

LAND USE ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This section of the Ramsey Master Plan provides a review of the existing land use pattern in the community, which serves as the basis for the Borough's Zoning Ordinance. For the most part, development in Ramsey has consistently occurred in accordance with the adopted Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. The only exception to this was the amendment of the Zoning Ordinance pursuant to the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan adopted in 1989 to address and satisfy the requirements of COAH to provide housing affordable to low and moderate income households.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In 1989, the Borough of Ramsey received Substantive Certification from COAH of its adopted first round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, which provided for the construction of 350 low and moderate income units, satisfying the Borough's first round (1986-1993) fair share allocation. When new cumulative first and second round fair share numbers were released in 1993, Ramsey's first round allocation was reduced from 350 units to 202 units for the entire 12 year period through 1999. In light of the 350 units already provided for under the Borough's first round plan, the Borough's remaining obligation was reduced to zero. This obviated a requirement to rezone additional land to provide for new high density multi-family development. The Borough adopted its second Housing Element and Fair Share Plan in 1994, essentially relying on the credits it had already earned for past housing activities. Under COAH's new third round Rules, the cumulative obligation for both of the prior rounds has been reduced still further, to 156 units. Given the 350 affordable housing units already created in the Borough in response to its first round allocation, the Borough has a surplus of 194 credits toward its third round fair share obligation.

For the third round, which covers the period from 2000 to 2014, with delivery from January 1, 2004 to December 31, 2013, COAH has adopted a Growth Share formula, wherein one new affordable housing unit must be provided for each 8 market priced residential units constructed, and one new affordable housing unit must be provided for each 25 jobs created through non-residential development. Dean Boorman and Associates, consultants to the Borough of Ramsey, prepared the third round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. After projecting the growth share obligation derived from the development of the Krisujen tract and various infill projects receiving COs after January 1, 2004, and after accounting for other potential development that might occur over the 10 year projection period, the consultants concluded that in 2014, the Borough will still have a surplus of 157 affordable housing units.

The Borough has collected over one million dollars in development fees derived from the implementation of a Development Fee Ordinance. It intends to use these funds for programs designed to make the existing affordable housing more affordable and to extend the affordability controls on the existing affordable units beyond the 40 year period of restrictions currently applicable.

The adopted third round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan prepared by Dean Boorman and Associates has been submitted to COAH along with a petition for Substantive Certification. It is included as an Addendum to this Master Plan, since it was previously adopted and will be amended and updated according to a different schedule than applies to the balance of the Master Plan.

EXISTING NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Vacant land in Ramsey has decreased from 94.7 acres in 1994 to only 31 acres in 2006. Of these 31 acres, about 22 acres are considered to be unbuildable due to the presence of wetlands and ponds.

In 1992, Ramsey's Environmental Commission prepared a Municipal Natural Resources Inventory. The purpose of that document was to identify the presence of natural resources and to delineate and classify them. Such resources as topography, slopes, soils, flood plains, wetlands, surface waters, and upland vegetation were mapped in that document. The inventory has served the Borough well in identifying sensitive areas and has been of assistance in evaluating natural resources that might be affected by a development. While not obsolete, the Borough's Natural Resources Inventory was not based on currently available Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data. These data are now available through Bergen County for each lot and block in the Borough of Ramsey. The maps presented on the following pages are based upon the GIS data regarding Ramsey's natural resources and critical areas.

The GIS maps, along with an aerial photograph showing the existing pattern of development in the Borough, together with Tables L-1 and L-2, provide a comprehensive summary of the natural and built environment within the Borough of Ramsey.

2002 Land Use/Land Cover

Steep Slopes

Critical Habitat - Emergent and Forested Wetlands

Critical Habitat - Forest and Grasslands

Surface Water Quality and Hydrology

2002 Aerial

TABLE L-1
EXISTING LAND USE, BOROUGH OF RAMSEY, 2006

Land Use	Area in Acres	Percent
Residential, One Family	1782.65	53.6
Residential, Two Family	21.0	.06
Residential, Multi-Family	150.3	4.5
Agriculture	0	0
Retail and General Commercial	279.2	8.3
Commercial Office	87.8	2.6
Industrial	47.1	1.4
Municipal and School	98.9	3.0
Municipal Parks & Green Acres	288.5	8.67
County Parks	77.5	2.3
Semi-Public	220.6	6.6
Vacant	31.0	.93
Streets, Stream, Railroad	241.1	7.5
TOTAL	3,325.7	100.0

Source: Borough Records.

TABLE L-2
EXISTING LAND USE IN ACRES BY ZONING DISTRICT
BOROUGH OF RAMSEY, 2006

ZONING DISTRICT	RESIDENTIAL ONE-FAMILY	RESIDENTIAL TWO-FAMILY	RESIDENTIAL MULTI-FAMILY	AGRIC.	RETAIL & CENTRAL BUSINESS	COMM. OFFICE	INDUSTRIAL	MUNICIPAL AND SCHOOL	MUNICIPAL PARKS & GREEN AC.	COUNTY PARKS	SEMI-PUBLIC	VACANT
R-1	667.97				14.50		0.50	31.00	103.30	77.50	68.70	4.30
R-2	96.15	1.60	10.10					5.70	64.90		42.40	2.00
R-3	939.82	8.30	3.90			0.50		43.40	116.50		56.10	8.00
R-4	0.30	3.20	3.40									
R-5	1.70	0.80	29.70			0.80						
R-5A			55.70									
B-1	4.00	2.90	2.80		5.70	2.90	0.30	3.40			4.40	
B1-A	7.95	6.20			6.00							
B-2	10.00		9.30		7.20	9.60		10.60	0.80		1.70	
B-3	20.60				203.60	18.90	8.80				1.40	8.00
1P					31.10		37.90	4.00			25.10	
L0	4.60				4.30	55.10					20.80	8.70
T-6	8.20		14.60									
T-3			21.80									
PUD	21.40				6.30				3.30			
TOTAL	1,782.65	21.00	150.30	0	279.20	87.80	47.10	98.90	288.50	77.50	220.60	31.00

Source: Borough Records

Table L-1 indicates that the Borough remains predominantly a one-family residential community, with such uses occupying 53.6 percent of the Borough's total land area. Two-family and multi-family residential uses occupy another 5.1 percent of the Borough's land area, while retail commercial, office and industrial uses occupy 12.3 percent. Municipal and school uses, together with municipal parks, Green Acres and County parks comprise 13.97 percent of the Borough. Churches and other semi-public land uses occupy another 6.6 percent of the Borough. The rest of the Borough's land area is comprised of agriculture, streets, streams, the railroad, and vacant land, with the latter representing only .93 percent of the Borough's 3,325.7 acres.

Table L-2 shows that only 14.3 acres of vacant land remain in the Borough's residential zones, and that there are 16.7 acres of vacant land in the Borough's commercial and industrial zones. The acreage in each existing zone district devoted to various types of land uses is broken down in Table L-2.

POPULATION, HOUSING, AND EMPLOYMENT

Population, housing and employment trends and projections are incorporated in the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan prepared by Dean Boorman and Associates and adopted by the Planning Board in November of 2005. The 2005 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan is included as an addendum to this 2006 Master Plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO PLANS OF STATE, COUNTY AND ADJOINING MUNICIPALITIES

Four municipalities border Ramsey - the Boroughs of Allendale, Saddle River and Upper Saddle River and the Township of Mahwah. Ramsey's land use patterns and zoning are generally similar to those in the abutting portions of these municipalities and are compatible.

Mahwah Township has experienced dramatic growth in both the residential and non-residential sectors. Its population has doubled since 1980. The outcome of all of this

additional development has been increased traffic on Ramsey's streets. Extensive multi-family and office development on Ridge Road has resulted in an intensification of traffic from Ridge Road south to Darlington Avenue, adding to an already congested condition within the Main Street Central Business District. Additionally, Ramsey has a major concern with the development potential of several large vacant tracts along Route 17 in Mahwah. These tracts are zoned for commercial development and are large enough to accommodate regional shopping centers. This will affect not only the existing traffic conditions on Route 17, but also the connecting roads throughout Ramsey. As a result of the recent opening of a Home Depot on the east side of Route 17, just north of the Ramsey border, southbound traffic on Route 17 will need to use the Spring Street interchange in Ramsey for access to the site, and this could have a severe impact on how well that interchange functions. Ramsey is also concerned about the impact of the future development of the former McKee Sand Pit with office/warehouse uses, as this will increase the traffic using North Central Avenue in Ramsey. Mahwah is being transformed by large scale residential and commercial development into the urban commercial hub of Northwest Bergen County and it is impacting Ramsey. Ramsey's efforts will need to be directed at working with the County, the NJDOT and Mahwah to limit opportunities for traffic to be routed onto the local streets and County roads that traverse Ramsey.

A townhouse project, constructed as part of Upper Saddle River's affordable housing compliance program, has been constructed on East Crescent Avenue next to a low density residential area in Ramsey. There is another property in Upper Saddle River that has been zoned for higher density housing, also as part of Upper Saddle River's affordable housing compliance program, and that abuts the Ramsey border. This property is adjacent to a non-residential building and is located in the triangle formed by Route 17, Mountain View Road and Lake Street. This site does not abut any low density residential areas in Ramsey. In fact, such development is expected to produce less traffic than the office development for which the site was previously zoned.

In the Borough of Saddle River, a high density multi-family development (containing 76 units of low and moderate income housing, built as part of Saddle River's affordable housing compliance program, was constructed just south of Ramsey's border on a portion of a 28 acre triangular site located west of Route 17, east of Borderline Road and north of East Allendale Avenue. In addition to the multi-family development, the tract contains a 120 bed assisted living facility, an office building and a hotel. Although this development has had some impact on traffic along Route 17, it has not so far adversely affected traffic conditions in Ramsey.

Allendale's zoning along Ramsey's border continues to provide for single-family residential development. No other uses are proposed there.

The Bergen County Master Plan was written and formally adopted back in 1962 and amended in 1966, although 26 separate reports and studies have been issued since that time, including various inventories of land use types, physical characteristics, demographic and traffic data, and cross acceptance reports, to name but a few. The Division of Master Planning for the Bergen County Department of Planning and Economic Development is currently embarking on the preparation of a new Master Plan for the County, to consist of nine (9) separate plan elements. The Bergen County Department of Planning and Economic Development has been an invaluable source of data and technical assistance for the municipalities in Bergen County, and the County is a leader in transportation planning studies. Nevertheless, the transportation planning efforts of the County need to be coordinated with a rational policy regarding land use and development, especially along municipal boundaries, and the associated traffic impacts.

The map presented on the following page illustrates the Planning Areas shown on the current State Development and Redevelopment Plan within the Borough of Ramsey. As the map indicates, most of Ramsey lies within Planning Area One, the Metropolitan Planning Area, on the State's maps. A small portion of the Borough is designated as a park.

State Plan Map

MAIN STREET REVIVAL

In the year 2000, the Borough of Ramsey established a Downtown Design Review Committee to consider alternatives that would improve traffic conditions, relieve congestion, reduce environmental pollution and promote pedestrian safety within the Central Business District (CBD). That Committee sought and received a grant for 2006-2007 to undertake a "21st Century Revival Project, Main Street, Central Avenue to Spruce Street". The elements of that project are under construction now. The project area extends eastward from the intersection of Central Avenue and Main Street to the Spruce Street traffic circle, a distance of approximately 1,200 linear feet. Also included in the project area are pedestrian crossings located east of Spruce Street at the Ramsey Cinema movie theater, at the existing bike path, and at Island Avenue near the High School.

The description of the project area in the grant application can be summarized as follows: Main Street is a 30 foot wide paved roadway with intermittent parallel parking along both sides. Buildings are constructed close to the street and the sidewalks are narrow, creating a corridor effect. The sidewalks are uneven, not uniform and in poor condition. About a dozen trees are located along the section of Main Street between Central Avenue and Spruce Street, mostly on the north side of the street. Street lighting fixtures are cobra style and are unevenly and inadequately spaced. The existing crosswalks are striped, and some of the mid-block intersections east of Spruce Street have inadequate provisions for safe pedestrian passage. There is an at-grade New Jersey Transit railroad crossing at the western end of the project area.

All told, the existing conditions in the project area were found not to be pedestrian friendly and to be in serious need of upgrading.

The improvements that are encompassed by the project include removal and replacement of the existing sidewalks and concrete curbing with new stamped concrete sidewalks and new concrete curbing; the installation of pedestrian-safe crosswalks at all

intersections in the study area; the installation of crosswalks and handicapped ramps at two mid-block intersections between Spruce Street and Island Avenue; the introduction of traffic calming measures through the installation of curb bump-outs at the mid-block intersections to alert motorists to the presence of the new pedestrian crossings; the installation of lighted pedestrian crosswalk systems at the railroad crossing and at the Island Avenue intersection; removal and replacement of the existing cobra style lighting fixtures with ornamental period lighting fixtures; and the planting of additional shade trees, protected with cast iron tree grates.

Additionally, the existing traffic circle at Spruce Street is being eliminated and replaced with a landscaped triangular traffic island to improved vehicular flow and pedestrian safety at that location.

ZONING AMENDMENTS

Since the adoption of the last Reexamination Report in 2000, the Planning Board has recommended, and the Borough Council has adopted, a number of ordinances and amendments to the zoning regulations governing land use and development in the Borough of Ramsey. All of these amendments have addressed particular problems identified by Borough officials and have been designed to better promote the goals and objectives of the Master Plan, to continue to upgrade developmental standards, and to build upon the existing zoning regulations and previously adopted ordinances and amendments:

1. An ordinance was adopted limiting the height of fences in a residential zone to four (4) feet. Additionally, fences in a front yard within a residential zone are required to be at least 50% open construction, and chain link fences are specifically prohibited in the front yard.

2. The sign ordinance was amended to prohibit internally illuminated signs in the B-1, B-1A and B-2 zones and in those portions of the B-3 zone that do not front on Route 17. The ordinance also requires the removal of business signs if a business has terminated its use of a property.
3. An ordinance was adopted to permit outdoor dining in the B-1, B-1A and B-3 zones.
4. An ordinance was adopted to regulate the installation of wireless communications towers and antennas.
5. An ordinance was adopted to prohibit parking in the front yard in the B-1A zone.
6. An ordinance was adopted establishing maximum building coverage, impervious coverage and living space requirements for all residential zones. The maximum living space requirements in the Ordinance were then further reduced, from 6,000 square feet to 5,500 square feet in the R-1 zone, from 5,000 square feet to 4,500 square feet in the R-2 zone and from 4,000 square feet to 3,500 square feet for lots over 10,000 square feet in the R-3 zone. The purpose of these amendments has been to increase compatibility of new development with existing house sizes in established neighborhoods.
7. The section of Ramsey's Zoning Ordinance that had permitted low income senior citizens housing developments was repealed.
8. An ordinance was adopted to limit billboards to the B-3 Highway Commercial zone and to regulate their size and placement.
9. The Zoning Ordinance was amended to include churches among the permitted uses in the IP, LO and B-3 zones.

10. A new PUD zone was created east of Route 17 to Williams Drive.
11. A property maintenance/preservation ordinance was adopted for properties in residential zones.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The accompanying Land Use Plan map is consistent with the existing zoning districts throughout the Borough. These districts are not proposed to be changed. Ramsey is nearly totally developed, with little or no vacant land remaining. Ramsey has met and exceeded its affordable housing obligations for the foreseeable future. Consequently, no new higher density or multi-family housing developments are proposed. Such development is not consistent with the goals and objectives of the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan. Future residential development should be limited to infill development on existing vacant lots, to development on new lots resulting from conforming subdivisions or to the occasional replacement of an existing dwelling with a new one, but only if building sizes are appropriately limited, consistent with the Zoning Ordinance, to maintain compatibility with existing homes in the same neighborhood.

New commercial development is expected to be minimal. Most of the site plan applications that have been presented to Ramsey's Planning Board over the preceding decade have been, and likely will continue to be, for the redevelopment of existing commercial sites by private landowners and developers. Such redevelopment applications provide the Borough with the opportunity to upgrade existing properties, requiring the developer to meet new zoning standards. These types of private-sector redevelopment efforts are welcome, provided that the intensity of land use is not increased beyond the level permitted in the Zoning Ordinance and provided that the uses proposed are permitted by Ordinance. Ramsey contemplates no public redevelopment efforts.

Land Use Plan Map