

# Taking the Next Step:

Princeton Township  
and  
Princeton Borough  
Municipal Assessment

October 2007



## *The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association*

Since 1949, our member-supported organization has worked on behalf of local residents to protect, preserve and enhance our local environment. We are dedicated to caring for the integrity of the natural ecosystems of the 265-square miles of central New Jersey drained by the Stony Brook and the Millstone River. We focus on environmental education, watershed stewardship and water resource advocacy – helping future generations understand the wonders and workings of the natural world we are preserving on their behalf.

We are headquartered on a 860-acre nature reserve in Pennington that includes a community supported organic farm, nature center, pond, and a 14-mile trail system that leads visitors through our woodlands, wetlands, and fields.

Many activities within our watershed affect the quality of streams, wetlands, ground water and forests. By changing how we carry out these activities, we can improve our environment and our quality of life. So whether at home, work or play, we can all make a difference.

**If you have questions about this report or want to learn more about membership support, volunteer opportunities, and new programs please contact us at:  
(609) 737-3735.**



[www.thewatershed.org](http://www.thewatershed.org)

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# Executive Summary

## “This town has a ‘Princeton-feel’ to it.”

It is not uncommon to hear these words uttered, describing a town or a city elsewhere in the country. And those who have been to Princeton would understand immediately the intent of this comment. People feel a sense of place as they walk down the tree-lined streets. They experience the bustle of a community that has long been the prestigious center of business, education, and arts. They are offered a choice of shops and restaurants, coffeehouses, and taverns. They find comfort in the fact that the center of town is a display of historic homes and parks. They are excited by the chance to walk or take the bus to a nearby environmental center or open space that is waiting to be explored. Princeton has much to offer... all in a day’s visit, and accessible by almost every major highway, rail line, and bus in Central New Jersey.

Anyone visiting or living in Princeton understands that this quality of life does not come without a significant thoughtful decision-making processes. There is opportunity in any community to garner support and make decisions that will lead to this heightened standard of living. It is accomplished through public participation, education and a compilation of solid ordinances.

Over the years, municipalities have been contacting the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association requesting guidance with planning and environmental issues. The Watershed Association decided that responding to these issues comprehensively would be most effective. The *Project for Municipal Excellence*, supported by the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, is designed to identify the issues in a municipality that either hinder or enhance the preservation of natural resources and quality of life in and around the community. It takes strong community leadership to step back and evaluate goals, policies and strategies and figure out how to connect them with their ultimate vision. Princeton Township and Borough were ready for this challenge and the Watershed Association was excited to work with such a dedicated and open community.

Princeton Township and Borough signed resolutions formalizing their new partnership with the Watershed Association and the municipal assessment process began. With a collection of survey responses from municipal officials, staff, and consultants and a review of the Community Master Plan, land use ordinances, policies, and best management practices, the Association was able to ascertain the community’s vision.

These initial steps guided this assessment, which is divided into four major themes: Land Use Planning Techniques, Land Conservation Techniques, Direct Municipal Responsibility for the Environment, and Watershed Stewardship Projects. Comparing the vision with existing ordinances, the Watershed Association identified areas where language could be strengthened to support the vision. These areas became the focus of the assessment report and a “step” toward making the connection.

Each chapter - or “step” - in the assessment report lists the Community’s *Goal* according to the Master Plan and survey responses and the *Current Protection* that is provided in local ordinances. The heart of each step focuses on the *Options* for new opportunities. In this section, the Watershed Association gives the municipality a menu of choices for current and future planning and conservation projects. The *Did You Know?* section discusses information relating to Princeton and to what communities elsewhere in the state and nationwide have learned about the subject. Lastly, the *Additional Resources* lists resources for additional guidance.

The recommendations in this report are intended to be catalysts to achieve responsible planning and environmental quality: its objective is to serve as a guide and inspiration. Future boards and committees should refer to this document for ideas and guidance and to make connections with other communities and local organizations. The report offers a variety of recommendations, which the Watershed Association is partially funded to assist in implementing.

This guide to current and future projects for the community will connect goals with implementation and implementation with vision. The results of this analysis for the Princeton community are documented in this report, entitled **“Taking the Next Step”**. Outlined below, in no particular order, are the ten strategies for achieving the Princeton community’s goals. (Please refer to the full report for more detail).

Note—one of Princeton’s unique characteristics is the regional nature of much of the community’s land use and natural resource planning (e.g. a regional planning board and joint environmental commission). At the same time, the two municipalities have separate governance structure and ordinances. Throughout this report, when we refer to “Princeton” or the “Princeton community” we mean to include both the Township and Borough. Otherwise, we distinguish as appropriate between the two.

## **⌘ Special Resources Areas Protection**

*Community Goal:* Preserve from development environmentally sensitive lands, such as the Princeton Ridge, that are characterized by the presence of natural features such as wetlands, steep slopes, stream corridors, boulder fields, unique ecological areas, and prime wildlife habitats.

*Current Practices:* Residential Clustering is permitted to “protect environmentally sensitive lands...by requiring that the more fragile areas of the site remain in preserved open space.” Some of the Ridge has been preserved while the remainder is zoned for development as residential or office space in varying densities.

*Recommendation:* Protect environmentally sensitive areas.

**⌘ Critical Areas Protection**

*Community Goal:* Three major goals: Protect critical areas such as steep slopes, wetlands, forested areas; Protect wildlife habitat; Protect natural vegetation.

*Current Practices:* Township and Borough have some protective language on the books that needs to be enhanced and enforcement measures should be added.

*Recommendations:* Adopt ordinances to protect woodland, stream and wildlife habitats.

**⌘ Scenic Viewshed Protection**

*Community Goal:* Protect natural visual and man-made resources. Preserve and enhance existing scenic corridors, historic landscapes, open agricultural land, woodlands, scenic gateways, and the tree-lined character of roadways.

*Current Practices:* Historic Preservation zoning and Residential Clustering Ordinances.

*Recommendations:* Identify scenic viewsheds, adopt a viewshed protection ordinance.

**⌘ Groundwater Protection**

*Community Goal:* Protect the quality of groundwater...to safeguard its use for drinking water supply.

*Current Practices:* Both the Township and the Borough have minimal ordinance provisions for protecting groundwater resources.

*Recommendations:* Identify and protect key recharge areas.

**⌘ Woodlands Conservation**

*Community Goal:* Retain wooded areas and large trees, protect trees, conduct a large-scale tree planting, and have restrictions on tree cutting.

*Current Practices:* Borough and Township have shade tree commissions; ordinances to minimize tree removal in development.

*Recommendations:* Conduct an inventory of woodland areas in the community so as to identify priority protection areas, adopt an afforestation ordinance; strengthen shade tree removal ordinances.

**⌘ Low Impact Development**

*Community Goal:* One goal is identifying, protecting, and preserving environmentally sensitive areas and natural systems to limit the disturbance of environmentally sensitive lands and to protect the quality of ground and surface waters.

*Current Practices:* Impervious Cover Ordinance; Stormwater Management Ordinance.

*Recommendations:* Emphasize and encourage sensitive construction practices in critical areas and look for opportunities to retrofit existing sites.

## **🔗 Sustainable Community**

*Community Goal:* Achieve sustainable community.

*Current Practices:* The joint Environmental Commission's Sustainable Princeton subcommittee encourages work to achieve sustainability in the community.

*Recommendations:* Continue to conduct community planning forums; encourage Green/LEED construction in new/retrofitted structures; adopt ordinances and practices; create sustainable community plan.

## **🔗 Traffic and Transportation**

*Community Goal:* Reduce “in-town” automobile trips using more and better bikeways, provide for more and better mass transit facilities. Provide a pedestrian and bicycle path network, and encourage the enforcement of pedestrian safety.

*Current Practices:* Studies covering the Route 206 Corridor and pedestrian safety in the Borough and Township are underway; the Borough is implementing traffic calming measures.

*Recommendations:* Develop a traffic management plan to address the needs of the community.

## **🔗 Flood & Stormwater Mitigation**

*Community Goal:* Reduce flood and stormwater damage, including damage to life and property

*Current Practices:* Township Stormwater Management Ordinance; stream and steep slope protection; Borough Stormwater Ordinance pending.

*Recommendations:* Implement Flood Mitigation Plan goals and adopt a Flood/Stormwater Mitigation Plan.

## **🔗 Public Participation and Communication**

*Community Goal:* Promote awareness and appreciation for resources in the community and to enhance the quality of life in the community.

*Current Practices:* Active board members, civic groups, neighborhood associations. Both municipalities have websites; the Township has a newsletter. Both conduct public meetings to discuss community issues.

*Recommendations:* Continue to encourage public participation by reaching out to residents through websites, newspapers, community days, etc.; strengthen effectiveness of communication.

Ultimately, Princeton Township and Borough must develop strategies to plan for current and future generations of residents. By committing to follow through on this report, the Watershed Association and the Princeton community are achieving the mission of preserving and enhancing the watershed and the communities within it. This report is the next step in realizing that vision.

# Acknowledgments

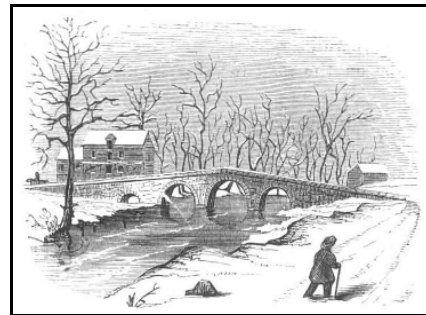
We commend Princeton Township's and Princeton Borough's leaders and professionals for participating in our Program for Municipal Excellence. It is difficult for anyone, whether an individual or a municipal body, to have the courage to evaluate current work, determine where and how to improve a current system, and if necessary, develop a new strategy. We want the readers of this report to look at not only what can be done, but what has already been accomplished in the Princeton community.

Our hope is that the Township and Borough will learn from and expand on their own experiences, challenges, and successes, as well as those of surrounding municipalities, keeping in mind that zoning and policy should look regionally to provide comprehensive and sensible growth. We also look forward to partnering with the community in embracing new opportunities that protect and enhance the character and natural environment that makes Princeton a special place to live.

We wish to thank the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for their generosity in funding this project, and the members of the Township Committee, Borough Council, Regional Planning Board, Joint Environmental Commission and staff for their responses to our survey. We would also like to acknowledge the individual input of Wendy Benchley, Victoria Bergman, David Breithaupt, Bill Enslin, Steve Hiltner, Wendy Kaczerski, Lee Solow, Barbara Trelstad, and Gail Ullman and all those who responded to the survey. Your time and dedication to this project was greatly appreciated.



Nassau Street, Princeton Borough



Stony Brook Bridge, Princeton Twp

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## How To Use This Report

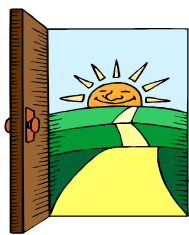


Each “step” in the assessment report lists Princeton’s *Goal* for a specific subject according to the Master Plan and survey responses and the *Current Protection* on the books. To guide our evaluation of these areas, we developed a checklist that covers areas important to land planning techniques, land conservation, how the municipality addresses environmental issues and what watershed stewardship projects are underway. We also interviewed key personnel.

The heart of each step focuses on the *Options* for new opportunities. In this section, Stony Brook gives the municipality a menu of choices for current and future planning and conservation projects. The *Did You Know?* section discusses information relating to Princeton and to what communities state and nationwide have learned about the subject at hand. Lastly, the *Additional Resources* lists resources for additional guidance.

This report serves as a guide for future boards and committees to inspire work on new projects and to support those tasks before them. In addition, it provides an opportunity for municipalities to support other community and local non-profit groups and foster a regional approach to any of these issues.

## Next Steps



Once the Assessment report is presented and a short list of priorities is determined, the Watershed Association will work with Township and Borough officials to implement the list using models and guides. This partnership will enable the Association to support Princeton’s efforts in providing citizens with a sense of community, a healthy environment and a strong economy, while maintaining a balance of development and preservation.

We realize the Township and Borough have already begun implementing some of the options listed in this report (and that the Master Plan is being re-examined) and we offer our continued assistance to the community. By committing ourselves to follow through on this report and its results, the Association is achieving its mission of protecting and preserving the health of the watershed.

Our Municipal Assessment program is uniquely tailored to each municipality’s goals and needs. At the request of the Township Committee and Borough Council, we have focused on goals other than current zoning practices and development of specific tracts of land.

# Highlights of Your Town



When beginning this assessment, members of the Township Committee and Borough Council, Regional Planning Board, Joint Environmental Commission, and various staff and consultants articulated their goals and vision for the community by responding to our survey (see Appendix A). It is important to note the proactive measures that have been implemented within the community and that have created the unique place that is Princeton.

## Good Things...

Some examples of Princeton's ongoing work to implement its vision include:

- **Sustainable Princeton**  
Princeton's Joint Environmental Commission has established a subcommittee to encourage the planning and construction of neighborhoods and buildings in a sustainable fashion. In addition, the Community Master Plan states that any "new and remodeled buildings and facilities be models of environmental, economic and social stewardship."
- **Regional Center for Surrounding Communities**  
Princeton is a regional center for business, education and arts (and a designated regional center under the State Plan). With its rich history and culture, ease of access and diversity of activities, Princeton is a desirable location for visitors and residents alike. Princeton's regional approach to land use planning (with a Regional Planning Board, joint Environmental Commission and Site Plan Review Advisory Board and other shared services) strengthens the relationship between the Borough and Township that contributes to Princeton's identity.
- **Exceptional Environmental Resources**  
Princeton possesses striking beauty and healthy ecosystems within and surrounding the community. Because of the sensitivity of these areas, the first section of this report is dedicated to the Special Resources areas. We spotlight these areas because they are consistently discussed throughout the Community Master Plan as places to protect; they deserve a stage of their own.
- **Open Space Preservation**  
In 1996 the Community Master Plan set a goal to "Preserve twenty-five (25) percent of the community's land area as public open space, private open space or park land." By 2003 this goal had been achieved, with 2,970 acres preserved as state, county, and municipal public parks, private open space, and private lands with conservation easements.



# Next Steps



# Introduction

**The elected and appointed officials in Princeton Township and Princeton Borough have a challenging task:** balance natural resource protection with economic prosperity, encourage business, provide local government services, ensure diversity of housing, and determine where best to site a variety of land uses throughout Princeton. These challenges are magnified in the Borough, where over half the land area is owned by tax-exempt institutions. Local leaders strive to ensure that the needs of current residents are met and that there will be high quality of life for residents in the future. To carry out this important task, officials rely on their Master Plan to provide a vision for the future and use zoning, policies and ordinances as the tools to help carry out that mission.

The Watershed Association recognizes the magnitude of this task. We developed the Project for Municipal Excellence with the understanding that the protection and health of a watershed depend on the land use laws and policies that govern development. In partnering with municipalities we provide an outside evaluation of current practices and we support planning that protects the natural environment and ensures that the vision in the Master Plan is achieved.

A good Master Plan guides both growth and conservation, clearly states goals and objectives, and highlights a vision for the future. In planning for quality of life for both current and future residents, Princeton's leaders recognize their current position and are actively working to ensure that their community retains its historic character, environmental health, and viable economy.

We were excited to partner with Princeton on this project, as the character of the community is something to emulate and learn from. The community embodies a sense of place consisting of the University, the historic landmarks, the natural resources, a variety of locally owned and small national retail stores in a vital and lively downtown, arts facilities that attract national and global performers, and a culturally and economically diverse population.

This unique combination of elements presents an opportunity for Princeton to share experiences with surrounding municipalities and with the Association. Making the bold move to assess their own practices, Princeton Township and Princeton Borough are advancing efforts to take on the challenge of protecting and enhancing these qualities.

## STEP

# 1

## Special Resources Areas Protection

**GOALS:** The Master Plan states, “The preservation and protection of the natural environment must be an integral part of all plans and designs for improvements and changes in land use. Examples include rezoning of the Princeton Ridge, focus on and protection of Lake Carnegie, protection of the Institute Woods [since preserved] and Quaker Road farms.” The 2003 update to the Open Space and Recreation element reiterates the goal: “Preserve environmentally sensitive areas such as the Stony Brook, Harry’s Brook Basin, Jewell’s Brook, Mountain Brook, the Ridge and Lake Carnegie...”

Survey respondents stated the importance of protecting “the Ridge” and other environmentally sensitive areas, and suggested “developing in town centers” to protect these areas.

The Master Plan Land Use Element also states: “As the Princeton Community approaches build-out, difficult choices among competing uses for the remaining land will have to be made. The legal obligations of affordable housing, a

growing school-age population, and the needs of the aging Baby Boom generation are placing difficult demands on the rapidly dwindling resource of vacant land inside the boundaries of Princeton.” Achieving the goal of preservation and protection of the natural environment while also accommodating competing development demands has been a source of ongoing debate in the community.

### CURRENT PROTECTION

Residential Clustering is permitted to “protect environmentally sensitive lands...by requiring that the more fragile areas of the site remain in preserved open space.” Some of the Ridge has been preserved while the remainder is zoned for development as residential or office space in varying densities.

Much of the Ridge has been designated “environmentally sensitive” in the State Plan (Planning Area 5.) The Township proposed that about 20 acres of the Ridge be re-designated from PA 5 to State Plan “Suburban” area (PA 2).

### **OPTION: PROTECT ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS.**

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

- 🔗 Improving the protection of environmentally sensitive lands by such strategies as acquiring conservation easements; purchasing additional open space; and evaluating and implementing new zoning and planning approaches for such areas to meet conservation goals.
- 🔗 Updating the Township’s Stream Corridor Ordinance to reflect current goals for protecting waterways and reducing flooding.
- 🔗 Creating a Critical Areas ordinance that defines environmentally sensitive areas and removes them from a buildable lot calculation prior to calculating density (See Step 2).
- 🔗 Ensuring that disturbance or construction on a site that contains environmentally sensitive features occurs outside of those areas.
- 🔗 Ensuring that any development occurring near environmentally sensitive features applies best management practices, such as limited impervious cover, limited tree removal, stormwater infiltration, and rain gardens.



## Did You Know?

Of the land area in the Princeton community, 25% is preserved open space, and 90% of the balance is developed. Princeton Borough has little to no room left to grow, although redevelopment and infill are occurring. Much of the 7.5% remaining undeveloped has environmentally sensitive features. Within the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed, East Amwell, Hopewell, Hillsborough, Montgomery, and West Amwell Townships have used their zoning authority to protect environmentally sensitive areas that are similar in topography, geology and hydrology to the Ridge, by establishing minimum-acre lots in the Sourland Mountain region and associated areas. Residential lot minimums include 15 acres (East Amwell and Hillsborough), 14 acres (Hopewell) (includes portions of the same landform as the Ridge, 10 acres (Montgomery), and 8 acres (cluster lots) (West Amwell.)



Yet another option is creating an ordinance that specifically protects “Critical Areas” by excluding the critical areas from the density calculations of the buildable area of a lot. Hillsborough Township has utilized this language in their Critical Areas Ordinance where the rule is applied to their Mountain Zone and Agricultural Zone, two environmentally sensitive areas.

Critical Areas are those of ecological importance. Whether steep slopes, healthy soils, lush stands of trees, or pools of seasonal waters, these areas often serve as habitats for threatened or endangered species of plants and wildlife, and may be adversely affected by inappropriate development. Disturbances to these areas can also affect neighbors of the site, increasing flooding or drying up wells. Minimizing the disturbance to these areas - in some instances, preservation - increases the chance for species survival and lessening the need for mitigation on a property.



## Additional Resources

***Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.*** Water Resources Protection Report for Princeton Township and Borough. Contact the Watershed Association for this report. 609-737-3735.

***Hillsborough Township Critical Areas Ordinance. Ord. 2005-02.*** Online at [http://www.e-codes.generalcode.com/codebook\\_frameset.asp?t=ws&cb=0602\\_A](http://www.e-codes.generalcode.com/codebook_frameset.asp?t=ws&cb=0602_A) or contact the Hillsborough Township Clerk’s office at 908-369-4313.

***Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.*** Articles and newsletters on planning for future growth and preservation. [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)

***American Planning Association.*** Smart Growth Reader. <http://www.planning.org/sgreader/>



## STEP

### 2

## Critical Areas Protection

**GOAL:** Three major goals are stated throughout the Strategic Overview of the Community Master Plan.

- Protect steep slopes, woodlands, wildlife, waterway corridors, floodplains and wetlands.
- Protect important wildlife habitat, streams, waterways, wetlands and other unique or irreplaceable land types.
- Preserve natural vegetation including woodlands, old field, meadow and wetland communities and specimen vegetation.

The Open Space Element states that the community seeks to preserve 25% of its

land area as public or private open space or park land.

**CURRENT PROTECTION:** §10B-191.2(a) “ In determining the number of dwelling units, lots which are precluded because of unusable areas shall not be counted.” "Unusable areas" are defined as steep slopes, flood hazard areas as “ other unusual suitability conditions.

Stream Corridor protection exists, but is limited, and enforcement is lacking.

As noted, the community has met its goal of preserving 25% of land as open space.



*Wooded stream habitat, Princeton*

### **OPTION: ADOPT ORDINANCES TO PROTECT WOODLAND, STREAM AND WILDLIFE HABITATS.**

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

- ⊗ Conducting a Natural Resources Inventory.
- ⊗ Developing a Woodlands Ordinance that protects forested areas (See Step 5, Woodlands Conservation).
- ⊗ Developing a Wildlife Habitat Ordinance with buffers for areas to be protected from development, for example: wooded corridors, stream corridors, grasslands, etc.
- ⊗ Updating the Township’s Stream Corridor Ordinance (SCO) to reflect current goals for protecting waterways and to reduce flooding; and adopting a Borough SCO.
- ⊗ Conducting public education programs about natural habitats in the community.
- ⊗ Increasing the open space preservation goal to preserve additional open space; priority should be given to protecting riparian areas (see Step 9), creating greenways and connecting open spaces.



## Did You Know?

A Natural Resources Inventory (NRI)

- is a compilation of text and maps depicting natural resource characteristics and environmental features of an area.
- includes tools to describe and compare information on the natural and environmental characteristics and features of an area.
- describes watersheds, streams and wetlands and can also include: climate, soils, geology, hydrology, geography, topography, vegetation, wildlife habitat, critical areas, land use, historic and cultural factors, scenic areas, air quality, transportation, noise and contaminated sites.
- Characterizes relationships between local and regional natural resources.

There are a variety of uses for a NRI. Some of them include:

- a factual basis for municipal land use planning;
- a basic tool in determining zoning regulations, municipal ordinances and other land use management techniques;
- a basis for a land capability analysis and for determining the intensity and location of development;
- an indicator of sensitive areas and areas suitable to certain kinds of development; and
- a tool to increase understanding of natural systems, and their limitations and opportunities for use.



## Additional Resources

***Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association. GIS Center.*** The GIS Center can provide mapping of Critical Areas in the Township and the Borough. Phone: (609) 737-3735. [www.giscenter.org](http://www.giscenter.org)

***Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC).*** ANJEC's Smart Growth Survival Kit brings together information and references to help environmental commissions and citizens incorporate natural resource protection and State Plan consistency into their local plans. Phone: (973) 539-7547 Resource Paper: Environmental Resources Inventory. <http://www.anjec.org/pdfs/EnvironmentalResource.pdf>

***NJ DEP Landscape Project.*** The Landscape Project is a pro-active, ecosystem-level approach for the long-term protection of imperiled species and their important habitats in New Jersey. For more information go to <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/ensp/landscape/>



## STEP

### 3

## Scenic Viewshed Protection

**GOAL:** The Community Master Plan states the need to preserve, protect and enhance natural and manmade visual resources.

The Plan also seeks to preserve and enhance existing scenic corridors, historic landscapes, open agricultural land and woodlands; maintain a "sense of place" and small town quality evidenced as one crosses into the community through its several gateways; maintain scenic and historic gateways and enhance those that are less attractive; preserve and enhance the tree-lined character of Princeton's roadways.

Survey responses were mixed; those who expressed interest in protecting natural and historic viewsheds cited the Princeton Ridge and Nassau St as examples.

**CURRENT PROTECTION:** Under Historic Preservation Zoning District and regulations, proposed actions must be compatible with existing structures and landscape in order to receive approval of a preservation plan.

The Residential Clusters section of the land use ordinance lists one of the purposes as providing a "desirable visual environment through creative development."

### **OPTION: IDENTIFY SCENIC VIEWSHEDS; ADOPT A VIEWSHED PROTECTION ORDINANCE**

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

- ⊗ Inventorying scenic corridors - including roadways, views of parks and open space, and views to ridgelines - using photographs and site descriptions.
- ⊗ Setting a minimum setback from and retaining the treeline along roadways to maintain the scenic corridor view and buffer any uses on roadside properties.
- ⊗ Establishing design review standards for applications for development in viewsheds and along established scenic corridors.
- ⊗ Enacting an ordinance that sets standards for hillside development to minimize the impact of buildings and grading on views of existing land forms, open spaces and unique geological landforms that can be seen from public roadways.
- ⊗ Working with surrounding municipalities to protect common viewsheds.



## Did You Know?

Scenic vistas and viewsheds are often destroyed during rapid change, especially in natural or open space settings. Identification and protection of these assets is an important component of scenic conservation.

Views are resources that cannot be recovered once they are lost. Viewshed protection is a form of aesthetic-based regulation. It has a clear property value basis that can also be justified on general public health and welfare grounds and as contributing to the overall quality of life in a community.

Standards used in a design review process are often called “design guidelines.” Unlike zoning codes, which are prescriptive and specific, design guidelines are more descriptive and suggestive. Design review is *not* the imposition of one person’s or one committee’s personal tastes upon developers or upon the community as a whole.

A viewshed protection ordinance is developed to protect the scenic quality of an area. Such an ordinance might include:

- Minimal disturbance to existing topographical features and vegetation.
- Guidelines for height, bulk, color, landscaping and other design elements
- Controls on placement and lighting of outdoor signage.

Viewsheds that the community may wish to consider protecting include the Quaker Road farms, Lake Carnegie, the Princeton Ridge and Nassau St.



## Additional Resources

***Scenic America*** helps communities identify and map special places as a way to manage new development and conserve significant visual assets through the use of easements. <http://www.scenic.org/easements>

***Napa County, California*** adopted a viewshed-protection ordinance in 2001. Ordinance excerpts, application checklist and design manual are located at <http://www.co.napa.ca.us/gov/apps/viewshed107/>

***Zoning for Aesthetics*** by Christopher J. Duerksen, Esq. provides insight on the legal basis of aesthetic regulation, administrative issues and other considerations such as priority protection areas and tailoring language to fit local needs. <http://www.plannersweb.com/wfiles/w509.html>



## STEP

### 4

## Groundwater Protection

**GOAL:** The Community Master Plan states the need to “protect the quality of groundwater... to safeguard its use for drinking water supply.”

Respondents to the survey wanted parking areas to be used to recharge groundwater . (compare Step 7, Low Impact Development)..



*Wooded recharge area*

checklists. The Township’s ordinance regulates the removal of trees, so as to (among other goals) prevent inhibiting aquifer recharge.

The Borough’s Land Use Ordinance defines “drainage” as “The removal of surface or ground water from drains, grading, or other means and includes control of runoff during and after construction or development... to induce

**CURRENT PROTECTION:** The Township’s and Borough’s Land Use Ordinances require aquifer recharge areas to be documented on the Soil Map for both major and minor site plan review

water recharge into the ground where practical...”. It also requires an environmental information statement that “estimates potable water demand and the source of water supply.”

### **OPTION: IDENTIFY AND PROTECT KEY RECHARGE AREAS.**

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

- ⊗ Using the Watershed Association’s Water Resources Protection Report to target recharge areas for protection.
- ⊗ Mapping (1) locations of facilities that handle hazardous materials (include proximity to critical recharge areas) and (2) Municipal Drinking Water Aquifers.
- ⊗ Applying Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect groundwater, especially in areas where recharge rates are high.
- ⊗ Enhancing stormwater control ordinances to control flooding.
- ⊗ Implementing BMPs for application of fertilizers, pesticides, road salt or sand; chemical use, storage and reduction; and hazardous materials disposal.
- ⊗ Limiting impervious cover, planting and restoring woodlands (see Step 5), and engaging in regional stormwater management planning with neighboring towns.
- ⊗ Adopting these ordinances: Wellhead and Drinking Water Protection (include routine testing of private wells to protect areas with higher groundwater recharge; Residential Septic System Monitoring and Maintenance (provide educational program on septic system maintenance; Borough Impervious Cover Limitation (reduce surface over which groundwater runs off without infiltrating aquifers.)



## Did You Know?

Half of the residents in New Jersey rely on groundwater for their drinking water supplies. However, these groundwater supplies can become polluted from failing septic systems, commercial or industrial pollution, and naturally occurring contaminants. Once pollutants enter groundwater, it is difficult and expensive to remove or treat them. Preventing groundwater pollution is not only more cost effective, but also more ecologically sound.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are methods that have been determined to be effective, practical means of eliminating or reducing the amount of pollutants that are washed by precipitation into ground and surface waters.

In many cases the conditions that favor groundwater recharge are also attractive for development. Areas with high groundwater recharge often have soils that are suitable for underground wastewater disposal systems such as septic. Protection of groundwater and associated recharge areas is a critical first step to ensuring clean and plentiful water for present and future Princeton residents.

Careful planning and water conservation are important practices to ensure that water supplies can meet the current and future demands. Drilling deeper wells may not always provide enough clean water.



## Additional Resources

***Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association's River-Friendly Program.*** Designed to help landowners become better stewards by reducing fertilizer and pesticide use and by reducing water consumption. <http://www.thewatershed.org> or 609.737.3735

***Citizen's Guide on Groundwater Protection.*** The Association has developed a document that provides information regarding wellhead protection, as well as what towns can do to protect groundwater recharge. See contact information above.

***Model Wellhead Protection Implementation Package.*** The Association is producing a series of implementation packages to assist municipalities in developing protective ordinances. See contact information above.

***DRAFT Model Well Testing Ordinance.*** Hunterdon County Environmental Toolbox. Although this model ordinance is still in draft form, it provides language for municipalities to apply to their own well testing needs. The Association has this DRAFT model ordinance on file for review and use. See contact information above.

## STEP

# 5 Woodlands Conservation

GOAL: Survey respondents said there is a need for “retention of wooded areas and large trees”, for “protecting trees”, conducting a “large-scale tree planting”, and having “restrictions on tree cutting.”

CURRENT PROTECTION: The Township and the Borough are Tree Cities; each has a shade tree commission that oversees the planting and maintenance of trees in public areas.

Both the Township’s and the Borough’s land use ordinances require developers to minimize tree removal. A Township ordinance restricts clear-cutting and large-tree removal on private and public property.



### **OPTION: CONDUCT AN INVENTORY OF WOODLANDS, IMPROVE TREE REMOVAL ORDINANCES AND ADOPT AN AFFORESTATION ORDINANCE.**

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

⊗ Using the Water Resources Protection Report, distributed by the Watershed Association in 2004, to identify areas where protection should be a priority.

⊗ Inventorying existing woodlands; determining where woodlands should be protected or enhanced, and developing a Comprehensive Woodlands Conservation Plan covering geology, topography, climate, soils, vegetative communities, wildlife, land use, historic and cultural resources, regional relationships and existing amenities (greenways, trails, and preserved open space).

⊗ Educating property owners about the benefits of trees and contiguous woodlands; informing them of programs and incentives to protect woodlands on their property.

⊗ Improving the Tree Removal Ordinance to protect trees from damage during construction, require replacement of removed or destroyed trees.

⊗ Adopting an afforestation ordinance to increase contiguous woodlands.



## Did You Know?

Trees and woodlands provide quantifiable social, health, economic and environmental benefits to the community.

Forested watersheds enjoy significantly higher water quality than those without wooded areas. Woodland soil absorbs stormwater and releases it slowly, reducing flooding. At the same time, woodlands filter out pollutants (sediment, nutrients, and metals) before they reach streams and groundwater. In one well-publicized instance, New York City estimated that by instituting measures to protect the vast forested watershed that supplies its drinking water, it would avoid a more than *three-fold* cost - \$6 billion - to build new water filtration infrastructure.

Other services that woodlands provide include :

- One acre of trees will generate enough oxygen in a day to support 18 people.
- Trees make dense areas more livable by buffering noise and providing privacy.
- Forests sequester carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas.
- Trees reduce energy costs: they efficiently cool the air in summer not only by creating shade, but also by evaporating water via their leaves
- Woodland habitats support diverse populations of plants and animals; the larger the contiguous woods, the higher the diversity and more resilient the population.
- Home values are higher for properties with trees or next to woods..



## Additional Resources

***Building Greener Communities: Planning for Woodland Conservation*** Prepared for the North Jersey Resource Conservation and Development Council and the Hunterdon County Planning Board. Prepared by Marybeth H. Carter, ASLA, AICP. June, 2003. <http://www.njrkd.org>

***Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions.*** Environmental and Natural Resources Inventory guidelines. <http://www.anjec.org>

***NJ Department of Environmental Protection.*** Green Communities Challenge Grants are available through the NJ DEP and will be awarded to communities for the development of comprehensive community forestry management plans. <http://www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/forest/community/grants.html>

***The Economic Value of New Jersey State Parks and Forests,*** by NJ Department of Environmental Protection (rev. Nov. 2006) includes information on the value of forests and woodlands. <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dsr/economics/parksforest-report.pdf>.



## STEP

# 6 Low Impact Development

**GOALS:** The Community Master Plan states goals including:

Identifying, protecting, and preserving environmentally sensitive areas and natural systems to limit the disturbance of environmentally sensitive lands and to protect the quality of ground and surface waters.

Creating a very low residential density district (10-acre lots) for two areas severely constrained by environmental features, in the southwestern and northeastern corners of the Township, adjacent to Stony Brook and the Millstone River, respectively.

Ensuring that natural and man-made environments are not adversely affected by new development.

Respondents to the survey suggested reducing lot coverage of new and rebuilt homes, limiting lot sizes, and implementing the stormwater

management plan and ordinance to reduce flooding in both the Township and the Borough.

### **CURRENT PROTECTION:**

*Impervious Coverage Ordinance* limits the amount of paved, compacted and built-on surface on Township residential lots.

*Stormwater Control Ordinance* (adopted by Township, pending in Borough) is triggered by any disturbance of one acre or more or one-quarter acre of impervious cover. Definition for Low Impact Development (LID) is included: “Utilizing selected stormwater management measures to replicate predevelopment hydrology in order to reduce the impacts of development. LID minimizes the creation of stormwater runoff and pollution by minimizing site disturbance and impervious cover and by promoting on-site infiltration of precipitation and runoff.”

### **OPTION: EMPHASIZE AND ENCOURAGE SENSITIVE CONSTRUCTION PRACTICES IN CRITICAL AREAS AND LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO RETROFIT EXISTING SITES.**

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

- ⊗ Ensuring accurate mapping of Critical Habitat Areas before granting construction permits.
- ⊗ Encouraging greater use of pervious material (porous pavement, green parking lots, gravel and other alternatives) on development and redevelopment sites.
- ⊗ Encouraging, in both development and redevelopment, sustainable building and redevelopment standards to distribute storm water across a site rather than directing it into a centralized management facility.
- ⊗ Amending Zoning Ordinances to protect the areas identified in the Master Plan as appropriate for low-density development.



## Did You Know?

Sensitive construction practices can protect critical habitats and limit soil erosion on construction sites, preventing runoff and sedimentation in nearby waterways. Some techniques currently used to alleviate environmental degradation include examples from around the country and can be distributed to developers at pre-application meetings:

- ⌘ **Minnesota Urban Small Sites BMP Manual.** Gives examples of Vehicle Track Pads, Grading and Sequencing of construction. <http://www.metrocouncil.org/environment/Watershed/BMP/manual.htm>.
- ⌘ **Conyers, GA - Construction Practices Brochure.** Gives examples to control erosion and sediment movement at the construction site. [http://www.conyersga.com/client\\_resources/cityhall/construction%20practices.doc](http://www.conyersga.com/client_resources/cityhall/construction%20practices.doc)

The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association has developed a Low Impact Development (LID) Guide to assist municipalities in applying these techniques to projects in their own towns. The LID Guide suggests that towns consider non-structural stormwater management strategies such as rain gardens, bioretention systems, disconnecting impervious cover in driveways, and using pervious pavement and concrete materials. Many LID practices are required by New Jersey Stormwater Regulations for new development.

The Guide also gives the municipality a look at how LID is a factor in Smart Growth planning. Reducing the amount of impervious cover or clustering development on a site or within a neighborhood can reduce the amount of infrastructure needed to service the development in the community.

The LID Guide offers examples of all of these techniques throughout the country and in New Jersey. The LID Guide is available from the Watershed Association.



## Additional Resources

***Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.*** River-Friendly Golf Course, Business and Resident Certification Programs and The Natural Lands Network Rain Garden brochure. 609.737.3735. [www.thewatershed.org](http://www.thewatershed.org).

***Native Plant Society.*** This organization has a list of references for native plantings, removing invasive species, and planting rain gardens and butterfly gardens to enhance infiltration of groundwater. <http://www.npsnj.org/references.htm>

***Construction Site Erosion Control Ordinance.*** Boise, Idaho. Municipal Code Chapter 8-17. This ordinance is a model for construction site erosion control that includes goals for minimizing depositing and tracking sediment, utilizing appropriate materials and equipment for construction, regulating temporary structures and materials, and for inspecting during the construction process. The Watershed Association has this ordinance on file for review. See contact information above.



## STEP

### 7

## Sustainable Community

**GOALS:** Land Use goals in the Community Master Plan create a healthy recipe for sustainability :balance uses with scale and character; apply urban design and energy saving principles to new and redeveloped projects; protect and enhance natural, cultural and recreational resources; enhance and protect the scenic quality of community gateways ; supply housing for low and moderate income residents; preserve historic buildings and sites.

A stated “community value” in the Master Plan is to maintain a sense of place and small town quality distinctive to the community.

Goals in the Utility Element include promoting the construction of energy efficient homes, offices and public buildings.

Respondents to the survey felt that sustainability could be achieved through building with regard for the community’s needs and for environmentally sensitive areas, as well as requiring energy efficient design of all new construction.

**CURRENT PRACTICES:** The Joint Environmental Commission’s Sustainable Princeton subcommittee encourages work to achieve sustainability throughout the community, including green design and LEED Certified construction. The subcommittee is creating a Sustainability Plan based on the ideas brainstormed at community forums.

### **OPTION: ENCOURAGE GREEN STANDARDS FOR CONSTRUCTION IN NEW AND RETROFITTED DEVELOPMENT.**

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

- ⊗ Continue to conduct community forums on sustainability, incorporate ideas into the sustainability plan (including design language for buildings and sites) and implement the plan.
- ⊗ Creating a “form-based” ordinance that can be tailored to the needs of the community and even specific sites. This code allows for flexibility, but creates diversity in the development and adds a neighborhood feel where it might not have been before.
- ⊗ Adopting standards and incentives for using “green building” techniques; requiring public buildings be “Green/LEED” certified.
- ⊗ Assessing how infill development will be affected by strategies like density bonuses, transit-oriented development or mixed-use development along commercial strips.
- ⊗ Working with neighboring communities and those implementing green development for assistance in developing a strategy for the Princeton region.



## Did You Know?

*Community Planning for a Sense of Place.* Beginning in the late 1980's community planners have sought to create unique communities with walkable places, a variety of housing and a mix of land uses, including open space within and surrounding the community. Focusing on the movement of people, street patterns are designed with a flow through and within the community. Form-based development codes help accomplish these goals by creating a place that is defined by the buildings and open spaces.

*Green Building Codes.* According to the Department of Energy, residential and commercial buildings account for 40% of all energy consumption in the US, and 40% of all carbon emissions. Since 1990, 48 percent of the increase in U.S. carbon emissions can be attributed to increasing emissions from the building sector (about 1/6 of that in their construction, and 5/6 in their operations).

Reducing the energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from buildings is the primary objective of a "green building code". One standard that addresses these objectives is the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standard of the US Green Building Council. Another effort is the Green Building Toolkit, a joint initiative of the American Institute of Architects and the US Council of Mayors.

## Additional Resources



***Smart Code: A Comprehensive Form-Based Planning Ordinance.*** Spring 2005 issue. Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Company. [www.dpz.com](http://www.dpz.com)

***Municipal Code Corporation.*** Distributes the SmartCode nationwide as an alternative to conventional (sprawl-oriented) ordinances. P.O. Box 2235, Tallahassee, FL 32316-2235; Tel: 800.262.2633 Fax: 850.575.8852

***Green Building Code Toolkit for Mayors.*** American Institute of Architects. Toolkit to achieve a goal of reaching a 50 percent fossil fuel reduction by 2010 and carbon neutral buildings by 2030. Includes an overview of green building issues, sample ordinance language that has already been used effectively, and real-world examples of what communities are already doing to pursue green building programs. [http://www.aia.org/aiarchitect/thisweek06/1110/1110n\\_mayors.cfm](http://www.aia.org/aiarchitect/thisweek06/1110/1110n_mayors.cfm)

***LEED Resources.*** US Green Building Council. The LEED reference systems, guides and case studies for new and retrofitted construction. <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=75&>

***Cook County LEED Ordinance.*** . Requires all new county construction in Chicago to conform to LEED standards. <http://www.cookctyclerk.com/agendas/2001/020601/ordinance.htm>; also see ***Town of Cranford, NJ LEED Ordinance***, <http://www.usgbc.org/Docs/News/News1952.pdf>.



## STEP

# 8

## Traffic and Transportation

**GOALS:** The Circulation Element of the Community Master Plan states the need to reduce “in-town” automobile trips using more and better bikeways, and to provide for more and better mass transit facilities.

Other goals include providing a pedestrian and bicycle path network, and encouraging the enforcement of pedestrian safety.

Respondents to the survey stated the importance of environmental issues related to the use of single-occupancy automobiles and the need for more and safer bike and pedestrian paths, better linkages of these paths from neighborhoods to parks to shopping, and more public transportation.

Respondents also agreed with the Community Master Plan that heavy truck traffic through the Borough needs to be limited for environmental, aesthetic and circulation purposes.

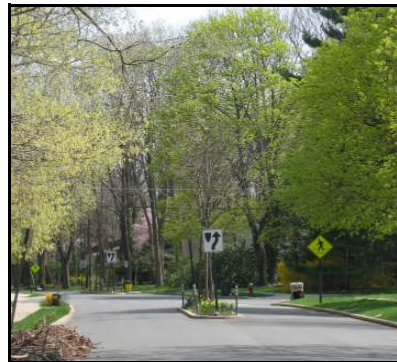
### CURRENT PROTECTION:

The Borough and Princeton University

have installed speed humps and other traffic calming measures. The Borough will be obtaining a jitney.

The Borough is conducting a pedestrian safety study. The Township has begun to install pedestrian signage.

The Route 206 Joint Vision Plan and Traffic Calming Study, delivered in October 2006, recommends a series of traffic calming elements - street trees, roundabouts, back-in angled parking, and pedestrian median refuges - designed to slow vehicular traffic and increase safe opportunities for pedestrians.



*Traffic calming, Prospect Ave.*

### **OPTION: DEVELOP A TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE AREA TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.**

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

- ⊗ Continuing to apply bicycle and pedestrian-friendly measures to major and connecting roadways to maximize movement where feasible.
- ⊗ Encouraging schools and institutions to work with Mercer Transportation Authority to develop carpooling policies
- ⊗ Working together with Princeton University to develop a jitney system
- ⊗ Promoting Safe Routes to School programs.



## Did You Know?

From 1975-2005 New Jersey's population increased 19% while vehicle miles traveled per capita increased more than 50%, to 8000 (sixth in the nation).

Automobiles in New Jersey contribute 40 percent of the pollution that diminishes our air quality, and more than 80 percent of airborne carcinogens. Diesel engines (in trucks, buses and heavy equipment) are a major source of the airborne fine particulate matter that causes as many deaths each year in New Jersey as motor vehicle accidents. Idling and queuing of diesel vehicles can have a significant impact on local air quality and be a significant source of such emissions.

Compared with traditional intersections, roundabouts reduce accidents and promote traffic flow. Roundabouts are much smaller than traffic circles and require vehicles to negotiate a sharper curve; thus slowing down traffic. By improving the efficiency of traffic flow, they also reduce vehicle emissions and fuel consumption.

## Additional Resources



***Route 206 Joint Vision Plan and Traffic Calming Study***, conducted by Princeton Borough and Township along with Citizens for a Safer Route 206, through the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

<http://www.princetontwp.org/RT-206-ReportRev10-02-06.pdf> and see <http://www.iihs.org/research/qanda/roundabouts.html>

***It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air*** is a unique public education and partnership-building initiative to help regional, state and community efforts to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. See <http://www.italladdsup.gov/>

***RideWise of Raritan Valley*** offers free services to help reduce traffic, improve air quality, and make getting to and from work less stressful. Helps individuals and employers find healthier, money-saving alternatives to commuting, such as carpooling, vanpooling, public transit, biking and walking. See <http://www.ridewise.org>

***The NJ State Plan*** offers suggestions on Traffic and Transportation to make sure that increasing traffic congestion isn't a way of life. See <http://www.state.nj.us/osp/resources/traffic.htm> or <http://www.njchoices.com/>

***The Tri-State Transportation Campaign*** is an alliance of public interest, transit advocacy, planning and environmental organizations working to reverse deepening automobile dependence and sprawl development. See <http://www.tstc.org>



## STEP

# 9

## Flood and Stormwater Mitigation

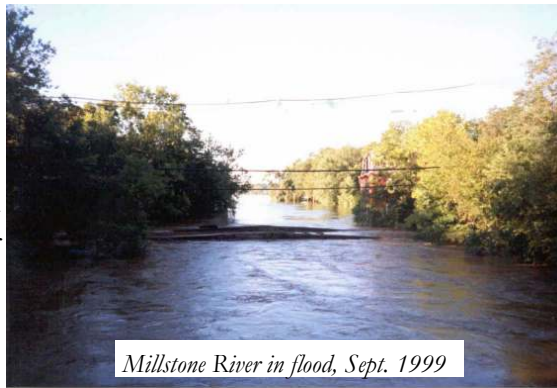
**GOAL:** The Township's and the Borough's Stormwater Management Plans, each adopted as an Appendix to the Community Master Plan, include the goal to "Reduce flood damage, including damage to life and property."

The Township adopted a Flood Mitigation Plan (Jan. 2006) to address repetitive flooding in the Harry's Brook watershed. The Plan (which is not limited to Harry's Brook) recommends the implementation of activities listed in an Action Plan, including incorporation of flood mitigation into the Master Plan and ordinances;

prioritization of riparian areas for open space preservation, and private property flood and stream bank mitigation.

### CURRENT EFFORTS:

The Township enacted a Stormwater Management Ordinance as required by state regulations. The Borough has yet to adopt a Stormwater Management Ordinance but it is pending.



*Millstone River in flood, Sept. 1999*

The Stormwater Management Plan for both Township and Borough note that a Stormwater Mitigation Plan will be developed, but no separate plan has been adopted.

### **OPTION: IMPLEMENT FLOOD MITIGATION PLAN GOALS AND ADOPT A FLOOD/STORMWATER MITIGATION PLAN.**

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

- ⊗ Adopting a detailed mitigation plan that lists specific retrofitting projects that address groundwater recharge, stormwater quantity and stormwater quality.
- ⊗ Seeking funds to retrofit stormwater facilities using Best Management Practices (including LID, see Step 6).
- ⊗ Implementing the Flood Mitigation Plan Action Plan.
- ⊗ Improving the community's stormwater management ordinances to apply to significant increases in impervious cover and to infill redevelopment, and completing the adoption of a Borough Stormwater Management Ordinance that applies to infill redevelopment.
- ⊗ Incorporating flood mitigation goals into the Master Plan.
- ⊗ Preserving additional riparian open space, and protecting riparian corridors through ordinances (See Step 2).



## Did You Know?

Princeton was an early innovator of stormwater management in the region, and adopted stormwater management concepts into its land use ordinances (e.g. protection of steep slopes and stream corridors; impervious coverage limits). While the Township has adopted current state-required stormwater regulations, in many older developments (including the Borough) stormwater and floodwater facilities neither have the capacity to deal with current development levels, nor employ current approaches to stormwater management. Since much of the community is either built out or environmentally sensitive, the opportunities for offsite mitigation of effects of new development are likely to be limited to retrofitting existing problems. Offering incentives or requiring retrofitting of existing stormwater facilities in new development, or funding stand-alone retrofit projects, are several approaches to mitigating the damage of past practices.

Under NJDEP's Stormwater Management regulations, municipalities may grant a variance or exemption to a developer for compliance with certain stormwater management design and performance standards if the developer is required to mitigate the effect of noncompliance, under an adopted municipal mitigation plan. The plan should identify existing problems resulting from current stormwater management practices and the means to address them proactively. It must ensure that the mitigation is completed in the same drainage area and for the standard (s) for which the variance or exemption was granted. A municipality may identify a pool of specific mitigation projects that the developer can select from, or set up a process under which the developer can identify an appropriate project.



## Additional Resources

***Guidelines for the Development of Municipal Mitigation Plans***, NJDEP. Requirements of a plan under the Stormwater Management Regulations, methods for identifying appropriate projects. <http://www.njstormwater.org/docs/munimitipplan030706.pdf>

***Borough of Ringwood Municipal Stormwater Management Plan***. Example of a MSWMP that has a detailed, project-oriented mitigation plan. [http://www.ringwoodnj.net/stormwater\\_management\\_plan.htm](http://www.ringwoodnj.net/stormwater_management_plan.htm)

***New Jersey Stormwater Best Management Practices Manual***, NJDEP. Information and guidance on stormwater management measures including retrofitting older facilities. [http://www.njstormwater.org/bmp\\_manual2.htm](http://www.njstormwater.org/bmp_manual2.htm)



## STEP

10

# Public Participation and Communication

**GOAL:** The Community Master Plan states that Princeton strives to promote awareness and appreciation for resources in the community and to enhance the quality of life in the community.

Respondents to the survey frequently mentioned the community's interested, knowledgeable and educated public as a positive force in the area.

**CURRENT EFFORTS:** Both the Township and the Borough have websites; both are informative and up-to-date, with postings of new ordinances, as well as events and notices. The Borough's Website was recently improved to create a more attractive virtual gateway to the Borough.

The Township has a newsletter, and both

the Township and Borough have local TV channels that broadcast community news and municipal meetings. The Township took the top prize in Rutgers' annual Municipal Public Information Contest in 2006, 2004 and 2002.

The community supports an extraordinary number of civic committees. The Borough and Township hold public meetings to inform and gather input from residents on issues.

Survey respondents noted that experts and decision-makers do not always listen to the opinions of citizens or advisory panels.

### OPTION: CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Specifically, Princeton should consider:

- ✎ Exploring programs to expand and improve open communications in the public decision-making process.
- ✎ Creating a survey or evaluation form to residents to complete after public meetings.
- ✎ On the Township's and Borough's websites, creating a discussion forum of current community issues of concern and various solutions.
- ✎ In addition to posting minutes and meeting agendas, encouraging Council and Committee members to write a regular column in the local newspapers to keep residents informed on key programs and issues, including educational programs.
- ✎ Building on existing programs like Communiversity to encourage interaction among residents, government, businesses, arts organizations and educational institutions.





## Did You Know?

- Princeton Township's website, <http://www.princetontwp.org/>, and Princeton Borough's website <http://www.princetonboro.org> list upcoming community events, such as clean-up days, as well as contact information for community officials.
- Empowering community members to make informed decisions based upon the best available information will result in a commitment to a future that reflects the will of the people and provides a unified focus for all municipal activities.
- Education programs sponsored by museums, nature centers, and community organizations encourage lifelong learning about issues so that individuals can make well-informed decisions.
- Raising public awareness of and support for community goals and conveying information on indicators for these goals will encourage residents to apply practices towards these goals into their daily lives.
- Partnerships extending throughout communities and levels of government will encourage support for community decisions, processes, and assessments.



## Additional Resources

***Effective Public Participation and Communication.*** The Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington provides concrete suggestions on improving the open communication process by ensuring that public participation is meaningful. <http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/Governancetegislative/communication.aspx>.

***North Hampton, New Hampshire*** conducted a pilot project called *Sustainable Development in the Little River Watershed*. This document gives a glimpse of the citizen participation involved in the visioning process. Please contact the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association for more information. 609.737.3735.

***Public Linkage, Dialogue, and Education: Task Force Report.*** This document, distributed by the President's Council on Sustainable Development, provides sufficient case studies and results from projects throughout the country. Focuses mostly on sustainable development, but citizen participation efforts are well laid out and assessed. This document is available at the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.

Appendix A:

Memo to Princeton Borough and Township:  
Summary of Municipal Officials Survey

# Memorandum



To: Princeton Township Mayor, Phyllis Marchand  
Princeton Borough Mayor, Mildred Trotman  
Borough Councilwoman, Wendy Benchley  
Township Councilman, William Enslin  
Regional Planning Board Member, Gail Ullman

From: Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association

Date: January 30, 2006

Re: Municipal Assessment Survey Response Summary

This memo summarizes the seventeen (17) responses we received to our Municipal Assessment Officials Survey, which was distributed to various Princeton Township and Borough officials, and places those responses in context with the vision of the Princetons' Regional Master Plan.

## **The first question asked the recipients to tell us their vision for the future of Princeton Township and Borough.**

The responses to this question reflect a holistic vision for the Township and Borough and speak to issues from improving traffic and transportation, to enhancing social sustainability, to maintaining a healthy environment. One of the most prominent responses was for the Borough and the Township to retain the small-town feel while remaining a regional center of tourism, education, business, and culture. Another overwhelming response was to continue the open and honest discussions that are carried out at Township Committee and Borough Council meeting.

Respondents were eager to tell of the appreciation they have for living and working in the Township and Borough, but also expressed their fear of these places losing the qualities that makes them so special.

## **We next asked the recipients to list their goals for the environment, for the social character of the towns, for the economy, and for the historic aspects of the towns.**

For the environment, respondents want to see more and better public transportation to reduce air pollution; they also want to see environmentally sensitive areas like the Princeton Ridge protected; and they would also like more of a focus on public education and policy enforcement. In particular, respondents felt more could be done about environmental education, including more of a discussion about the goals of the Sustainable Princeton initiative.

For the social character of the Township and Borough, respondents' goals focused on increasing availability of affordable housing and maintaining the diversity of the towns. This diversity was expressed in a number of ways: age, income, culture, profession, land use and services. There was certainly a mix of feelings about senior housing, but every single respondent would like there to be a balance for all needs!

For the economy the number one goal was to control or fix property taxes. This goal was referred to in other sections of the survey, as well. Many respondents felt that the taxes in the township and the borough are driving out the middle-class, are not supporting the young professionals or seniors, and that there needs to be a balance among businesses and non-profits. In terms of local businesses, respondents want to see a diversity of "mom and pop" shops with the regional, tourist attractions. Respondents also felt that improving traffic circulation would enhance the attractiveness of the Township and Borough for visitors and that increased affordable housing would be attractive to a wide range of people.

The majority of the respondents listed historic preservation as the most important goal for Princeton Township and Borough. Two respondents felt that there should be a record for important historic housing of more recent eras such as the 1950's and 1960's. A few respondents also felt that parks and flora and fauna are important to protect. Perhaps the most important goal for historic preservation was to limit the size of new construction so as not to detract from the historic feel of the Township and Borough.

Other responses to this question included goals for protecting open space, addressing flooding issues, consolidating the police departments and focusing more energy on the youth in the communities.

**The respondents were then asked to discuss how Princeton Township is protecting open space, viewsheds, and ground water, and improving water quality.**

For open space almost half of the respondents praised the implementation of the open space tax, although they felt that it should be used for preserving lands and not for maintenance of existing open spaces. Respondents said that the Township and Borough continue to work on regulations to limit the size of new construction and to include set asides of open space for new development applications. Three respondents would like to see funding made available to purchase remaining plots of open space in the Borough.

Respondents felt that Princeton's prompt response to the new Stormwater Regulations was encouraging, in terms of improving water quality. A few respondents mentioned the flood control ordinance that has since been adopted. Four respondents recognized the work being done to complete an impervious cover ordinance, and still others mentioned the need for better parking lot materials. One suggestion included monitoring the impact of runoff on water quality. A few respondents would also like

to see better street cleaning activity to keep streets free of debris and to allow for proper storm water management

Respondents discussed the protecting of scenic views in a few ways. More than half of the respondents felt that the Princeton Ridge is an important scenic view and that more protection and cooperation with developers is needed there. Five respondents felt that the historic character of the township and borough offer a scenic view and therefore, language to protect scenic views was included in the historic district designation. Finally, respondents mentioned the regulations that are currently in place to protect scenic views.

According to a majority of respondents, protecting ground water is a pressing issue. Most respondents stated that protecting the large trees in the towns would help protect ground water and keep soils healthy.

In order to protect other natural resources respondents would like to see a limit on heavy truck traffic through the towns and to discourage engine idling. Woodlands protection, providing parks, public open spaces, and better bike paths and signage were also on the list of protection goals. Perhaps the most prominent response was the effort to reduce the deer population in the township and borough. There was a mix of reactions to current deer management methods. Some felt that the methods used were not the “right thing to do”, while others acknowledged the controversial nature of the issue and still felt it necessary to address.

The respondents were then asked to identify what they thought were the strengths and weaknesses within Princeton Township and Borough.

Respondents listed the following <u>Strengths</u> of the Township and Borough	
Public involvement	Populace that is active and demanding
Large number of well-educated people in caliber and diversity	Capable and agreeable officials
Dedicated and very able volunteers, elected officials and staff	Preservation of open space
Library	Awareness of the value of green space
	Resistance to “McMansions”
	Promotion of affordable and senior housing

Respondents listed the following Weaknesses of the Township and Borough:

Township is “politically lopsided”	Not courting future leaders
Experts don’t listen to other opinion	
Not utilizing talents in the Township (I.e. The Long technical review process Architecture School)	
Not making pro-active decisions	
Managing growth amongst increasing demand	
Municipal and school taxes too high for services	
Outdated zoning ordinances	

“Deer slaughter” and not enough attention paid to wildlife in general  
Reluctance to improve (or work toward preserving) open space  
Not addressing the needs of the youth in the community

Next, the respondents were asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses in efforts to protect the environment in Princeton Township.

Respondents listed the following Strengths in efforts to protect the environment:

Dedicated volunteers on various commissions  
Environmental Commission  
Shade Tree Commission  
Open Space protection efforts  
Regional cooperation is always considered  
Support of local and regional non-profit organizations

Respondents listed the following Weaknesses in efforts to protect the environment:

Elected officials and decision makers don't often listen to their advisory panels  
Make decisions to satisfy pressure groups that have negative environmental impact  
Officials not of environmental mind  
Environmental issues often put on the back burner  
Need more and better communication between the governmental bodies and the advisory committees  
“Voluntary” participation only comes with a nudge from the governmental bodies  
Balancing economics with appropriate development  
Using the environment and traffic concerns as a scapegoat for NIMBY-ism (Not In My Backyard)  
Not properly maintaining open space and parks

Finally, the respondents were asked how the Township encourages public participation.

Most volunteers are tapped via word of mouth  
Newspapers  
Open meetings and welcoming atmosphere  
Moved up the public hearing portion of meetings to the front of the agenda  
Website  
Go door-to-door  
Newsletter  
Get kids involved so parents will follow  
Ensure local leaders are accessible  
Educate residents about issues  
Public officials lead by example  
Citizens are already interested and knowledgeable  
Participation suffers in the area of fire fighters

As the Association prepares the next phase of the assessment, we look to these responses to provide the areas where we can help Princeton Township and Borough's land use and environmental practices better fit their vision. Based on the responses of this survey and on the language of the Master Plan, the Association will focus its assessment of ordinances and Best Management Practices on the following areas. This is only a preliminary list:

- Enhance Sense of Place
- Sustainability
- Tree Protection
- Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Stormwater Management
- Preserving Open Space
- Protecting Water Resources
- Traffic and Transportation
- Affordable Housing
- Enhancing Cultural Diversity
- Supporting the Business Community and Encouraging Appropriate Development
- Updating and Enforcing Local Ordinances
- Public Education
- Municipal Official Education

