



TOWNSHIP OF LONG HILL
DOWNTOWN VALLEY
COMMERCIAL DISTRICT (B-D)
ELEMENT of the
MASTER PLAN

Prepared for:
The Long Hill Township
Planning Board
24 January 2017

Kevin O'Brien

Kevin O'Brien, P.P., A.I.C.P.
Shamrock Enterprises, Ltd.
NJ License #5348

**LONG HILL TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD RESOLUTION**

Adopting the Downtown Valley Commercial District
Element of the Long Hill Master Plan

WHEREAS, the Valley Road Business District Element of the Master Plan was adopted in September, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board determined at its July 12, 2016 meeting that a reexamination of the Valley Road Business District Element of the Master Plan was warranted; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board discussed the issue of residential uses at that meeting and at subsequent meetings; and

WHEREAS, the Long Hill Township Planning Board has given considerable thought to the prior Element based upon public comment and Township Committee comments and has prepared a new Downtown Valley Commercial District Element of the Master Plan with the assistance of Board Planner Kevin O'Brien; and

WHEREAS, the Valley Commercial District Element has been discussed by the Planning Board at a noticed public hearing on 24 January 2017:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Long Hill Township Planning Board hereby adopts the January 2017 Downtown Valley Commercial District Element of the Master Plan, as referenced above; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Planning Board Secretary be directed to send a copy of the adopted report with this resolution to the Morris County Planning Board and to the clerks of each adjoining municipality.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Those in Favor: Those Opposed: I, Nancy Probst, Planning Board Secretary of the Township of Long Hill in the County of Morris, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Planning Board at a regular meeting held on the 24th day of January 2017.

Dated: 24 January 2017

Nancy Probst
Planning Board Secretary

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	13
I. INTRODUCTION	2
II. VISION STATEMENT	2
III. RECOMMENDATIONS	3
1. Zoning Changes	4
2. Attracting Quality Businesses to Downtown	4
3. Community Improvements	5
4. Environmental Improvements.....	5
5. Roadway Improvements.....	5
6. Design and Architectural Standards	6
7. Downtown Recreation and Leisure Activities	6
IV CONCLUSION.....	6
V APPENDIX	
A. Maps	7
1. Current Zoning	7
2. Proposed Zoning	8
3. Flood Hazard Areas	9
B. Township Committee and Boards	107

I. INTRODUCTION

This Master Plan Element shall be known as the **Downtown Valley Commercial District** Plan herein referenced as “Downtown” and encompasses the area in and around Valley Road between Main Avenue and Morristown Road, Plainfield and Bay Street as shown in Map 2. The purpose of this reexamination of the Master Plan Element is to recommend changes that reflect how Downtown Long Hill should look, feel and function.

Millington Village, Stirling Village and the Meyersville Hamlet each have their distinctive centers unique to their respective areas. We believe that the Downtown Valley Commercial District will grow into a more orderly and thriving center supporting the Township and the general vicinity.

Currently primary business activity is situated along Valley Road and consists of two shopping centers and individual development including retail, office, limited industrial and residential uses as shown on the current Zoning Map labeled Map 1. The architectural style and visual look and feel of the area reflects decades of un-planned development, resulting in an unattractive, unharmonious mix of newer buildings co-existing with older structures. As part of that development, Valley Road was widened over the years creating the anomaly of a multilane highway section incongruously placed in the midst of what is still a two-lane, tree-canopied street throughout the rest of the township. Residents have long expressed a desire for a central open concept shopping square that is conducive to strolling, outdoor eating, and relaxing and that has access to parking outside of the immediate shopping area.

Since the 2012 Valley Road Business District Element was written, several changes have taken place that reinforce the concept of a downtown oriented planning area. The most noticeable have been the creation of the Mathew G. Kantor Memorial Park and the large tract of land known as Central Park located at the northeast corner of Downtown with plans to develop walking paths and new recreational facilities. The Township is also considering the purchase of deteriorated buildings at the southwest corner of Valley Road and Main Avenue to develop a pocket park and gateway into the Downtown.

II. VISION STATEMENT

The vision for Downtown Long Hill is that of a vibrant hub of community activity. We envision a future in which the area is highly accessible to pedestrians through connecting pathways and sidewalks. Downtown will be a place where people will come

to stroll, shop, work, attend cultural and entertainment events, enjoy food and drink, and conduct civic and other business activities.

Downtown should be planned to strengthen its role as an economically sustainable commercial center that provides many of the goods and services that Township residents need on a daily basis and also be a magnet to people from the surrounding region.

Consistent with this vision, traffic patterns should be redesigned to allow this area to evolve into a community focal point rather than just a through road. It should evoke a sense of place on a human scale consistent with the semi-rural nature of the remainder of the town and especially the tree-lined residential sections of Valley Road to the east and west of Downtown. As opportunities arise through redevelopment in the future, consideration should be given to complete street approaches that enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation. East-west links parallel to Valley Road, like Bay Street, should be created for non-automobile passage between areas within Downtown. In the future, appropriate north-south connections between Downtown and the other Township centers should be established, such as between the public uses on either side of Valley Road west of Morristown Road. Long Hill Township's dedication to a semi-rural community should be evidenced in our Downtown by our dedication to environmentally friendly and green building practices as well as a park like setting with tree lined streets and a sensitive balance between economic viability and environmental friendliness.

We recognize that sections of Downtown flood as demonstrated by the five (5) one hundred year storms Long Hill Township has experienced since 2000. Flood hazard areas are shown on Map 3. In addition, Valley Road is surrounded by flood hazard areas of the Passaic River and its tributaries. As a result, this Master Plan highly recommends the utilization of stormwater control and management and other appropriate flood mitigation practices to ensure that the area remains commercially viable.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following changes support the Vision Statement above and are based on a background study completed by the Master Plan Committee entitled "A Study of the Primary Business Zones and their uses along and surrounding Valley Road in the

Township of Long Hill”, March, 2015. Seventeen meetings between September 2014 and March 2015 were held that led to the Vision Statement.

1. Zoning Changes

1. Combine portions of the B-2, B-3, LI-2 and O Zones along Valley Road into a new Business Downtown Zone (B-D) to allow office, commercial and retail uses.
2. Insure that the land use ordinance permits uses in the B-D zone that are substantially similar to the currently permitted uses in the B-2, B-3 and O zones, and expands uses to include those typically permitted in a downtown area.
3. Eliminate the LI-2 Limited Industrial Zone on Valley Road.
4. Define a Planned Shopping Overlay (PSO) that has bulk standards that are substantially similar to the previous B-3 zone. Use this overlay where the B-3 zone currently exists to continue existing permitted uses and bulk standards in the Shop Rite Mall and Valley Mall.
5. Define a small lot Residential Zone (R-5) in the area along Metzler Place near the corner of Plainfield Road as shown on Map 2.
6. Define a Valley Industrial Overlay Zone (VIO) as shown on Map 2. The intent of this overlay is to bring those affected properties into compliance with the Zoning Ordinance without allowing additional industrial uses in the future. The only permitted uses should be those existing currently - garden supply, warehouse, small-scale manufacturing and small-scale construction.
7. Add the lots at the intersection of Valley Road and Main Avenue to the Conservation Zone (C) as indicated on Map 2 because the area is prone to localized and very severe flooding.
8. Correct a small split zone line issue that bisects an existing building on Block 10515, Lot 1.01. The adjustment will remove the split zone line that currently runs through the building and will zone the entire building and property B-D.
9. Revise the prohibited uses list of the land use ordinance to ensure that appropriate Downtown business activities are encouraged in the B-D Zone.
10. Add an overlay zone to be called the Passaic Valley Overlay on the south side of Valley Road and north of Bay Street between Poplar Drive and Plainfield Road which would allow an increase in lot cover up and lesser setbacks between principal buildings to encourage shared parking and fewer curb cuts.

2. Attracting Quality Businesses to Downtown

1. Improve Township facilities such as sidewalks, pocket parks, benches, pathways, public parking, Downtown-oriented signage and sewer availability to encourage and attract high quality businesses to the area.
2. Develop Plainfield Road from Valley Road to Metzler Road as a commercial area consistent with the Vision for the rest of Downtown.

3. Establish a Downtown epicenter between Poplar and Plainfield and develop this area into a desirable place to visit. Encourage visitors to park-and-walk by removing natural or manmade barriers that inhibit the free flow of pedestrians between businesses.
4. Encourage businesses to utilize recreational opportunities on the Passaic River.

3. Community Improvements

1. Do not permit single family detached residences or any other residential uses on the first floor within the B-D Zone.
2. Allow visitor lodging such as a bed and breakfast and/or a small hotel.
3. Connect the Library and Town Hall to Valley Mall to encourage walking traffic.
4. Provide sidewalks or walking paths to connect surrounding residential zones to the Downtown area.
5. Create a walking and biking pathway between Downtown and Stirling Village.

4. Environmental Improvements

1. Mitigate flood damage through stormwater control and management and other appropriate flood remediation practices to enable the Downtown to be a viable commercial area. See Map 3 for flood hazard areas.
2. Require pedestrian-friendly amenities such as suitable street furniture where appropriate for all new Downtown projects.
3. Require recycling and bicycle parking facilities for new projects where appropriate.
4. Ensure that new development and redevelopment within the B-D Zone maximizes tree and vegetative planting in accordance with the comprehensive Township landscape plan. This will promote softening and greening the area.
5. Encourage “Green” building practices and LEED building practices.
6. Add an overlay zone to be called the Passaic Valley Overlay on the south side of Valley Road and north of Bay Street between Poplar Drive and Plainfield Road which would allow an increase in lot cover up and lesser setbacks between principal buildings to encourage shared parking and fewer curb cuts.

5. Roadway Improvements

1. Connect Bay Street to Plainfield Road to create a walkable Downtown loop and develop the area to encourage a “park and stay”, “pedestrian and bicycle-friendly” environment.
2. Encourage use of existing signalization for new development and discourage new signalization of intersections on Valley Road. Where possible, replace existing standard stop lights and other street fixtures with more attractive context sensitive fixtures.

3. Encourage a balance and mix of uses that will support each other to promote "park and stay" shopping behavior.
4. Reduce the number of entrances, driveways and curb cuts within Downtown while encouraging interconnections between parking areas through strategies such as shared parking and revised bulk requirements that do not adversely affect stormwater runoff.
5. Retain Valley Road as a two-lane road with appropriate turning lanes.

6. Design and Architectural Standards

1. Require parking to the rear and side of buildings.
2. Adjust the front yard setback in Downtown to bring buildings closer to the street, evoking a Downtown feel.
3. Use uniform signage to increase the visibility of prominent destinations such as "Downtown Long Hill".
4. Building entrances should face roadways or wide pedestrian pathways.
5. Encourage lot consolidation.
6. Encourage in-fill development.
7. Continue existing lighting Ordinance standards to cut down on excessive light.
8. Ensure both property development and re-development follows township architectural standards.
9. Require design standards, as part of the zone district Ordinances, to insure that the look and feel of the zone district achieve the goals of this Master Plan Element.
10. Encourage second floor commercial use to minimize lot cover with shared parking strategies and possible increase in Floor Area Ratio (FAR).

7. Downtown Recreation and Leisure Activities

1. Increase recreational opportunities along the Passaic River.
2. Encourage establishment of an open outdoor area to use for dining, local art, music and other events as a way to highlight Downtown.
3. Develop pocket parks within Downtown.
4. Consider using environmentally constrained lands in and around the new B-D zone for possible recreation uses and leisure activities in partnership with land owners and consider whether bulk bonuses would help to develop those lands responsibly.

IV CONCLUSION

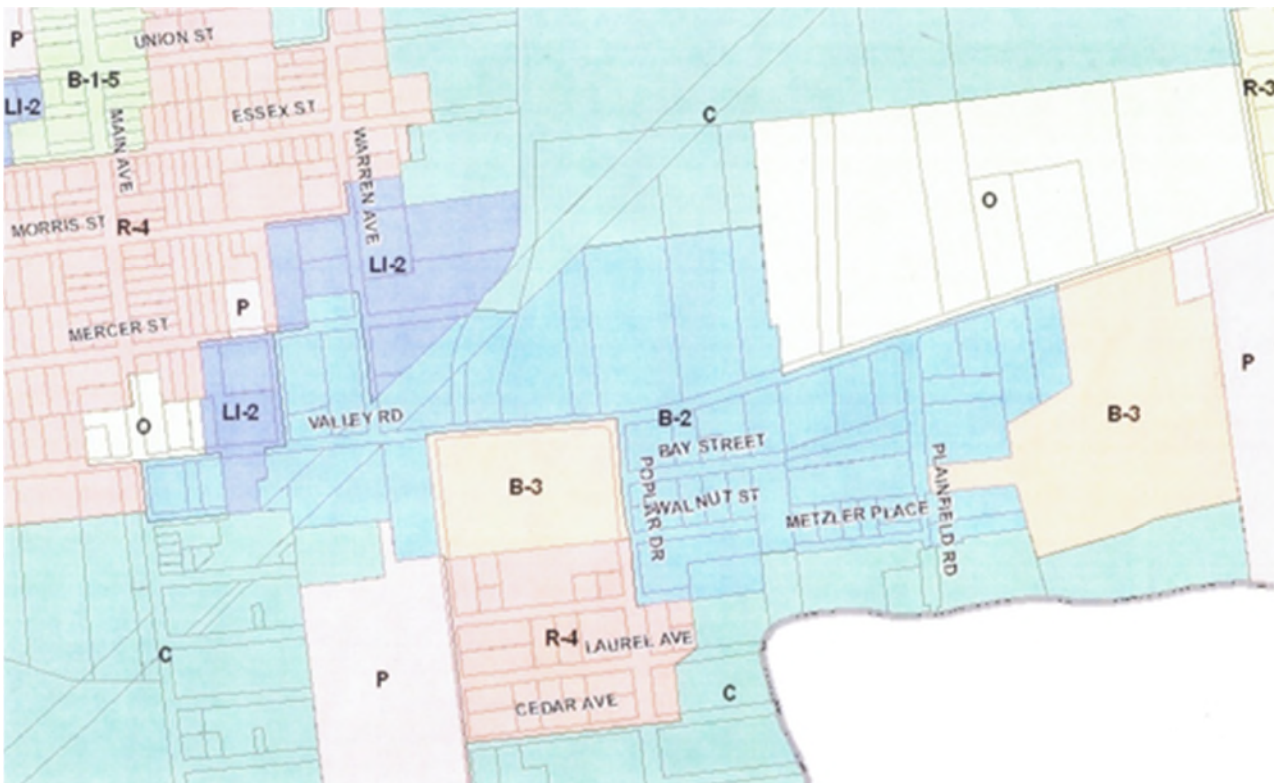
Long Hill Township consists of five distinct areas - Gillette, Homestead Park, Meyersville, Millington and Stirling. The five stars on the Township seal reflect these individual sections but together they become the Long Hill Township that our citizens know and love.

The center of business activity for all of Long Hill and surrounding towns has been the business district along Valley Road. But, until now, that business district has been divided into six distinct zoning districts, with different purposes and standards. The goal of this Element of the Master Plan is to encourage development of this vital corridor and center of commerce in a comprehensive way to assure that a sustainable, aesthetically pleasing, successful and vibrant downtown area continues to remain the economic center of the community.

V. APPENDIX

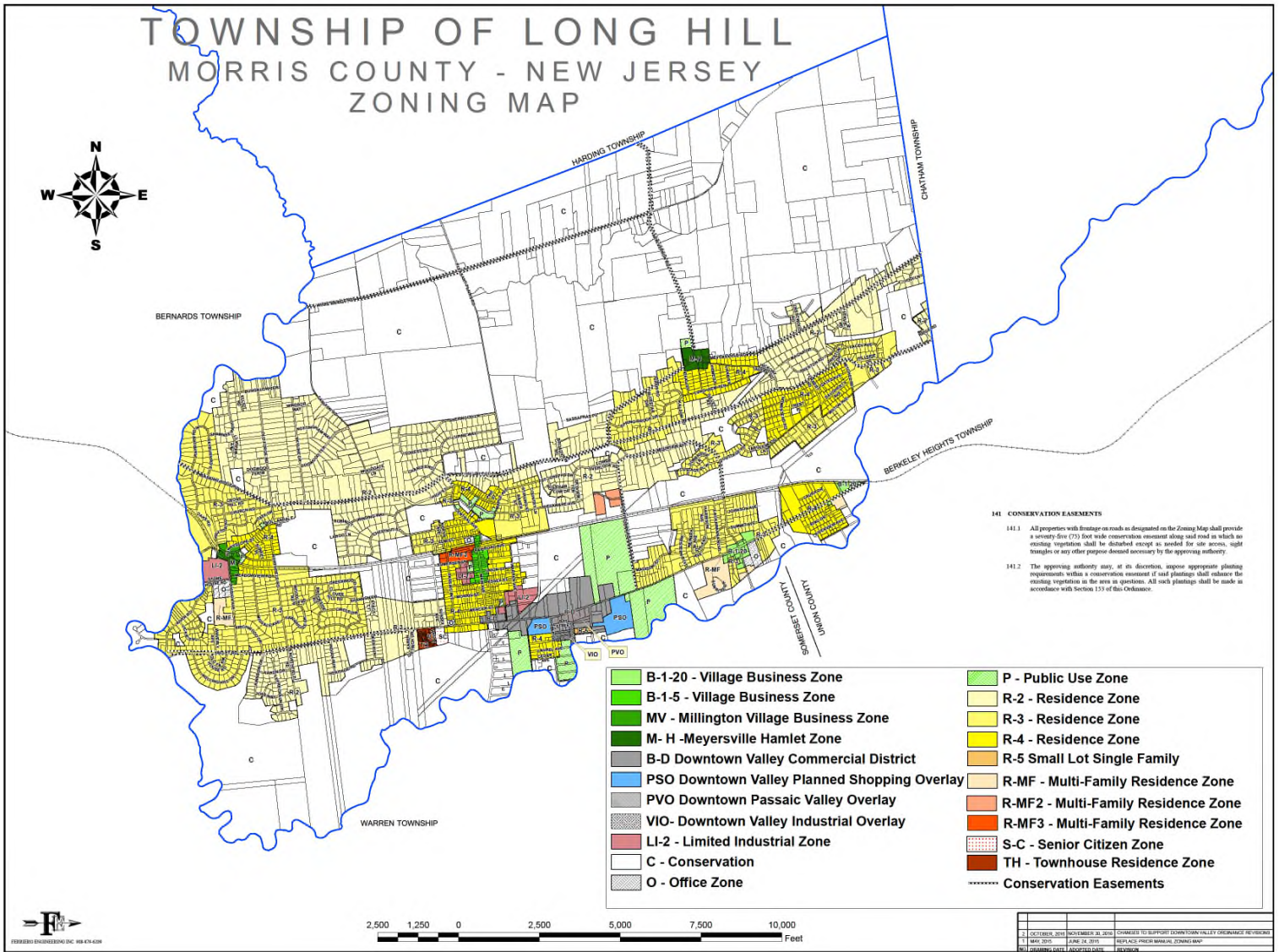
A. MAPS

1. *Area zones based on ordinances as of 1 September 2015*

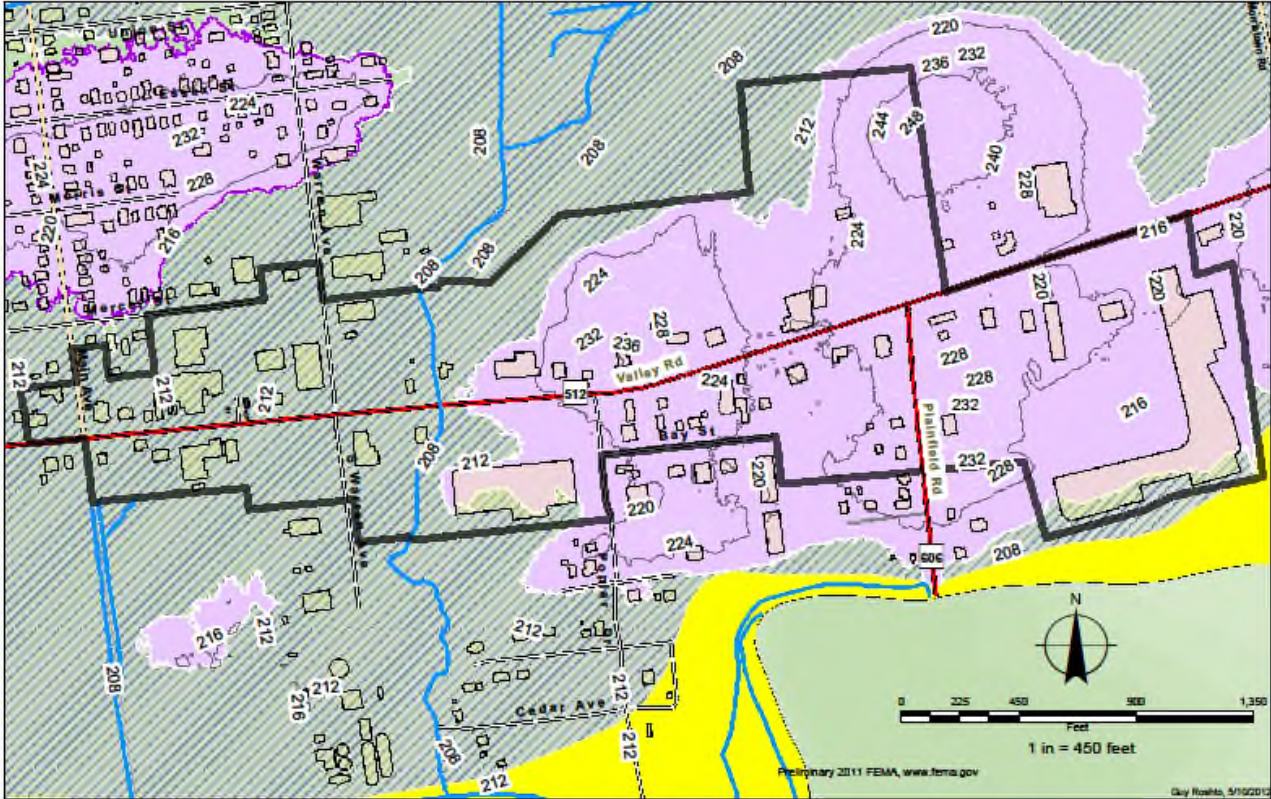


Zoning Map showing current zoning districts along Valley Road. Original prepared by Justin Lizza, P.E., Township Engineer in 2008. Copied from Valley Road Business District Element of the Master Plan dated 26 June 2012.

2. Adopted Zones in the Downtown Districts, November 2016



3. Flood Hazard Areas



Long Hill Township Flood Hazard Area Valley Road BD Zone

Flood Hazard Legend	
	Floodway
	Floodway
	100 Year
	500 Year

The information provided on this map was gathered from various sources and has not been independently verified for accuracy. This map is provided as general information and is not to be relied upon for the purpose of providing precise information on flood related boundaries, streets, buildings, or other existing features.

B. TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE AND BOARD MEMBERS

The Planning Board thanks the many concerned citizens who gave their time, dedication and knowledge to the Valley Commercial District Element of the Master Plan process. We also give our thanks to the selfless volunteers who make up the following bodies:

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

Cornel Schuler, Mayor
Brendan Rae, Deputy Mayor
Matthew Dorsi
Bruce Meringolo
Guy Piserchia

PLANNING BOARD

Alan Pfeil, Chair
David Hands, Vice Chair
Cornel Schuler, Mayor
Brendan Rae, Committeeman
Patrick Jones
Tom Malinousky
Ashish Moholkar
Don Richardson
Dennis Sandow

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Edwin F. Gerecht, Jr., Chair
Michael Pesce, Vice Chair
Jerry Aroneo
Tom Grosskopf
Brian Johnson
Richard Keegan
Michael O'Mullan
Jeffrey Wills