

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bridgewater Township Mayor and Council  
Bridgewater Township Planning Board  
Regional Center Strategic Master Plan Steering Committee  
Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders  
Somerset County Planning Board  
Regional Center Partnership



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## INTRODUCTION

This document serves as the Somerset County Regional Center Element of the Bridgewater Township Master Plan. The Somerset County Regional Center consists of the Boroughs of Raritan and Somerville and portions of Bridgewater Township. The center is located in central Somerset County along the State's major transportation corridors including US Route 22, Interstate 287, US Route 202 and US Route 206 and is the economic and governmental focal point of the area (see map).

The Regional Center received Regional Center designation from the New Jersey State Planning Commission in 1996. Established as a collaborative effort to address common concerns through coordinating planning, it was the first multi-jurisdictional center approved by the State Planning Commission.

The Regional Center Partnership was created to guide the planning process for the Center. The partnership is made up of representatives from the three communities, Somerset County, the Somerset County Business Partnership, the Somerset County Coalition on Affordable Housing and the private sector. One of the Regional Center initiatives was a five day workshop held in 1999 that was intended to create a future vision for the Regional Center. The initiative established a general policy direction and planning framework for future growth and development in the Center. One of the key recommendations of the workshop initiative was to prepare a Strategic Plan for the Regional Center.

Originally estimated to be between 11.2 and 11.5 square miles in size, the Center, in fact, is 14.09 square miles including: 2.02 square miles in Raritan, 2.36 square miles in Somerville and 9.71 square miles in Bridgewater. The revised estimate is based upon more accurate GIS data. Using the guidelines of the State Plan, Regional Centers have a land area of one to ten square miles.

It is recommended that the Center boundaries be reduced to no more than 13.13 square miles (ideally the center would not exceed the 10 mile maximum regional centers). The reduction in land area is entirely located in Bridgewater. According to the State Planning Rules, a reduction in Center area of up to 10 percent can occur without triggering a major amendment. The Bridgewater core includes the Bridgewater Commons, the adjacent Sixth Avenue Redevelopment Area, the Bridgewater municipal complex, the Somerset Corporate Center and the County facilities. The extent of residential and commercial development outside the core areas should be limited. It is recommended that any further center reductions in Bridgewater be discussed during the upcoming cross acceptance process.

It is the position of the Township that development intensity in the Bridgewater core and the remaining portion of the Bridgewater Regional Center as proposed in the State Plan is inconsistent with the Townships' land use policies and the existing and future pattern of development. Although the Bridgewater portion of the Regional Center contains greater density than outside the Center, development in the Center should be consistent with the existing zoning plans for the Area.

By participating in the Regional Center, the Bridgewater Planning Board does not adopt any goals,

targets, regulations or policies except those specifically identified and explicitly endorsed in this Plan. Moreover, if the voluntary, advisory nature of the Regional Center goals, targets and policies were to change and were to become mandatory, that change would be contrary to the intent of the Plan. If such a change were to occur, it is presumed that Bridgewater would withdraw from the Regional Center. Participating municipalities retain full sovereignty over all land use issues.

The Regional Center is not intended as a vehicle for increasing density in any part of the Township.

**TOWNSHIP AND REGIONAL CENTER OVERVIEW**

Bridgewater Township can be characterized as a mature suburban community with a diverse land use pattern. It contains a total area of 32.5 square miles with a 2000 population of 42,950. The population increased by 10,431 residents or 32.1 percent between 1990 and 2000. The Township has been a major focus of growth in Somerset County and Central New Jersey, with more than 4 million square feet of commercial and industrial space and thousands of new housing units constructed over the past decade.

The Township is distinguished by an intermingling of recent, large-scale and auto-oriented “edge city” commercial and residential development, with established compact, largely residential neighborhoods. The Township also has areas devoted to large, low-intensity commercial and industrial uses.

The area of Bridgewater located within the Regional Center includes a full range of land uses. At the center, near the junction of several major highways, is located the Bridgewater Core, with a regional shopping mall, many of the Township’s community facilities, and office development. On the east is located the Finderne neighborhood, an older residential area characterized by pre-World War II development patterns. The Finderne area contains industrial areas and the sites of redevelopment projects, such as the Commerce Bank Ballpark and the Bridgewater Promenade, a large retail center. On the west, the portion of Bridgewater within the Regional Center is characterized by large campus style employment centers lining Routes 22 as well as extensive postwar-style suburban housing and multi-family housing developments.

The following table and Existing Land Use map breaks down the existing land use by categories based upon Township MOD IV tax assessment data:

EXISTING LAND USE		
BRIDGEWATER PORTION OF REGIONAL CENTER		
<i>Land Use Category</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
Residential	918	20.4
Commercial	590	13.1
Industrial	878	19.5
Apartments	60	1.3
Railroad	26	.6
Public School	106	2.4
Public Property	454	10.1
Churches and Charitable	40	1.0
Cemeteries	33	.7
Other Exempt	253	5.6
Golf Course	137	3.0
No Data	212	4.7
Undeveloped	791	17.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>4498</b>	<b>100</b>

\* This does not include roads.

Parks, open space and any other community facilities are scattered throughout Bridgewater including the area within the Regional Center. Opportunities for additional open space exist along Bridgewater’s borders, many of which are formed by the rivers and brooks that flow around the Township (See Existing Community Facilities map).

Bridgewater’s roadway system consists of several interstate highways as well as state and county roads which connect residential neighborhoods with employment and shopping centers. The Township functions as a “crossroads” of Central New Jersey with significant pass through traffic on Routes 287, 22, 202, and 206. The Raritan Valley Train Line stops in the Finderne and East Gateway sections of Bridgewater.

## **PLANS, PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES**

The Township of Bridgewater has initiated and/or is a partner in multiple planning, redevelopment and infrastructure projects that will improve local quality of life, generate new economic development and revitalize underutilized properties and areas. These projects include the following:

- Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Master Plan: An innovative and unique regional planning process involving Bridgewater, Somerville Borough, Raritan Borough, Somerset County and the Regional Center Partnership.
- Route 22 Suburban Boulevard Study: A plan to improve Route 22 by separating local and regional traffic, upgrading highway crossings, providing green infrastructure and enhancing mobility in the Regional Center.
- Route 22/Chimney Rock Road Interchange: A capital improvement project to upgrade the Route 22 and Chimney Rock Road interchange and improve access, capacity and safety in the interchange area.
- Raritan River Greenway: A Somerset County initiative to create a linear greenway along the Raritan River in Bridgewater, Somerville and Raritan for passive and active recreation.
- East Gateway development: The continued development of the Chimney Rock Road corridor in the easternmost section of the Township within the Regional Center to its intersection with Route 28 based upon smart growth principles.
- Bridgewater Core Build-Out: The continued build-out of the Bridgewater Commons development plan, development of the municipal complex and creation of improved connections linking the commercial, public and residential uses in the area.

**2020 VISION (RETROSPECTIVE)**

The Township of Bridgewater in 2020 is a thriving municipality where adherence to smart growth principles, continued open space preservation and incremental development of a balanced transportation network have curbed sprawl, strengthened neighborhoods, enhanced local quality of life and increased mass transit, walking and bicycling opportunities. The Township has a diverse suburban character with distinctive residential neighborhoods, regional shopping and employment destinations and an interconnected system of parks, recreation and open space. The combination of low-density suburban residential neighborhoods and large-scale commercial development linked by an extensive system of greenways, parks and open space, and mass transit is unique to the Regional Center and Somerset County.

Bridgewater in 2020 has made significant progress in promoting balanced and sustainable development by applying smart growth principles within the Regional Center Core. The Bridgewater Regional Center Core, Finderne and the Route 22 corridor had historically been the most developed areas of the Township. As a consequence, the Township has designated this area as a smart growth zone to promote mixed-use and walkable development linked to neighborhoods by an expanded open space system and balanced transportation network. Stronger connections with Raritan and Somerville have been created to reinforce Somerville and Raritan's positions as the core of the Regional Center. Major projects that have been initiated during this period include a neighborhood plan for Finderne, the Raritan River Greenway with connections to the Washington Valley/Second Watchung Open Space System, and initial improvements to Route 22 as part of the suburban boulevard project. Those areas outside of the Regional Center have been reoriented toward slower growth and lower intensity development through rezoning, open space preservation and limited infrastructure capacity.

Through the Regional Center's Vision, the Township of Bridgewater will have successfully maintained the quality and uniqueness of the Township. This has been accomplished through smart growth and sustainable development principles. Space has been allotted in its circulation network for all modes of transportation. Township residents feel safe walking and bicycling to commercial uses, schools and their neighbor's homes. Where appropriate, new developments of office parks and retail will be walkable. Trucks will use major roadways and not take shortcuts through residential areas.

Bridgewater's determination to pursue smart growth through the Regional Center process has reduced the pressure for sprawl and reinforced the importance of community character and quality of life. The Township still contains regional scale shopping and employment destinations such as the Bridgewater Core, however, the historic pattern of distinct residential neighborhoods served by small scale shopping districts, linked by a balanced transportation network and extensive open space systems has been strengthened.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Township of Bridgewater has a well-established land use pattern, established infrastructure, diverse residential neighborhoods, multiple business districts and extensive park and open space areas. Bridgewater’s rapid growth over the past decade, however, has resulted in increasing concern about the extent of development, local quality of life, community character, neighborhood preservation, traffic congestion and other issues arising from the commercial and residential boom of the 1990’s. The Township has reached a critical moment in its development because land use decisions that are made now will shape the future build out of the community and affect its physical character.

The key organizing principle established in this Plan is that future growth should occur in a smart and sustainable manner where infrastructure, access, carrying capacity and established land use patterns support development. A significant component of this principle is that neighborhood planning and preservation is a priority.

*Land Use*

- Provide a balanced land use pattern in the Township of residential, commercial, industrial, public/semi-public, conservation and parks/open space uses that supports residential neighborhoods, maintains and strengthens existing commercial districts, preserves some remaining industrial areas, increases parks, recreation and open space, protects environmentally sensitive natural features, accommodates community facilities and facilitates local/regional circulation without placing undue demands on infrastructure including roads.
- Preserve and enhance the residential character of the Township by protecting established neighborhoods, addressing quality of life issues, promoting a diversity of housing choices, providing for compatible in-fill housing and planning for appropriate development in targeted redevelopment areas where land uses are in transition. Continue to address the Township’s COAH fair share housing obligation.
- Reconcile the difference between the existing pattern of development and existing zoning. Assess appropriate zoning on vacant and underutilized parcels in order to determine consistency with the Townships “vision”.
- Continue the build-out of the Bridgewater Core, which includes the Bridgewater Commons Mall and the Township’s Municipal Complex. Utilize improved connections, balanced intermodal access, bikeways, sidewalks and streetscape improvements to create a sense of place and enhance community design.
- Encourage appropriate redevelopment of targeted land use focus areas in the Township that will return brownfields and underutilized lands to productive use, generate economic development activity, diversify the municipal economic base, create new employment opportunities and strengthen the tax base.
- Maintain and expand the Township’s existing system of parks, recreation and open space in order to meet the recreation needs of the Township residents, preserve open space, and provide for an interconnected network of parks, greenways, conservation, and open space.
- Encourage the retention of existing light and high technology industrial uses, wherever feasible, with an emphasis on industrial clusters found in the region such as pharmaceuticals, bio-medical research and life sciences.

- Encourage land conservation, protect environmentally sensitive critical areas and facilitate the creation of a greenbelt through and around the Township.
- Coordinate public uses and facilities with future growth and the Township’s multiple neighborhoods and commercial districts to ensure an adequate distribution of municipal services. Address the Township’s need for municipal facilities.
- Continue Township support for the Regional Center process as a means of promoting coordinated land use planning, addressing growth management issues, improving the residential quality of life and preserving the economic viability of member communities. Consider opportunities for expanded inter local agreements, regionalization of services and pooling of resources to address issues of common concern.

#### *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space*

- Monitor the inventory of recreation facilities to ensure that adequate passive and active recreation and conservation areas are available and properly maintained throughout the Township.
- Maintain and preserve the existing parks and recreation parcels within the Township with a goal of acquiring and preserving additional properties.
- Continue to acquire and conserve additional properties as identified by the Township Open Space Advisory Committee and Township Council through funding sources such as the Township and County Open Space Trust Fund.
- Pursue funding through Federal, State, and County agencies to help acquire, maintain and improve recreation and open space facilities. Work with non-profit organizations and private property owners to acquire deed restrictions and conservation easements for open space.
- Utilize the parks, recreation, and open space standards of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres program to evaluate the adequacy of the Township’s existing system and work to address recreation and open space needs in underserved areas and neighborhoods.
- Utilize the Regional Center Partnership as a means to improve and create parks and open space areas within the Township and other member communities and provide an interconnected greenway network.
- Incorporate parks, recreation and open space into land use focus areas such as the East Gateway and the Chimney Rock Road corridor, where appropriate.
- Undertake neighborhood based planning initiatives to address parks, recreation, and open space needs in Finderne and other areas of the Township.

#### *Circulation*

- Coordinate land use and transportation planning so that planning is comprehensive in nature.
- Promote and enhance all types of transportation infrastructure and services such as walking, bicycling and ride sharing, to the fullest extent, prior to pursuing capacity increasing projects.
- Design and construct all of the transportation infrastructure with the improvements necessary to provide safe movement of people and goods.
- Control the appropriate speed limit on streets by applying equally the three “E’s”; Enforcement, Education and Engineering/design.

- Improve and increase service for the residents by working closely with transit agencies.
- Encourage the free flow of goods on the appropriate federal, state and county roads and rail corridors.
- Provide residents with alternative means of transportation, such as multi-use trails and jitneys, which provide linkages to places of interest.
- Select and prioritize transportation improvements that are intended to address existing traffic and safety issues, rather than to facilitate more intensive development in the future.

***Community Facilities***

- Continue to provide the level of community facilities that residents and businesses expect and need.
- Determine an appropriate means for addressing the inadequate useable space in the existing municipal complex and police station.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Land Use*

- Single Family Residential: Maintain the existing residential neighborhood pattern of development at densities comparable or lower than existing. Consider reducing density in the “environs”, where feasible.
- Acknowledge the historic use of the Raritan Valley Country Club as a golf course. In order to reinforce the open space network in the Center, the site should be designated as a golf course zone.
- Prepare neighborhood plans for Finderne, North Bridge Street and the Milltown/Vanderveer Roads areas.
- Multi-Family Residential: Encourage any future required affordable housing opportunities in close proximity to employment centers and transit facilities.
- Bridgewater Regional Center Core Area: Promote the completion of the Bridgewater Commons redevelopment plan consistent with its function as a commercial destination of regional significance.
- Prepare an upgraded community design and access management plan that will upgrade the character of the area and foster a sense of place while improving connections in the Regional Center.
- Neighborhood Business: Prepare community design standards for the neighborhood business centers.
- Office Corridors: Maintain existing campus style office development along major highway corridors outside the core. Promote increased access through interconnections, both vehicular and pedestrian, among developments.
- Encourage the elimination of existing uses in the Route 22 median.
- Medical Office Park: Consider the feasibility of providing for a larger medical office node only if off-street parking is available. Limit on-street parking in this area.
- Consider adding hospital uses such as outpatient services and ambulatory care facilities to accommodate Somerset Medical Center’s expansion plans.
- Industrial: Expand the range of permitted commercial uses within the district while eliminating industrial uses, such as manufacturing, chemical processing, and food processing, which have significant impacts. Plan for mixed-use redevelopment of the former Central Jersey Industrial Park.
- Raritan River Greenway: Consider the creation of an extensive greenway project in the southern portion of the Township adjacent to the Raritan River in Finderne in order to address flooding, provide increased recreational opportunities and buffer residential areas.
- Evaluate environmental constraints on the American Cyanamid property. Consider options including public recreation opportunities for regional recreational uses. These uses should be examined for the area south of the railroad corridor. Environmental issues should be mitigated prior to finalization of plans for any use.
- Environmentally Sensitive Critical Areas: Encourage increased lot sizes in the “environs” and re-evaluate the Township’s steep slopes ordinance and other environmental regulations. Consider a critical areas ordinance to further regulate development in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Identify and improve major gateway locations to enhance the image of the community.

### *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space*

- Encourage the maintenance of conservation areas.
- Preserve and enhance existing parks, recreation, and open space by providing new amenities, creating connections/linkages.
- Work with the County to implement the Raritan River Greenway and branch greenways to increase parks, recreation, and open space and connect the Township to other Regional Center communities.
- Incorporate parks, recreation, open space, and greenway systems areas such as the Bridgewater Core and East Gateway.
- Pursue interlocal agreements, cost sharing, and pooled funding with Somerville, Raritan, and other adjacent municipalities to implement parks, recreation, and open space opportunities.
- Pursue additional funding from the County Open Space Trust Fund and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program for park maintenance, improvements, and creation of new facilities.
- Coordinate with the County Regional Center Partnership and Regional Center municipalities on an open space plan for the region as a whole.
- Establish pedestrian linkages throughout the Regional Center including schools, community facilities, neighborhood areas, and among the downtown commercial cores.
- Link the parks, recreation, and open space in the Regional Center area of the Township with those outside the Regional Center.
- Improve stewardship of the Township's open space through inventory, inspection, and volunteer oversight.
- Create neighborhood plans which address parks, recreation, and open space.

### *Circulation*

- Evaluate and update the functional classification of the Regional Center's system of roadways and streets and identify and implement capital improvements and regulatory mechanisms needed to enable the system to function as intended and meet existing and future needs.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for accommodating travel by bicycling and walking and coordinate with the parks, open space and greenway network.
- Develop and implement strategies that support and encourage travel demand management opportunities.
- Develop and implement actions that enhance public transit opportunities in appropriate locations.
- Require the preparation of traffic impact studies for development applications.
- Request that the County Planning board provide the Township with traffic analysis reports when an applicant contributes to the County transportation impact fund.

### *Community Facilities*

- Evaluate and identify needs for the expansion of public facilities; and, investigate opportunities for cooperative arrangements that improve the efficiency of delivering public services.
- Study the expansion or replacement of the Municipal Building, the Police Station and Courtroom.

- The Township should consider sharing additional services with Somerville, Raritan, and other municipalities as part of an overall service delivery strategy.
- Monitor police, fire, and emergency services to ensure that adequate service continues to be provided. Sharing some services with Raritan, Somerville, and other municipalities should be explored.
- Maintain the Bridgewater Library at a level that will adequately serve both the immediate community and the broader region. Providing stronger connections from the library to other community facilities and the Bridgewater Core area should be encouraged.

## LAND USE

### Residential Land Use Districts

The Township of Bridgewater has a diverse housing stock including detached single-family houses, attached townhouses, multi-family apartments and specialized housing such as senior citizen apartments and group homes. Bridgewater's housing is located in multiple residential land use districts throughout the Center consistent with the historic pattern of development in the community. The primary purpose of the Districts is to accommodate existing residential development and provide the opportunity for limited development of housing on suitable vacant or underutilized parcels.

In the future, the pace of residential development in the Township will slow because available vacant land is increasingly scarce, infill development sites are limited and there is no opportunity for large projects such as Milltown/Vanderveer Road. The following recommendations are proposed:

- Maintain the existing residential neighborhood pattern of development with no significant increases.
- Consider reducing density in the environs, where feasible.
- Preserve environmentally sensitive areas through environmental regulations.
- Acknowledge the historic use of the Raritan Valley Country Club as a golf course. In order to reinforce the open space network in the Center, the site should be designated as a golf course zone.
- Prepare neighborhood plans for Finderne, North Bridge Street and the Milltown/Vanderveer Roads areas.
- Provide for senior citizen housing in appropriate sections of the Finderne area such as Block 329 Lots 3.01, 13.01 and 14.01.

### Commercial Land Use Districts

The Township of Bridgewater has multiple commercial districts and a dispersed pattern of business centers that provide local and regional shopping, employment, services and entertainment. The commercial districts include a regional shopping center, big box retail power centers, neighborhood commercial districts and highway oriented commercial centers. The majority of Bridgewater's commercial development is focused in the southern section of the Township within the Regional Center and includes the Bridgewater Commons Mall, the Bridgewater Promenade, the Route 22 corridor and a neighborhood business district in Finderne. This reflects the Township's evolution from a community of rural neighborhoods anchored by small commercial districts to a transportation crossroads with commercial corridors that function as major regional destinations for shopping, services and employment.

It is anticipated that future commercial development will be focused in the Regional Center to the extent that there is public infrastructure, balanced access and opportunities for smart growth. Potential development sites include parts of the East Gateway such as the former Central Jersey Industrial Park. There are also opportunities for improved development on a smaller scale within the existing neighborhood business districts in Finderne. The major issues affecting the commercial land use districts are: addressing the economic viability of transitional areas, maintaining a balance of

Township and Regional Center retail, service and office uses, encouraging continued private sector investment and public infrastructure improvements, and supporting the business districts that serve residential neighborhoods.

### ***Bridgewater Regional Center Core***

The Bridgewater Regional Center Core is the commercial center of the Township of Bridgewater and is intended to function as a local and regional destination for shopping, services and employment. The Core encompasses the Bridgewater Commons Mall, the Marriott Hotel, the Bridgewater Crossing office complex, the Somerset Corporate Center, the Sixth Avenue Redevelopment Area and the County facilities. The Core is approaching full build-out as the Bridgewater Commons Redevelopment Plan is in the final stages of implementation.

There are no major changes recommended for the Bridgewater Core given its established character and advanced implementation. The major issues are: improving links and connections among the various land use components and enhancing the sense of place within the Core. The following is a summary of the recommendations:

- Maintain the permitted uses and promote the completion of the Plan consistent with its function as the Township Center and a commercial destination of regional significance.
- Prepare an updated community design and access management plan that will upgrade the character of development and foster a sense of place while improving links to, and connections within, the Core through balanced access. Such access would include a pedestrian-friendly streetscape, expanded walking/bicycling infrastructure, mass transit access from a Regional Center Core shuttle and improved connections to neighborhoods within the Township and Regional Center.
- Develop recommendations for County-owned properties along Vogt Drive that would reflect the existing County facilities in the area and also respect the need for a generous buffer from any adjacent residential properties.
- Encourage the relocation and redevelopment of the NJDOT maintenance facility adjacent to the municipal complex.
- Study traffic into the Bridgewater Commons Mall, I-287 South onto the Routes 202-206 merge and the Milltown Road underpass for traffic improvement designs.

### ***Neighborhood Business***

The purpose of the Neighborhood Business areas is to provide a variety of small-scale commercial uses at a moderate intensity of development that support the Township of Bridgewater's established residential neighborhoods in the Bridgewater portion of the Regional Center. These areas are located along Main Street in Finderne, Prince Rogers Avenue in the Bridgewater Core, and the Somerville Circle vicinity. They are predominantly commercial in character but have developed over time with a mix of uses including retail, services, offices and limited residential housing. The health of these areas is central to the residential quality of life because they are neighborhood anchors that often serve as the destination of choice for daily activities such as dining out, grocery shopping, banking and other daily needs.

The major issues in the areas include: maintaining their economic viability in the face of competition from larger-scale retail development, promoting a range of commercial uses to meet the daily needs of Township residents, providing opportunities for appropriate in-fill development, enhancing the character and quality of development, protecting adjacent residential neighborhoods from nuisance impacts.

#### ***North Bridge Street Neighborhood Commercial Area***

The purpose of the North Bridge Street Neighborhood Commercial Area is to provide limited service commercial uses and community services that support the North Bridge Street residential neighborhood. This area is located in the Regional Center within the Bridgewater Core at the intersection of Prince Rogers Avenue and North Bridge Street.

The primary issue is integrating the area with nearby commercial and public uses and providing enhanced connections to adjacent residential neighborhoods and the Bridgewater Core. It is therefore recommended that pedestrian, streetscape and traffic calming improvements be implemented including but not limited to widened sidewalks, pedestrian-scale lights and textured crosswalks.

It is recommended that community development plans be prepared for the major neighborhood business centers including Main Street in Finderne. Such plans should address key planning/zoning issues and incorporate permitted land uses, bulk standards, potential in-fill development locations, community design and architecture and public improvements such as parking and streetscape upgrades.

#### ***Office Corridors***

Office corridors are intended for intermediate-scale commercial office uses on larger parcels with direct highway access. These corridors are concentrated along the Route 22 corridor within the Regional Center. Existing uses include a broad range of offices, financial institutions, restaurants and auto related uses. New office development rather than additional retail activity along the Route 22 corridor is encouraged.

The Township should continue to promote low intensity campus style development with generous setbacks along the Route 22 corridor similar to the Ethicon and Metropolitan Life sites on Route 22 west of the Somerville Circle. From a planning perspective, low rise campus style office development remains appropriate given the existing land use pattern, highway access and the relatively low intensity character of the corridor. Existing front yard setbacks should be maintained. It is recommended that new development along the corridor consider mass transit service, provide shelters and bike racks, where appropriate, and create increased access through interconnections among developments. Further, existing uses located in the Route 22 median should be eliminated.

#### ***Commerce Bank Park/Bridgewater Train Station/Bridgewater Promenade***

Acknowledge the existing "big box" mixed use commercial and entertainment development in the area. The Bridgewater train station functions as a special events/commuter station and should continue to function in that fashion. Any short term consideration for mass transit in the Regional

Center should be focused in Somerville and Raritan. It should be noted that Bound Brook is currently designated as a joint center with South Bound Brook. Pedestrian, streetscape, and traffic calming improvements should be implemented in the Area.

The former American Cyanamid land has been redeveloped as a major local and regional destination containing the Bridgewater Promenade “big box” retail center, the Hilton Garden Inn, the Commerce Bank Ballpark and the NJ Transit Bridgewater Train Station.

Under the current zoning, the build-out of the area is capped at a maximum of 700,000 square feet of commercial space. This results in a dispersed pattern of development characterized by free-standing big box stores in large parking lots with a strong auto orientation and limited pedestrian/bicycle accessibility. There are no major changes recommended for this area given its recent development. Recommendations include the following:

- Provide improved links and connections in the area to enhance access from Finderne and the adjacent community of Bound Brook. Recommended improvements include a full sidewalk network, traffic calming, bus stop(s) for future Regional Center shuttle service, intersection improvements along Main Street and Route 28 and bicycle facilities.
- Integrate the historic Van Horne House into the area through improved signage, access/parking, sidewalks, streetscape improvements on Main Street and the introduction of compatible uses. Work with the Heritage Trail Association to promote uses such as exhibits, historical programs and displays regarding the Battle of Bound Brook that will increase its use and visibility.

#### **Medical Office Park Area**

The Medical Office Park area is intended to capitalize on the proximity of the Somerset Medical Center and provide a range of medically-oriented commercial, residential and public uses. The area is located along Route 28/Union Avenue immediately to the north of the Medical Center at the municipal border with Somerville Borough. The predominant use within the area is the Arbor Glen continuing care retirement community, which contains a variety of independent living, assisted living and skilled nursing senior citizen housing. It is recommended that medical related uses that are complementary to the Somerset Medical Center continue to be encouraged such as outpatient services and ambulatory care facilities. A limitation to off-street parking should be imposed.

#### **Industrial Areas in Transition**

The Township of Bridgewater has multiple industrial areas that are a remnant of its past industrial development and that accommodate a broad range of manufacturing, warehousing/distribution and research/laboratory uses. These areas are concentrated within the southern section of Bridgewater in the Regional Center. Bridgewater’s industrial development has evolved over time from an emphasis on heavy manufacturing clustered along the former Central Railroad of New Jersey Main Line to cleaner, truck-based warehouse, distribution and light manufacturing uses oriented to the regional highway system.

Heavy industrial activity such as the former American Cyanamid complex on Main Street has given way to lighter industrial uses such as the UPS distribution hub on Route 28/Union Avenue. The primary exception to this trend is the Quarry Industrial area where Stavola Construction Materials has an established quarry and mining facility with several decades of projected capacity.

It is anticipated that Bridgewater's remaining industrial and manufacturing activity will continue to decrease because of changing markets, domestic and foreign competition as well as the long-term trend of relocation to lower cost Sunbelt and overseas jurisdictions. There are opportunities, however, to capture higher technology and value added industrial development generated by the bio-medical, health care and pharmaceutical industry clusters found in the Regional Center and central New Jersey.

There are also opportunities to return vacant and/or underutilized industrial properties to productive use through redevelopment, as has been done in the East Gateway and Route 22 corridor. The major issues to be addressed include: upgrading deteriorated parcels, refining permitted uses, redeveloping vacant or underutilized industrial sites while protecting adjacent residential neighborhoods from nuisance impacts.

Mixed-use non-residential redevelopment (potentially including cinemas) of the Middlebrook Crossing Industrial Park area should be planned as part of the Regional Center East Gateway Area consistent with the mixed-use vision established in the 1996 Township Master Plan Reexamination Report and 1999 Regional Center Vision. Buffering of industrial uses to the residential areas should be required.

### **Senior Citizen Housing**

According to the 2000 Census, Approximately 20 percent of the Township population are residents aged 55 years old or over. The population in the 55 years old and over age cohort is expected to remain relatively stable in the future. The Township has a diverse and extensive inventory of senior housing dispersed throughout the Township including:

- Arbor Glen – a continuing care retirement community – 202 apartments and 9 independent villas.
- Brandywine – assisting living – independent villas.
- Autumn Woods – assisted living – 90 units.
- The Avalon – assisted living – 68 units.
- Boarding Home (Duvall St.) – 16 rooms.
- Kirkside at North Branch – shared living residence – 5 bedrooms.
- Eastern Star Home – residential health care – 48 residents.
- Centerbridge II – low and moderate state program – 171 units.
- Centerbridge I – HUD 202 housing – 113 units.
- Four Seasons – 162 units
- Cooperative Housing Corporation – shared living residences – 20 residences.

### **Raritan River Greenway**

The Raritan River Greenway Area is located in Finderne within the Regional Center between Main Street and the Raritan River. This area evolved into active manufacturing hub during the early 1900's due to its location along railroad lines. It became home to several large manufacturing facilities such as Calco/Wyeth and National Starch. The area permits manufacturing, research laboratories, radio and television stations and warehouses including mini-storage. The planned commercial development of corporate office complexes is also a permitted use.

The area has a deleterious land use pattern because of declining industrial activity, vacant and underutilized properties, environmental contamination and the presence of incompatible residential uses. As a consequence, it is undergoing a transition due to the continuing loss of heavy manufacturing uses, significant environmental limitations and County plans for the Raritan River Greenway. Other factors influencing the land use pattern in the area include site remediation at the American Cyanamid/Wyeth superfund site, redevelopment activity in the Chimney Rock Road corridor and long-term plans by NJ Transit to reactivate commuter rail service on the West Trenton Line. The majority of the property in this area is the former American Cyanamid site extending to the Raritan River. In recent years, Somerset County has purchased over 100 acres to the west of the Cyanamid property for recreation and open space purposes. The area acquired by the County should be acknowledged as a public use.

Discussions are ongoing with the current owners of the American Cyanamid property relating to the development of recreational uses. This is a proposal that merits serious consideration and should be encouraged.

### **Parks, Recreation and Open Space**

Parks, recreation and open space areas are acknowledged through a Parks and Open Space District which consists of major public parks, recreation facilities and open space located in the Township of Bridgewater. The purpose of the District is to recognize existing areas devoted to parks, recreation and open space as well the important contribution they make to the Township's desirability as a place to live, work and visit. It has a total area of approximately 2,791 acres and consists of Township, County, State and Somerville owned land.

### **Neighborhood Plans**

The Township of Bridgewater is a community of attractive, distinct and well-established residential neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are often located in close proximity to commercial and industrial districts as well as major transportation corridors because of Bridgewater's growth and historic pattern of development. This creates the potential for adverse impacts from traffic, parking, noise and the intrusion of non-residential uses that detract from the quality of life in residential neighborhoods. In addition, some neighborhoods have aging housing stock and are in transition as the local population grows, housing turnover occurs and in-fill development continues. This creates pressure on the residential neighborhoods resulting from increased density, limited parking, property maintenance and the need for additional community facilities including parks and schools.

It is therefore recommended that the Township prepare neighborhood plans for the major residential districts that further address land use issues, quality of life concerns, community facilities and necessary infrastructure improvements. This will promote a community-based approach to planning that recognizes Bridgewater's residential neighborhoods as the foundation of the Township. Neighborhood Plans should be prepared specifically for the following areas with Finderne implemented first as a Regional Center demonstration project:

- Finderne: The neighborhood from Route 22 in the north to the Raritan River in the south, Bound Brook in the east and Somerville in the west.
- North Bridge Street: The neighborhood from Woodlawn Avenue in the north to I-287 in the south, and Bridgewater Commons Mall to the west including the Sixth Avenue redevelopment area.
- Milltown/Vanderveer Road: The neighborhood from Route 22 in the north to Route 202 in the south, Raritan Borough to the east and the Raritan River to the west.

#### **Environmentally Sensitive Critical Areas**

Bridgewater contains environmentally sensitive natural features that require protection from encroaching development and additional disturbance including areas within the Regional Center. They contain water bodies, floodways, 100-year flood hazard zones, wetlands and steep slopes that are susceptible to impacts from development.

Bridgewater's natural features are often located in close proximity to established residential neighborhoods and commercial districts. Development in areas of steep slopes results in site disturbance, excessive stormwater runoff and increased soil erosion. The Township's surface water bodies are susceptible to flooding with the potential for property damage in adjacent developed areas during periods of severe inclement weather. The reevaluation of the Township's environmental regulations is recommended to ensure that natural systems and environmentally sensitive areas are protected. Consideration should be given to the preparation of a updated critical areas Ordinance to further regulate development in environmentally sensitive areas both inside and outside the Center in order to minimize the degradation of existing natural resources and protect established residential neighborhoods.

#### **Gateways**

There are numerous areas in the Township of Bridgewater that function as gateways into the community. They include the East Gateway at Route 22, Route 28/Union Avenue and Main Street, the Bridgewater Core, the NJ Transit Bridgewater Train Station and other major entry points including Old York Road, Washington Valley Road and Route 202-206. Gateways are principal entrances into a municipality, neighborhood, business district or other section of a municipality. They typically occupy a high visibility location and function as the "front door" to a community. Gateways have the potential to contribute to a unique community identity and convey an image as an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest. It is recommended that the Township identify and improve major gateway locations to enhance the image of the community and strengthen its identity. Possible improvements include new signage, landscaping, streetscape improvements, public art and upgraded land uses.



**CIRCULATION PLAN**

**Introduction**

The Regional Center portion of Bridgewater Township has an extensive roadway network and functions as a transportation crossroads of Central New Jersey with significant pass through traffic on Routes 287, 22, 202 and 206. The Regional Center is also served by the Raritan Valley train line with a station in Somerville and Raritan.

This Regional Center Circulation Element recommends and promotes many of the transportation policies from the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). In particular, statewide policy "#8 states: "Improve transportation systems by coordinating transportation and land use planning; integrating transportation systems; developing and enhancing alternative modes of transportation; improving management structures and techniques; and utilizing transportation as an economic development tool."

**Focus Areas**

The following focus areas are discussed in the circulation section to stress the importance of the land use/transportation connection. These include the Bridgewater Core Area and East Gateway. The discussion of the focus areas from a transportation perspective is critical to the overall planning for these areas.

**Core Area**

The core area of Bridgewater encompasses a diverse range of land uses and transportation infrastructure. The core includes new office buildings, a regional mall, several hotels, retail commercial, senior citizen housing, a vocational technical institute, a post office, a library and other civic uses. This area is primarily designed for access from the automobile, although it is served by a bus route and has some pockets of pedestrian activity.

Existing Conditions

- Traffic congestion in and through this area is a problem.
- Infill development in this area would be difficult to accomplish considering the levels of traffic that it is already experiencing.
- Most buildings/uses are not within reasonable walking distances.
- The sidewalk environment is not inviting.

Recommendations

- Recognize the proximity of the public and parochial high schools that surround the area when planning improved pedestrian and bicycle access to and throughout the Core.
- Improve the pedestrian environment on bridges across the major highways in the Core area along Route 202/206, Route 287 & Route 22.
- Link this core area to the downtowns of Raritan and Somerville by a shuttle, sidewalks and bike paths.
- Continue to support the Route 22 sustainable corridor initiative.
- Require sidewalks for all development within the center.

**East Gateway Site**

This area acts as one of the eastern gateways into the Regional Center. This area has been targeted as a possible redevelopment area that could be served by a form of mass transit. The Chimney Rock Road/Route 22 area is primed for non-residential redevelopment considering its good access to transportation corridors.

Existing Conditions

- Heavy traffic volumes along Route 22.
- A rail right of way currently exists through this area and connects to an active freight line to the south.
- This area has good access to Route 22, Route 287 and Route 202-206.

Recommendations

- All new and infill developments in this area should be designed to incorporate the principles of smart growth. This would allow for either Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or light rail.
- Existing buildings and areas should be retrofitted to make it easier to walk or ride a bicycle. This could be a long term strategy that results in an area that is friendly to any form of mass transit.
- Access management techniques should be implemented along the Route 22 corridor such as combining driveways where feasible and minimizing any new access points.

**General Focus Areas**

There are five general focus areas within the Township of Bridgewater. They are the following:

- Route 22
- Milltown/Vanderveer Roads
- Bridgewater Train Station
- Route 28
- Identified Local Roads

***Route 22***

The Route 22 corridor through Bridgewater acts in part as the northern boundary of Regional Center. The area of this corridor east of Route 202/206 provides a large grassed and landscaped median that contains a variety of commercial land uses. The long range plan for this area is known as the "Suburban Boulevard". This corridor is critical not just in an east west direction but as a corridor to be crossed from the south to the north. There are few grade separated crossings and hence serves the corridor as a significant barrier between the northern and southern portions of the Regional Center. The few grade separated crossings also serve to create some of the most significant traffic bottlenecks in the Regional Center.

Recommendations

- The goal of the Suburban Boulevard is to improve safety and to separate local from regional traffic. Access management policies should be implemented along this corridor as both a short and long term strategy. The Suburban Boulevard is not intended to be used as a rationale to increase density within the Regional Center or the Township as a whole.

- At grade crossings should be eliminated.
- Land uses in the median are a constant safety hazard for both the customers of these uses and the regional traveling public. The Township should eliminate the existing development in the Route 22 median areas particularly in light of compatibility with the Suburban Boulevard project.

***Milltown/Vanderveer Roads***

This area within the Regional Center is bordered to the north by Route 28 and Route 22, to the south by Route 202 and to the west by the western boundary of the Regional Center. This area has developed during the past 15 years and contains a diverse mix of residential units including townhouses, condominiums and single-family homes. Little, if any commercial development has been built within a reasonable walking distance.

**Recommendations**

- This area needs to improve its bicycle connections to the adjacent commercial areas in order to restore a balance to the circulation system.
- The feasibility for a separated shared-use path along the Raritan Valley Line railroad right-of-way should be considered. Such a path would help to connect this area to the south and east. This would allow bicyclists to avoid navigating the Somerville Circle in order to get into Somerville. A separated shared use path along a railway corridor is a concept known as “rails with trails”.
- The railroad bridge over Milltown Road should be studied to determine if it should be replaced to accommodate vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Any improvements should discourage truck traffic from using Milltown Road between Route 202 and Route 22.

***Bridgewater Train Station***

The Bridgewater Train Station (formerly known as Calco) is located on the southeastern edge of the Regional Center. This station is a part of the Raritan Valley Line and has service from High Bridge to Newark. During the past six years, this station has witnessed an upgrade in its waiting area and a general improvement in the surrounding land uses including the construction of the Commerce Park Stadium.

**Recommendations**

- This area needs to continue to focus on its pedestrian connections to the surrounding development and to continue its use as a special events/commuter stop, known as a mixed use transit village.

***Route 28***

The Route 28 corridor is an east-west corridor that runs parallel to Route 22 through Bridgewater Township and its adjoining municipalities. The corridor contains both residential and commercial land uses, in addition to two schools. As Bridgewater and the local region have grown, traffic and congestion have increased along this roadway. This increase has resulted in access issues for residents, concerns about maintaining the residential character of neighborhoods providing adequate

access for vehicles according to the functional classification of the roadway, and issues regarding bicycle and pedestrian safety along the corridor.

*Recommendations*

- Review and implement the findings from the “Route 28 Needs Assessment”.
- Provide a complete bicycle and pedestrian network along and across the route length.

*Identified Local Roads*

As development and growth has increased in the region, many local roads have experienced an increase in traffic volume. The following roadways have been identified as needing further study to determine the impact of increased volumes on these roads, the adjoining neighborhoods, and the community at large: Main Street; Adamsville Road; Vanderveer Road; Pearl Street/Kline Place; Milltown Road.

*Recommendations*

- The Township should monitor these roadways to determine the extent of through traffic increases.
- Traffic calming measures should be evaluated for applicability to issues identified on problem roadways.

### Existing Circulation System

The system of roadways within a municipality is a significant part of the land use planning process, since it is the roadway network that provides people with their most basic way to get around. Bridgewater Township is dependent upon the automobile and has adequate access via the existing road system.

The purpose of this section of the Circulation Plan Element is to document the characteristics of the existing road network throughout the Township of Bridgewater. Information has been analyzed in order to determine those situations where the present roadway system appears to be deficient or problematic.

### *Jurisdiction of Roads*

The Jurisdiction of Roads Map shows the Federal, State, County and Town jurisdiction of roads within Bridgewater Township. Generally speaking, the volume and the function that a road performs are identified by the political jurisdiction that has control of its design and maintenance.

There are over to 230 miles of public roads in Bridgewater Township. The bulk of these consists of municipal roads (over 80%), followed by state and federal roadways (nearly 12%), then roads under county jurisdiction (almost 9%). The State of New Jersey, through the New Jersey Department of Transportation, is responsible for maintaining all federal and state highways.

Interstate 287 runs through the northern portion of the Somerset Regional Center. State Route 22 runs east west throughout the length of the center and acts as a connector to all of the major routes in the Center. State Highway 202/206 is found in the central portion of the Township that is within the Center and runs mostly north south through the Township. State Highway 28 forms the northwestern border of the Regional Center continuing through Raritan and Somerville Boroughs and extending through Finderne as Union Avenues.

### *The State Highway Access Management Code*

The New Jersey Department of Transportation adopted the State Highway Access Management Code in 1992. The State Highway Access Management Code consists of two components. The first is an access classification matrix and the second is a desired typical section for each segment of each state highway. Access levels to each classification and segment of road are established in the Code with the overriding purpose of controlling access to adjacent lands commensurate with the classification, speed and design of the highway. The following table contains road system characteristics for those roads located in that portion of Bridgewater located in the Regional Center.

Regional Center Road System Characteristics Bridgewater Township, 2002					
Roadway	Length	Access	Desirable Typical Section	Speed Limit	Orientation
<b>State</b>					
I-287	5.1 miles	Fully controlled access	10 lanes divided with shoulders or parking (172' R.O.W.)	65 mph	north-south
US 202	1.1 miles	Right-turn access with provision for left turn access via jughandle	4 lanes divided with shoulders or parking (114' R.O.W.)	55 mph	north-south
US 202/206	1.3 miles	Right-turn access with provision for left-turn access via jughandle	4 lanes divided with shoulders or parking (114' R.O.W.)	45 & 55 mph	north-south
US 22	6.6 miles	Right-turn access with provision for left-turn access via jughandle	4 lanes divided with shoulders or parking (114' R.O.W.) and 6 lanes divided with shoulders or parking (148' R.O.W.)	55 mph	east-west
NJ 28	4.1 miles	Driveway with provision for left-turn access via left-turn lane	2 lanes with shoulders or parking (78' R.O.W.)	45 mph	east-west
<b>County</b>					
Finderne Avenue (CR 533)	.6 miles	Full	As required to meet functional classification	35 mph	north-south
Finderne Avenue (CR 633)	.9 miles	Full	As required to meet functional classification	40-45 mph	north-south
Main Street (CR 533)	2.1 miles	Full	As required to meet functional classification	35 mph	east-west
Main Street (CR 612)		Full	As required to meet functional classification		
Chimney Rock Road (CR 675)	.9 miles	Full	As required to meet functional classification	30 mph	north-south
N. Bridge Street (CR 639)	.9 miles	Full	As required to meet functional classification	40 mph	north-south
<b>Municipal</b>					
All streets not listed above	N/A	Full	As required by local conditions	25-35 mph	N/A

### *Existing Right-of-Way Widths*

It should be noted that the right-of-way of a street is not synonymous with the width of the paved portion of the roadway, which is referred to as the cart-way width. The right-of-way includes the paved area, or cart-way, the shoulders, and most often the sidewalks, if present. Somerset County roadways generally range in right-of-way widths between 50 to 80 feet. The municipal roadways in Bridgewater Township generally range between 50 feet to 60 feet in right-of-way width.

It is a goal of Bridgewater Township to have the roads within the Township improved to the degree necessary to provide safe and convenient traffic movement. Conversely, it is also a goal of the Township to prevent any road work, which may cause traffic speeds to unnecessarily increase reduction of existing bicycle and pedestrian areas, or the removal of existing vegetation along the street frontage.

### *Improvement Plans, Programs, and Studies*

The County has a 6 year capital improvement plan which is prepared annually and lists projects for the next 6 years. The County plan has the following roadway projects that are proposed in the Regional Center:

- The Finderne Avenue jug handle at Van Veghten Drive has been programmed for the following improvements: engineering design, construction, right-of-way, easements and inspections. Curbs, drainage structures, bituminous concrete pavement, traffic striping and beam guide rails will also be a part of this project. The proposed improvements at Finderne Avenue and Van Veghten Drive have been endorsed by Bridgewater Township.
- The Chimney Rock Road/Route 22 interchange has been programmed for the following improvements: engineering design, right-of-way and easements, and construction and inspection.
- Chimney Rock Road, from Route 28 to Route 287 (including bridge widening over Route 287) has been programmed for the following improvements: engineering design, right-of-way and easements, and construction and inspection.
- The intersection of Chimney Rock Road with Thompson Avenue (CR 525) has been programmed for the following improvements: new traffic signal-engineering design, right-of-way, easements, construction and inspection.
- Main Street/Finderne Avenue has been programmed for the following improvements: engineering design, construction and inspection.
- Foothill Road has been programmed for the following improvements: engineering design, construction, inspection, right-of-way and easements.
- Finderne Avenue from Main Street (CR612) to Route 28 has been programmed for the following improvements: engineering design, construction, right-of-way, easements and inspections. Curbs, drainage structures, bituminous concrete pavement, traffic striping; and beam and guide rail improvements will be part of this project.
- Chimney Rock Road, from Route 287 to Route 22, has been programmed for the following improvements: engineering design, construction, right-of-way, easements and inspection. Curbs, drainage structures, bituminous concrete pavement, traffic striping, and beam and guide rails will be part of this project as well.

For the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), the current Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) includes two road projects that will impact the portion of the Township that falls within the Regional Center. They are as follows:

- The Chimney Rock/Route 22 interchange is programmed for improvements. The design phase of this project is estimated to begin in 2004.
- Mountain Avenue to the Bridgewater Commons Mall is programmed for a pedestrian overpass structure to provide access from Somerville to the Bridgewater Commons Mall and surrounding facilities. The structure will include both steps and ADA compliant ramping as required.

It is New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) policy that all roadways except limited access highways should be bicycle compatible. The Township should work with NJDOT to retrofit state roadways.

#### ***Bus/Rail***

The public transportation in the Township of Bridgewater includes a network of bus routes and a commuter rail line. NJ Transit serves the Township for both rail and bus. There are a total of four different bus routes that serve the community.

The Bridgewater train station (formerly known as Calco) is on the southeastern edge of the Regional Center. This station is a part of the Raritan Valley line and provides service from High Bridge to Newark. From this station it takes one hour and fifteen minutes to travel to NYC Penn Station, with a switch in trains in Newark. This station has 23 eastbound trains and 26 westbound trains a day.

Bridgewater also has another station within the Regional Center. Finderne Station is located off of Finderne Avenue just east of Manville. A total of three trains a day stop at this "station". This station does not have a building or any other station features. This station is primarily left over from when the adjoining industrial areas relied on it to bring its employees to the area of work.

The goods movement industry is a major user of the transportation network in Somerset County and throughout the state. Because of the county's extensive transportation network and proximity to markets, this industry is key to its economy. Trucks are the dominant mode of freight transportation in Somerset County. However, rail freight also plays a vital role in moving goods through Somerset County. The southern portion of the Bridgewater Regional Center is crossed by rail freight lines.

#### ***General Recommendations***

- The Township should work with Somerset County to determine if there are any locations that should be considered as park and ride facilities. The feasibility of constructing park and ride lots on agreed upon locations should be assessed, particularly in the Regional Center.
- Provide short and/or long term bicycle parking in all commercial districts, in employment centers and multifamily developments, at schools, in industrial developments, at special events, in recreational areas, and transit facilities.

- Consider adopting NJDOT's Bicycle Compatible Roadways and Bikeways Planning and Design Guidelines as part of the Township of Bridgewater's Ordinances. This document is an extensive publication that provides guidance on bicycle facilities and design.
- Implement pedestrian improvements as part of all transportation improvements, including road construction, reconstruction, traffic calming, and intersection improvements, wherever feasible.
- Ensure that all projects in the Township conform to the NJDOT Pedestrian Compatible Planning and Design Guidelines. This document is an extensive publication that provides guidance on pedestrian facilities and design.
- Traffic calming techniques should be used as a tool to increase pedestrian safety and access.
- Coordinate with the county and state to identify major truck routes through and around the Township.
- Identify existing or future roadway features that are unsafe or limit the passage of trucks.
- The NJ Transit bus service (Route 114) that stops at the Commons mall should be extended into Raritan.
- Install bus shelters at designated bus stops.
- Require the preparation and submission of traffic impact studies particularly for projects of regional significance.
- Develop benchmarks which the community can gauge current and future compliance and non-compliance with overall plan goals. These may include walk mode share, pedestrian facility mileage, poor sidewalk condition, pedestrian-friendly areas guidelines, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita, vehicle air pollutant emissions, poor bridge/pavement condition, bicycle mode share, bicycle facility mileage, provision of bicycle facilities/amenities at transit hubs and other activity centers.
- Mitigate, to the extent feasible, the impact of "pass through" traffic particularly in residential neighborhoods.



## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN**

### **Introduction**

Bridgewater Township residents expect a high level of community facilities. As the Township has grown over the years, these facilities have been expanded to serve the rising population and new development. These facilities include the municipal administration as well as such essential municipal services as police, fire, emergency response, and public works. Community facilities also include educational resources such as schools and libraries, in addition to hospitals and other medical institutions. Perhaps more than any other single factor, high-quality community facilities are crucial to maintaining and enhancing the Township's desirability as a place to live, work, and conduct business.

### **Municipal Facilities**

The Township administration complex is located within the Regional Center at 700 Garretson Road. The complex, a converted school, houses municipal administrative functions. The police, municipal court, and council chambers are located in the adjacent annex. Space shortages and maintenance have been a problem in these buildings. The Township is evaluating an appropriate means for addressing the shortage of useable space in the existing municipal complex and police station. The Township is in the process of procuring a municipal building and police facility.

### **New Public Works Facility**

Bridgewater Township and the Borough of Bound Brook are working with Somerset County to develop a shared public works facility on 15 acres of property that Somerset County has purchased from Stavola Quarry along Chimney Rock Road. Bridgewater Township will also look to incorporate the maintenance operations of the Bridgewater-Raritan Board of Education into this new facility. The School Board currently has a vehicle maintenance and storage facility along Commons Way that needs to be relocated as part of the Township's efforts to enhance Commons Way. Although each entity will operate independently, cost savings will result from the centralization of this facility and the ability to share the purchase and distribution of materials.

### **Fire Protection/Emergency Response**

Fire protection in Bridgewater is provided by six volunteer fire companies: Finderne, Bradley Gardens, Country Hills, Green Knoll, Martinsville, and North Branch. Four volunteer rescue squads serve the Township: Bradley Gardens, Finderne, Green Knoll, and Martinsville. Fire and rescue dispatching is handled by Township police.

The Township has experienced a continuing difficulty finding an adequate number of volunteers to respond to daytime calls. To address this issue, the Township has encouraged Township employees to respond to first aid and rescue calls when necessary. The Township has also equipped an ambulance for these employees to use. To ensure that personnel with the required skill levels are available, these employees will receive additional emergency response training.

### **Schools**

Public elementary and secondary education in the Township is provided by the Bridgewater-Raritan Regional District, which serves both Bridgewater and the Borough of Raritan. Two schools are

located within the Bridgewater section of the Regional Center: Bridgewater-Raritan High School on Garretson Road and Adamsville Elementary School on Union Avenue. The two schools in the Regional Center were constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. The high school has been expanded several times since initial construction.

Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District Enrollment			
Grades	1996 Enrollment	2004 Enrollment	2008 Enrollment (projected)
K-3	2,204	2,766	2,840
4-5	1,006	1,403	1,555
6-8	1,354	2,150	2,270
9-12	1,677	2,523	2,954

Source: Bridgewater-Raritan Regional School District

The above table shows actual enrollment in 1996 and 2004 and projected enrollment in 2008. The school district has been experiencing rapid enrollment growth in recent years and expects this high rate of growth to continue in the intermediate, middle, and high school grades. To cope with this increase in the student population, the district recently completed expansions to Bridgewater-Raritan High School.

The district developed a long range facilities plan that was state approved in January 2003. As part of the plan, a new K-4 school is to be constructed along with classroom additions to the two intermediate schools and two primary schools. Three gymnasiums are to be added to three primary schools. These projects were approved by voters in March 2003. Reconfiguration of K-8 schools will take place upon completion of these projects. Current pre-K to grade 3 schools would become K-4; the intermediate schools would become 5-6 rather than 4-5 and the middle school would become 7-8 rather than 6-8.

Somerset County provides vocational and technical education within Bridgewater. The Somerset County Vocational and Technical High School, serving grades 9-12, is located at North Bridge Street and Vogt Drive, near the Bridgewater Library within the Regional Center. The facility provides vocational and technical training, an alternative high school, and a variety of customized courses. The school also has programs open to high school graduates.

**Libraries**

The Bridgewater Library is operated by the Somerset County Library System and serves as the main headquarters for the system. The facility is located within the Regional Center at 1 Vogt Drive, off of Bridge Street north of Route 287. This facility, which was renovated and expanded in 2001, is one of nine branches and stations operated by the library system throughout Somerset County.

**Hospitals**

The closest full-service hospital to Bridgewater is the Somerville Medical Center, located within the Regional Center in the Borough of Somerville. The 365 bed medical center provides a diverse range of outpatient, inpatient, and community services.

**County Mental Health Center**

The Somerset County Mental Health Center, located at 500 North Bridge Street within the Regional Center, provides comprehensive services for county residents experiencing mental or emotional illness. Outpatient care, 24-hour acute care, an adult care program, school liaison services, and an adolescent program are among the services provided.

**Shared Services**

For many years, Bridgewater Township has pursued shared services agreements with the Bridgewater-Raritan school district, surrounding municipalities, and other government entities. The Township actively pursues shared services within the Departments of Public Works, Parks, Recreation, Health, Emergency Services, Volunteer Fire Companies, Emergency Management and Police. In addition, the Township belongs to several cooperative municipal organizations that pool resources to increase efficiency. These include Somerset County Joint Insurance Fund, SASSA and Somerset Joint Purchasing Cooperative. The act of sharing municipal services is a time-tested practice that increases efficiency and reduces the tax burden. The Township continues to look for additional shared services opportunities.

**Recommendations**

- For some time, the Township has been considering upgrading or replacing the existing municipal complex. In analyzing alternative strategies for providing a new or rebuilt municipal complex, the Township should consider factors relevant to the Regional Center, including access to other community facilities and residential areas within the Regional Center. The possibility of pursuing additional shared services with surrounding municipalities or Somerset County should also continue to be explored.
- Police, fire, and emergency response services should continue to be monitored to ensure that adequate service is provided as the Regional Center grows. Opportunities for shared services should be continued and be explored.
- The Bridgewater Library should be considered a core community facility serving the Regional Center. The County Library must be maintained at a level that will adequately serve both the immediate community and the broader region. Strengthening reciprocal sharing programs between the Bridgewater Library and other community facilities in the Township should be encouraged.
- The pursuit of additional shared services agreements should continue to be a priority. The Township has experienced success in recent years in sharing staff, equipment, and facilities with other governments. These efforts should be continued and expanded wherever possible.
- The Township has developed an agreement with Somerset County to locate a shared public works facility at the Stavola Quarry.



**PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE PLAN**

The Township of Bridgewater contains an extensive amount of parks, recreation and open space. The extent and level of parks, recreation and open space can have a significant impact on residents’ quality of life. Bridgewater has a total of 3,942 acres of parks, recreation and open space. Greater than half of the Township’s recreation land is passively used, one-quarter is used for active recreation and the remaining land is undeveloped. This contributes to a large, diverse and high-quality parks, recreation and open space system available to Township residents.

Of the 3,942 acres of parks, recreation and open space, over 455 acres or 11% are located in the Regional Center. This land is owned by the Township, Somerset County, Somerville and private and semi-public entities. In addition, over 38 acres are in farmland assessment.

Table 1 Parks, Recreation and Open Space Somerset County Regional Center Bridgewater Township	
Ownership	Acres
Bridgewater Township	56.3
New Jersey	0
Somerset County	137.3
Private or Semi-Public	170.5
Farmland Assessment	38.7
Somerville Borough	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>455.8</b>
<i>Source: 2000 Bridgewater Township Open Space and Recreation Master Plan</i>	

Table 2 Active Recreation Facility Somerset County Regional Center Bridgewater Township, 2002					
No. keyed to map	Facility	Block	Lot	Acres	Amenities
1	Green Knoll Field and Park	411.01	41	4.4	Ball fields, soccer, restrooms
2	Slattery Park/ Kidstreet	411.01	42	4.0	Playground, restrooms
3	Somerville Manor	518	6-11	2.2	Ball fields, basketball, playground
4	Prince Rodgers Baseball Complex	515		19.0	Little league fields, full-sized ball field, parking, walking trail
5	North Bridge Street	515.01	1,4	4.3	Playground, ball fields, soccer, restrooms
6	Dartmouth Avenue	222	29	1.6	
7	Belair Place	245	1	1.3	Playground, basketball, ball fields
8	Finderne Avenue	254	16	2.0	
9	Harry Ally	254	10.01, 11, 29-44	15.0	Playground, tennis, basketball, ball fields, soccer, roller hockey, walking trail, restrooms
10	Kline Place	255	36	2.5	
	Total			50.2	

*Source: 2000 Bridgewater Township Open Space and Recreation Master Plan*

Table 2 lists the Township’s existing active and passive sites located in the Regional Center which represent approximately 56.3 acres of Bridgewater land. There is a total of over 50.2 acres of active recreation facilities in the Bridgewater Regional Center. Some of the larger parcels within the Regional Center include Harry Alley Park in Finderne, and Prince Rodgers Baseball Complex. The three passive recreation sites, Dartmouth Avenue, Finderne Avenue and Kline Place, total over six acres in the Regional Center.

### State of New Jersey

The State of New Jersey owns 44 acres along the North Branch of the Raritan River in the Township of Bridgewater for watershed protection. This area is located in the Bradley Gardens section of the Township, southwest of the Regional Center. As expansion of the Raritan River Greenway extends outside of the Regional Center towards Duke Island Park, it is important to create links to the State owned property.

Bridgewater Township and Somerville Borough are working together to extend a greenway along Peters Brook into Bridgewater Township from Somerville. This will include providing a pedestrian overpass at Route 202-206 to connect Somerville with Clark Woods. This greenway would follow Peter's Brook onto the Bridgewater-Raritan High School property. A connection should also be pursued from the Commons Mall onto Prince Rodgers Avenue to connect the recreational facilities in that area. The greenway would then continue across North Bridge Street where with the cooperation of Somerset County, it could be extended along Vogt Drive and Somerville Road to the Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School.

### Somerset County Land

The Township of Bridgewater has over 137 acres of parks, recreation and open space under County ownership which are located in the Regional Center. The various County properties are used for active and passive recreation as well as open space. The following proposal is within the Regional Center.

- Somerset County's plan for the creation of a new park along the Raritan River south of Loeser Avenue. The concept plans propose a mix of active and passive uses. Needed baseball and softball fields are part of this proposal, in addition to multi-purpose fields that can be used to meet a growing demand for field hockey, lacrosse and Pop Warner Football. Access issues should be addressed as the plan is moved forward. This is a proposal that merits consideration and should be further pursued to determine its feasibility.

### Somerset County Bikeway Plan

Somerset County does not have a Countywide Bikeways Plan, however in 1998 they partnered with Ridewise, the County's Transportation Management Association, in a mapping effort that rated the County roads for compatibility with biking. The map showed the major opportunities for linking activity centers and County park facilities.

The County should continue this effort and work with Bridgewater Township to create bicycle trails and links to existing trails along the Middle Brook, Raritan River Greenway, Peter's Brook and North Branch. A future bikeway should link established neighborhoods and commercial areas to parks and trails throughout Bridgewater and the Regional Center.

### **Private or Semi- Public Land**

Within the Bridgewater Township portion of the Regional Center, there is approximately 170 acres of private and semi-public recreation lands which contribute to the overall quality of life. These facilities help relieve pressure on the existing Bridgewater Township parks and recreation facilities. Their status should be monitored to ensure preservation, especially as development pressures increase in the region. As a result, the Township should consider possible acquisition, purchase of easements and development rights and/or converting these properties to public use.

### **Somerville Borough Land**

The Borough of Somerville owns a 31.5 acre site known as Clark's Woods within the Township of Bridgewater Regional Center that serves as a recreation facility for both Somerville Borough and Bridgewater Township. Clark's Woods is located near the Somerville Circle.

### **Redevelopment Focus Areas**

The Township of Bridgewater has several redevelopment and land use focus areas that have been identified through the Somerset County Regional Center Vision Initiative and further confirmed in the Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Master Plan Issues Report. These are the Bridgewater Core and the East Gateway. The land use plan recommends incorporating parks, recreation and open space into their redevelopment plans. This includes small parks, passive open space and greenway connections.

#### ***Bridgewater Core***

The Bridgewater Core area, while almost completely developed with the Bridgewater Municipal Complex, Bridgewater Commons Mall and the Somerset Corporate Center, can be improved with potential trails and greenway linkages from the Bridgewater Regional High School, nearby Somerset County Vo-Tech facilities, Raritan Valley Country Club and Somerville. The open space surrounding the Bridgewater Commons Mall can be enhanced by connecting southeast to Peter's Brook and east-west through a green boulevard on Commons Way and Prince Rodgers Avenue. A network of active and passive recreation facilities can be successfully achieved by connecting the existing commercial, civic and services areas within the Bridgewater Core to other nearby greenways, recreation facilities, schools and open space parcels.

#### ***East Gateway***

In general, this redevelopment focus area can be enhanced through appropriate passive recreation such as a greenway along the Middle Brook and Cuckholds' Brook and a future connection south to the Raritan River Greenway. Discussions are ongoing with the current owners of the American Cyanamid property relating to the development of recreational uses. This is a proposal that merits serious consideration and should be encouraged.

### Raritan River Greenway

There are several major greenways within the Township of Bridgewater. These include the North Branch of the Raritan River, Peter's Brook, Mac's Brook, Ross Brook, and Cuckholds' Brook. They offer valuable recreation opportunities as well as potential greenway linkages throughout the Regional Center. The Somerset County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, and the Somerset County Regional Center Vision Initiative, encourages the creation of local greenways that will connect municipal facilities, neighborhoods or other areas of local interest.

The creation of a Raritan River Greenway is a centerpiece of the Regional Center Vision Initiative. The Greenway has been described as the most significant natural resource and potential recreation amenity in the Township and the Regional Center. The completion, connection and extension of the Raritan River Greenway is encouraged. Major components of the Greenway include the following:

- Creation of a regional active and passive recreation complex serving the Regional Center and its member municipalities.
- Provision of active recreation facilities including ball fields, courts, and walking/biking trails.
- Establishment of open space areas and passive recreation opportunities including seating, viewing areas, and wooded land.
- Expansion of waterfront access for fishing, canoeing, and other water related activities.
- Preservation of flooding and flood hazard zones for conservation purposes.

The Raritan River Greenway is a foundation of Bridgewater's future park, recreation and open space system and its creation will address future demand for new facilities.

### Recommendations

- Preserve and enhance existing park, recreation and open space by providing new amenities, creating connections/linkages and maximizing use.
- Work with the County, Regional Center Partnership and the Regional Center municipalities to plan for and locate a regional recreation facility.
- Implement the Raritan River Greenway and branch greenways to increase parks, recreation and open space and connect the Township to Regional Center communities.
- Incorporate parks, recreation, open space and greenway systems into major redevelopment areas such as the Bridgewater Core and the East Gateway.
- Pursue inter-local agreements, cost-sharing and pooled funding with Somerville and Raritan to implement parks, recreation and open space improvements.
- Create a Green Streets program to enhance public spaces and rights-of-way through the addition of street trees.

- Establish pedestrian linkages between schools, community facilities, neighborhood areas and downtown commercial cores.
- Link the parks, recreation and open space in the Regional Center portion of the Township with those outside of the boundaries of the Regional Center.
- Implement a sign program to identify open space, recreational facilities, greenways and trails.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS**

### **State Development and Redevelopment Plan**

The Bridgewater Township Regional Center Element was prepared as part of the Regional Center Strategic Plan, an initiative that is intended to implement the policies of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan in Somerset County. The Somerset Regional Center, consisting of a portion of Bridgewater as well as Raritan and Somerville, was the first Regional Center to be designated by the State Planning Commission. Since that initial designation in 1996, a new State Development and Redevelopment Plan has been adopted, and the process which led to the preparation of this document was launched.

### *Goals*

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan includes eight statewide goals:

- Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns
- Conserve the State's Natural Resources and Systems
- Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of New Jersey
- Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution
- Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost
- Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost
- Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value
- Ensure Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide

These goals are intended to fulfill the vision of the State Planning Act in which development and economic growth are encouraged in suitable locations with existing infrastructure, sprawl is reduced, and areas of environmental quality are preserved. This Regional Center element strives to implement the overall goals of the State Plan. It sets forth policies which further the revitalization of established neighborhoods in the Township and identifies a core area in which to focus further growth and development. This element also recommends policies which protect the Township's environmental assets.

The Regional Center, including Bridgewater Township, is located inside State Planning Area 1, the Metropolitan Planning Area, which consists of existing developed areas with substantial amounts of existing infrastructure. This designation classifies Bridgewater Township as a location that is to be made a high priority for redevelopment, as per state policy.

### *Policies*

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan also includes 19 Policies which provide detailed recommendations on the process and tools to be used to implement the goals. As part of the Regional Center Strategic Plan initiative, this Regional Center element advances many of these policies in tangible ways. In particular, the policies related to Urban Revitalization, Comprehensive Planning, Water Resources, and Design are addressed.

The element fulfills the goals of Statewide Policy #2, Comprehensive Planning, in being fully integrated with the Master Plan Updates for the adjacent municipalities of Raritan and Somerville, and in contributing to the Regional Center Strategic Plan, which creates a single coherent vision for the entire Center.

Additional Statewide Policies which are tangibly advanced by this Regional Center element include:

- #3: Public Investment Priorities: This element recommends that public resources be used to upgrade infrastructure to maintain and enhance the value and quality of life of existing developed neighborhoods within a designated Center.
- #8: Transportation: This element recommends transportation investments that improve access to the regional transit system.
- #11: Water Resources: This element seeks to protect the Raritan River and its tributaries through the designation of greenways along stream corridors.
- #12: Open Lands and Natural Systems: By providing connecting corridors throughout the region, the proposed Raritan River Greenway will protect environmentally sensitive areas and provide expanded habitat for a variety of species.
- #14: Waste Management, Recycling, and Brownfields: This element promotes the cleanup and reuse of the American Cyanamid site, an existing Brownfield site within the Township.
- #19: Design. This element promotes the addition of environmental design features to the Bridgewater Core which will improve the environment for pedestrians. It also proposes planning initiatives in established Bridgewater neighborhoods which will identify community design improvements to maintain and enhance the quality of life of those areas.

### **Communities outside the Regional Center**

In addition to the Regional Center municipalities of Somerville and Raritan, the Regional Center section of Bridgewater Township borders five municipalities. Bodies of water separate Bridgewater Regional Center from all surrounding municipalities.

#### ***Borough of Manville***

On its southeast, Bridgewater borders the Borough of Manville, a historic town which has experienced extensive redevelopment since the floods caused by Hurricane Floyd in 1999. The Raritan River and its floodplains separate Bridgewater from an established residential district and a former industrial area, which has recently been redeveloped. Intermunicipal impacts are limited here by the necessity of preserving a wide floodplain. However, redevelopment both in Manville and in Bridgewater will generate increased traffic on Finderne Avenue, which links the two communities across the Raritan River. Signage and design treatments should be applied to this boundary to inform travelers that they are entering Bridgewater and the Regional Center. It should be noted that Manville has been designated a Town Center by the State Planning Commission.

#### ***Franklin Township***

The Raritan River separates Bridgewater Township from Franklin Township on the southeast. This area of Bridgewater will remain with limited development as it is subject to severe environmental

constraints and is separated from the rest of Bridgewater Township by a rail corridor. The Raritan River Greenway proposed for this area of Bridgewater will enhance the environmental values of the river throughout the region.

#### ***Borough of Bound Brook***

Like Manville, the Borough of Bound Brook is a historic community which was severely impacted by flooding associated with Hurricane Floyd. Bound Brook, which borders the Finderne section of Bridgewater on the east, has also proposed extensive redevelopment since the flooding occurred. The Middle Brook and Route 287 provide a sharp edge separating Bound Brook from Bridgewater. Bound Brook and South Bound Brook have been designated a joint Town Center by the State Planning Commission.

Most of Bound Brook's border with Bridgewater consists of well-established residential development. Bound Brook's Redevelopment Vision Plan proposes a greenway park along The Middle Brook, which coordinates with the Regional Center vision of a Raritan Greenway along the river and several of its tributaries. As part of the redevelopment efforts, the Middlebrook Shopping Center has been constructed in Bound Brook near the Bridgewater border on Route 28. Increased traffic from this project, which is in Bound Brook's Regional Business Zone, and other redevelopment projects in Bound Brook's Central Business District, will continue to impact the Finderne section of Bridgewater. At the same time, redevelopment proposals in Finderne will continue to impact Bound Brook.

#### ***Hillsborough Township***

A small portion of Bridgewater borders Hillsborough Township on the south. The Raritan River forms the boundary between the two Townships. This area, proposed for a portion of the Raritan Greenway in Bridgewater, is zoned Agricultural in Hillsborough, and is subject to environmental constraints on both sides of the border. No cross border impacts are expected from the policies of either Township.

#### ***Communities within the Regional Center***

This Regional Center element is consistent with the Regional Center Strategic Plan for Bridgewater, Somerville, and Raritan. The Goals and Recommendations included in this document support the broader Goals and Recommendations of the Strategic Plan.

The Regional Center Strategic Plan, of which this element is an integral part, provides a coordinated framework for planning for its three constituent municipalities. The recommendations in this element are based on three years of meetings and discussions, beginning with the Somerset County Regional Center Vision Initiative in 1999. Though this element includes recommendations that apply specifically to Bridgewater, its recommendations transcend a purely local focus in that they reflect not only the existing and future conditions within Bridgewater, but also those within Somerville and Raritan.

As a result of the process leading to its completion, every recommendation in this element is based on a recognition of the connections between policies recommended for Bridgewater and those recommended for Raritan and Somerville, and vice versa. For example, it proposes a greenway system that traverses the entire Regional Center. It also recommends that the Central Business Districts of Somerville and Raritan can more appropriately fill the role of Downtown for the Regional Center than the Bridgewater case. Because each element of this element recognizes the relationship between existing and future conditions in Bridgewater and those in Somerville and Raritan, there is no need to address separately the relationship between this element and those of Somerville and Raritan.