

Vision 2020

Report

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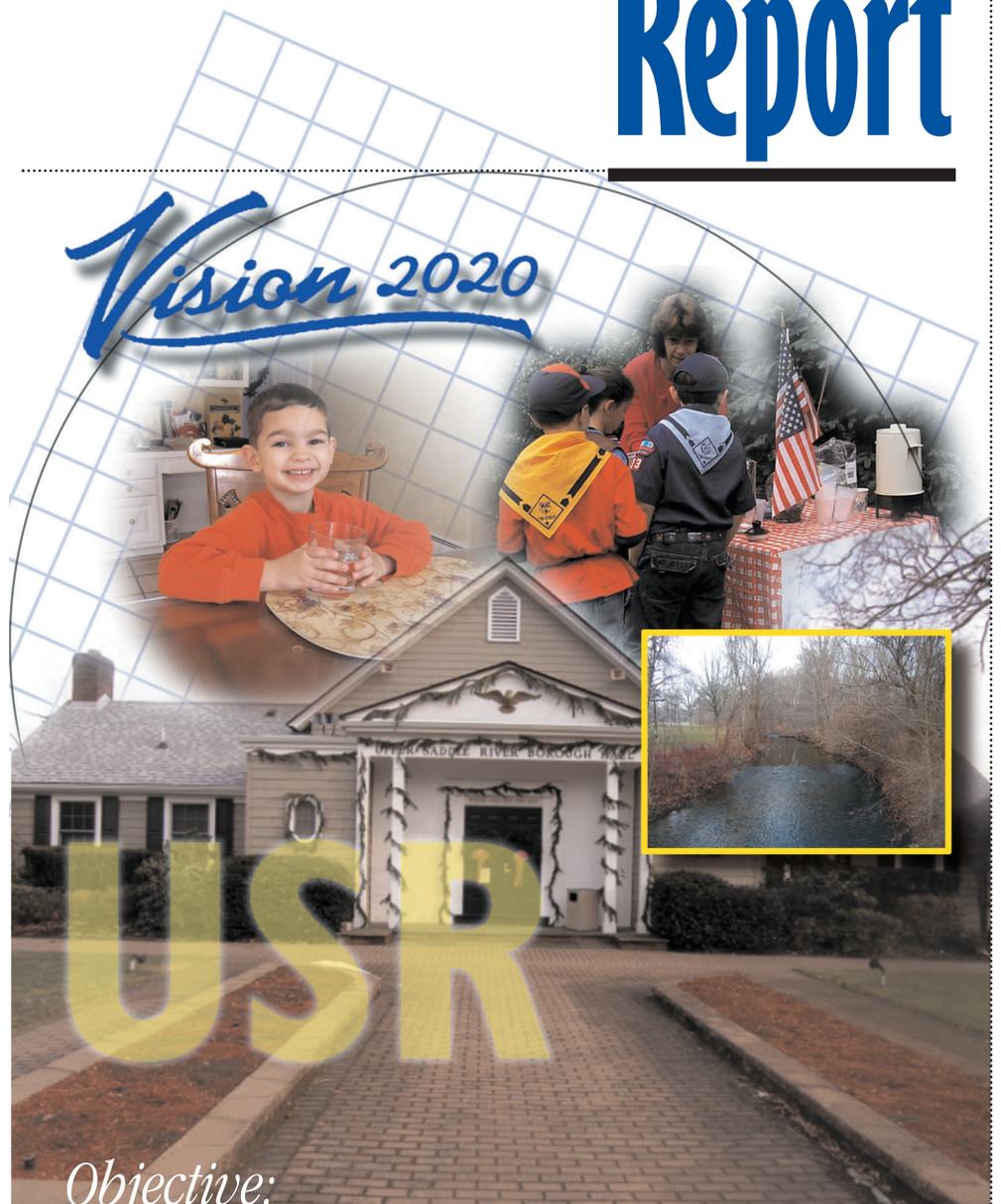
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Objective:

To develop a view of Upper Saddle River that residents would like to see by the year 2020.

Vision 2020

To: the Mayor and Council

Re: VISION 2020 REPORT

Date: March 2006

Attached is the Vision 2020 Report, based on the work done by four subcommittees and the results of the town wide survey.

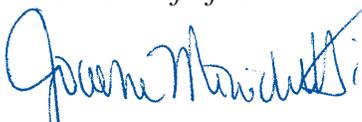
We have tried to focus the report on the areas that are of most concern or of greatest urgency. This should not be viewed as a list of complaints or criticisms, but as recommendations from citizens who are very positive about living in Upper Saddle River and want to see it become the best possible place it can be. It is not just a "wish list" but a carefully researched and thought-out statement of ways we can make our community better.

Please keep in mind that by definition Vision 2020 extends over a 14-year time horizon. Many of these recommendations will take time to implement, but careful consideration should be given to them and work begun on the top priorities now. Many who worked on the subcommittees and others who have contacted us are eager to help the Borough in the implementation of these recommendations.

In the process of doing this report, we have worked with many insightful and dedicated citizens from a wide cross-section of groups in the community. We thank them for their efforts and their thoughtful contributions. We also thank all those who took time to fill out the survey and Debbie Viola and her research assistant, Naveen N. Deenadayalu, for summarizing the survey results. This has been a rewarding experience for us and we appreciate the opportunity the Mayor and Council have given us to participate in Vision 2020.

Sincerely,

On behalf of the Vision 2020 Committee,


Joanne Minichetti


Bill Yeomans

Vision 2020

Vision 2020 Committee Report

How the Report was accomplished

The Vision 2020 Committee

In May 2005 Mayor Ken Gabbert sent a letter to houses of worship, local businesses and community organizations requesting that each select a representative to serve on the Vision 2020 Committee. He invited residents as well through the Borough Bulletin. He appointed Joanne Minichetti and Bill Yeomans co-chairs of the Committee.

An initial meeting was held on May 10, 2005 at the Library. Thirty-eight community representatives attended. Attendees were put into groups and were asked to discuss assigned questions on the present and future of Upper Saddle River. Input from the groups identified topics to be studied and led to the formation of four subcommittees.

Subcommittees

Traffic and Safety: Traffic, fire, police, emergency management, health and environmental issues. Chair: Maria DiMartino

Our Residents: Senior citizen issues, childrens' issues, education and demographics. Chair: Nona Maher

Quality of Life: Attractiveness of the Borough, peace and quiet, recreation and leisure, cultural events and historical preservation. Chair: Frank Trusheim

Population and Growth: Taxes, development of Rt. 17, planned growth, zoning-both residential and commercial. Chair: Robert Collins.

The subcommittees did research, called in experts on relevant topics and developed recommendations, meeting from May through October 2005. Each subcommittee prepared a final report submitted October 31, 2005. Many thoughts and concerns of the subcommittees were incorporated into the Vision 2020 Survey.

A list of subcommittee members is included in Appendix A and the complete text of each subcommittee's report may be found in Appendix B.

SURVEY

Based in large part on the work of the subcommittees, a community survey was designed. It was distributed to all households in the November 2005 issue of the Borough Bulletin. The survey was publicized in the Borough Bulletin, newspaper articles, letters to community organizations and with a banner hung in Lion's Park. Survey response was 473 or almost 19% of the approximately 2560 households in town. This response rate provides a significant statistical study. Responses that indicate the respondent agrees or strongly agrees with the survey question are shown in this report. Survey results are included in Appendix C and D.

VISION 2020 Executive Summary

This report presents a summary of information gathered from several sources: the recommendations of the four Vision 2020 subcommittees, a statistical analysis of the results of the community wide Vision 2020 survey and a summary of the written comments on the survey. The Vision 2020 co-chairs and the subcommittee chairs reviewed the information collected and made judgments on what to include in the report, and about priority order. The principal recommendations are:

- 1. Preserve our Semi-Rural Character.** Strategies: Control home size and design (stop McMansions and teardowns); Preserve open spaces; Strengthen shade tree ordinances and enforcement; Preserve historic sites, including rural look of Elmer's; Strengthen noise ordinances and enforcement.
- 2. Assure Our Safety.** Strategies: Provide adequate staffing for all emergency services (including hiring paid staff where there is a shortage of volunteers); Better inform all citizens of our Office of Emergency Management (OEM) plans and what they can do in their own homes to prepare; Grid the community and install fire hydrants; Control traffic (speeding, congestion around schools, road maintenance and parking of lawn service vehicles).
- 3. Protect Our Environment.** Strategies: Form a Water and Waste Task Force; Work with neighboring communities to control activities that would adversely affect our environment; Form a bi-state committee to protect the quality of water in the Saddle River; Regulate the use of lawn chemicals.
- 4. Stabilize Taxes.** Strategies: Develop Rt. 17 corridor; Share services with other communities; Hire a grant writer; Provide incentives for seniors to stay in USR; Promote volunteerism.
- 5. Keep Improving Quality of Life.** Strategies: Create a gathering place, a "town center"; Provide safe access to Elmer's; Strengthen recreation, leisure and cultural opportunities (improve ball fields, create more intergenerational activities); Hold more activities for the non-sports minded; Have more cultural events; Provide biking and walking paths.
- 6. Maintain High Quality Government and Services.** Strategies: Review and update Borough ordinances; Maintain excellence of schools while controlling costs; Improve services (twice a week garbage collection, better stick collection, leaf pick-up, improve Borough web-site).

VISION 2020 Recommendations

1. Preserve Our Semi-Rural Character

“We have lost a lot of our charm...”
- a survey respondent

Importance:

Based on comments from the survey and discussions within the subcommittees, there is widespread concern that the Borough is losing its unique character, and a strong desire to save what is left of our semi-rural atmosphere. Two of the subcommittees listed this as a high priority and of the survey responses, 175 respondents chose to write in comments that indicated semi-rural atmosphere as most important in making Upper Saddle River a good place to live and said it was what they most wanted to preserve. This was by far the most frequently recurring comment.

Strategies for Preserving our Semi-Rural Atmosphere:

A. Control home size and design

Stop McMansions and teardowns.



Several nearby communities are actively looking for ways to control the size and/or design of new homes and to limit teardowns. These include Montvale, Kinnelon, Ridgely Park and Fairlawn. We have had a FAR referendum, which was defeated, but the Planning Board is continuing its efforts to make recommendations to Council on measures to take which would address the size and appearance of bulk of new homes. The results of the survey indicate that this is a priority with 99 respondents choosing to write in comments that this was what they would most like to see changed.

B. Preserve open spaces

This was a priority identified by Vision 2020 with 32% of survey respondents indicating open space was a prime factor in making Upper Saddle River a good place to live. Although not a survey question, 33 respondents commented on their own that open space and privacy is the one thing they most want to preserve. We recommend that the Borough update our inventory of open spaces and negotiate right of first refusal should owners of large parcels decide to sell. Green Acres funding should be sought to reduce tax burden. We also recommend, based on residents' desire to keep as much open space as possible, that the land recently purchased by the Borough at the corner of Lake and West Saddle River Roads be kept as open space, rather than building on it. A volunteer group should be encouraged to rebuild the signboard on the corner, clean up the brush and perhaps install some plantings to spruce up the area.



In a related area, 87 % of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed we should bring Mt. Laurel obligation to a conclusion so there will be no additional high density housing, and 23 independently wrote in comments to that effect. This is one more indication of the concern of survey respondents to the loss of our semi-rural atmosphere. We recommend that in a future edition of the Borough Bulletin, we spell out, in easy to understand terms, where we are in terms of our obligation and what we are doing to bring it to an end.

C. Strengthen shade tree ordinance and enforcement.

Subcommittee members and survey respondents urged that we act quickly to preserve our trees.

The Shade Tree Ordinance should be strengthened to limit the number and types of trees that can be cleared, and limit the area in which trees can be cleared. Every healthy mature tree cut down should be replaced with a large hardwood tree elsewhere on the property or as agreed elsewhere in the Borough. The Shade Tree Commissioner should be given the power to issue summonses for violations. 65% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should adopt stronger regulations regarding the removal of trees. The number one response to "What do you like about Upper Saddle River?" was beauty of homes, trees and landscaping (71% of responses).

Trees are enjoyed by everyone, taking down trees has an effect on neighbors on all sides as well as on the lot owner. Borough wide, disappearance of trees changes the character of our landscape and moves us away from the semi-rural atmosphere so many of our residents cherish. If it has not already done so, the Shade Tree Commission should review the tree ordinances in towns such as Englewood, Mahwah and Franklin Lakes which have strong regulations.

D. Preserve our historic sites, including the rural look of Elmer's.

Upper Saddle River has 40 sites that were built before 1900, 22 before 1850, and 4 pre-Revolutionary. Except for the museum and the churches, none of these sites are protected from demolition. Only 4 private homes are on the State and National Register of Historic Homes and even that does not protect them.

Old structures help preserve a measure of the unique character of the community. We recommend the Borough institute a local landmark ordinance, which would require developers to explore alternatives to demolition. Several neighboring communities have such an ordinance, including Montvale, which has an ordinance that works well and could be a model for ours. We recommend that Upper Saddle River move ahead with adopting a Historic Preservation Ordinance. 78% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should preserve our historic sites.



Other than Old Stone Church, Elmer's is the most visible and best-known site linking us to our agricultural and rural past. We recommend that every effort be made to explore the restoration and incorporation of Elmer's barns into the design for redevelopment of the property and suggest that the rear barns be used for a café where people can gather for coffee and conversation. This would serve an important need: a local gathering place offering residents a place to meet for coffee or lunch or an after school snack. Senior citizens, parents and teens all would enjoy a café like atmosphere.

Historic details and plantings should be an important part of the design, and it should appeal to residents of our community as well as to outsiders. If we lose Elmer's, we will take a big step to becoming just another residential community with big homes rather than the semi-rural town our residents treasure. We recommend against adding additional gas pumps or a convenience-type store as this would seem in conflict with the strong wishes of survey respondents to keep the Borough semi-rural.

E. Strengthen our noise ordinance and enforcement.

Currently the Borough limits hours of landscaping and tree services and contractors in the use of equipment which creates noise including leaf blowers, mowers, weed wackers, chain saws, bull dozers, power shovels etc. But citizens of this community should be able to enjoy peace and quiet on the weekends and before 8:00 a.m. and after 6:00 p.m. every day.

57% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should adopt stronger noise regulations. We recommend further limits and applying them to residents as well as contracted workers.

2. ASSURE OUR SAFETY

*“We want this to continue to be a safe place to raise our family.”
- a survey respondent*

Importance:

96% of survey respondents rated our emergency services as good or very good. There is growing concern, however, that the Ambulance Corps, Rescue Squad and Fire Department are facing a shortage of volunteers. In addition, traffic is becoming an increasing area of concern.

Strategies for Assuring Our Safety:

A. Provide adequate staffing and equipment for all emergency services.

We have a severe lack of volunteers and it is only expected to get worse. We should hire paid staff to fill the gaps where we have a shortage of volunteers and assess regionalizing emergency services with other communities as well as explore private contractors to assure services to residents.

In addition to manpower, emergency services need equipment. The Rescue Squad will need an additional vehicle, the Police Department will need a command vehicle with an advanced radio system and the Fire Department will need an aerial ladder truck. A ladder truck will improve our ability to fight fires especially in the new larger homes, which have roofs and windows beyond the reach of ground ladders. This creates a serious safety condition for residents and for our volunteer firefighters. These items should be kept in mind when future municipal budgets are planned. The possibility of sharing some equipment with nearby towns to save on costs should also be explored.

B. Inform all citizens of our Office of Emergency Management (OEM) plans and what they can do in their own homes to prepare.

Citizens should know what our OEM plans are and how they affect individual homeowners. Upper Saddle River has an emergency plan in place and it is detailed on the Borough's website. However, this information should be updated and distributed via other means so everyone is aware of it, perhaps in the Borough Bulletin on an annual basis. A checklist of actions, supplies, operation of reverse 911, etc. should be distributed and workshops held to prepare citizens for emergencies. This would apply to major disasters, but also to local occurrences such as fire and flood. Training and education are needed to ensure emergency plans that work. We should continue emergency drills.

C. Grid the community and install fire hydrants.

In 2005 a survey conducted through the tax assessor yielded the following stats: 2560 total residential homes, not including apartments and commercial structures. In 2004, 530 of these were in excess of 4000 square feet of living space (not including finished basements, garages, etc.). 1141 were in excess of 3000 square feet. In 2005, there were approximately 70 new homes built in excess of 4000 square feet. This trend is expected to continue for the next 10 years so that by 2015 there will be more than half the homes in this “large range” of 4000 sq ft or more in size. Availability of water is critical to effective firefighting in these larger homes.

Over time, we should continue to install fire hydrants along the major arteries of the Borough so all properties are within reach of a pumper carrying 2,000 feet of hose or less. Currently more than 75% of USR homes are not within reach of a fire hydrant. This would not only improve fire safety, but would reduce homeowners’ insurance costs.

The current practice of expanding the water system as improvements are made in town should be continued.

An ordinance should be passed ensuring that all homes have prominently mounted large house numbers so emergency personnel can find them quickly in the event of an emergency.

D. Control traffic

Traffic issues and the safety of our children were of major concern to our subcommittees and survey respondents.

*** Control speeding, especially on secondary roads.**

Many of our streets have become connectors for commuters and shoppers from other communities who are passing through. They don’t slow down as they exit County roads with speed limits of 40 m.p.h. and begin traveling Borough streets with 25 m.p.h. speed limits. 88% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that our Police Department has been doing an excellent job, however, 62% asked that we better enforce speed limits.

If more tickets are issued with higher fines, word will get around and people will slow down or use other roads outside of Upper Saddle River.



Public service campaigns such as “Drive 25, Keep Kids Alive” and the recent resolution passed against drinking and driving have been very effective in bringing attention to traffic issues. Encouraging our residents to drive the speed limit in order to slow down speeders from other towns can also be effective. These traffic and safety campaigns should be continued and expanded.

Traffic at peak hours on Lake Street and West Saddle River Road can impede emergency vehicles from entering or exiting the area in a timely manner. This situation is currently being evaluated by the County. If they will not help alleviate the problem, the Borough will need to see what else can be done to address this situation. There is currently a multi-municipality traffic study underway. Because of the strong concern survey residents have shown, we recommend the Borough consider implementing any worthwhile recommendations that come from this study to alleviate or better allocate traffic.

*** Alleviate congestion, especially around schools.**

This was of great concern to residents, (70% strongly agree or agree that this is a priority) not because of waiting time to pick up and drop off children, but mostly from safety concerns for the children themselves. Our entire community must be encouraged to make school traffic and parking a priority. Public service campaigns need to be continued through the schools so parents can be made aware of safety strategies.

A northbound “cut out” on West Saddle River Road within the schools’ parameters would help the flow of traffic move more smoothly. This would allow traffic not making a turn into the school parking lot to continue to flow rather than backing up. This is currently being studied by the County. This would also help the OEM vehicles enter or exit as the traffic on West Saddle River Road would be eased. The school administration has discussed ideas such as moving bus parking to the rear and permanently paving the field in front of Bogert for additional parking. The field, temporarily used for parking, becomes unusable in inclement weather, thereby causing an overflow of cars unable to enter the Bogert lot. Cars back up onto West Saddle River Road. An additional parking lot may become necessary.

The schools have crossing guards only in the morning. At pickup, students, teachers and parents at times walk amidst moving traffic. Additional afternoon crossing guards should be added. The custodians at pickup are there only to direct cars. As in the past a traffic and safety committee, consisting of parents, administrators, police and emergency personnel, should be formed and professional traffic studies should be made to determine what would be the best course of action.

48% of survey respondents strongly agreed that we should have sidewalks near the schools. Sidewalks would make it safer for children who live nearby to walk to school, thus cutting down on traffic. Since West Saddle River Road is scheduled for re-pavement within the next few years, the addition of sidewalks and a cutout should be addressed in the very near future.

Busing for more children should be encouraged to alleviate traffic as well.

*** Improve road maintenance.**

66% survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we need better road maintenance. Several respondents suggested better brush clearing at intersections would help and reflective street signs should be installed.

*** Regulate parking of lawn service and construction vehicles.**

Currently lawn service and construction vehicles park on the street and on curves. Large trailers and trucks obstruct visibility and it is difficult to see around them for oncoming traffic. Vehicles should park in driveways and not on the streets.

3. PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT



***“What will happen if
our wells become
contaminated?”***

- a survey respondent

Importance:

There were mixed feelings about Borough wide water systems and sewers, but many feel we need to examine this carefully. In the survey responses, 85% strongly agreed or agreed that we should develop a plan for dealing with sewerage but only 34% strongly agreed or agreed that we should consider going to a full municipal water system. However, 90% strongly agreed or agreed that we should adopt stronger environmental regulations to preserve well water quality.

Proponents of sewers feel that it will become more difficult to service our septic systems as other communities move to sewers and consequently there are fewer septic service companies around. They also worry that septic systems will someday wear out, and/or will not be able to handle the demands created by the new larger homes. Those opposed to sewers cite that 7/8 acre zoning is fine for supporting septic systems, that we lost our best opportunity for putting in sewers years ago, and that today the cost would be excessive. They also contend that if we had sewers we would lose some of our rationale for preventing overbuilding.

There is widespread concern about pure water and protecting our aquifer. Over-development in NJ/NY is causing considerable concern about the availability of clean healthy well water. Declining water purity will eventually have an adverse affect on health and on property values.

When we asked in the survey what citizens would most like to change, the (second) largest response (after no more McMansions) was no more high-density housing including the NY development on Hillside Avenue.

Strategies for Protecting Our Environment:

A. Form a Water and Waste Task Force.

The subcommittees felt that Upper Saddle River should appoint a task force to study our water and septic situation, calling in experts to advise us on the adequacy of our wells and private septic systems, and potential for contamination of our ground water. The task force would develop a plan for our future course of action. The task force can work with the septic service companies to assure our residents available and reasonably priced maintenance. It would also develop recommendations for negotiating with United Water and would enforce environmental ordinances.

B. Work with neighboring communities to control activities that would adversely affect our environment.

The most immediate concern is with the NY Hillside Avenue project. The Rockland County, NY sewer system was designed for a maximum of 153,000 residents, the population now is about 300,000 and growing. In the past 5 years there have been over 830,000 gallons of raw sewage overflows documented by Rockland County Sewer District # 1. The overflows go into the streets, into the Saddle River and the Saddle River Valley Swim Club. Some may find its way into our aquifer, which runs southward from the New York Thruway and through Upper Saddle River.

93% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should work with neighboring communities to resolve issues that would adversely affect Upper Saddle River. 20 chose to write in comments that specifically opposed development in NY on Hillside Avenue.

C. Form a bi-state committee to protect and improve the quality of water in the Saddle River and our aquifer.



The Ramapo River Committee, a bi-state grassroots environmental group formed for the protection of the Ramapo River and its watershed, could be a model for a similar group devoted to the protection of the Saddle River.

Additionally, the Passaic River Coalition was formed in 1969 to “protect drinking water, protect sensitive wetland, improve water quality, create new open space and promote natural resource management.” The director reports that there is little work being done on the Saddle River, a tributary of the Passaic River, and they would welcome our involvement. A suggestion is we begin with a survey of the river and its banks and with water testing. This is on the Environmental Committee Agenda. We should seek advice from the Hackensack River Keeper on this matter.

D. Regulate the use of lawn chemicals

58% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should explore the use of lawn chemicals. Toxic chemicals, which wash into the Saddle River with each rainfall, are heavy and can leach into our aquifer and our wells. We have already experienced well contamination on the east side of the Borough near the old Tice orchards and elsewhere. The Environmental Committee should be charged with studying ordinances in other communities, recommending legislation including methods of enforcement. The Board of Health should consider sending reminder notices to homes on a routine basis for well-testing or consider an ordinance making testing every few years mandatory as the water quality diminishes. Spot checking of wells could also be considered in the future to ensure safe drinking water for all of our residents.

4. STABILIZE TAXES

***“USR is becoming a place that only
the very rich can afford.”
- a survey respondent***

Importance:

Everyone wants lower taxes and more services, but there is a strong concern evidenced in the subcommittees and in the survey results that taxes are too high and are going up too fast. A typical survey comment was “Taxes keep going up and there’s no end in sight.”

A large majority of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should stabilize or reduce taxes of all kinds. 77% would like to see county taxes reduced, 75% municipal taxes reduced, 66% Northern Highlands tax reduced and 65% the K through 8 school tax cut.

Strategies for Reducing Costs, Broadening the Tax Base:

A. Maintain excellence of schools while controlling costs.

School taxes make up nearly 70% of our tax burden. Preserving the quality of our schools is a high priority among our survey respondents, but more money may not always translate into better education. Many school costs are mandated by the State but increased attention should be given to eliminating or reducing costs that do not contribute significantly to the education of our children.

Reducing costs is one part of the equation, broadening the tax base without adding more children to the school system is another.

68% of survey respondents listed high quality of schools as the most important reason Upper Saddle River is a good place to live. 78% rated the K through 8 school system as good or very good and 76% rated Northern Highlands as good or very good.

At the same time, 65% expressed a concern that school taxes are too high and that they need to be brought under control. Fundraising groups such as the PTO and Educational Foundation may play increasingly important roles in maintaining the quality of education.

B. Develop the Rt. 17 corridor to increase rateables.



74% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should encourage development on Rt. 17, and the Growth and Development and Cost of Living sub-committee felt that this was an urgent need.

The current Ten Cees Agreement (sewerage) severely limits use of the properties along Rt. 17 resulting in lower rateables and reducing the motivation for continued improvement. Route 17 looks run down and could generate more taxes for the Borough. Existing zoning regulations and the size/depth of the lots further limit improvement.

- * Update the “Engineering Report for Sanitary Sewerage for Redevelopment of Route 17” dated June 7, 2001 by Boswell Engineering. The data, including costs, are old and more importantly, the analysis did not address full utilization of the properties but only capacity needed to implement Ten Ceas. The update should determine the flow requirements for full utilization, not limited by existing agreements. It should consider options in addition to the Ramsey/Allendale Interceptors (reference in report to possible use of Ho-Ho-Kus Brook North).
- * Utilize County and NWBCUA representatives to help achieve the right to dispose of sewage with NWBCUA.
- * Undertake a major planning effort to determine zoning and allowable use changes required to improve rateables. Assume full sewerage and include goals such as underground power lines, and updated landscaping.
- * Whenever possible, steer clear of eminent domain as a mechanism for change.

C. Share services to cut expenses.

Some survey respondents expressed concern that sharing would reduce the quality of emergency services, but 75% strongly agreed or agreed that sharing of administrative costs and purchasing of equipment would produce savings. Methods for doing this should be explored. A gradual regionalizing of emergency services may save money on equipment and salaries.

D. Hire a grant writer to obtain State and federal funds for community development.

Grant writers know how to get through the complex process of applying for grants and sometimes are paid on a portion of the grants they obtain. Ho-Ho-Kus, for instance, is using a grant writing firm to apply for the TEA 21 grant for streamlining traffic and enhancing the attractiveness and safety of the community. This is probably the most important thing the Borough can do to ensure some of the recommendations in this report become feasible.

E. Provide incentives for seniors to stay in USR.



“Our seniors are being squeezed out by high taxes.”
- a survey respondent

63% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that there should be more incentives for seniors to stay in Upper Saddle River. Upper Saddle River needs many diverse residents with diverse interests. Diversity should be maintained in part by retaining residents of all ages.

There is tax relief provided by the State under the Property Tax Reimbursement Program for senior citizens and disabled persons with incomes less than \$49,082 for married homeowners. Since our median household income is over \$130,000, that would apply to only a few residents of Upper Saddle River. There is also a program that applies to all seniors but it is not funded. A committee of concerned seniors could lobby State officials to fully fund this program.

Seniors play a big part in the cultural and historical heritage of the community. On a very practical level, seniors do not have children in school and therefore do not add to educational expenses. We should find ways, in addition to tax relief, to keep seniors here, including exploring lower cost housing.

We recommend: working with the State to fund tax credits or tax limitations for long time senior residents, considering affordable senior housing for meeting COAH requirements, including senior housing in any future mixed use properties (e.g. small commercial/retail area with apartments).

F. Promote and increase volunteerism.



Upper Saddle River is a volunteer town, with more than 40 civic, charitable, governmental, church and other organizations staffed by volunteers. 62% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should promote volunteerism. Volunteerism is a way for our residents to work together and give back to the community we love. In total, however, we suspect that only a small percentage of our population actively volunteer, in some cases because people do not know what is needed and what is available. We should form a Volunteer Bureau (staffed by volunteers, of course) to maintain an inventory of what volunteer opportunities are available, make them

known to residents, and to explore new roles for volunteers, especially those that would save tax dollars.

For instance, several respondents indicated a need for volunteer drivers for seniors, i.e. food shopping, doctor appointments. An established group such as the Woman's Club or others could possibly make this service available if they were made aware of the need.

The Bureau could also organize an annual volunteer recognition ceremony/ publication, and volunteer awards. This could be a part of USR Day.

5. KEEP IMPROVING OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

*“We love the kindness of the people,
the friendliness and community spirit.”
- a survey respondent*

Importance:

While recognizing that the quality of life in Upper Saddle River is high, the subcommittees and survey respondents felt we could make it better.

Strategies for Improving our Quality of Life:

A. Create a gathering place, a “town center”.

The subcommittees put a great deal of discussion into the need for a community gathering place and 40% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we need such a place. A gathering place would build our sense of community. The subcommittees envision a multipurpose space for adults and children to gather for non-sports recreational, social, cultural and summer activities. A gathering place would also provide a place for adult and intergenerational activities. Future acquisition and refurbishing of a house next to Borough property or building a new center, perhaps between Lions’ Park and the Borough Hall and the Police Station would meet this need. Many survey respondents emphasized the fact that the Library serves as a community center and should be enhanced rather than constructing something new. Renovation of Elmer’s to include a café would create another gathering place.

We recommend the appointment of a steering committee to explore this, develop plans, design, identify possible locations and ultimately be responsible for programs and services offered at our “town center”.

B. Strengthen our recreation, leisure, cultural opportunities.

39% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we need more cultural, sports and recreational events.

*** Provide biking and hiking paths.**

The roads in our Borough are too narrow and carry too much traffic to be safe places to bike or walk. There are plenty of spaces, especially along the rivers, that could be developed into scenic, off road paths for biking and hiking. The Riverwalk is one example, but because it is difficult to ride on and does not extend very far, it is not used as much

as it could be. We recommend that the charter of the Riverwalk Committee be expanded to explore other areas for hiking and biking. 69% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that more biking/hiking paths are needed. The Mayor's Walk USR Program will get this started.

*** Improve ball fields, add bathrooms, snack bar.**

There are plans to upgrade the fields at Lion's Park. The subcommittees urged that we move ahead with this, stating that our fields do not measure up with those of neighboring communities. 59% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that we should improve our ball fields and parks.

*** Provide safe access to Elmer's.**

If and when Elmer's is renovated/restored and becomes a community gathering place, a sidewalk should be built and split rail fence added allowing safe access from Lion's Park to the corner of East Saddle River Road and Lake Street. People will want to cross to Elmer's safely from the schools, the Library, Lion's Park and the Hopper Goetschius Museum.

*** Create more intergenerational activities.**

The subcommittees felt that there should be more activities that involve parents and children together (aside from a coaching situation), and 40% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that this was needed as well as events that appeal to all ages, seniors, empty nesters, parents and children.

*** Hold more activities for the non-sports minded.**

There are children who are not interested in sports. Almost all of our community sponsored activities center around sports. Scouting and the Library do provide alternatives, but there should be other activities available such as drama programs or art classes. While survey respondents assigned a rating of very good or good to the Cultural Center (68%), the Library (85%) and the Historical Society (71%), they also expressed a desire for more cultural activities.



6. MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY GOVERNMENT AND SERVICES.

***“I am proud of the Mayor and Council
and the work they do.”
- a survey respondent***

Importance:

64% of survey respondents rated our government and services as good or very good. 69% rated responsiveness on the part of Borough employees as good or very good and almost all Borough services received high marks.

Along with those high ratings, survey respondents and subcommittee members had a number of suggestions for improvement.

Strategies for Maintaining High Quality Government and Services:

A. Appoint a panel to review and update our ordinances.

Many of our Borough Ordinances are out of date. We recommend that a panel be appointed to review our ordinances, compare them with those of like communities and recommend changes and additions to the appropriate Boards and the Mayor and Council. The panel would also recommend the deletion of ordinances that are no longer needed and creating new ordinances where needed.

B. Improve and expand services.

25 survey respondents wrote in suggesting we should have twice a week garbage collection, 12 wanted better stick and branch collection with no bundling, and 19 wanted curbside leaf pickup (survey was done in the fall).

Although 84% of respondents rated communication between the Mayor and Council and residents as good or very good, there were some suggestions that might be helpful. The Borough should improve and expand its website. Residents should be able to access agendas and meetings as well as understand how the different Boards (Council, Planning and Zoning) work. The list of dates should be laid out clearer and by category, not just a scan of the back page of the monthly Bulletin. An attractive wooden sign outside of Borough Hall posting upcoming events and meetings would also be helpful.



APPENDIX A

Membership of the Subcommittees

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

Maria DiMartino, Chair

Mike Fanning

Ben Acaster

Patrick Rotella

Ernie Kastner

Arnie Friedman

Gert Howell

James Levine

Ron O'Malley

Stephen Sabo

Tom McElderry

Gilda Linden

President, Saddle River Valley Junior Woman's Club

Lieutenant, Police Department

Ret'd Sergeant, Police Department

Detective, Police Department

Ret'd Detective Lieutenant, Police Department

Chairman, Shade Tree Commission

Environmental Committee, Historical Society

Chief, Fire Department

Zoning Board, Commissioner of the Bergen County

Improvement Authority

M. D., Board of Health

Pearson Education, Facilities Manager

School Nurse, Ambulance Corps.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Frank Trusheim, Chair

Hans Kalchbrenner

Mallory Grossman

Dara Feinman

Lindsey Calomeo

David Brown

Joe Torres

Environmental Committee, Recreation Commission

Citizens' Advisory Committee

President, SRV Jewish Community Organization

No. Highlands Student Council

No. Highlands Student Council

Cavallini Student Council

Republican Club, USR Educational Foundation

RESIDENTS

Nona Maher, Chair

Reverend Gary Bartlett

Becky Kester

Martha Mahoney

Angela Sacco-Torres

Mary Welton

President, Library Board

Pastor, Bergen Highlands United Methodist Church

Service Unit Manager, Girl Scouts

Church of the Presentation

Upper Saddle River Board of Education

Woman's Club

POPULATION AND GROWTH

Robert Collins, Chair
Michele Phibbs
Harry Collins
Terrie O'Connor
Brent Edmonds
Robert Richardi
Ron O'Malley

Citizens' Advisory Committee
Planning Board
Senior Citizen
Realtor
President, Bergen Highlands Rotary Club
Zoning Board
Zoning Board, Commissioner of the Bergen County
Improvement Authority

SUPPORT

Debbie Viola
and her Research Assistant,
Naveen N. Deenadayalu
Dean Graphics

Summary of the Surveys
Graphic Design and Printing

VISION 2020 CO-CHAIRS

Joanne Minichetti
Bill Yeomans

Board of Health
Environmental Committee, Borough Historian

Full Text of Subcommittee Reports



Traffic and Safety Sub-Committee

First Topic: Traffic and Safety:

Present Situation:

- ~ Peak load issues related to school drop off and pick up.
- ~ Lake Street commuter traffic issues are present.
- ~ Safety on Lake Street, especially between Pearson Education and Carlough Road a major concern.
- ~ Cars speeding on East and West Saddle River Road.
- ~ Closing of Hillside Avenue and its impact on other major arteries.
- ~ West Saddle River Road slated for re-paving at end 2006 or early 2007.

Vision for 2020 and Recommendations:

- ~ Since the West Road is scheduled for re-paving should we consider adding sidewalks on roads leading to schools so residents who are close enough to walk, can safely do so. Also, adding a "cut out" on the West Road, by the schools would help to keep traffic flow more steady.
- ~ Busing needs to be re-evaluated.
- ~ **We need new street signs that are reflective for nighttime viewing, with larger letters for clearer vision.**
- ~ **Larger house numbers on each home for police and fire safety.**
- ~ Street lights for major arteries, i.e. West and East Saddle River Roads, Lake Street.
- ~ Installing passive devices to slow down traffic on the East and West Roads.
- ~ Installing intersection cameras at all major arteries in town, just as Saddle River.

Influences:

- ~ Commercial development in commercially zoned areas (Rt. 17) to help ease costs on taxpayers.
- ~ State/county/schools/residents
- ~ Support of the community
- ~ Money

Second Topic: Fire, Rescue and E.M.S.

Present Situation:

- ~ Severe lack of volunteers and expected to worsen in the future.
- ~ Not enough fire hydrants.

Vision for 2020 and Recommendations:

- ~ Explore the idea of regionalizing various municipal departments, including USR VAC, USR Fire Dept., Saddle River Valley Rescue and neighboring area departments. A gradual regionalizing of these municipal emergency services, may save participating towns some money on equipment and salaries (assuming it wasn't volunteer anymore). This might insure additional State funding because now these municipalities are servicing a larger residence base.
- ~ **Need to add more fire hydrants. Grid them out along the main roads in town for better safety and insurance savings.**
- ~ Hire salaried employees, where gaps exist, for different departments.
- ~ Must have better communication between the police and the other emergency services.
- ~ Controlled traffic lights for emergency management and better safety.
- ~ **USR Fire Dept. needs a ladder truck.**
- ~ Police Dept. needs to add incentives for officers to keep up-to-date on their E.M.T. skills to further assist the various departments in emergency situations.
- ~ Ambulance Corp. needs a generator.

Influences:

- ~ Mayor and Council to help with transition.
- ~ Residents approval.

Third Topic: Police

Present Situation:

- ~ Not enough man power, especially during schools drop off and pick up times.
- ~ Currently 2 to 3 man squads.
- ~ 18 USR Police employees, 14 of which are patrol officers.

Vision for 2020 and Recommendations:

- ~ **Increase of manpower to accommodate overlapping of shifts. Ideally 3 or 4 man squads with overlapping shifts, with a total of 22 employees, 18 of which are patrol officers.**
- ~ Explore the possibility of regionalizing departments with neighboring towns. This may save some money in operational costs, dispatching, centralized 911-system and communication equipment.
- ~ Must have better communication between the police and other emergency services.
- ~ Need a command vehicle
- ~ New, more advanced radio system is needed for improved safety.

Influences:

- ~ Support of Major and Council
- ~ Residents must agree.
- ~ Separate town governments

Fourth Topic: Office of Emergency Management (O.E.M)

Present Situation:

- Chief of Police is director of Emergency Management plan currently in place.

Vision for 2020 and Recommendations:

- Emergency plan needs to be put in place in the event of an evacuation of N.Y.C. or Indian Point.
- **Years of ongoing rehearsals, training and education so we are prepared for any situation.**
- Coordination of O.E.M. with neighboring towns.
- More money needs to be allocated and put into a Capital Budget for O.E.M.
- **Hire a grant writer to get money for projects from the county and state.**
- Controlled traffic lights for better emergency management.
- Officers need better and additional access to a database delivering pertinent information into any given situation.
- Reverse 911 system needs to be improved. Residents need to be aware and updated on emergency plans. Everyone's data needs to be included, even those with unlisted phone numbers.
- More generators are needed.

Influences:

- State/County/Government
- Police, Fire, Rescue

Fifth Topic: Health and Environmental Issues:

Present Situation:

- Well water
- Septic
- Shade Tree Commission in place to protect.
- No interactive liaisons between County and Town Planning Boards.

Vision for 2020 and Recommendations:

- Need to develop a long range plan for providing adequate water supply for residential, municipal and commercial needs.
- Need to develop a long-range plan for management of private and public sewage waste/disposal needs.
- **Establish a new department who would be responsible for water/well/sewage issues. This dept. would commission a study by an objective expert to assess the adequacy of private wells and septic systems to meet current and future needs of the borough. A study would also have to be conducted advising us of the existence of current or potential for future groundwater contamination based on known sources of pollution in or near USR.**
- **New department would be headed by someone who would be responsible for all water/sewage needs and serve as a liaison between mayor and council and outside sources.**

- ~ Explore the idea of moving from well water to municipal water, as well as the idea of moving from Septic to Sewers.
- ~ Establish an ordinance that septic companies have to get a permit from the town. These approved vendors would have to have all the proper credentials in order to service in our town. This would help to regulate vendor charges and accountability. (Check into Franklin Lake's ordinance)
- ~ Better storm and water drainage.
- ~ Review and comparison of USR town ordinances compared to those of other towns.
- ~ Preservation of our towns rural like appearance.
- ~ Need more commercial zoning on Route 17 for more tax income to help pay for changes, especially if main water lines and sewage is needed.
- ~ Create a liaison between the county and our town, which would force the county to consult with us first, before deciding on county "improvements", which might, ultimately, end up changing the nature of our town and the number of cars that drive through it.
- ~ Shade Tree Commission needs more ordinances to replace trees that are taken down due to new construction.

Influences:

- ~ D.E.P.
- ~ Water Companies
- ~ Residents
- ~ Commercial Development

General Comments:

- ~ It would be hard to realize this project being executed and followed through with such a long-range goal. We suggest implementing a 5-year strategic steps plan to insure execution and follow through.
- ~ We need more commercial zoning on Route 17. We have land there that could be earning lots of tax dollars to help offset the costs of all these projects.
- ~ The town needs to hire a Grant Writer to get monies from the County and State levels.

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY SUB-COMMITTEE

Members of the Subcommittee:

Chairperson:

Maria T. DiMartino: *Representing The Saddle River Valley Junior Woman's Club*

Contributing Members:

Mike Fanning: *Representing the USR Police Dept.*

Arnie Friedman: *Representing the Shade Tree Commission*

Gert Howell: *Representing the Environmental and Historical Society*

James Levine: *Representing the USR Fire Dept.*

Gilda Linden: *Representing the Ambulance Corp.*

Tom McElderry: *Representing Pearson Education*

Ron O'Malley: *Chairman of Commissioners and Commissioner of the Bergen County Improvement Authority. Also a 10 year member of the USR Zoning Board.*

Stephen Sabo: *Representing the Board of Health*

Our Residents Subcommittee Recommendations:

A Gathering Place: Town Center

Recommendation Number 1:

Create A Non-Commercial Gathering Place/ Town Center

The Vision

Upper Saddle River has many varied offerings for the youth of our town in Sports Recreation Programs at many skill levels ranging from instructional to competitive. While the Library and Scouting fill the void for some activities and programs for those who do not choose to participate in sports, we feel that the USR of the future needs a gathering place with rooms that could be utilized for non-sports learning activities and programs for our youth, as well as for our Seniors, and our Adults who choose to pursue non-sporting interests together.

Why This is Important

Upper Saddle River has many diverse residents with diverse interests. The town needs to provide for this diversity to be nourished and to grow into the future.

Possible Drawbacks

Land is at a premium, so this project would require either purchase or re-utilization of an already owned town parcel of land. Cost remains an abiding challenge.

Strategies For Creating a Town Center

Create a committee of interested residents who could explore the feasibility of:

- * Acquiring/appropriating town owned land for this use (A possible future parcel would be to acquire the land to the west of and to the south of Elmer's as these private homes are put up for sale)
- * Developing a steering committee with officers who would design, and be responsible for, the programs/services offered at our Town Center
- * Consider bringing in an outside developer (like the YMCA) who might be interested in developing the programs/services offered to our residents in our Town Center
- * Exploring a "regionalization" of such a facility to include surrounding contiguous towns who also might have similar interests and be willing to pool resources- Allendale, Ramsey, HoHoKus, and Montvale

Tax Relief

Recommendation Number 2:

Create A Tax Relief Opportunity For All Residents

The Vision

The Upper Saddle River of the future needs to be a balanced community with residents of all age levels able to remain living in, and contributing to the town. Diversity of all sorts is important to the health of our town community.

Why This is Important

Upper Saddle River has a rising tax burden which forces residents to re-think their ability to remain in the town as they reach retirement. Our senior citizen population is dwindling, as is our middle-aged population-both of whom have time, talent and expertise to contribute to our town.

Upper Saddle River needs many diverse residents with diverse interests. The town needs to provide for this diversity to be maintained by retaining residents of all ages in our town.

Possible Drawbacks

Senior citizen tax relief, while attractive, would not be fair to all of our town residents who together share the burden of our municipal and school services. Cost of maintaining services while providing tax relief, is a challenge.

Strategies For Creating Tax Relief

Create a committee of interested residents who could explore the feasibility of:

- * Developing land on Route 17 to provide needed tax ratables
- * Consider structuring a pro-rated scale of tax levy that would give some relief to those residents who meet certain criteria of age + length of time as a USR resident
- * Work with developers of the open land/ existing high density housing management to consider building/identifying townhomes to “downsize into” for seniors who wish to remain in town

Our Residents Committee

***Members: Nona Maher, Becky Kester, Mary Welton, Martha Mahoney,
Gary Bartlett and Angela Sacco Torres***

Infrastructure Improvements

Recommendation Number 3:

Plan And Implement Infrastructure Improvements: Sewers Servicing All Homes, And Sidewalks/Bike Paths On Main Roads

The Vision

The Upper Saddle River of the future needs to be a community that provides its residents with safe drinking water, adequate sewage disposal, and safe pedestrian transit on busy main roads,

Why This is Important

Upper Saddle River has an ongoing battle with Mother Nature when it comes to proper and efficient septic drainage in many areas of town. As all of our town land becomes developed, the need for more septic drainage will increase and will further exacerbate an already tenuous situation. A plan for the future needs to include development of sewers in order to ensure that our well system can be protected. It is also possible that the infrastructure improvements in the future may dictate the move from private wells to “town water supply” but this may be able to be avoided if septic problems are eliminated.

Safe pedestrian/ bike transit on main roads is imperative-both for our students walking to school and our residents who exercise and travel by foot or by bicycle.

Possible Drawbacks

Cost of implementation remains a challenge both to the town and to individual residents. Some potential widening of county roads to create a 3-4 foot wide bike path (at a minimum), may present a problem since their jurisdiction is out of town control, but not beyond town recommendations.

Strategies For Creating Infrastructure Improvements

Create a committee of interested residents who could explore the feasibility of:

- * Working with surrounding towns to explore hooking into existing sewer systems
- * Contacting County DOT to explore procedure and possibility of installing 3-4 foot wide bike paths (at a minimum) for pedestrian and cyclist safety on West Saddle River Road, East Saddle River Road and Lake Street.

Our Residents Committee

***Members: Nona Maher, Becky Kester, Mary Welton,
Martha Mahoney, Gary Bartlett and Angela Sacco Torres***

Maintain/Increase Volunteerism

Recommendation Number 4:

Maintain And Increase Volunteerism In Upper Saddle River

The Vision

The Upper Saddle River of the future needs to be a community that is active, interconnected, and involved in directing its own growth and providing a model for the youth of the future.

Why This is Important

A hallmark of early Upper Saddle River was the interconnectedness of its residents. Early Lenape and European settlers depended on each other for help, support, friendship and socialization. These needs have not changed as our town has moved into the 21st century. We depend on each other to develop our town programs and services and to spark each other with ideas and varied interests. Volunteerism is our residents' way of coming together and giving back to the community we have built and have grown to love. Unless this is maintained in our ever increasingly busy and individualistic community, our town as a unit will not thrive and may not survive. Without volunteers to run our programs, we will have nothing to offer each other.

Possible Drawbacks

None

Strategies For Creating Continued and Increased Volunteerism

- * Create an addition to USR Day (or an additionally scheduled day) to trumpet volunteer opportunities for residents. All town organization could set up booths and have a "Volunteer Fair!"
- * Ensure that residents receive a friendly welcome and an invitation to join town organizations and boards with smiles and specifics that create a sense of ability to fill a need that is defined and understood. Broad invitations to get involved are not effective! For successful recruiting of needed volunteers, newcomers (and old timers alike), need to feel that the need is well defined and is small enough but important enough to merit their time, and therefore eminently do-able within their schedule!

Our Residents Committee

*Members: Nona Maher, Becky Kester, Mary Welton,
Martha Mahoney, Gary Bartlett and Angela Sacco Torres*

Promote More Intergenerational Affairs

Recommendation Number 5:

Develop And Promote More Intergenerational Activities In Upper Saddle River

The Vision

The Upper Saddle River of the future needs to be a community that is active, interconnected, and involved in activities that transcend age groups.

Why This is Important

A healthy town relies on the wisdom and experience of its aging population, the energy and dreams of its young adults, and the promise and spark of its children. We need to provide for these diverse age groups to come together to share seminal moments throughout the calendar year that promote sharing of these talents, and a true town-wide bond that promotes mutual appreciation and understanding across the generations.

Possible Drawbacks

None, unless the town needs to advance funds that could be recouped with possible admission fees or fund raising.

Strategies For Creating and Promoting More Intergenerational Activities in Town

- * Create a new Town Board with 2-3 members from each of our population segments—our seniors, our adults, our high school students, our middle school students, and our elementary school students.
- * Charge this new Town Board with creating a monthly calendar of intergenerational activities to add to those that exist—for example: USR Day, Holiday Party/Cookie Bake-Off at the Library, Holiday Lightings at Town Hall, Harvest Festival at the Goetschius House, Town Movie Night etc.
- * Suggest a concert series in the newly improved Lions Park, a talent night at the Cultural Center or school multi purpose room (or our Town Center of the Future!) —among other ideas that might be generated by the newly formed board.

Our Residents Committee

*Members: Nona Maher, Becky Kester, Mary Welton, Martha Mahoney,
Gary Bartlett and Angela Sacco Torres*

Quality of Life Committee Report

Recommendations:

Number 1:

Vision: Re-consideration of the use or classification of Elmers. Need to look at potential renovation under present guidelines.

Why: Elmers represents the center of town. The present state is not only unattractive but a health hazard

Drawbacks: Historical designation. How do we recreate a decent business environment without affecting a severe zoning change.

Strategies: Consult with present owner and a new council committee to discuss strategies to be used:

Number 2:

Vision: Create a walkway to common public spaces for children and residents to safely enjoy the town facilities. The immediate area to consider is the NW corner of Lake and West Saddle River Roads (tree farm), town hall/schools, Lions Park, Library, and Elmers.

Why: Safety, attractiveness, ability for children to walk between fields, schools and potential community center (see recommendation Number 3).

Drawbacks: Cost

Strategies: Consult with variety of fundraiser groups via new council committee to encourage existing groups to donate - a town wide effort

Number 3:

Vision: Build a Recreation Center between Lions Park, the town hall and Police station.

Why: Town needs a space for adults and children to gather for important town functions. Additionally the RC will allow new cultural events and summer programs.

Drawbacks: Security, funding and yearly maintenance costs.

Strategies: Use fundraising groups to help raise initial funds and add additional funding via town referendum

Number 4:

Vision: More Cultural Events.

Why: Help expand the community awareness and children's education

Drawbacks: None.

Strategies: Volunteer efforts by High School students, Recreation Committee, and Scouts.

Quality of Life Committee Members:

***Frank Trusheim, David Brown
Joe Torres, Hans Kalchbrenner
Mallory Grossman, Dara Feinman
Lindsay Colameo***

Upper Saddle River

Population Growth & Cost of Living Subcommittee Report -

Task

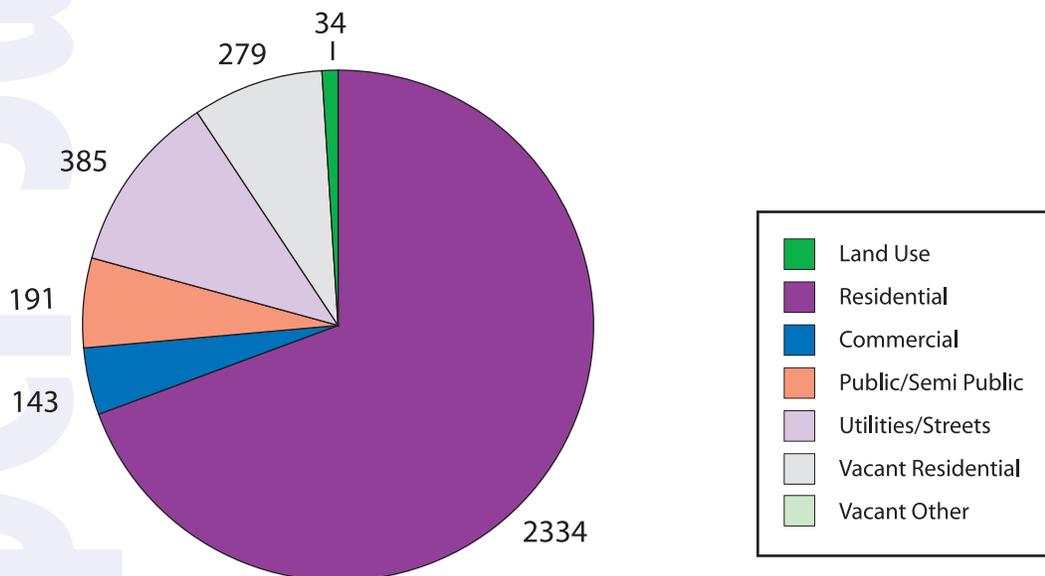
Describe where we are today for residential land use, commercial land use, and local taxes. Envision changes in these areas for 2020 and those factors that will help or hinder achieving the changes. Provide specific recommendations to the 2020 team.

Where We Are Today * (data taken from 2005 COAH Report)

USR is an affluent suburb community with a population of approximately 7,700 and approximately 2,500 households. The borough has the following districts:

- R1 – single family dwellings on 37,000 sq ft minimum lots
- R2 – single family dwellings on 10,000 sq ft minimum lots
- AH zones – affordable Housing District (AH-1, AH-2, AH-3, AH-4) with multi-unit lots
- SR – Scarce Resource Districts
- H-1, H-1R, and IP – Highway Commercial, Retail and Industrial Park Districts

The borough population has varied in the last 35 years between 7,000 and 8,000. Household Size has been declining from 4-3 over that period. The borough land use is predominately residential as seen in the chart below



The bulk of the commercial/retail/industrial park use has been along Route 17; this area is effectively isolated from most residential areas.

The planning goal for residential land use in town was to have large lot size with single family dwellings. The AH Zone were created in response to state fair housing laws. Set backs, buffer zones, and limits on coverage are intended to maintain the “wooded” feel of the town, minimize intrusion on neighbors and minimize the environmental impact of development. USR is predominately served by private wells and private septic. The preservation of our aquifer is critical to our well being. Trees, nature friendly landscaping, and restrictions on soil movement help with water flow issues. The town straddles the Saddle River (a Category 1 River in NJ) and has several wetlands and minor streams.

The public land use in USR is as follows:

- Board of Education Properties – Bogert, Reynolds, Cavallini and fields behind each school (this represents K-8; High School is regionalized in Allendale)
- Public Use – Borough Hall, Fire Dept, Ambulance, Public Library, smaller scattered parcels of land
- Recreation – Lions Park, Hess Court Park, Liberty Pond, B of Ed fields
- Historical – Hopper-Goetschius House, Slave Cemetery

Residential Land Use

We are close to saturation on residential building at this time
Recent trend to knock down houses from the 50s instead of renovating

Commercial Land Use

- Fully developed although some vacant properties on Route 17
- Buildings are 1950/1960 construction with few exceptions
- Route 17 looks down trodden. See Appendix for photos.
- Some structures close to road (grandfathered)
- Not well landscaped
- Doesn't look or feel like part of USR

Taxes

- New Jersey has one of the highest tax rates in the country
- Bergen County has one of the highest tax rates in the state
- Upper Saddle River has one of the lowest tax rates in the county and is therefore attractive to those wanting extremely large homes.
- Local government is committed to keep tax rates low.
- USR does not provide sidewalks, sewers, water, or street lights to the residents
- Public Education is the largest portion of the taxes at

Year	Tax Rate	Town Rateables
2001	\$2.22/\$100	\$1,237,601,047
2002	\$1.52/\$100	\$1,932,143,500
2003	\$1.61/\$100	\$1,991,784,313
2004	\$1.72/\$100	\$2,013,077,348
2005	\$1.77/\$100	\$2,048,429,192

Data Source - Harry Collins.

Recommendations

#1 - Route 17 Commercial Corridor

Vision for 2020: Full utilization of existing commercial/retail properties that can generate a far more substantial rateables.

Why Important: Current Ten Cees Agreement(sewerage) severely limits **use** of the properties resulting in lower rateables and reducing the motivation for continued improvement. Route 17 looks run down and doesn't generate enough money for the town. Existing zoning regulations and the size/depth of the lots further limits improvement.

Possible Drawbacks: Cost of providing sewerage and the possibility that addressing the sewerage problem on Route 17 apart from the larger sewerage question in town might lead to a less efficient implementation. Increase in COAH requirements driven by increase in commercial land use.

Strategies for Making this Happen:

1. The "Engineering Report for Sanitary Sewerage for Redevelopment of Route 17" dated June 7, 2001 by Stephen Boswell needs to be updated. The data, including cost data, is old but more importantly, the analysis did not address full utilization of the properties but rather capacity needed to implement Ten Cees. **The update should determine the flow requirements for full utilization, not limited by existing agreements.** It should consider options in addition to the Ramsey/Allendale Interceptors (reference in report to possible use of HoHoKus Brook North).
2. Act now – 2005 - while we have representation at the county level and have the right to dispose of sewage with NWBCUA.
3. Major planning effort to determine zoning and allowable use changes required to substantially improve rateables. This would start from an assumption of full sewerage and would include goals such as underground power lines, and updated landscaping.
4. Steer clear of eminent domain as mechanism for change.

#2 – Preservation of Large Parcels of Open Space

Vision for 2020: We recognize that Apple Ridge is not for sale – our hope is that Apple Ridge continues to operate as a golf course, either privately or as a town or county run golf course, preferably generating income to the town. Furthermore, we ask that any other large parcels of open space remain open

Why Important: It is important to preserve open space and to manage burden on our schools and other town resources. If the few remaining parcels are developed based on R1 zoning, the increase in children to the district and the need to provide other town services would affect our taxes and the reduction in open space would have a negative environmental impact.

Possible Drawbacks: Cost of land. We do NOT want to suggest that Apple Ridge is up for sale.

Strategies for Making this Happen:

1. Consider rezoning the land to limit future development (may not be an option)
2. Approach Bergen County about the process and costs of County Control
3. Use Green Acres funding, if possible, to reduce tax payer burden
4. Consider negotiating a Right of First Refusal should the owners of large parcels decide to sell.

#3 – Encourage Seniors to Stay in Town

Vision for 2020: Affordable Senior Housing and/or incentives

Why Important: Seniors add our town in countless ways – from volunteerism to respect for families to reduced burden on our schools (our biggest source of expense). We want to encourage our seniors to stay.

Possible Drawbacks: Negative public response to tax credits for seniors, fear of changing character of town if we introduce mixed land use.

Strategies for Making this Happen:

1. Consider tax credit, or tax limitation for long time residents
2. Consider senior housing for meeting COAH requirements
3. Consider senior housing for any future mixed land use opportunities (ex. if a small commercial/retail area is created with apartments)

#4 – Town Water and Sewerage

Vision for 2020: Providing town wide water and sewerage options

Why Important: Development and over development in NJ/NY is causing considerable concerns about clean healthy well water availability. There is an increase in the need for deeper wells and concerns about contaminants. The trend towards far larger home substantially impacts our environment and requires larger septic fields while reducing the impervious areas needed for water management. Our existing septic systems are reaching the end of useable life and there will be fewer and fewer options for relocating the septic fields. This problem will be exacerbated by the larger homes and increased lot coverage due to pools.

Possible Drawbacks: Cost, may negatively impact aquifer since used water is not returned to the immediate area, possible diminished rationale for current acre zoning in R1 zones.

Strategies for Making this Happen:

1. Study to determine cost
2. Builder's fee to offset cost
3. Look for outside funding from State or County based on health or environment concerns

#5 – Town Community Area

Vision for 2020: Creation of a community gathering area including small scale retail in a walkable area in proximity to schools/town hall/library/park.

Why Important: A town survey should assess the desire to create such an area.

Possible Drawbacks: Residents response to introducing retail or even public gathering spots within residential area may be negative. If a small retail zone is established, managing the look and feel of the area in the long term can become problematic. Creation of walkable area that involves West Saddle River Road, East Saddle River Road and Lake Street involves traffic and safety issues that are difficult to resolve. Potential threat of road widening by the county on major roads.

Strategies for Making this Happen:

1. Survey to determine resident's wishes.
2. Negotiate Right of First Refusal for the Herman T. Hopper House on the corner of Lake and
3. West Saddle River Road.
4. In anticipation of possible use of land between municipal building and Lions Park, do not build or renovate on that area (ex. DPW).

APPENDIX C

HERE ARE THE RESULTS TO YOUR RECENT

Vision 2020 SURVEY

Dear Upper Saddle River Residents,

The Vision 2020 survey was sent to all households in November as an insert in the Borough Bulletin. We received 473 responses or roughly 19%. The survey results, along with the work of the members of the Vision 2020 Committee, have been incorporated into a comprehensive Vision 2020 Report. The report, which was presented to the Mayor and Council on March 8, 2006, contains 23 recommendations under the headings: Preserving Our Semi-Rural Atmosphere, Assuring Our Safety, Protecting Our Environment, Stabilizing Taxes, Improving Our Quality of Life and Maintaining Good Government Services.

The Vision 2020 Report will be available as a PDF on the Borough's website, www.USRtoday.com, and in print at Borough Hall.

We will have a town meeting on Wednesday, April 19, 2006 at 7:00 pm at Borough Hall to answer your questions about Vision 2020. We hope you will attend—please familiarize yourself with the Report ahead of time.

I would like to thank all those who returned completed surveys and the members of the Vision 2020 Committee who worked so hard for the last 10 months on this project.

Sincerely,
Ken Gabbert,, Mayor

ABOUT YOU

How long have you lived in USR?

Under 1 year 6 1-5 years 59 6-10 years 95 11-20 years 120 over 20 years 172

What is your age range?

Under 21 - 21-35 18 36-45 104 46-64 186 65 and over 132

Optional: Your name _____ Phone # _____

Optional: Email address _____

WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT UPPER SADDLE RIVER

What is most important in making Upper Saddle River a good place for you and your family to live?

Please select the 5 most important from the following list and rank them 1-5, with 1 being most important:

81 Affordability (value of living here vs. cost)

46 Quality of government

131 Town services (police, garbage, etc.)

121 Library

___ Cultural center activities

43 Historic heritage of the area, museum

35 Houses of Worship

303 Semi-rural atmosphere

206 Location, proximity to work, near NYC

336 Beauty: homes, trees, landscaping

121 People, neighborliness

49 Community spirit

323 Quality of schools

50 Recreational programs, sports activities

151 Open space, parks

324 Safe, clean environment.

___ Other _____

Comment _____

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO PREPARE FOR OUR FUTURE?

Here is a series of statements covering all aspects of living in USR. Consider what you want USR to be like in the years to come and respond to each item using this scale: Strongly Agree; Agree; Neutral (neither agree or disagree); Disagree; Strongly Disagree.

1. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>USR should...</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage commercial development on Rt. 17	<u>191</u>	<u>158</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>36</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Preserve historic sites (protection from tear-down)	<u>236</u>	<u>135</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>3</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Work with neighboring communities to resolve issues that would have adverse effects on USR	<u>330</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>22</u>	-	-
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt zoning regulations regarding the size of new homes.	<u>200</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>80</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>39</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt stronger regulations regarding removal of mature trees	<u>190</u>	<u>118</u>	<u>93</u>	<u>48</u>	<u>13</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt stronger environmental regulations to preserve well-water quality	<u>236</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Bring Mt. Laurel obligation to a conclusion so there will be no additional high density housing	<u>333</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Plan for the most effective way to deal with sewerage and waste	<u>274</u>	<u>129</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>3</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider going to a full municipal water system	<u>98</u>	<u>65</u>	<u>138</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>69</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____					

Now go back and select the three most important from the list above and place a check mark in the box at the left of each.

Comments on future Growth and Development in USR _____

2. QUALITY OF LIFE

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>USR should...</i>					
<input type="checkbox"/> Use tax payer dollars to purchase and retain open space	<u>123</u>	<u>148</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>36</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide more cultural, sports and recreational activities	<u>41</u>	<u>145</u>	<u>211</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>19</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide more activities involving parents and children together	<u>30</u>	<u>161</u>	<u>215</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>14</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor more activities that foster a sense of community (parades, USR days, carnivals, etc)	<u>52</u>	<u>183</u>	<u>180</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>12</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a community center, a gathering place	<u>65</u>	<u>125</u>	<u>161</u>	<u>71</u>	<u>32</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt stronger noise regulations (e.g. hours of use of mowers, leaf blowers, chains saws, etc.)	<u>139</u>	<u>129</u>	<u>138</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>16</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt stronger regulations regarding use of outside lighting	<u>60</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>197</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>30</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Regulate the use of lawn chemicals by landscapers and homeowners	<u>102</u>	<u>172</u>	<u>122</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>4</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve ball fields, parks	<u>100</u>	<u>177</u>	<u>133</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>17</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Expand and encourage volunteer opportunities	<u>72</u>	<u>221</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>5</u>	-
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____					

Now go back and select the three most important from the list above and place a check mark in the box at the left of each.

Comments on future Quality of Life in USR _____

3. COST OF LIVING

<i>USR should...</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Stabilize or reduce real estate taxes: <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal	<u>238</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>5</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> County	<u>238</u>	<u>125</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary/Middle Schools	<u>218</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>23</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Highlands	<u>227</u>	<u>85</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>24</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Find ways to reduce costs by sharing services with other communities (such as fire, ambulance, purchasing...)	<u>224</u>	<u>131</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>15</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide incentives for seniors to stay in USR	<u>182</u>	<u>115</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>23</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide lower cost housing for seniors	<u>96</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>159</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>40</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____					

Now go back and select the three most important from the list above and place a check mark in the box at the left of each.

Comments on future Cost of Living in USR _____

4. TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

<i>USR should...</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/> Better enforce speed limits	<u>128</u>	<u>163</u>	<u>129</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>6</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop plan to ease traffic congestion, especially in the area of the schools	<u>171</u>	<u>158</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>4</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Build more sidewalks, especially near schools	<u>133</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>39</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide better bike and walking paths	<u>169</u>	<u>159</u>	<u>94</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>14</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Oppose County road widening	<u>174</u>	<u>109</u>	<u>106</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>17</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Improve road maintenance	<u>116</u>	<u>195</u>	<u>126</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>-</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop a plan to ease traffic congestion	<u>111</u>	<u>185</u>	<u>114</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>8</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop plans for Emergency/Disaster situations and inform citizens	<u>163</u>	<u>188</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide reflective, easily read street signs	<u>128</u>	<u>171</u>	<u>122</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>4</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____					

Now go back and select the three most important from the list above and place a check mark in the box at the left of each.

Comments on future Traffic and Safety in USR _____

5. CURRENT USR GOVERNMENT AND SERVICES

Please rate the quality of the following community services:

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
<input type="checkbox"/> Responsiveness of Mayor and Council to community needs	<u>77</u>	<u>225</u>	<u>106</u>	<u>19</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Responsiveness of Borough employees	<u>101</u>	<u>224</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>39</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Borough keeping us informed (<i>Borough Bulletin</i> , etc.)	<u>150</u>	<u>245</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>14</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Police	<u>279</u>	<u>155</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>3</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Ambulance	<u>286</u>	<u>131</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>-</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Rescue Squad	<u>277</u>	<u>132</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>2</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Garbage collection	<u>189</u>	<u>175</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>21</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Recycling	<u>181</u>	<u>190</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>24</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Trash collection	<u>179</u>	<u>201</u>	<u>69</u>	<u>9</u>

5. CURRENT USR GOVERNMENT AND SERVICES (continued)

	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
<input type="checkbox"/> Snow removal	<u>122</u>	<u>206</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>34</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Stick and branch collection	<u>76</u>	<u>194</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>40</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary/Middle Schools	<u>187</u>	<u>183</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>1</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Highlands	<u>180</u>	<u>178</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>2</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Library	<u>237</u>	<u>164</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>3</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Center	<u>106</u>	<u>214</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>4</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Society and Museum	<u>134</u>	<u>203</u>	<u>46</u>	<u>2</u>

Comments on present and future Government and Services in USR _____

What is the one most important aspect of life in USR you would like to see preserved or changed?

Vision 2020 will be an ongoing effort

If you have questions about the report or would like to become involved
 in future Vision 2020 activities,
 please contact **Joanne Minichetti** at *Dminichett@aol.com*
 or **Bill Yeomans** at *wyeoman@erols.com*.

Appendix D

Survey Results

Summary of Most Frequent Survey Results

SURVEY “What I like about USR”	#	Category
Beauty, homes, trees, landscaping	336	Rural
Safe clean environment	324	Environment
Quality of schools	323	Government
Semi-rural atmosphere	303	Rural
Location, proximity to work, NYC	206	Quality of Life

SURVEY (Strongly Agree, Agree)	#	Category
Work with neighboring communities to resolve issues that would have adverse effect on USR	440	Environ/Rural
Adopt stronger environmental regulations to preserve well water quality	424	Environment
Bring Mt. Laurel to conclusion - no more high density	412	Rural
Plan for the most effective way to deal with sewerage and waste	403	Environment
Preserve historic sites (protection from tear-down)	371	Rural
Stabilize or reduce county taxes	363	Taxes
Reduce costs by sharing services with other communities	355	Taxes/Gov't
Stabilize or reduce municipal taxes	353	Taxes
Develop plans for Emergency/disaster and inform	351	Safety
Encourage commercial development on Rt. 17	349	Taxes/Gov't
Develop plan to ease traffic congestion, esp near schools	329	Safety
Provide better bike and walking paths	326	Quality of Life
Stabilize or reduce Northern Highlands taxes	312	Taxes
Improve road maintenance	311	Safety
Stabilize or reduce local school taxes	309	Taxes
Adopt stronger regulations regarding removal of mature trees	308	Rural

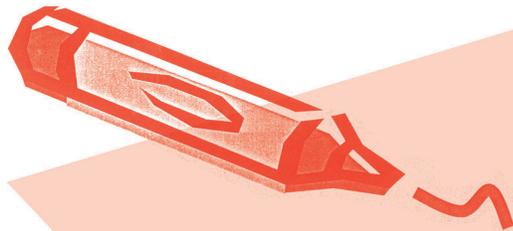
SURVEY: Write-in comments# **Category**

Preserve Semi-Rural atmosphere	175	Rural
Stop McMansions	98	Rural
Taxes too high	37	Taxes
Preserve open space, privacy	33	Rural
Enforce speeding laws	29	Safety
Improve ball fields	28	Quality of Life
Two times a week garbage collection	26	Gov't.
Preserve quality of schools	25	Gov't.
No more high density housing	23	Rural
Need sidewalks, bike paths near schools	20	Safety
Seniors need tax relief	20	Taxes

Appendix E

School Enrollment

Compiled by Dr. Joyce Snider, Superintendent of U.S.R. Schools



Enrollments and Class Size

Current and Future Projections



September Enrollments 7-year History

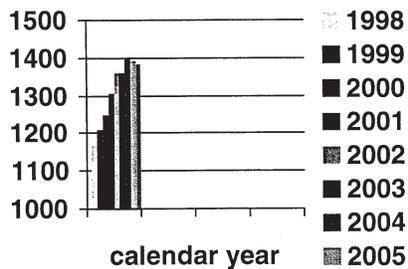
• 1999	1210	+ 3.6 %
• 2000	1250	+ 3.3 %
• 2001	1306	+ 4.5 %
• 2002	1362	+ 4.3 %
• 2003	1360	- 0.1 %
• 2004	1398	+ 2.8 %
• 2005	1345	- 3.8 %



Actual Enrollment 8-year History

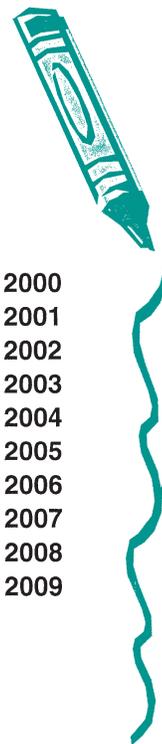
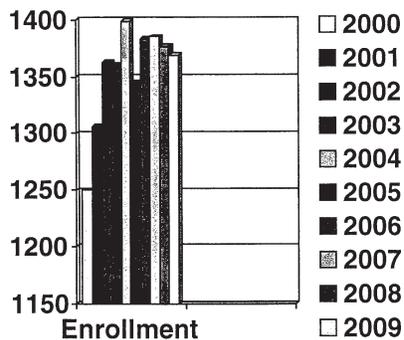
- Questions
 - What can we expect in next 5 years?
 - What would be impacted?
 - How accurate are the projections?

District Enrollment Trends



Projected Enrollment and Recent History

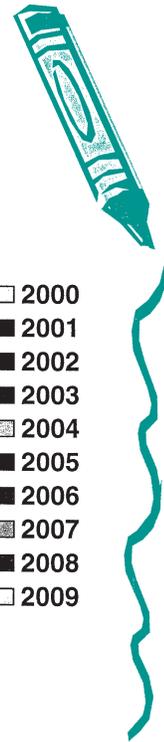
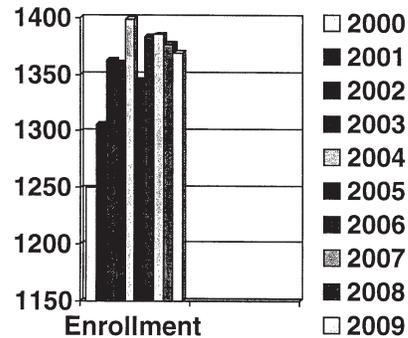
- Questions
 - What can we expect in next 5 years?
 - What would be impacted?
 - How accurate are the projections?



Projected Enrollment and Recent History

- Questions

- What can we expect in next 5 years?
- What would be impacted?
- How accurate are the projections?



Average Class Size Grades K-5

Grade	Enrollment	Sections
Kindergarten	131*	8
1	150	8
2	131	7
3	162	8
4	142	7
5	156	7



Average total K-5 $872/45 = 19.4$

* Does not include 13 Jr K students



Demographer Projections* and Actual K-8 Enrollments (9/6/05)



Grade Level	Projection	Actual	Accuracy
1	154	150	-4
2	138	131	-7
3	173	162	-9
4	145	142	-3
5	156	156	0
6	160	158	-2
7	149	138	-11
8	153	146	-9



VISION 2020 NEXT STEPS

Here are the next steps, based on the findings outlined in this report:

1. Finalize new legislation to address the size and appearance of bulk of new homes.
2. Bring Mt. Laurel obligation to a conclusion so there is no further building of high-density housing.
3. Rewrite the Shade Tree Ordinance to minimize removal of live mature trees.
4. Adopt a Landmark Ordinance to prevent tear-downs of historic buildings.
5. Tighten our Noise Ordinance to preserve peace and quiet in the evenings and some week-end hours.
6. Provide adequate staffing and equipment for our emergency services.
7. Inform all citizens of our OEM plans and actions they should take.
8. Install fire hydrants.
9. Control traffic and reduce congestion especially around schools.
10. Form a Water and Waste Task Force.
11. Fight activities in neighboring communities that will adversely affect our environment.
12. Form a bi-state River Committee.
13. Control school costs.
14. Develop Rt. 17 corridor.
15. Explore the feasibility of sharing services with other communities.
16. Hire a grant writer.
17. Provide incentives for seniors to stay in Upper Saddle River.
18. Promote volunteerism.
19. Create a gathering place.
20. Strengthen our recreation, leisure and cultural activities.
21. Appoint a panel to review and update our ordinances.
22. Improve and expand some Borough services.