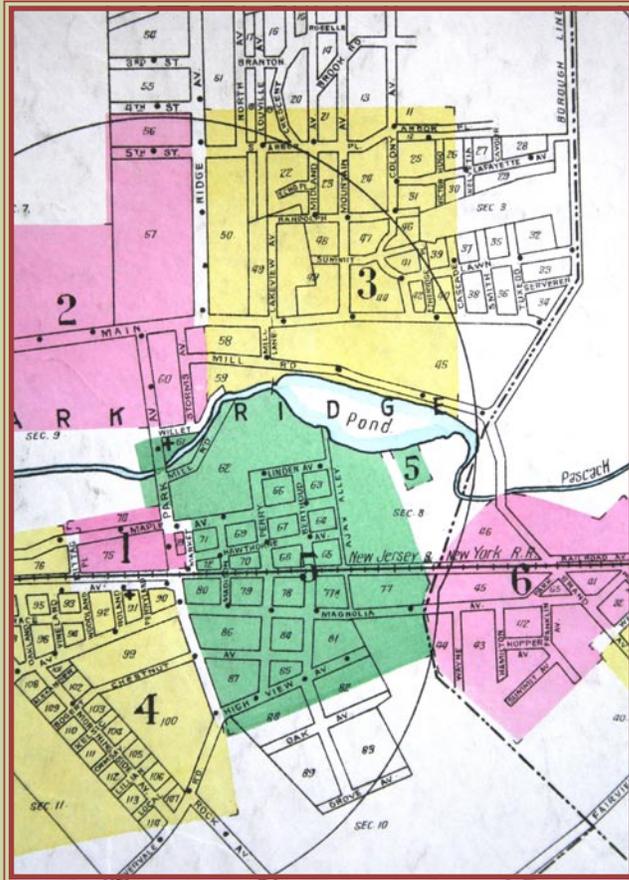


PARK RIDGE

Bergen County, New Jersey



Final Report

Downtown Visioning

Regional ^{CT}_{NJ NY} Plan Association

March 2009

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Acknowledgements

Borough of Park Ridge

Don Ruschman – Mayor
Peter Wells – Council President
Joen Ciannella – Councilmember
John Kane – Councilmember
Tamara Levinson – Councilmember
Gerry Maughan – Councilmember
Mike Viola – Councilmember

Park Ridge Planner

Brigette Bogart PP/AICP, Burgis Associates

Park Ridge Vision Committee

Peter Wells, Chairman
Bill Beattie
Joe Bruno
Joen Ciannella
Jim Hesse
Andy Hodgins
Terry Maguire
Barbara Martine
Gene Vinci, Administrator
Dave Voza
William Walker

Designers/Facilitators

Juan Ayala
Jeffery Charlesworth
Michel Dionne
Michael Fleischalfer
Phillip Giang
Christine Graziano

George Paschalis
Corey Piasecki
Rob Pivani
Jeffery Raven
Carlos Rodrigues
Bettina Zimny

Introduction

Community Design Analysis

The Borough of Park Ridge is located in Northeastern Bergen County. It was incorporated in 1894. It contains 2.6 square miles and had a population of 8,700 in 2000. Park Ridge is on NJ Transit's Pascack Valley line. It is home to the world headquarters for the Hertz Corporation in addition to Sony Corporation, the Marriott Hotel and the Bear's Nest, a luxury gated community whose most famous resident was perhaps former President Richard Nixon.



Mill Pond

The downtown area of Park Ridge has an "L" shape, and includes the portion of Park Avenue (County Road 92, which runs East/ West) from the bridge over Pascack Brook to the intersection with Kinderkamack Road (County Road 513 which runs North/ South); and the portion of Kinderkamack from Park to Perry Street. Park Avenue is anchored further to the West by the Park Ridge High School -- approximately 560 students in grades 7-12 -- located at the corner of Pascack Road, County Road 63, which also runs North/ South.

Park Avenue is traversed by Pascack Brook, which feeds Mill Pond to the North and the Woodcliff Lake Reservoir to the South. The stream corridor is a defining natural feature in Park Ridge's small downtown. The local school district has a number of recreational facilities located along the stream corridor, which also runs by the municipal complex.



Local vernacular

Park Avenue's character is somewhat mixed. The area between the High School and the bridge over Pascack Brook does not have a strong retail presence, and includes a variety of uses such as residential and professional offices. A solitary pizza restaurant reflects the proximity to the High School. The area between the bridge and Kinderkamack has a much greater emphasis on retail, although it also contains a fair amount of residential around the train station, some of it quite recent.

The Park Avenue Bridge over Pascack Brook is one of only a few stream crossings in this part of the county. The nearest crossing to the North, at Mill Road, is over ½ mile away, as the crow flies; the nearest crossing to the South, at Woodcliff Avenue is over ¾ of a mile. As a result, there is intense traffic on Park Avenue unrelated to the downtown. This traffic must contend with a grade crossing at NJ Transit's Pascack Valley line; an awkward "T" intersection at Park and Pascack (signal has no left turn phase); and closely spaced and generally awkward intersections at Park and at Maple, Park and Hawthorne, Park and Broadway and Park and Kinderkamack.



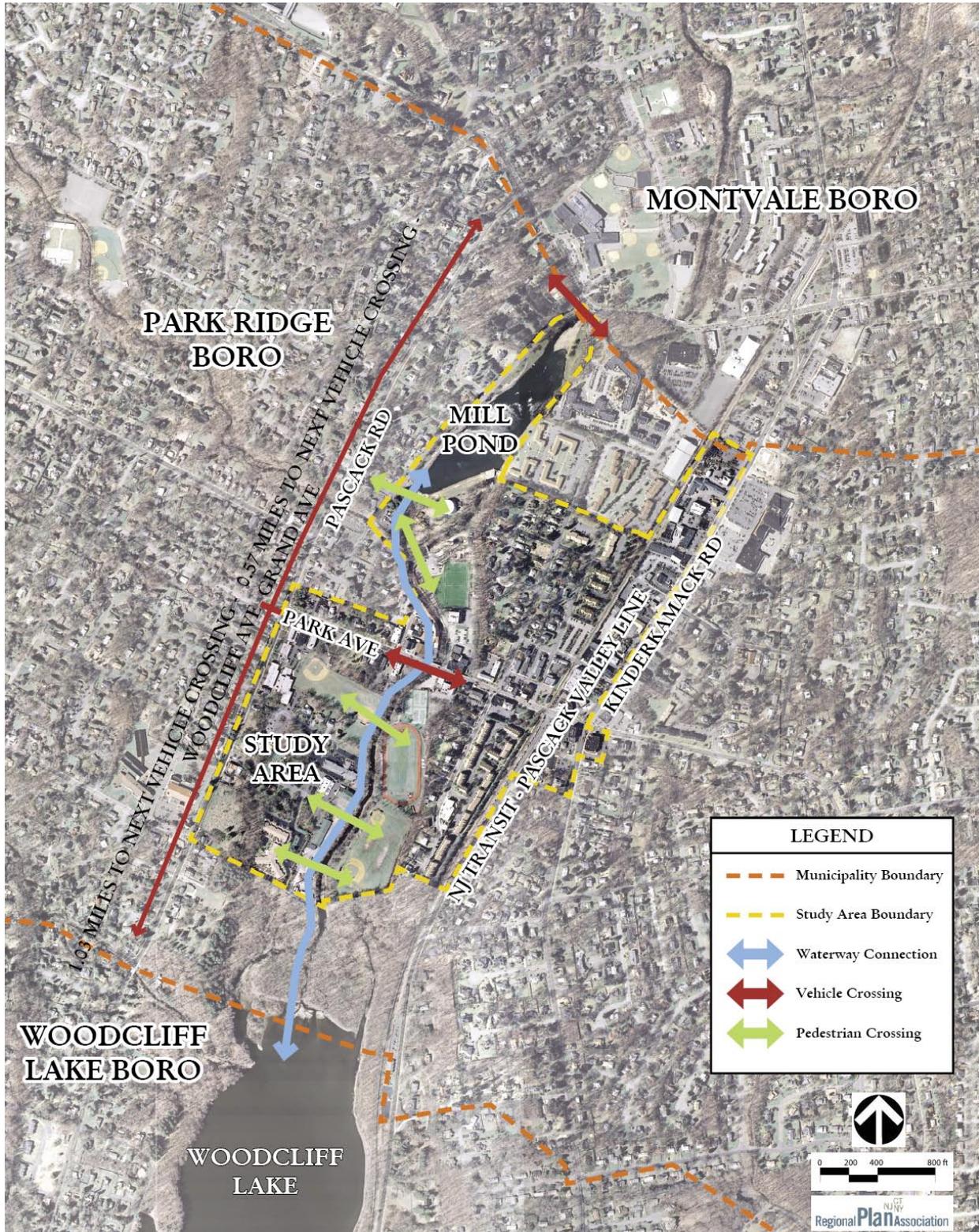
Cemetery

Past efforts to facilitate the flow of traffic on Park Avenue have generally resulted in a deterioration of the pedestrian environment. The volume and speed of Park Avenue traffic, combined with poor pedestrian facilities, have undermined the quality of the pedestrian experience. This in turn has reflected poorly on the performance of the Park Avenue/ Kinderkamack Road retail area, which has been unable to fully capitalize on the downtown's many assets: the presence of the train station; a reasonable amount of downtown housing; the presence of the High School, municipal building, library and fire station; the post office; proximity to multiple recreational fields and nature walks; and easy walking distance to surrounding residential neighborhoods.

As a result, Park Ridge's compact "L" shaped downtown is visibly struggling and does not reflect Park Ridge's healthy demographics. The distance from the High School to the intersection of Park and Kinderkamack is 2,200 feet, less than a 10-minute walk. The more retail oriented portion -- from the bridge to Kinderkamack -- is only 1,100 feet, less than a 5-minute walk; and the portion of Kinderkamack that is more oriented to pedestrian retail is only 1,000 feet, from Park to Perry, again less than a 5-minute walk. Clearly distances are not the issue in Park Ridge's downtown.

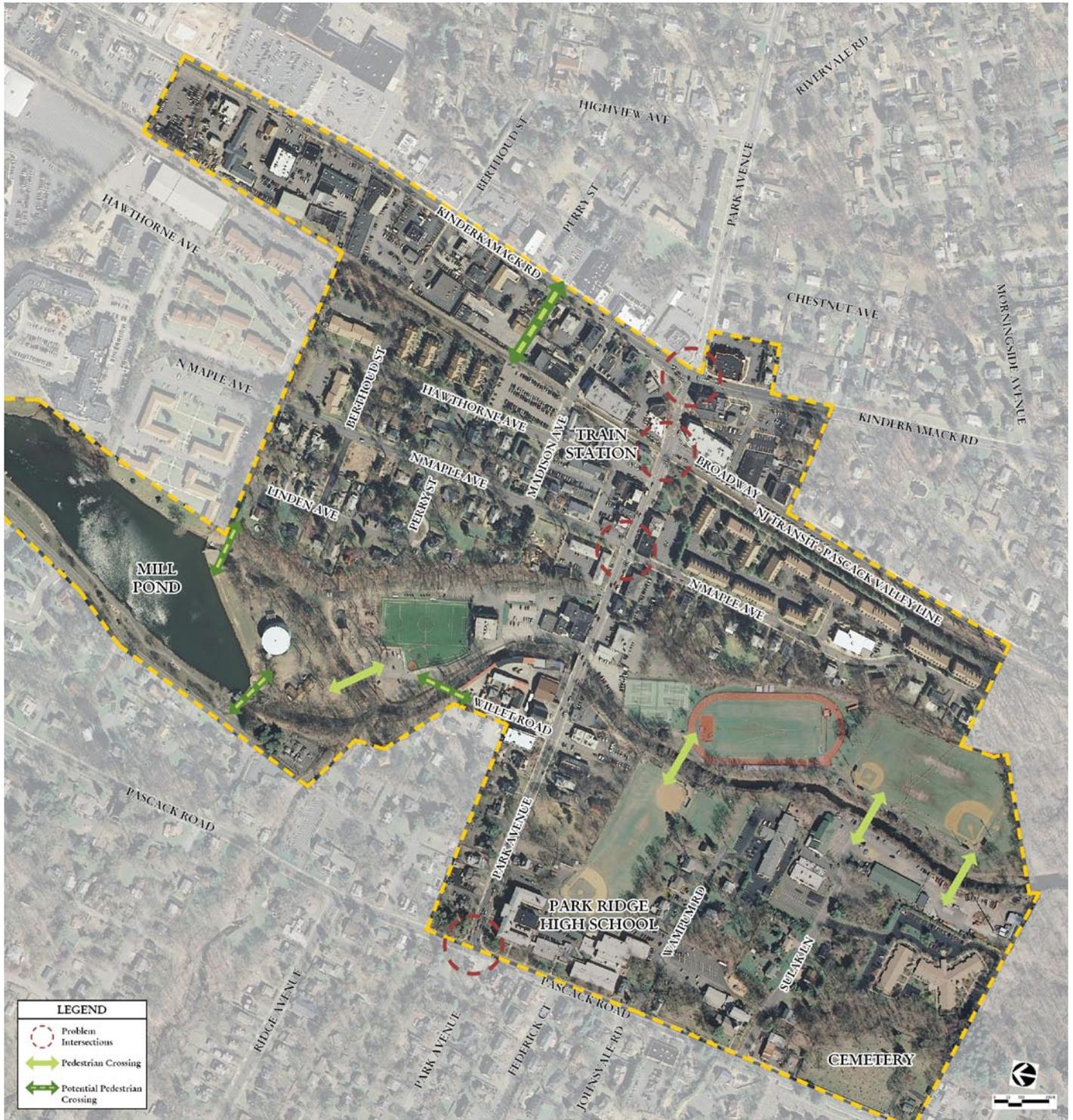


Regional Context



The study area is traversed by Pascack Brook, a watershed and open space system linking Woodcliff Lake with Mill Pond. Although there are several pedestrian crossings in and around the downtown, Park Avenue provides one of the few opportunities for motor vehicles to cross this system. Additional vehicle crossings are unlikely, but there may be other opportunities to improve circulation in and around the downtown.

Circulation



Building Footprints, Curb Lines & Off-Street Parking



Park Ridge Vision Committee

A few years ago the Borough created a broad-based Vision Committee with a mandate to revitalize and improve the downtown area. The Vision Committee identified the following goals for its work:



Spillway

- Create space that will encourage people to walk and spend time in the downtown area with well defined crossing areas and presence of Foot Patrols during peak times such as Saturday 9:00-1:00 and Weekdays 11:00-1:00 and 4:00-6:00.
- Explore the potential of creating a new downtown area possibly around Depot Square and Madison Street.
- Develop a detailed maintenance document to assure that whatever is done is maintained to the highest standards and people can be held accountable.
- Review design goals in Master Plan for Business Improvement District (landscaping, lighting, signage, awnings, building height, walkways).
- Increase the use of Green Buildings in Downtown Area (work to identify ideas to encourage green development).

Towards the end of 2007 the Vision Committee identified the “top 8 issues to improve Park Ridge”:

- Enhance the Downtown Business District to promote a resident friendly atmosphere.
- Streamline approval processes and lessen strict regulations in the Borough for business to prosper.
- Include the entire business district in the Redevelopment Zone to take advantage of grants or low interest loans specifically Hawthorne & Madison.
- Create senior and affordable housing in downtown district.
- Slow traffic in the business district to enable pedestrian friendly atmosphere.
- Enhance business district with trees, plants and design elements.
- Create more parking in the Downtown area.
- Encourage integration of school recreation fields and Borough owned fields through the establishment of a green spine linking Mill Pond with the Reservoir.

The minutes of the Vision Committee meetings also indicate a number of issues which have repeatedly been identified as important:

Public Spaces

- Provide a Downtown location to meet, eat, relax, and recreate.
- Create pocket parks and curb line “bump-outs”.
- Rehabilitate older buildings and preserve the design character.
- Ease signage restrictions for businesses (windows, awnings, etc.).
- Encourage use of design elements.
- Create a Tree Ordinance.
- Provide public trash and recycling containers.

- Create a walkway from Mill Pond over the Dam to Memorial Square across Park Ave to the south end of the Sulak Field.
- Continue to follow a “mixed-use model”.

Commercial/ Business Development

- Diversify uses of downtown properties.
- Post Office Redevelopment.
- Expand Business District from the High School to Town Scoop.
- Rezone Hawthorne and Maple Avenues for mixed use.

Traffic

- Re-evaluate parking on Park Ave. Possible use of “bump outs” to slow traffic.
- Create more downtown parking -- possible use of old Post Office site, build a 2 story parking structure at commuter lot, metered parking by Train Station and on Broadway.
- Slow traffic via intersection improvements on Park Avenue, Kinderkamack Road, Broadway and Pascack Road.
- Re-consider pedestrian circulation to insure barrier free safety.

Visioning Workshop

In the summer of 2008 the Borough’s Vision Committee engaged Regional Plan Association (RPA) to organize a community-wide visioning process focusing on the downtown. RPA conducted field work, reviewed background documents, and met with the Vision Committee and the Borough Planner on several occasions to better understand the assignment. RPA prepared a briefing book summarizing key findings from the learning process setting the stage for a public visioning workshop.

The visioning workshop brings together Borough officials, members of the Vision Committee, residents, merchants and other stakeholders with a group of planning and design professionals recruited by RPA specifically for the purposes of the workshop. The planning / design professionals facilitate discussions among the public and stakeholders, which take place at breakout tables, each focusing on one of three selected topic areas. Table 1 focused on the Pascack Brook/ Mill Pond corridor and on the potential to turn this into a real greenway. Table 2 focused on several sites generally located between the NJT railroad right-of-way, Park Avenue and Kinderkamack Road and which had been identified as having the potential for redevelopment. Table 3 focused on selected portions of Park Avenue and Kinderkamack Road, with an emphasis on parking, streetscape elements, storefront and façade treatments (including signage), public spaces and traffic calming. All tables were charged with investigating ways to better circulate within and around the downtown study area. It was anticipated that some topics would overlap and as such might be discussed at more than one table.



Pascack Brook

Key Parcels

1. Transfer Station:

This site is currently occupied by a transfer station, which is not an appropriate use in a downtown setting. It is also 1 block from the train station. It is approximately 500 ft x 130 ft (1.5 acres) and backs up to the railroad tracks. Redevelopment of this site offers opportunities to remove a nuisance; reinforce downtown, transit-oriented housing; perhaps provide additional retail; and create new pedestrian links between Kinderkamack and the other side of the tracks.

2. Commuter Parking Lot:

The commuter parking lot on the corner of Hawthorne and Madison is owned by the Borough. It contains 100 spaces and is restricted to Park Ridge residents. Permits cost \$100 / year. The lot is managed by the Borough. The .9 acre parcel could perhaps be redeveloped with new downtown-oriented uses over the existing parking.

3. Gas Station Block:

The block at the southwest corner of the intersection of Park Avenue and Kinderkamack Road contains a gas station, several other businesses and what appears to be an empty parcel. The streetscape is of low visual quality. Pedestrian circulation at this important intersection is threatened by an almost continuous curb cut and by chaotic circulation patterns internal to the block. Potential redevelopment could improve the pedestrian experience, rationalize circulation and parking and enhance the streetscape and architectural qualities of this location.

4. Depot Square and Memorial Square:

There are two public spaces in front of the train station, on either side of Park Avenue, but they feel separate and distant. There is a lack of definition between private front yards and public space in the green in front of the Park Ridge Crossing condominiums and fast moving traffic on Park Avenue is threatening to pedestrians looking to cross the street. A strategy is needed to better connect these two important and central public spaces.

5. Existing Post Office Site:

The existing post office building will be redeveloped once the new post office opens. The existing post office occupies an important Park Avenue site abutting Pascack Brook. When the site is redeveloped attention should be given to providing better public access to the High School recreational fields behind it as well as to the Brook.

6. New Post Office:

A new post office building is under construction. Unfortunately the Post Office refused to provide pedestrian access through the site, from Park Avenue to the High School's recreational fields. Perhaps this can be remedied in the future.

7. Triangle Park:

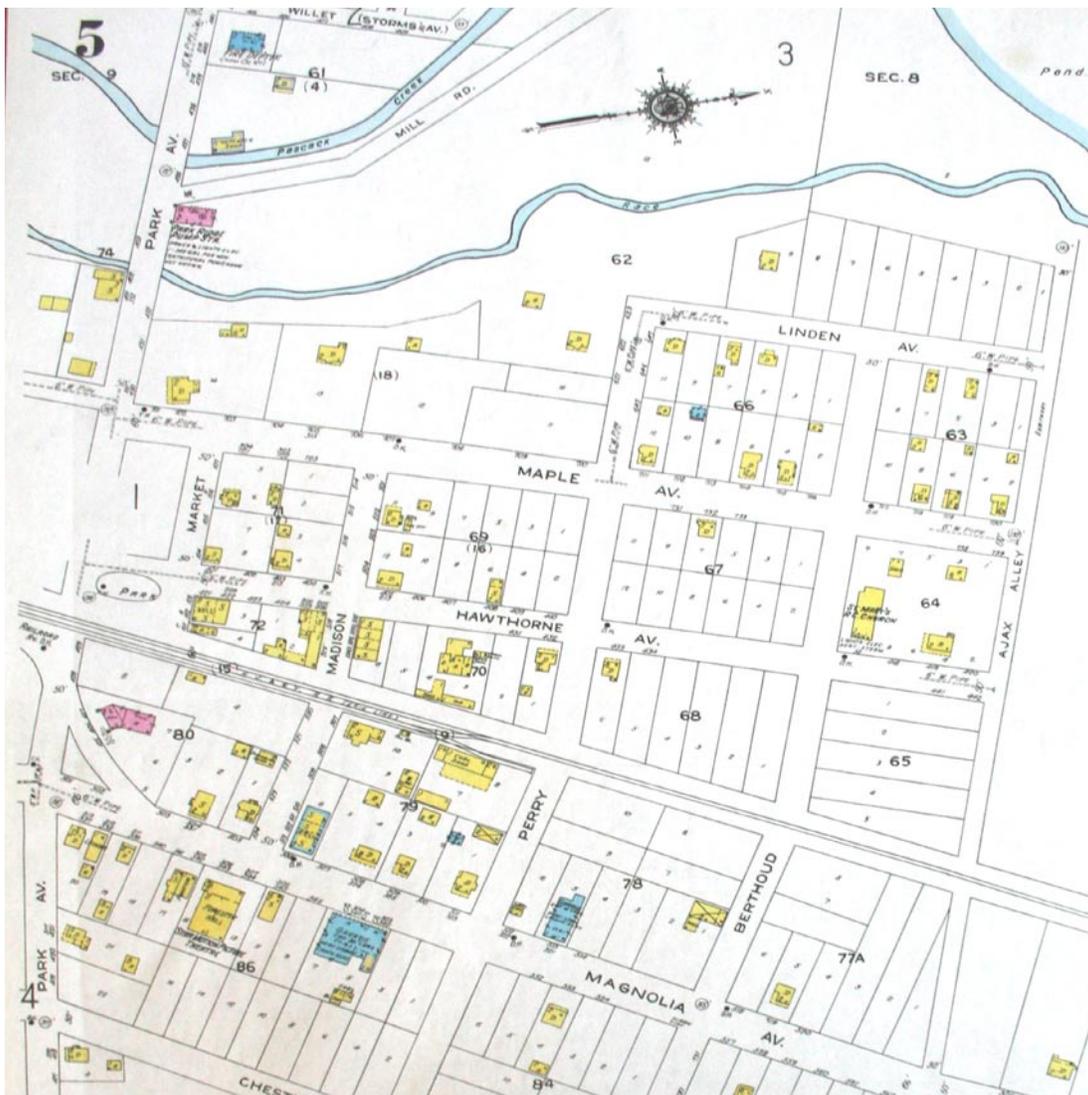
The publicly-owned parcel with the water tower and police facility behind the tennis courts is tremendously under utilized and shows signs of considerable neglect. The parcel could offer access to existing walking trails along Mill Pond and beyond and therefore is a linchpin site in a possible larger greenway system. Competing uses and interests with respect to this site must be reconciled.

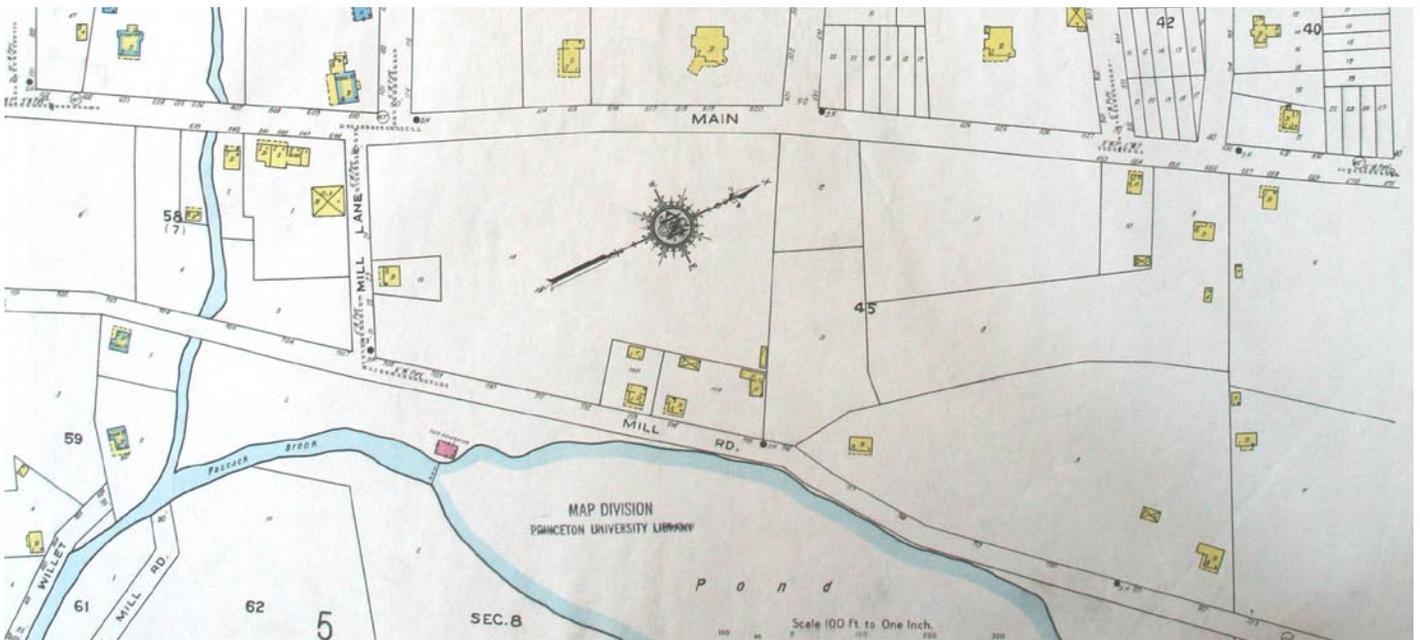
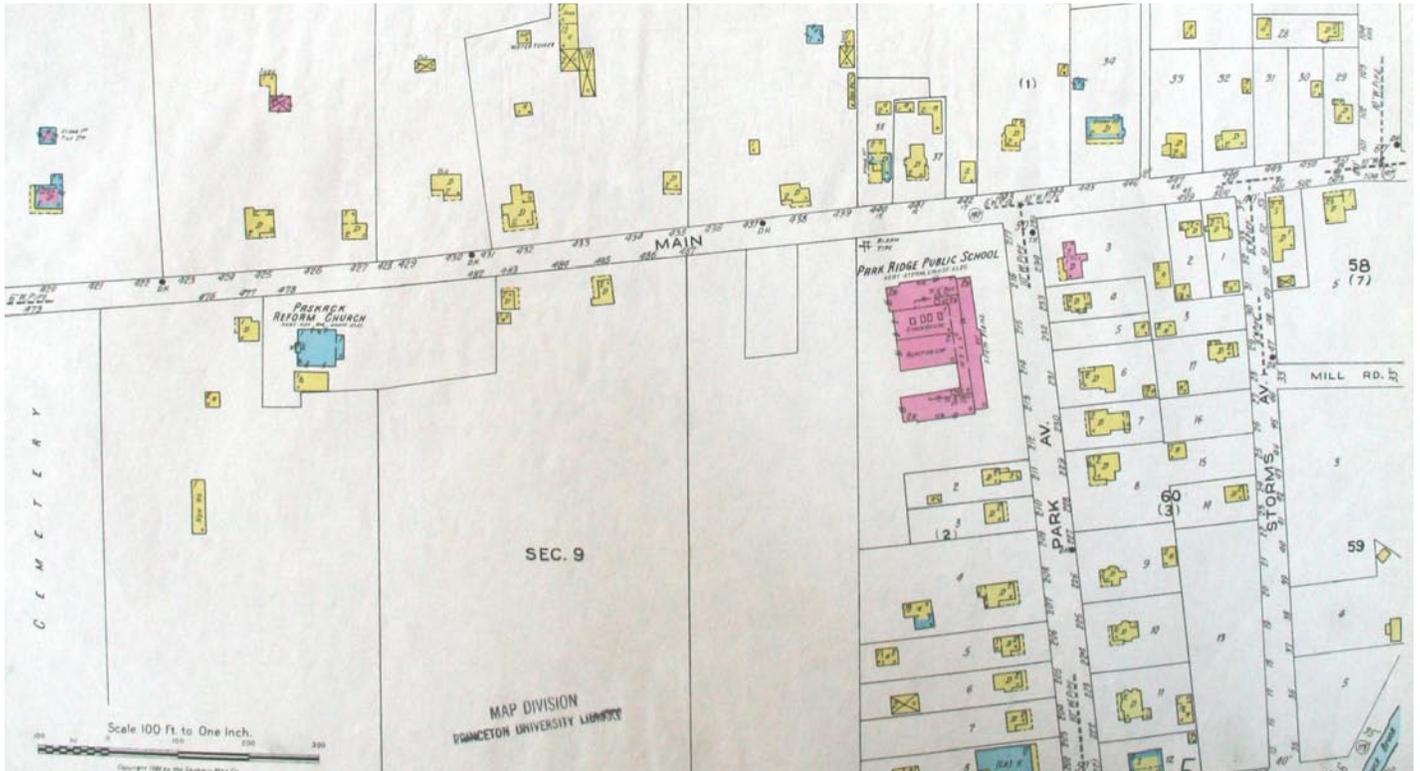


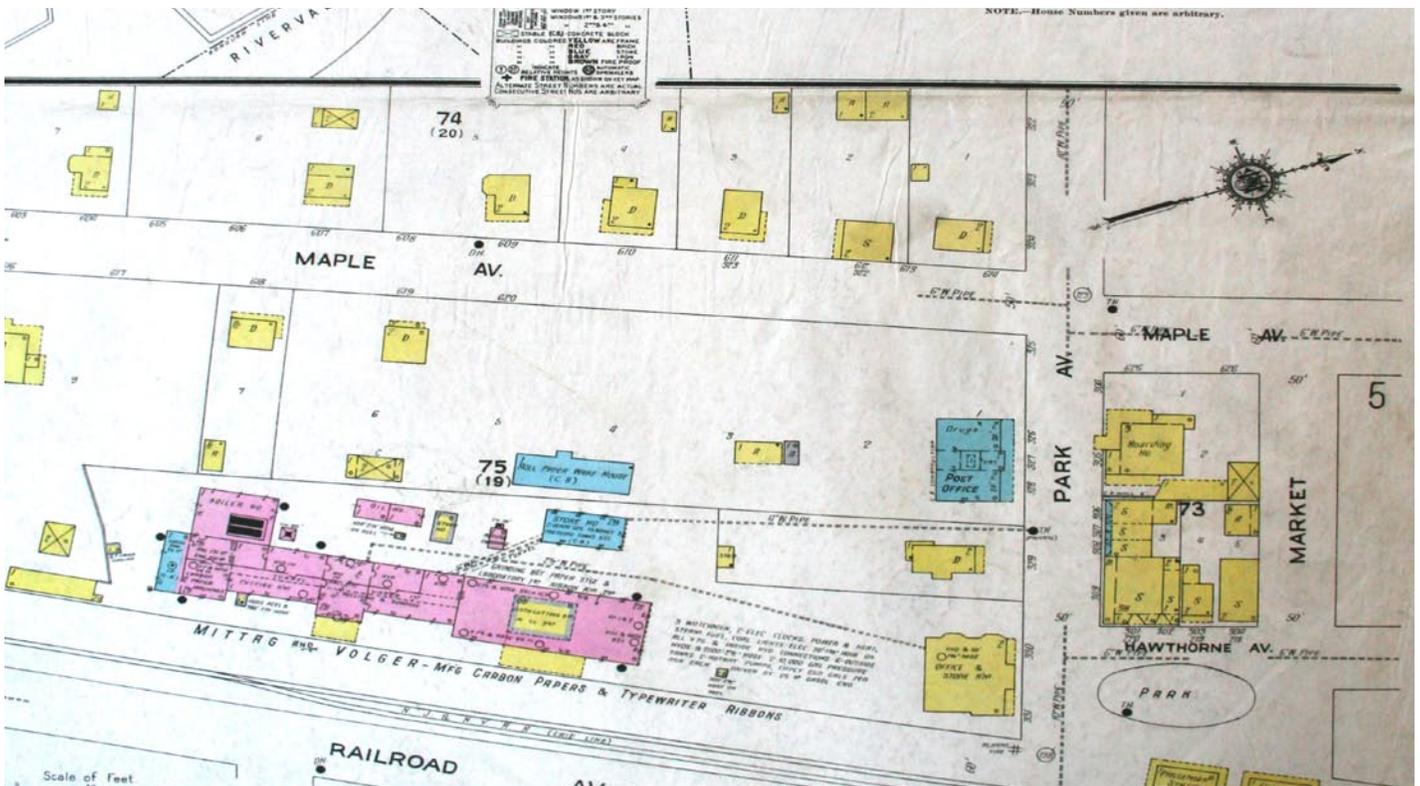
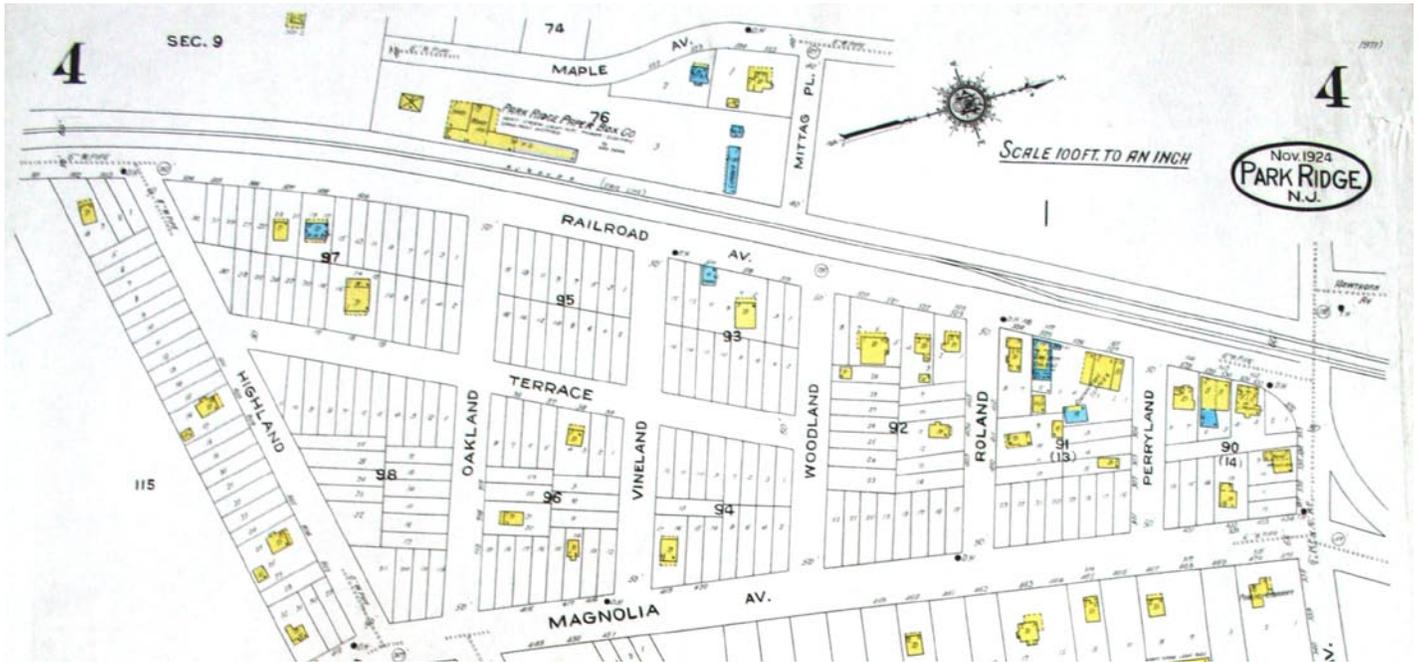
Historic Sanborn Maps



These 1924 fire insurance maps provide an accurate representation of the study area in an earlier time and clues that help explain how the current land use and circulation system came to be. The study area has not changed significantly since then. Several larger industrial uses along the railroad – such as Mittag and Volger, a manufacturer of carbon paper and typewriter ribbons, and the Park Ridge Paper Box company on Maple Avenue – have been replaced by housing. The Post Office moved from its earlier location – across from a boarding house, also on Park – and is moving now again. An office and store stood where Memorial Park is now. The Park Ridge hotel, on the corner of Hawthorne and Madison, was demolished to make way for the commuter parking lot. And a pump station is located where Borough Hall now stands. Some street names have also changed: Magnolia became Kinderkamack, Railroad became Broadway and Main became Pascack. Interestingly, the Northwest corner of the intersection of Kinderkamack and Park has always been rounded, with the same wide turning radius we see today, although the triangular green island seems to have been reduced in size over the years.







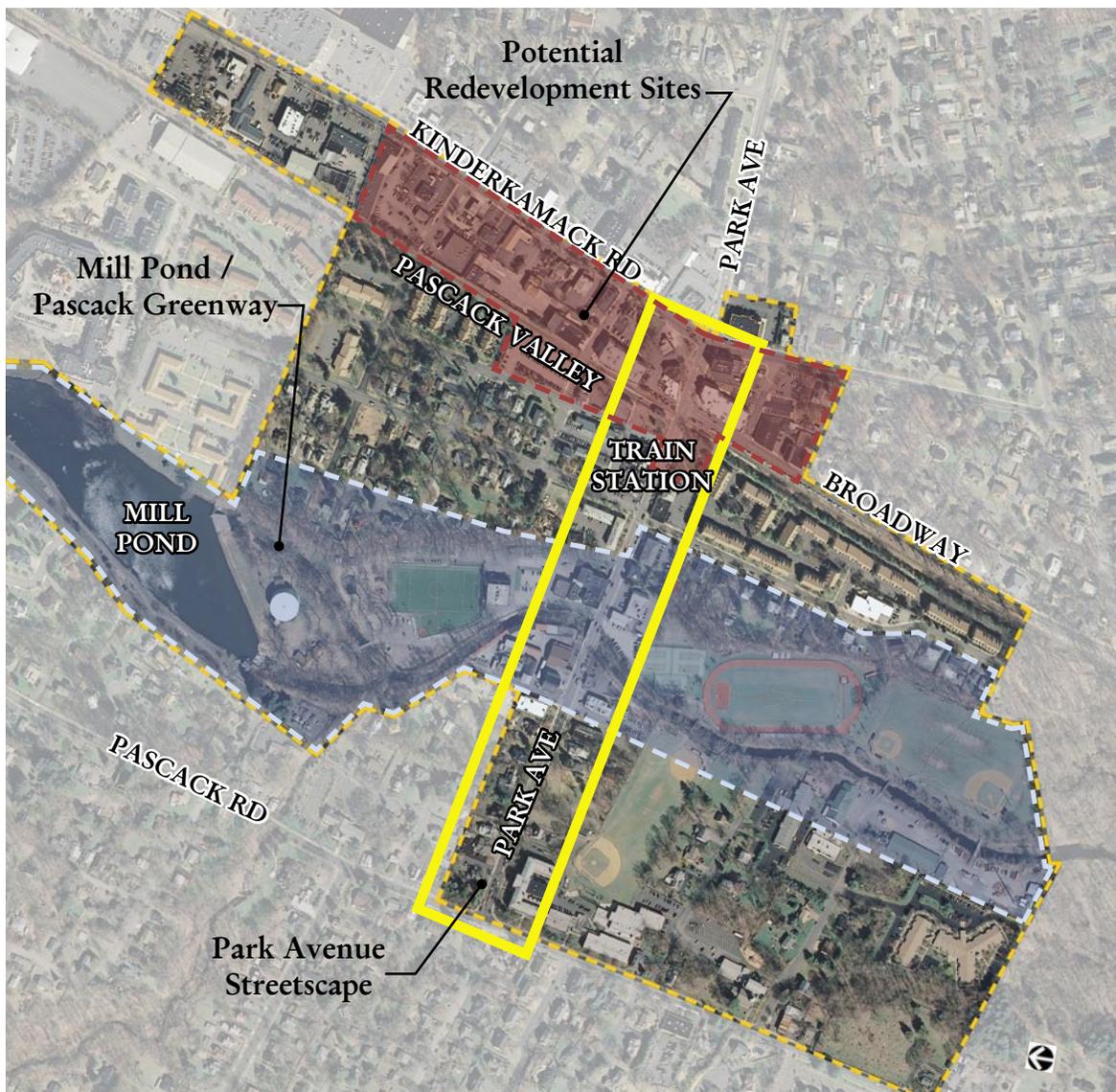
The Visioning Workshop

The visioning workshop was held at Borough Hall on March 7, 2009 from 9:00 to 2:00. Approximately 80 people attended, including the designers / facilitators, distributed amongst 6 breakout tables. Two breakout tables focused on Park Avenue streetscape issues, two on the Pascack Brook greenway and two others on the potential redevelopment sites. The 6 tables validated many of the ideas discussed to date and included in the briefing book, added some new ones and dismissed or modified others. Many ideas surfaced at more than one table.



The Visioning Workshop.

Study Areas for Breakout Sessions



Questions for Discussion

Pascack Brook / Mill Pond Greenway

This natural system weaves its way through the heart of downtown Park Ridge. While it creates discontinuities in the circulation system -- with important consequences in terms of how traffic circulates and increased congestion -- it should be a great asset to the downtown, offering tremendous opportunities to combine lively downtown activities, sports and recreation, nature walks, and alternative means of access from the neighborhoods into the downtown. However, there are barriers to pedestrian and bicycle circulation throughout the corridor: chain link fences in various locations restrict circulation, and access between the stream corridor, playing fields and surrounding neighborhoods is not always intuitive or formalized.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Is there a better way to access the playing fields behind the library than through the municipal parking lot? Can access be provided from the neighborhood to the East?
2. What is the best use for the triangular parcel where the water tower is located?
3. How can pedestrian access across Pascack Brook by the historic mill be provided?
4. Is there a need for additional pedestrian crossings over Pascack Brook, and if so, where? Off Willet Street?
5. Can redevelopment of the existing Post Office site offer opportunities for waterfront access and a new pedestrian link between Park Avenue and the playing fields?
6. In general, is there a better, more formal way to access the playing fields behind the High School than going through the school's parking lot?
7. Can the significant area at the end of Sulak Lane currently occupied by Park Ridge Electric and Water and the Department of Public Works be improved?
8. Can the chain link fences around the school playing fields and through the Elks parking lot be eliminated or mitigated?
9. Can one or more points providing pedestrian access between South Maple and the playing fields be created?
10. Can a new pedestrian connection between Woodland Gardens and Pascack Road be created?
11. Should curb-side parking be permitted along Pascack Road in front of the cemetery and church?
12. Can pedestrian access along Pascack Brook from the playing fields towards the Reservoir be created?
13. Can impervious surfaces along the stream corridor be minimized? Which water quality practices might best be feasible and applicable along Pascack Brook without thoroughly disrupting existing patterns? Is stream bank restoration feasible?

Potential Redevelopment Sites

The area between Park, Kinderkamack and the rail line – along with the commuter parking lot at Madison and Hawthorne -- offer the potential for new downtown oriented development that could generate additional pedestrian activity (and quite possibly additional transit ridership) and reinforce downtown activities. The area could also be made more permeable to pedestrian connections between the neighborhoods on the West side of Kinderkamack and activities on the East side of the railroad tracks.

Questions for Discussion:

1. The transfer station -- 1 block from the train station -- is not an appropriate use in a downtown setting. What should be the guiding design principles if this site were to be redeveloped in the future?
2. Could the Park Ridge commuter lot on the corner of Hawthorne and Madison be better utilized? While the loss of commuter parking is not desirable, it may be possible to maintain the parking and add new uses at the site. What use or combination of uses and at what scale would be appropriate?
3. Could the gas station block -- at the southwest corner of Park and Kinderkamack -- be better utilized? If redevelopment were to occur, what are the guiding design principles that might improve pedestrian circulation, rationalize circulation and parking and enhance the streetscape and architectural qualities of this location.
4. How can the intersection of Park and Kinderkamack be made more functional and friendlier to pedestrians?
5. How can pedestrian circulation throughout this area be improved?

Park Avenue / Kinderkamack Streetscape

As previously discussed, Park Avenue has a mixed character and does not necessarily “read” like a Main Street. There are many gaps in the retail frontage, even within the section closer to Kinderkamack, where more retail is present. Some of the existing retail establishments prefer a side street address to a Park Avenue address – they do not allow customer access from Park, relying instead on access via side streets. Traffic is fast and aggressive, and there are a number of closely spaced, awkward intersections with insufficient queuing and poor sight triangles, in addition to the grade crossing of the NJ Transit line, which further complicates vehicular circulation. The quality of the streetscape is uneven, there is an almost complete absence of street furniture and an insufficient number of street trees and businesses choose not to have an outdoor orientation. The area contains two public spaces, facing each other across Park Avenue, but there is little to animate or connect them. Consequently, pedestrian activity levels in the downtown are well below what might otherwise be expected and the quality of retail businesses suffers as a result.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What can be done to improve the performance of the Park Avenue intersections with the side streets? Would changes in geometry or other strategies, such as one (or more) traffic circles improve how the system performs?
2. Would traffic calming techniques be appropriate on Park Avenue and if so, which and where?
3. What can be done to animate the two public spaces in front of the train station, on either side of Park Avenue, and make them feel more integrated? Can the lack of definition between private front yards and public space in the green in front of the Park Ridge Crossing condominiums be improved?
4. Redevelopment of the existing post office building, construction of the new post office and other small scale infill / redevelopment activities offer opportunities to change the Park Avenue streetscape for the better. What design principles would be most appropriate to guide scattered site infill / redevelopment?
5. Is there a need for a different parking strategy?
6. Would the downtown benefit from a part-time or full-time management entity and would it be able to support it?

Vision Statement

Park Ridge's small downtown provides a variety of goods and services for the local residents within a compact footprint. Investments in traffic calming, streetscape improvements, circulation improvements and an emphasis on increased outdoor activities – such as farmers markets, flower shows, flea markets and others – will help reclaim the essential pedestrian nature of the downtown area. Existing commercial buildings should be upgraded, with colorful awnings, festive signs and enticing merchandise pleasing the eye and tempting shoppers. Improved sidewalks, generous numbers of street trees and seasonals in planters and flower boxes will provide a pleasant and colorful walking environment.

Improvements to the Pascack Brook Greenway will allow an increasing number of residents to access the downtown, providing a cool, green spine that weaves its way through town, linking two lakes, public parks, multiple recreational fields, schools, day care, churches and civic uses such as the municipal complex, public library and post office. The greenway should offer a variety of landscapes within a short distance, with areas of undisturbed natural beauty only a short walk from more manicured, urbane sections with benches and lighting.

Access to the greenway should be enhanced, with multiple connections from the surrounding neighborhoods and multiple pedestrian bridge crossings, making walking and biking healthy, convenient and practical options. As a result, walking and biking will become popular modes of transportation around town, reducing traffic and the need for parking. In particular students at the local high school will likely embrace walking and biking, thereby greatly reducing early morning and mid-afternoon traffic.

The downtown's retail frontage should be increased through additional, appropriately scaled mixed-use development along Hawthorne, North Maple, Madison and Market. Housing in these and earlier projects will create a live-in population eager to patronize the cafes, restaurants and other quality stores located within a 5-minute walking distance. And the convenient train service – which will soon provide a faster, one seat ride to Manhattan – will greatly increase the attractiveness of the entire area and spur new interest and investment.

Findings and Recommendations

Redefine the Downtown

Park Avenue is a small Main Street and only the area between the Brook and Kinderkamack is truly commercial. Additional retail/ mixed-use development within a small footprint will reinforce the downtown and make it more viable. Thus the importance of the redevelopment sites.



Possible treatment for portions of Pascack Brook in a “downtown setting”.

The intersection of Park and Kinderkamack and the area immediately surrounding it functions as the true center of Park Ridge’s small downtown. As such, the way the intersection functions – for both vehicles and pedestrians -- the way it is framed by buildings, and the public spaces it might contain should all be carefully upgraded. Any new buildings should have shallower setbacks to better “hold” the intersection.

Any changes at the potential redevelopment sites should only occur in ways that enhance the identity of the downtown and further develop a unique and memorable Park Ridge experience.

The notion that greater definition was needed between private front yards and public space in the green in front of the Park Ridge Crossing condominiums was rejected. But the need for a second, ‘active’ plaza on the north side of Park Avenue, to balance the existing ‘passive’ plaza, i.e. Memorial Square (not likely to change, given local history) was advanced. It was also suggested that the 6 head-in parking spaces on the West side of Depot Square could be reclaimed, thereby expanding that public space by an additional 20 feet or so to allow space for a Farmer’s Market and other seasonal outdoor activities. This requires further study and evaluation.

The small train station is an iconic building with great integrity and deserves a more dignified setting, surrounded by upgraded public spaces.

The existing gas station was seen as a detriment and should be removed, to make way for a new mixed-use building that better holds that corner. It was also suggested that the right turn lane from Kinderkamack on to Park – which as mentioned earlier is a feature of the original street layout – be removed, since it does not seem to serve a legitimate circulation purpose and in fact creates dangerous conditions for pedestrians. The space thus reclaimed could be used to create a larger public space at that corner. Alternatively, it could be replaced by a new building, closer to the street, that would better hold the corner.

Any new public space thus created, possibly expanded by week-end street closures, could be programmed to host special community events, such as flower shows, a farmer’s market, sidewalk sales, concerts or others. Outdoor events in good weather should spill out into Memorial Square and Depot Square.



Workshop drawing.

Decorative pavers and other landscaping/ streetscape treatments were viewed as a traffic calming feature and a way to unify Memorial Square and Depot Square -- the two public spaces on either side of Park Avenue by the train station -- and perhaps in other strategic locations along Park Avenue.

There was consensus regarding the benefits of redeveloping the municipal commuter lot with a mixed-use building, as well as the transfer station with parking and retail.

The commuter parking lot block is a trapezoid, roughly 135 feet of frontage on Madison, 250 feet along Hawthorne and the railroad right-of-way and 150 feet on the fourth side. As such, it is possible to insert a parking deck with a standard width of 120 feet, and still provide a narrow “liner” building along Hawthorne and Madison. This would be suitable for retail on the ground floor, but might be too narrow for housing on the upper floors. As an alternative, the liner portion of the building on the upper floors could be limited to the wider part of the block, leaving a portion of the upper floor(s) of the parking deck exposed, which would facilitate ventilation and could be successfully concealed or disguised. The parking deck elevation facing the railroad tracks would always be exposed. Yet another alternative is to provide the parking for this building on the transfer station site.



Workshop drawing.

The transfer station site is more problematic in terms of trying to combine a parking deck with a new mixed-use liner building. This site is also a long trapezoid, 500 feet in the long dimension, but narrower in the short dimensions (110 and 120 feet). With these narrower dimensions it would be difficult to insert an efficient parking deck design and impossible to add a liner building along the long dimension. A cheaper and more feasible solution would be to create a double-loaded parking spine at grade, taking advantage of the long block size. This would create approximately 55 parking spaces along the back of the site, facing the railroad right-of-way, which would probably satisfy the demand created by redeveloping the rest of the site with a two-or three story mixed-use building prototype, perhaps combining ground floor retail with upper floor housing or office. Alternatively, this site could be dedicated to parking, with a retail/ office liner use facing Madison. This structure would be primarily visible from the tracks and therefore relatively unobtrusive.

Circulation Improvements

Circulation was a topic that generated much discussion and a wide range of possible interventions and solutions:



Park Avenue/Broadway area.

- Signalize the intersection of Broadway and Park.
- No left turn on Park from Broadway.
- Reduce curb cuts and consolidate parking lot ingress and egress wherever possible.

- Move the northbound train stop further north by the commuter lot, thereby allowing traffic to continue to flow on Park.
- Create a new at-grade crossing at Berthoud Street.
- Create a designated drop-off location at the High School.
- A new pedestrian bridge at Willet Street
- Consider a partial or full one-way system involving Madison, Market, Maple and Hawthorne;
- Eliminate the “right-on-red” option at Kinderkamack and Park Avenue, which is dangerous to pedestrians.
- Prevent trucks travelling on Kinderkamack from turning on to Park Avenue.

Traffic Calming

The need to calm traffic throughout the downtown was widely recognized. Several locations were identified where traffic calming devices, such as bump-outs and/or raised intersections (speed tables) should be considered:

- In front of the new Post Office site.
- At the Park Avenue bridge in front of Borough Hall.
- In front of Depot Square.
- By the High School.

These enhanced intersections or ‘nodes’ along Park Avenue will in turn slow traffic and expand pedestrian presence.

Stricter enforcement of existing speed limits through a more sustained police presence was also requested.

The idea of replacing one or more signalized intersections with roundabouts did not receive support.



Enhanced Park Avenue streetscape treatment.

Park Avenue Streetscape

The following design-related ideas were discussed:



Pedestrian walkway through wetlands.

- Maintain two- and three-story height throughout corridor.
- Consider establishing an architectural review board and/or a subcommittee of the Planning Board to guide design.
- Reconsider design controls over signage and awnings to lead to better outcomes.
- Consolidate traffic signs and eliminate redundancies.
- Pay greater attention to the pedestrian experience and adopt streetscape guidelines covering street furniture, sidewalk details and landscaping, with an emphasis on “greening” Park Avenue with more street trees, additional landscaping, rain gardens and wider sidewalks.
- Consideration should be given to identifying funds for façade restoration.

- Sponsor a design competition for new pedestrian bridge(s).
- Visually enhance the area around the Park Avenue bridge over Pascack Brook. This might involve visually enhancing the bridge itself, and/or exploring new pedestrian points of access to the water.

Parking

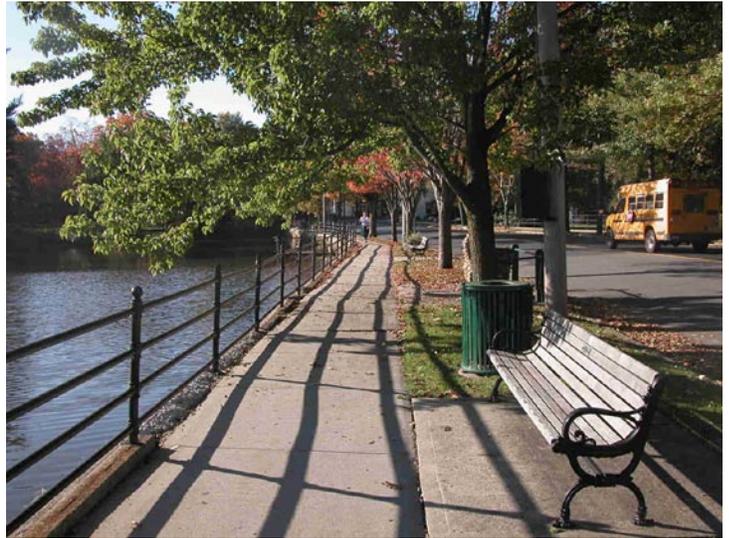
With respect to parking, the following was suggested:

- Revise zoning ordinance to allow shared parking and reductions for mixed-use projects.
- Provide for additional multi-use, shared parking in a parking deck as part of the future redevelopment of the transfer station site.
- Provide for a multi-use parking deck as part of the redevelopment of the commuter parking lot at Madison.
- Reach an agreement with the new Post Office to allow multi-use parking on that site. (This would presumably benefit first time visitors, unaware of downtown parking options; from a practical point of view, it will be hard to prevent residents and others familiar with the area from taking advantage of the post office parking for other purposes).
- Landscape municipal parking lot and improve signage directing people to it.
- Add bike racks throughout the downtown and greenway areas in appropriate locations.

Pedestrian Access to Pascack Brook Greenway

Increasing pedestrian access to the greenway at various locations from the surrounding neighborhoods was enthusiastically supported. Opportunities to achieve this were identified at the following locations:

- Pedestrian easements at the end of Berthoud Street and Perry Street, which would better connect these neighborhoods and those to the East of Kinderkamack with Mill Pond and Memorial Park.
- A pedestrian easement at the end of Willet Street and a new pedestrian bridge crossing Pascack Brook.
- Pedestrian access to Sulak Fields from the end of South Maple Avenue.
- Pedestrian access to Sulak Fields from Pascack Road, by creating a pedestrian easement at the end of East Avenue. This would require a new pedestrian bridge.
- Pedestrian access from Kinderkamack to Mill Pond following an existing power line easement. (See page 26)
- Acquire property or obtain an easement from United Water to provide pedestrian access from Sulak Fields to Woodcliff Lake.
- A circumferential walkway around Mill Pond is feasible and would be a valuable community asset.
- Similarly, a better marked circumferential walkway along Sulak fields.
- The chain link fencing that restricts pedestrian connections across publicly-owned properties should be removed wherever appropriate.



Possible treatment of portion of Mill Pond waterfront.



Possible treatment of portion of Mill Pond waterfront.

Triangle Park

There was consensus that the pistol range by Mill Pond should be moved to a less scenic location and that Triangle Park should be upgraded, perhaps as a location for outdoor Summer concerts. There was a suggestion that the water tank would be less visible if re-painted a different color.

Mill Pond

Mill Pond generated some interesting new ideas. It was noted that the pond is shallow. If it is not dredged it could turn to wetlands. The sediment captured by the dredging could be used to create a new island in the pond and/or to reconfigure a portion of the shore line to add visual interest and increase pedestrian access.



A number of other ideas were also suggested:

- Add new plantings along the pond's West shore.
- Add a bulkhead or boardwalk along the pond's East side.
- Create small additional parking areas near pond, to increase access.

Recreational Facilities

- Consider a new recreational field at the end of South Maple.
- Upgrade park facilities, with a new snackbar, better lighting and upgraded rest rooms.



The Visioning Workshop.

Public Works

Relocating the public works complex and other municipal functions located along Pascack Brook was not considered feasible, due to a lack of alternative locations.

Animal Hospital / Post Office Land Swap

A 'land swap' involving the Park Ridge Animal Hospital and the site of the old post office was enthusiastically endorsed. The animal hospital would be offered incentives to move west, to allow for a proper entrance to the Greenway, i.e. a trail head adjacent to the bridge. (This may be compromised, since the Animal Hospital just received approval for a major expansion at its present location.)

Other Issues

- There was disappointment regarding 'lost opportunities' with respect to the design of the town's municipal buildings along Park Avenue. The Police building, in particular, received poor reviews. The new Post office, while generally well received, was considered disappointing for not allowing new pedestrian access to the recreational fields behind. Perhaps this can be remedied in the future.
- The idea of a part-time or full-time downtown manager for the downtown did not gain traction as this was viewed as an unnecessary additional layer.

Action Items/ Implementation

Implementation of the recommendations of this visioning effort will require coordinated and sustained action by a number of Park Ridge agencies-- such as the planning and zoning boards, governing body, board of education, recreation department and public works-- as well as outside agencies, such as Bergen County and New Jersey Transit.

The following items were identified for action:

- The many ideas involving changes to the circulation system should be evaluated jointly, not individually. Therefore a circulation plan for the Downtown – reevaluating intersection design, signalization controls, potential limitations on the circulation of trucks, traffic calming devices and pedestrian infrastructure -- is a necessary action, and should involve Bergen County.
- Establishing a well connected greenway from Mill Pond to the Reservoir will be a challenging but, ultimately, a vastly rewarding task. An active greenway that includes a continuous walkway around Mill Pond and connections to the “triangle park site,” Memorial Park and across Park Ave via the old post office to connect with School and Town recreation fields and continue to the reservoir will provide a cool, green spine and enhance the pedestrian experience downtown. Ultimately, creation of the greenway should involve moving the police shooting range to another location and rehabilitating and enhancing the “triangle park” site.
- Enhancing the streetscape along Park Avenue is seen as critical in attracting additional pedestrian traffic to Downtown Park Ridge. Sidewalk improvements, streetscape enhancements (street furniture, street tree plantings), storefront enhancements and additional quality public spaces will all play a positive role.
- Removing the gas station at the intersection of Park and Kinderkamack should be prioritized. This will increase the performance of that intersection, improve pedestrian safety and create an opportunity to redesign how existing (and possibly new) buildings relate to this important intersection.
- Redevelopment of the commuter parking lot will provide additional retail/ housing opportunities downtown; redevelopment of the transfer station site will provide replacement commuter parking, provide additional general purpose downtown parking and create new retail/ office frontage along Madison.
- Moving the train stop further north, while maintaining the historic train station in its current location as a community facility, will allow circulation to continue on Park Ave while transit passengers exit northbound trains. This would greatly facilitate circulation.