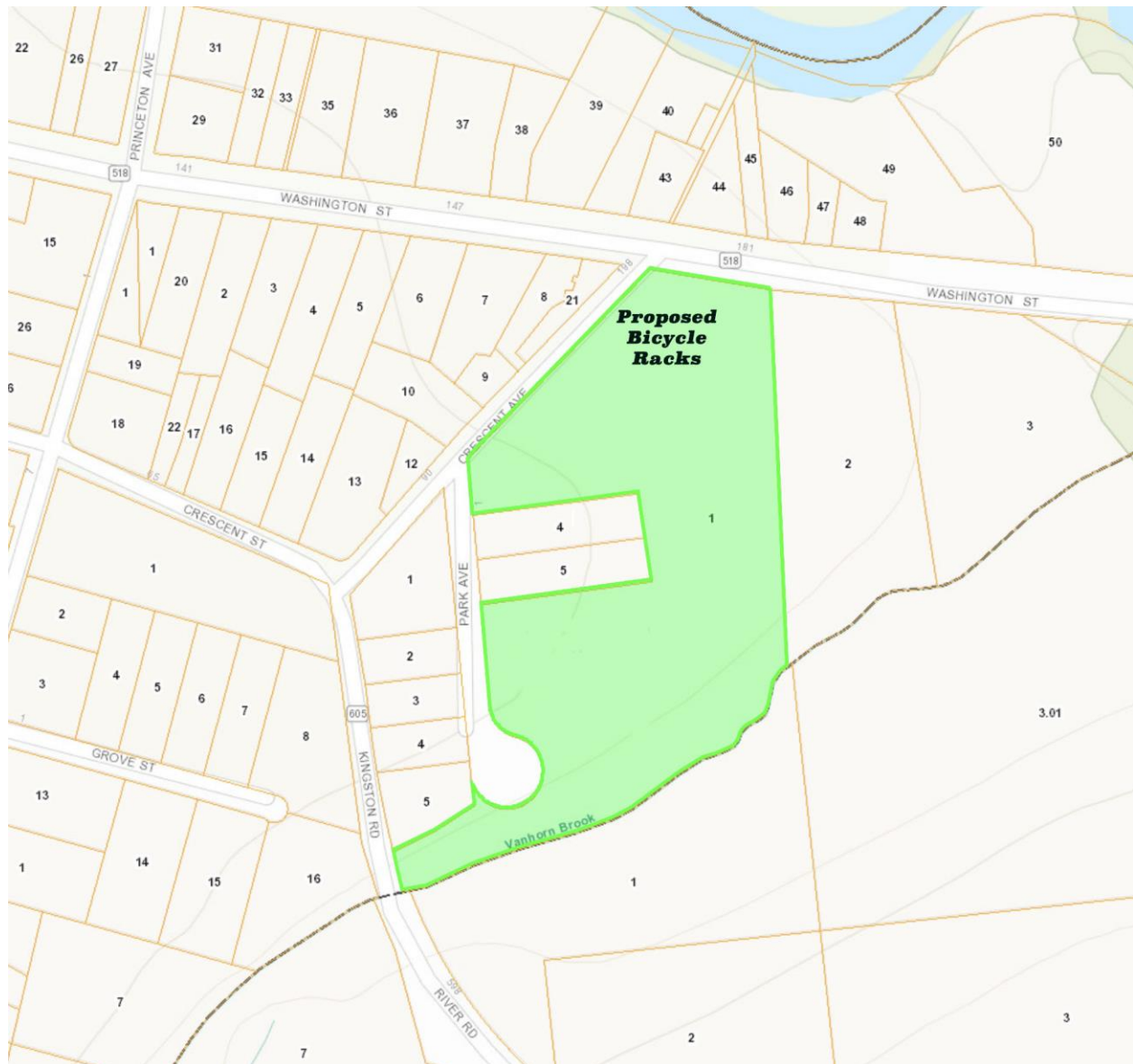


Figure 15
Panicaro Park Today



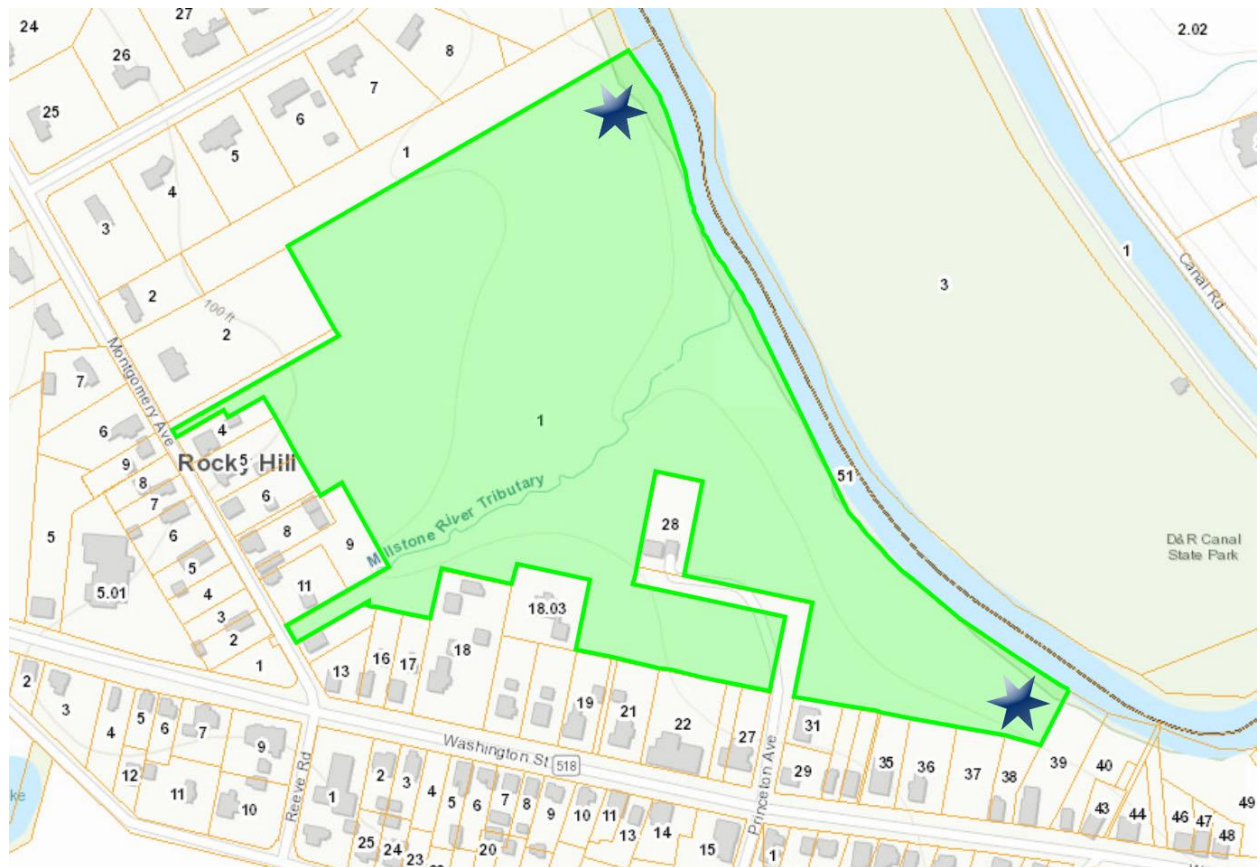
Figure 16
Panicaro Sidepath



Sitting Wall



Figure 17
Millstone River Park



Note: The blue stars indicate a need for signage that private property is ahead.

Figure 18
Addition to Van Horne Park

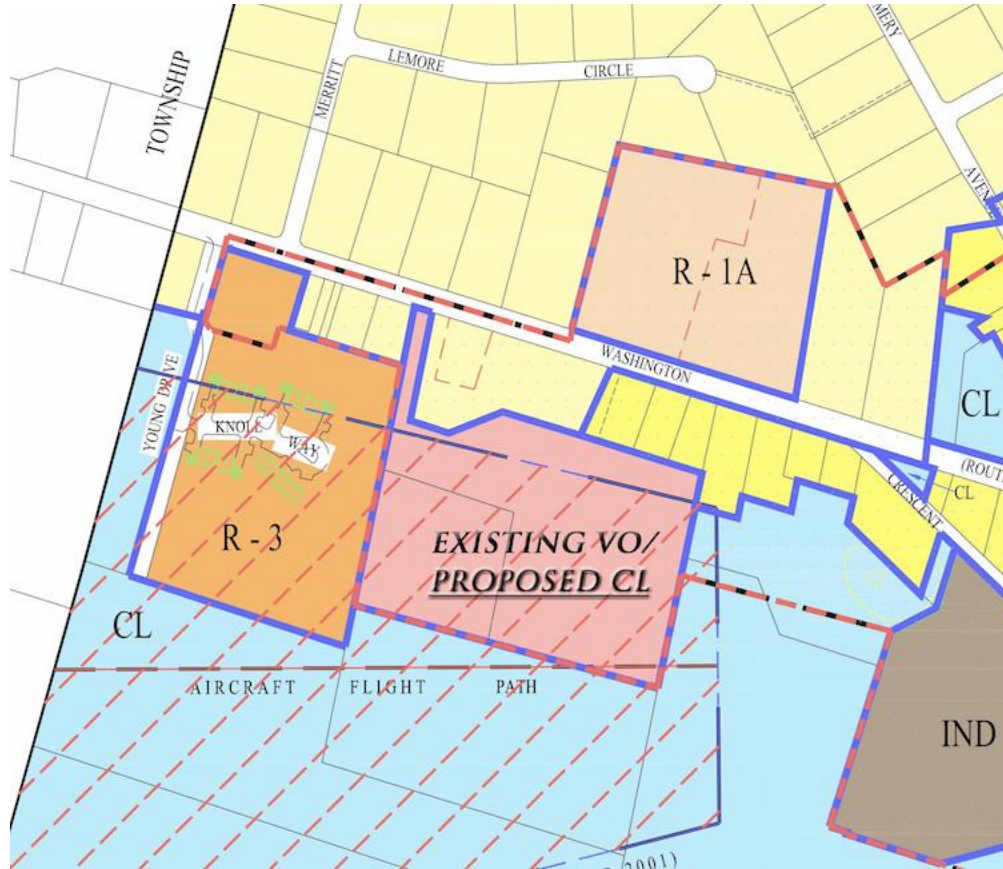


Figure 19



Millstone Valley Scenic Byway

● National Scenic Byway • New Jersey



Source: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/byways/2462/maps>

Figure 20

Somerset County Historic Marker Press Release

Historical Marker Unveiled at Van Horne House

Post Date:10/25/2016 4:26 PM

The Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders joined the Heritage Trail Association Oct. 25 in unveiling a new historical marker at the Van Horne House at 941 E. Main St., Bridgewater, across from the ballpark.

Built circa 1750, the Van Horne house was a key location in the Battle of Bound Brook in April 1777 during the Revolutionary War. Owner Philip Van Horne, “known far and wide as a gracious host,” served breakfast to British General Charles Cornwallis after the battle and a light supper to American Generals Benjamin Lincoln and Nathanael Greene. The house also served as headquarters in 1778-79 for General William Alexander (Lord Stirling), who was second-in-command under General George Washington.

The sign is part of the Somerset County Historic Marker Program coordinated by the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission. To date, markers have been installed at the African-American burial ground in Bedminster; the Van Veghten House in Bridgewater; the Abraham Staats House in South Bound Brook; the Kennedy Martin Stelle Farmstead in Basking Ridge; Washington Rock Park in Green Brook; the Somerset County Courthouse Green in Somerville; and at the Manville Public Library, commemorating a key encampment during the Revolutionary War.

There are historical markers at various historic bridges throughout Somerset County as well: Opie Road over the South Branch Raritan River, Branchburg/Hillsborough; Georgetown-Franklin Turnpike over Beden Brook, Montgomery; Studdiford Drive over a South Branch Raritan River tributary, Branchburg/Hillsborough; Easton Turnpike over the North Branch Raritan River, Branchburg/Bridgewater; Dead Tree Run Road over Pike Run, Montgomery; Raritan River Greenway (Hunts Bridge) over the Raritan Power Canal, Raritan; Nevius Street over the Raritan River, Raritan/Hillsborough; Old Dutch Road over Peapack Brook, Bedminster; Griggstown Causeway over the Millstone River, Franklin/Montgomery; and the Pedestrian Overpass over Cloverleaf Drive, Bridgewater.



Figure 21**Traffic Counts County Route 518: Georgetown Franklin Turnpike**

Functional Class: “Urban Minor Arterial “in Franklin and Rocky Hill; “Urban Collector” in Montgomery;
 “Rural Major Collector” in Hopewell and ends as an “Urban Collector” in Lambertville

Source: NJ Department of Transportation

Mile Post	Municipality	Traffic Volume						
		Date	Day	Hours Surveyed	Total Vehicles	% Cars	West	East
18.03 Between Canal Rd. and Canal Pl.	Franklin	11/09/2012	Fri.	24	7,497	86.9%	3,854	3,643
		11/10/2012	Sat.	24	5,476	87.4%	2,766	2,710
		11/11/2012	Sun.	24	4,737	89.1%	2,377	2,360
		11/12/2012	Mon.	24	7,256	87.5%	3,688	3,568
		11/13/2012	Tue.	24	7,157	87.1%	3,686	3,471
		11/14/2012	Wed.	24	7,474	88.0%	3,832	3,642
		11/15/2012	Thu.	24	7,501	87.3%	3,855	3,646
		12/07/2012	Fri.	24	7,106	84.5%	3,869	3,237
		12/08/2012	Sat.	24	5,413	83.0%	2,727	2,686
		12/09/2012	Sun.	24	4,112	86.0%	2,067	2,045
		12/10/2012	Mon.	24	6,921	83.7%	3,645	3,276
		12/11/2012	Tue.	24	6,880	83.9%	3,765	3,115
		12/12/2012	Wed.	24	6,749	83.9%	3,770	2,979
		12/13/2012	Thu.	24	7,458	86.3%	3,808	3,650
17.18 Between Princeton Ave & Crescent Ave	Rocky Hill	09/06/2012	Thu.	24	10,910	NA	5,412	5,498
		<i>Note: Second 17.18 Mile Post Report is from 2015</i>						
		09/09/2015	Wed.	24	11,304	NA	5,626	5,676
		09/10/2015	Thu.	24	11,134	NA	5,528	5,606
16.97 Between Merritt Ln. and Crescent Ave	Rocky Hill	08/03/2012	Fri.	24	13,183	78.4%	7,067	6,116
		08/04/2012	Sat.	24	9,772	82.3%	5,213	4,559
		08/05/2012	Sun.	24	7,699	84.2%	3,863	3,836
		08/06/2012	Mon.	24	12,594	77.7%	6,843	5,751
		08/07/2012	Tue.	24	13,100	78.8%	7,047	6,053
		08/08/2012	Wed.	24	13,149	78.0%	7,008	6,141
		08/09/2012	Thu.	24	13,258	78.7%	6,961	6,297
		09/07/2012	Fri.	24	13,623	81.7%	7,123	6,500
		09/08/2012	Sat.	24	9,631	84.5%	4,984	4,647
		09/09/2012	Sun.	24	8,067	80.7%	4,161	3,906
		09/10/2012	Mon.	24	12,942	81.6%	6,930	6,012
		09/11/2012	Tue.	24	13,768	81.3%	7,381	6,387
		09/12/2012	Wed.	24	13,906	80.4%	7,419	6,487
		09/13/2012	Thu.	24	13,521	80.3%	7,196	6,325
14.26 Between Mountain- view Rd and Burnt Hill Rd.	Montgomery	10/09/2012	Tue.	24	10,776	NA	5,378	5,398
		<i>Note: Second 14.26 Mile Post Report is from 2015</i>						
		04/28/2015	Tue.	24	11,078	NA	5,356	5,722
		04/29/2015	Wed.	24	10,999	NA	5,294	5,705
13.36 Between Hollow Rd and Van Zandt Rd.	Montgomery	09/25/2013	Wed.	24	10,833	NA	5,438	5,445
		<i>Note: Second 13.36 Mile Post Report is from 2016</i>						
		08/30/2016	Tue.	24	9,494	NA	4,752	4,742
		08/31/2016	Wed.	24	9,481	NA	4,698	4,783

Source of Data: http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/refdata/roadway/traffic_counts/

Figure 22
Montgomery Promenade



Since there is not a downtown in Montgomery Township, there is a pent up demand for a Town Center. Therefore Madison Marquette has created a destination that not only has convenient, everyday shopping but also a place where people want to stay for hours on end. The project is anchored by a 60,000 sf Frank's Theater with 11 screens, 16 lanes of bowling and a 5,000 sf sports bar. The rest of the center is designed with a main street type theme including restaurants, high end shopping and a 1 acre green space for outside entertainment. The total has 300,000+ sf with everything from coffee to day care to specialty boutiques to some of New Jersey's top restaurants.

The center is complimented with a contemporary designed bypass road and roundabout including 33 single family lots for those who choose to live near the action but also choose to live far enough away to enjoy everything Montgomery has to offer. Architecture and Landscaping will rival anything found in the state but keep with the very desirable Montgomery feel.

- 10,000 VPD through new bypass road
- 21,000 VPD through Route 206
- 14,000 VPD through Route 518

300,000⁺
SQUARE FEET

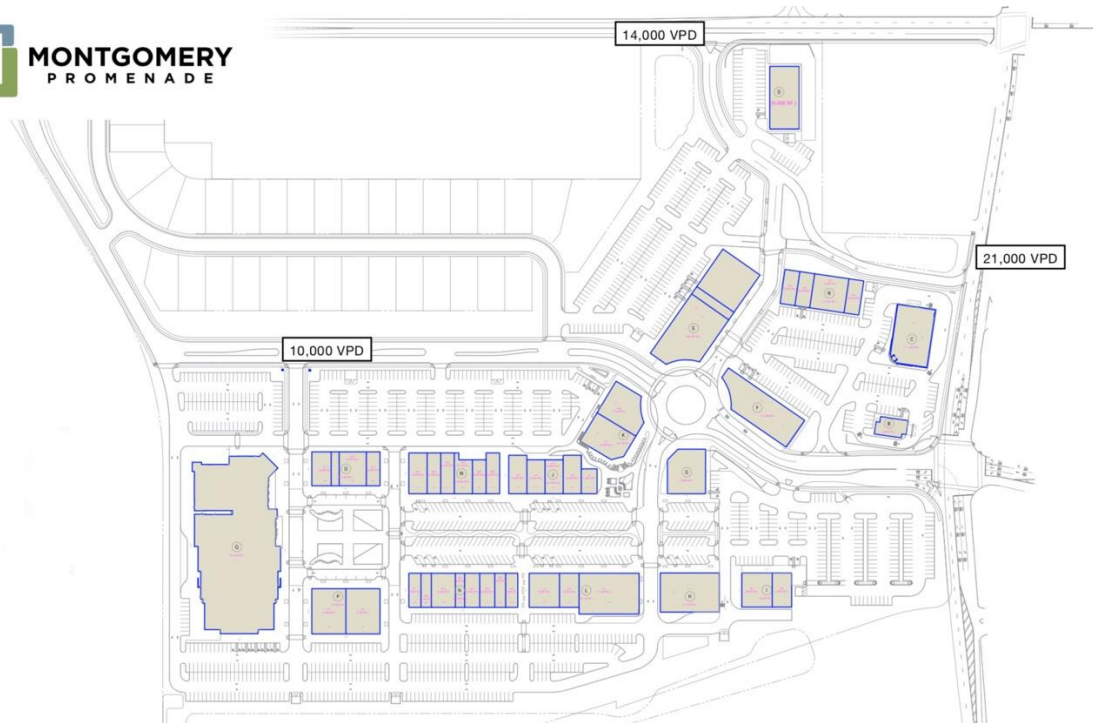
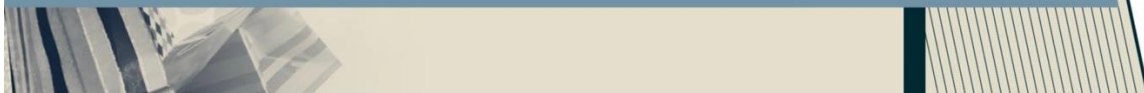
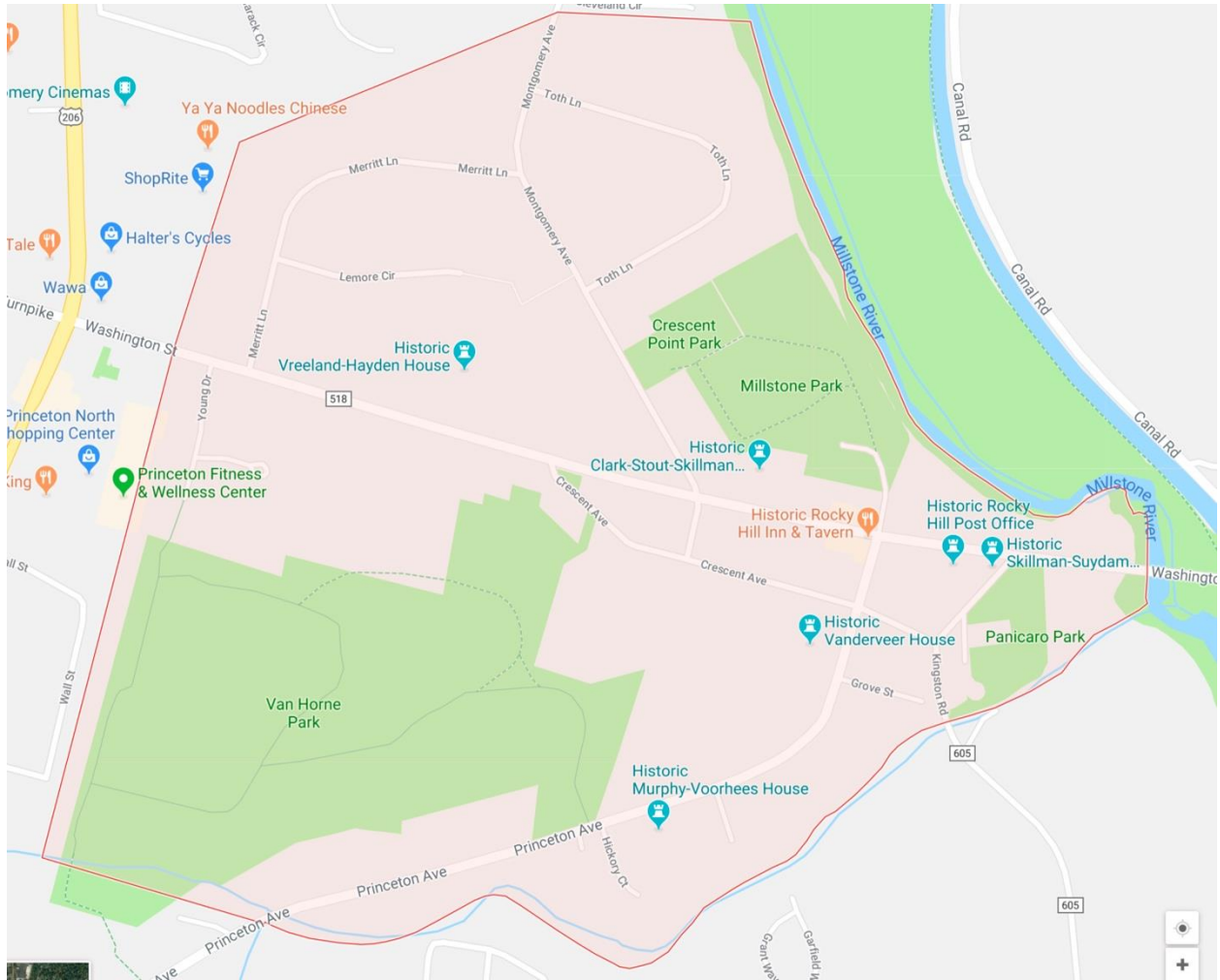


Figure 23
Borough Property Washington Street -- Gateway



Source: Google Maps

Note: The area shown in green at the eastern end of Rocky Hill flanks the Somerset County bridge over the Millstone River and is owned by the Borough.

Figure 24
Sidewalks and Sidepaths

