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Creating Great Places to Age: Aging-Friendly Land-Use Assessment

FOR THE VILLAGE OF RIDGEFIELD PARK, NEW JERSEY



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Introduction

The demands of an aging population will require New Jersey municipalities to reexamine how they manage and shape their built environments. Those communities that take steps to do this now will be in a better position to support and retain their older residents today and over the long term.

In 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO) published [Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide](#), which encourages cities to “become more age friendly...optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security.” The report noted that the world was entering into a phase of rapidly aging human populations and that the proportion of the global population aged 60 and over, which was 11% in 2006, would double to an estimated 22% by 2050. In response to these projections, the WHO called upon cities to adapt structures and services to be more accessible to and inclusive of older people, who have differing needs and capacities. The guide considers important aging issues, including transportation, housing, outdoor spaces, and social inclusion.

The WHO’s findings and guidelines are particularly relevant today to the communities and residents of the United States and especially in New Jersey, where the population aged 55 or older has grown significantly since 2000. About 1.87 million New Jersey residents—22.2% of the state’s population—were at least 55 years old in 2000 with more than half of that total over the age of 65 and 136,000 aged 85 or older. Between 2000 and 2017, the percentage of the state’s population aged 55 and older grew to 29.3 with the number aged 85 or older standing at just under 200,000. In fact, recent [Census Bureau projections](#) indicate that by as soon as 2035, for the first time ever, there will be more people in the U.S. over the age of 65 than under 18.

According to the [2018 Home And Community Preferences Survey](#) conducted nationally by AARP, 77% of individuals age

50 and over would like to stay living in their communities, but only 46% consider that to be a possibility. In New Jersey, four factors related to the built environment create considerable obstacles to realizing this preference:

1. Land-use patterns typical of New Jersey’s communities inhibit accessibility and mobility. According to the report, [Where Are We Growing](#), issued by New Jersey Future in September 2017, “today’s retirees are disproportionately living in places with land-use characteristics that aren’t conducive to getting around without a car, and this situation is likely to be exacerbated as the rest of the Baby Boom ages into retirement.”
2. As of the 2017 American Community Survey, 46% of New Jersey households headed by someone 65 or older are housing cost-burdened, paying at least 30% of their gross income on housing costs. According to a November 2017 [report](#) from the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Aging Services, the statewide Elder Economic Insecurity Rate (EIRR) is 54%, which means that more than half of New Jersey elder-only households lack annual incomes that will insulate them against poverty as they age.
3. More older people than ever are living alone. In Ridgefield Park Village, 26.0% of the population 65 and older lives alone (see Appendix: Ridgefield Park Village Demographic Profile), nearly identical to the statewide rate of 25.9%. New Jersey elders who live alone are much more likely than elder couples

to live in economic insecurity.¹ Taking steps to address this issue is important because [research](#) has shown an adverse relationship between isolation and health and longevity. Findings from [studies](#) on this topic indicate that loneliness can increase the risk of heart disease, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, dementia, and even suicide attempts.²

4. Although older adults clearly prefer to grow old in their homes, they need effective design solutions and adequate support systems to enable them to do so. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, in Ridgefield Park Village, 92% of housing units were constructed in or before 1979.³ The vast majority of these structures were likely never designed to be barrier-free to accommodate people with limited mobility.

The foregoing factors underscore the fact that municipalities throughout New Jersey must start devising strategies to meet the needs and address the preferences of their growing aging populations. This is particularly true as more older people may opt to remain independent longer, rather than move in with younger relatives or live in institutional living quarters such as nursing homes. Great places to age are designed to be safe, affordable, and comfortable. They offer living arrangements that suit the needs of all older people—regardless of economic, cultural, racial, or any demographic feature; provide centers of social activity that mitigate risk of social isolation; ensure access to transportation and ways to enhance mobility and independence; encourage physical activity and exercise through community interactions; and enable economic opportunity and

livelihood to allow older residents to be financially secure. Communities that can address these challenges will be in a better position to support and retain their older populations than those that fail to act. Readily accessible, center-based locations that offer jobs, housing, entertainment, and amenities characterize those places that are most suited to the needs of older residents.

Fortunately, municipalities have the ability to shape community design and character through their local planning, zoning, subdivision, and land development regulations, and redevelopment, revitalization, and capital improvement plans. Healthy community design—exemplified by places that offer a variety of housing options with convenient access to food services, greenspaces, and employment—leads to improved mental and physical health, stronger economies, and improved safety and mobility. But aging-friendly community design does not happen by chance. Local governments need to intervene to change the built environment. Ensuring that a municipality's land-use regulatory controls and public investment strategies are designed to promote aging-friendly characteristics will help to retain and enhance community vitality and economic viability for all residents.

This report summarizes an assessment of the land-use features, plans, and regulations that shape the built environment in the Village of Ridgefield Park, New Jersey. The report evaluates the extent to which the community's physical form enables older adults to remain active, healthy, engaged, and capable of continuing to live in their communities.

¹ Living Below the Line: Measuring Economic Insecurity Among New Jersey's Retired Seniors, NJDHS Division of Aging Services, November 2017

² Acknowledging the seriousness of this issue, the UK recently appointed a [Minister for Loneliness](#)

³ Source: 2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Acknowledgements

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Methodology

The analysis that follows builds from New Jersey Future’s 2014 guide titled [*Creating Places to Age: A Municipal Guide to Best Land-Use Practices*](#). This report offers a more detailed description of how the aging-friendly criteria can be applied specifically to **Ridgefield Park Village**. A combination of demographic data, site visits, and interviews, as well as a review of municipal planning and zoning documents, provided the background for the analysis. It should be noted that while the focus of the analysis is on how friendly the village is to older adults, these same attributes make a community more livable for all age groups. This report evaluates four major categories of the built environment. For each category, the report describes preferred features, assesses whether these features are present in the village’s built environment, and recommends strategies and actions to introduce or enhance the attributes.



I. Mixed-Use Centers. Mixed-use centers afford the opportunity for people to live in close proximity to commercial centers, reducing the need to use an automobile to accomplish everyday tasks, while also permitting residents to remain socially connected to their communities. Putting homes, stores, offices, and civic buildings near each other allows for those with limited mobility—or with limited desire to drive—to maximize their trips by minimizing the distances among different types of destinations. This benefits an aging population and also creates a vibrant community for all.



II. Housing. Providing a variety of housing options beyond single-family detached homes helps to accommodate the different preferences, budgets, and access needs of all residents, particularly older adults aiming to downsize their home or remain in a community after retirement reduces their income. Locating new residential development near a mixed-use center goes one step further by offering the additional benefit of pedestrian access to a variety of destinations. Communities may be undersupplied with the types of housing that older residents want or need—for example, homes with smaller yards, fewer bedrooms, or only one story. Some communities may also have high housing prices in general, making them unaffordable for many. Land-use policy that allows for a variety of housing types

benefits older adults in terms of manageability, affordability, accessibility, and safety.



III. Transportation. Interconnected transportation networks give people options; enabling them to get from one place to another without the need for highway driving and allowing them to opt for secondary roads, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, or mass transit. Compact and walkable development patterns also create the opportunity for “unplanned encounters” with neighbors and strangers, the kinds of personal interactions that are important for creating and maintaining social cohesion. For older residents who are no longer interacting with coworkers or immediate family members on a daily basis, these types of interactions are an important safeguard against social isolation. Transportation choices mean residents who do not own a car or who choose not to drive will still be able to maintain their mobility.



IV. Public Spaces and Amenities. Public spaces such as parks, plazas, and trails help to hold a community together. They provide opportunities for exercise and a place for social interaction, help to maintain neighborhood stability, and even improve psychological health. They can also provide environmental services, including stormwater runoff controls and remediation of the effects heat and air pollution through the installation of

trees and vegetation. Amenities such as community centers or libraries also help meet the needs of residents, particularly older adults, by offering programming to address such needs as nutrition, entertainment, and intellectual enrichment.

Smart Growth Metrics

As noted in the introduction to this report, great places to age will need to be safe, affordable and comfortable, offer living arrangements that suit the needs of older people, provide centers of social activity, enhance access to transportation and mobility, enable economic opportunity, and allow older residents to be financially secure. Compact, walkable, mixed-use communities are best suited to meeting these objectives, enabling all residents to continue to live independently as they age. To evaluate the extent to which a community has these characteristics, New Jersey Future developed three municipal-level metrics of compactness and walkability: net activity density (NAD) (population + jobs per developed square mile), presence of a mixed-use center, and street network density (SND) (as measured by route-miles of local road per square mile). The community profile for Ridgefield Park Village in the Appendix presents the village's ranking in relation to these three smart growth metrics and describes how the village compares in these measures and others to the state as a whole.

Recommendations

Each of the four built environment categories evaluated in the following sections of this report include descriptions of several category features, a brief discussion of whether the features are present in Ridgefield Park Village, and recommendations for steps the municipality can consider to introduce or enhance the features. All of the recommendations are then combined in a summary listing, from which action objectives are formulated to initiate an implementation program.



Land-Use Analysis Overview for the Village of Ridgefield Park

In August 2019, the Village of Ridgefield Park executed an agreement with New Jersey Future to designate a project committee that would play an integral role in development of this aging-friendly land-use analysis conducted by New Jersey Future with funding from The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation. The recommendations that result from this analysis can help inform the village's long-term planning goals. In mid-November 2019, the municipally-designated project committee was invited to attend a meeting and conduct a site visit in the village with the New Jersey Future project team to discuss the existing features of the village and consider opportunities to enhance the community's aging-friendly characteristics. The November 2019 meeting was the first step in the assessment process. Meeting participants were asked their opinions about Ridgefield Park Village's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and constraints as they related to the village's population of older adults.

In response to a question about what they think makes it easier or more desirable for people to age in the community, the project committee provided the following responses:

- Everything is within walking distance, especially in the downtown.
- Basic necessities are in the town, including a grocery and pharmacy.
- The community/nutrition center provides an opportunity for intergenerational activities and interaction.
- The library offers a lot of programming.
- There are downtown land parcels suitable for redevelopment that can add housing stock and diversity.

- Housing above retail is permitted downtown, which currently provides smaller units and can be a strategy to increase housing stock and diversity.
- Five-story and six-story apartment buildings have existed mixed in with residential neighborhoods for decades, so people are used to mixed-housing development patterns.

Members of the group also identified challenges:

- The property tax rate is high, especially for people on a fixed income. The tax rate is higher in the village than surrounding towns because property values are lower.
- The town needs a greater number of smaller units and smaller rental units to create more housing options that are affordable. Smaller units will pay less in taxes.
- Zoning ordinances or building codes may prohibit or discourage certain housing options that could be more affordable or desirable for older residents.
- The town does not offer incentives for creating housing in the downtown.
- The two highways bisecting the town can lead to disconnected neighborhoods.
- Although there are good transportation and walkability conditions in the town, more can be done, and there should be a strategy for assisting people who can no longer drive.
- There is a need to identify problem or dangerous intersections.
- The village should provide for greater pedestrian access to waterways.
- The central business district lacks community spaces or open places to gather or interact socially.

- The village is a combined sewer overflow community, and more green infrastructure and open spaces should be integrated throughout the town to mitigate stormwater.

Ridgefield Park Village is located in the northeast region of the state in the south-central area of Bergen County within a 20-mile drive of New York City. The village is bordered by South Hackensack Township and Little Ferry Borough to the west, Bogota Borough and Teaneck Township to the north, Leonia Borough and Palisades Park Borough to the east, and Ridgefield Borough to the south. The village is bisected by the New Jersey Turnpike running through the eastern portion of town and US Highway 46 running through the southern portion of town. Ridgefield Park Village sits at the confluence of the Overpeck Creek to the south and east and the Hackensack River to the west. It is surrounded on three sides by water. (See *Figure 1. Ridgefield Park Village Basemap.*)

As of 2018, the Census Bureau estimates Ridgefield Park's total population at 13,009. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, 11.2% of the village's population (1,464 people) was 65 years of age or more compared to the state's 15.1%. National and state trends indicate that this population segment is expected to continue to grow considerably.

Ridgefield Park Village has a land area of 1,165 acres, or about 1.8 square miles.⁴ As noted in Ridgefield Park's municipal profile (see the Appendix), the village is 77.3% developed, with another 17.1% that cannot be built on due to environmental constraints, leaving 5.7% still developable. The village is thus 93.2% built out (the percent of its developable land that has already been developed), meaning that most new development that happens is going to be redevelopment. While Ridgefield

Park is considerably more developed than the state as a whole, its land development profile is not atypical for a North Jersey municipality.

Ridgefield Park's central business historic district (C-1(H) zone) is a prime example of a traditional compact downtown, although it is lacking sufficient housing to truly be a mixed-use center. The first floor of the village's C-1(H) zone buildings is required to be retail. The height allowance is 40' (4 floors), but most buildings are not built to that. Housing above retail on Main Street is allowable and could add smaller units to the housing stock. Any downtown redevelopment should be considerate of maintaining the historic character of the downtown, and the village has assigned historic design criteria to the C-1(H) zone. A local creative placemaking group has been actively working to enhance community design. The Northern New Jersey Community Foundation is also engaged in a project with the village to draft a public art master plan.

The downtown has a compact, walkable Main Street and immediate area with a mix of businesses. It is centrally located in town and includes a grocery store, pharmacy, bakery, hardware store, veterinarian, dentist, salons, and several types of restaurants. There is no operating transit station in town, but there is a historic train station located just outside of the C-1(H) district. A highly utilized bus line runs along Main Street and along Teaneck Road about four blocks and less than a half mile to the east, stopping at nearly every block. Outside the downtown area, the development pattern in the village is largely built-out residential, with industrial located all along the eastern shore of the Hackensack River, the northern shore of Overpeck Creek, and extending northward west of the turnpike and south of Highway 46. Areas east of the turnpike and south of Overpeck County Park are slated for office park and mixed-use redevelopment.

⁴ Land area excludes water bodies

The steering committee described Ridgefield Park Village as a diverse, small-town community. With lower housing costs than the surrounding area, the town serves as a “launching point into the middle class.” Although 40% of housing in Ridgefield Park is single-family detached, there are residential buildings with two-to-four dwellings distributed throughout the village’s neighborhoods (making up 35% of housing), and 25% of the housing stock is larger apartment buildings with five or more units. Despite the relatively diverse housing stock of the village, however, the rate of households that are housing cost-burdened⁵ is higher than the statewide rate—45.7%, vs. 40.7% statewide. The differential is smaller for households headed by someone aged 65 and older—46.9% are cost-burdened in Ridgefield Park vs. 46.1% statewide—although note that in both cases the cost-burdened rate is higher for older householders than overall. Older residents who are seeking to downsize within town are often not able to find suitable housing. The most available option appears to be the Marlboro House Cooperative on Main Street. The steering committee expressed a concern that any new housing developed would not ultimately be occupied by older Ridgefield Park Village residents. Zoning, ordinances, or building codes prohibit or discourage certain housing options, such as, shared housing or room rentals, separate accessory dwelling units, or mother/daughter units. Scattered private development downtown has recently added a few new residential units above commercial, although these are relatively small projects that were the result of vacancies being filled.

Circulation is very good in the town, as the village has a well-connected local street network with 15.4 route-miles of local road per square mile. (The median over all 565 municipalities in the state is only 9.75.) Connecting areas south of Highway 46

and east of the turnpike to the broader community may be a challenge and will need special consideration. The existing street network, however, largely provides a good opportunity for the village to pursue a bicycle and pedestrian plan that will create an interconnected system of community facilities and amenities with pedestrian access from all neighborhoods throughout the town, including the commercial district downtown. The village’s non-automotive transportation options are a key to Ridgefield Park’s future aging-friendliness because of the access they offer to goods and services without the necessity of car ownership, which is an important consideration for older residents.

The walkability and close-knit character of the community make it easier for people to interact and be neighborly. The town has several community facilities, including parks, a pool, a library, and a community center. The municipal building is located on Main Street and in close proximity to the library and community center—approximately 1/2 and 1/5 mile away, respectively. The recently renovated Ridgefield Park Civic Center includes both a senior center and a youth center, promoting intergenerational interactions and activities. Less than a half-mile walk to the east of the library is the John B. Davis Municipal Pool and Hobart Street Park, which are directly south of the 12 acre Veteran’s Park, creating a recreational complex that extends about a mile north from the pool to the Ridgefield Park Jr.-Sr. High School. The 2009 Village of Ridgefield Park Bergen County, New Jersey Master Plan Reexamination indicates that the town maintains thirteen other sites as parks and open space. Spanning over 80 acres between the Overpeck Creek and the turnpike in the northeast corner of the village, Overpeck County Park provides various opportunities for active and passive recreation to the village and surrounding communities. There is a notable gap in pedestrian access to community open space from the northern

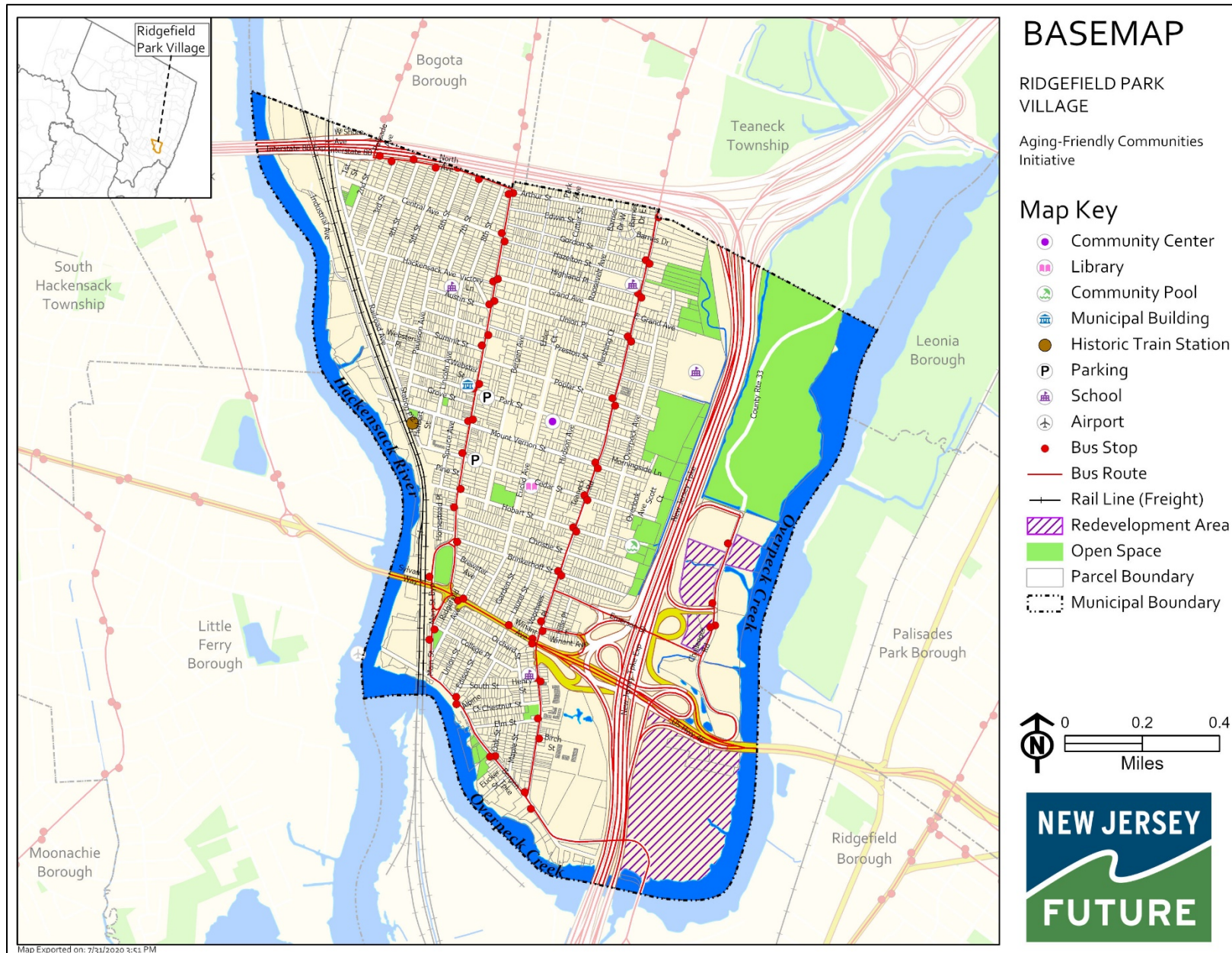
⁵ Housing cost-burdened means that the household is paying at least 30% of their gross income on housing costs.

portion of town, although the village is considering development of a nature park north of the jr.-sr. high school that would help to lessen that gap.



Main Street in Ridgefield Park Village

Figure 1. Ridgefield Park Village Basemap





I. Mixed-Use Center

Is there currently a mixed-use center in Ridgefield Park Village and/or are the necessary policies in place to foster development of that center or create a new one in the future?

PRESENCE OF A CENTER

Is there a central business district or other community center that includes a mix of uses?

Mixed-use centers afford the opportunity for people to live within close proximity to commercial and business areas, reducing the need for an automobile to accomplish everyday tasks, while also permitting residents to remain socially connected to their communities.



Looking for: a center or centers with homes, stores, offices, and civic buildings in close proximity.



Ridgefield Park Village is fortunate to have a compact, walkable, traditional mixed-use downtown, with a wide selection of restaurants, retail, and service establishments. Much of the retail activity is concentrated within two blocks along Main Street between Summit Street and Cedar Street, and along Mt. Vernon Street generally bounded by the freight rail tracks to the west and Bergen Avenue to the east. The study area for this assessment also includes a neighborhood immediately to the west of the northern portion of the Main Street downtown area. It consists principally of one and two-family homes that are in walking distance of Main Street and Mt. Vernon Street. The street system directs movement to the downtown area of the village. (See Figure 2. Ridgefield Village Park Business District.) The area transitions to the west where it is also proximate to the Hackensack River waterfront area. The entire waterfront along the western boundary of the village is currently zoned for industrial use.



The downtown commercial area is zoned as Central Business Historic District (C-1(H)), denoting design guidelines under the purview of an advisory Historic Preservation Commission. The zoning code allows for a variety of permitted principal commercial or business uses and for residential above retail as a conditional use in the C-1(H) zone, but the zoning code does not detail the regulations governing residential approval in the C-1(H) zone. Although the built form of the downtown area is conducive to pedestrian activity, there are minimal existing civic uses in the C-1(H) zone. Clubs and social recreational buildings are a permitted conditional use. The village's municipal building and police headquarters are located at the northern end of the zone on the corner of Main Street and Park Street. The Ridgefield Park Public Library and the Ridgefield Park Civic Center are located about two blocks from each other and to the east of Main Street outside the district. Also outside the C-1(H) zone, Euclid Avenue, which is the cross-street for these facilities, contains a center-median memorial park with limited seating that runs parallel to Main Street for nearly the length of the business district. Fellowship Park, a pocket-park to the south at the corner of Euclid Avenue and Hobart Street, is within a quarter-mile walk from the southern extent of the C-1(H) zone.


	<p>There is a train station at the west end of Mt. Vernon Street along the West Shore Rail line. It is currently zoned for single- and two-family residential use and occupied by a commercial business. Although the rail line had been a passenger line in the past, and there is a hope that it could be converted in the future, it is currently freight only and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.</p> <p>Ridgefield Park's downtown has a compact form and diversity of businesses that would indicate the presence of a center. Although the maximum building height in the C-1(H) zone is 40 feet, redevelopment projects have not taken advantage of the height allowance, and the downtown remains largely one-to-two stories. Where they are permitted jointly, residential and commercial uses in a community tend to be mutually supportive, enlivening, and activating areas. The village recognizes this and desires to promote a mixed-use center in the downtown.</p> <p>The village should conduct an economic and market analysis to identify the kinds of businesses that can be supported by the local and regional economy, then seek mixed-use redevelopment that would create a sustainable downtown economy and increase residential units above commercial along Main Street based on the outcomes of the analysis. Additional commercial development could help to ease the relatively high property tax rate of residential properties in the town, and mixed-use development will create a greater number of smaller, more affordable residential units into which older residents can downsize from single-family homes and reduce their tax burden. The village has not thus far attracted sufficient residential development above existing retail on Main Street. This, along with the limited number of residential units that could be added on Main Street, suggest the need to consider redevelopment opportunities along Mt. Vernon Street and in the areas of Lincoln Avenue and Spruce Avenue.</p> <p>Considering the quaint historic character of Main Street and the potential to adversely affect the scale and character of existing development, the village should also evaluate strategies that would promote mixed-use redevelopment along Mt. Vernon Street at higher densities, including around the existing train station, which should be rezoned to a mixed-use district to enable transit-oriented development. The village could consider acquiring the train station property to initiate a public-private partnership that would ensure the historic nature of the site would be retained. The village's 2009 master plan reexamination recommends extending the C-1(H) zone to include the existing rail station and acknowledges that commercial development along Mt. Vernon</p>
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	<p>Street is a viable option and appropriate, despite the rail line currently being freight only. A long-term regional plan proposes an expansion of the West Shore Rail line to reinstall commuter service along the line,⁶ although this is not considered to be a feasible option in the near future. A transit evaluation should determine the potential for the train station to be developed into some sort of transportation hub, particularly with bus instead of rail service. If appropriate, the village should identify strategies, such as density bonuses or an overlay zone, that would be consistent with transit-oriented development along Mt. Vernon Street and incorporate enhancement of the riverfront industrial properties currently existing on the west side of the rail tracks and along the Hackensack River to provide pedestrian access from Mt. Vernon Street to the river and promote environmentally compatible uses along the river.</p> <p>The village should consider conducting a housing assessment in conjunction with an economic and market analysis to evaluate ways to maximize residential density in the study area while retaining community character. Consideration should also be given to potential negative impacts of locating any senior housing in close proximity to a transportation hub or the freight rail line. To increase housing and stimulate economic development, there is a potential opportunity to create mixed-use development on underutilized church or other privately-owned properties in the study area through a contractual agreement that would enable the current owner to retain certain uses after the property were redeveloped for mixed-use.</p> <p>Noted lacking features in the C-1(H) zone are civic and green spaces. It is recommended that the village identify opportunities for street activation, pedestrian seating, gathering locations, and green infrastructure in the downtown; and consider integration of civic and green spaces as a condition into any redevelopment projects along Mt. Vernon Street, particularly for multi-family housing projects. This could be implemented through a municipal ordinance establishing a minimum requirement or recommendation. Civic and recreation amenities are located just outside the C-1(H) zone, and the village should ensure walkability and connectivity to those features from the downtown is maintained or enhanced with future development. “Unplanned encounters” can reinforce community building and should be maximized wherever appropriate and possible throughout the village, but particularly in the downtown area.</p>
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⁶ http://www.realtransit.org/tao_2013_9.php




	<p>In addition to the C-1(H) central business district, the village has two office park zones, OP-1 and OP-2, that account for approximately 150 acres, making up nearly the entire southeast portion of town east of the turnpike and south of the county park. The OP-1 and OP-2 zones include the two areas designated in need of redevelopment in the town. Proposed projects in these areas suggest mixed-use development, and their eventual development should not be in competition with drawing people to the village's C-1(H) zone.</p>
<p>Net Activity Density Net activity density (NAD), a measure of community compactness, is a calculation of municipal population plus employment divided by its developed area in square miles. By capturing both residents and businesses, this calculation provides a picture of the range of activities—and the buildings they occupy—that can be found in the municipality. Net activity density can be thought of as a proxy for building density, i.e., what a place physically looks like when experienced at the ground level.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> a high NAD, which is a strong indication of an active mixed-use center.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park Village has a net activity density of 12,026 people and jobs per square mile, ranking it in New Jersey Future's "small city/urban suburb" category, the second highest. The median net activity density among all 565 municipalities in the state is 5,244, so the village's net activity density is more than double the municipal median.</p> <p>The village ranks relatively well on the NAD metric and has good street connectivity surrounding the central business district. Connecting areas south of Highway 46 and east of the New Jersey Turnpike to the broader community should be a consideration in redevelopment and circulation plans.</p>
POLICIES AND PROGRAMS that encourage compact, mixed-use development	
<p>Special Improvement District Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) are authorized by state law and created by an ordinance of the local government. They work by collecting a special assessment on the commercial properties in a designated district, which supports initiatives that drive business activity, increases property values, and supports marketing and branding efforts.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> a formally established SID.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park Village has no designated Special Improvement Districts.</p> <p>The village should consider the formation of a SID that encompasses the central business district. A SID could serve as a vehicle to fund necessary improvements exclusively within the district, such as streetscape designs suggested in the Ridgefield Park Design Guidelines for Main Street booklet or implementation of the Ridgefield Park Public Art Project. The improvements could include installation of wayfinding signage and street furniture. It could also provide a cooperative framework within which elected officials, business, and property owners could collaborate to grapple with such topics as maintaining historic character and small-town feel.</p>
<p>Main Street Community Designation Main Street New Jersey is a division within the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. It provides on- and off-site technical assistance and training in downtown revitalization and management. In Fiscal Year 2019, the state budget authorized \$500,000 to restart and enhance this program.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park Village is not currently a designated Main Street community.</p> <p>For reasons similar to those noted above for designation of a SID, Ridgefield Park should consider participation in the Main Street New Jersey program to develop focused streetscape improvement strategies and long-term economic stabilization strategies in its central business district. Applications for designations are</p>



 <p><i>Looking for:</i> Main Street New Jersey designation.</p>	<p>accepted every two years. Selected communities receive technical support and training to assist in restoring their Main Streets as centers of community and economic activity.</p>
PLANS that encourage compact, mixed-use development	
<p>Master Plan A municipal master plan defines the community's vision of how it will evolve over time, the changes it intends make to the major systems encompassed within its boundaries—housing, transportation, recreation, environment and open space—how it will preserve its historic resources and what initiatives it will undertake to meet its residents' needs to remain socially and economically vibrant into the future. The master plan is a community's roadmap for decision-making and the foundation for all of its prospective physical, economic, and social development.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> a demographic analysis that considers community-wide aging factors and a land-use element of the master plan that encourages compact, mixed-use, center-based development.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park's 2000 master plan noted the age distribution in town—important information, given that older residents may have needs and concerns that are different from those of the general population—but did not assess housing costs in relation to household income by age. Nor does the plan consider the implications of demographic trends moving forward. The 2009 master plan reexamination does acknowledge the need “to encourage senior citizen housing development in appropriate locations” and notes the permitted use of age-restricted housing in two designated redevelopment areas east of the turnpike and isolated from the town center. However, the report did not delve into the related economic factors that point to the growing need to respond to housing needs of the village's older population.</p> <p>Although the proportion of the village's population aged 65 and older has dropped from 12.4% in 1990 to 11.2% in 2010, there is substantial reason to address the demographics of older residents in the town. Ridgefield Park Village's poverty rate of 9% for residents aged 65 or older is slightly higher than the corresponding statewide rate of 8% and is slightly higher than the overall town-wide poverty rate in the village. In Ridgefield Park, being over the age of 65 means one is more likely to be living in poverty, rather than less likely, as is the case for New Jersey as a whole and the village as a whole. Demographic trends described in the 2000 master plan and the 2009 master plan reexamination reports do not assess poverty rate in the community and do not assess socioeconomic demographics by age group. The socioeconomic consequences of these trends are emphasized in the Housing segment of this report (Part II) and the Ridgefield Park Village Demographic Profile (Appendix). These analyses indicate that the village should update its master plan to reflect the evolving and projected socioeconomic characteristics of the village's aging population in order to define aging-friendly strategies the village could adopt to respond to the community's emerging needs. Community design for mixed ages and incomes should be integrated into municipal planning and policies.</p> <p>The 2009 Village of Ridgefield Park Bergen County, New Jersey Master Plan Reexamination addresses housing opportunities in the village, including senior housing, through designated housing requirements in the redevelopment areas of the OP-1 and OP-2 zone. The village should make an effort to ensure that these neighborhoods are not isolated by the turnpike or Highway 46 and designed to</p>

	<p>be entirely car dependent. Community design of these areas should retain green spaces, be outside projected⁷ flood-prone areas, exhibit a mixed-use compact form and incorporate destinations that will enable older residents to meet their daily needs, such as having a grocery store, pharmacy, and opportunities for social engagement.</p> <p>Ways to promote community engagement and a vibrant downtown atmosphere should be considered in the master plan update. Designation of a cultural district in the downtown is currently being evaluated by the local creative placemaking group and would provide an excellent mechanism to activate the downtown and stimulate economic development. Updates to the master plan should also reflect a consideration of land use that promotes livability for residents of all ages by incorporating recommendations of this assessment.</p> <p>The village is currently in the process of updating the master plan. Considering the planned large-scale redevelopment projects approved along the Overpeck Creek, the master plan land-use element should identify strategies to integrate the sections of the village bisected by highways while retaining the historic, small-town quality of the existing downtown and the natural resource benefits of the Overpeck Creek stream corridor.</p>
<p>Redevelopment or Rehabilitation Plan Redevelopment and rehabilitation plans are adopted by the governing body to guide development within areas formally designated as being in need of redevelopment or rehabilitation. These plans define the vision for the area and control its implementation through very specific building type and design requirements.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> a redevelopment or rehabilitation plan that encourages compact, mixed-use, center-based development.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park used the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law to facilitate redevelopment in the office park, OP-1 and OP-2 zones, which are not in the vicinity of the central business district downtown area. The OP-1 2019 Challenger Redevelopment Area Plan has not yet been adopted, and the OP-2 Skymark Redevelopment Plan has general plan and phase 1 approval at the time of this report. The village is also investigating an area adjacent to Main Street around Lincoln and Spruce Avenues as a potential area in need of redevelopment.</p> <p>The village's master plan update should seek to incorporate redevelopment that occurs in the OP-1 and OP-2 zones into the existing community character and ensure that it is consistent with redevelopment goals in the C-1(H) zone and promotes complete and green streets and pedestrian mobility not only within the redevelopment areas, but also between those areas and the village neighborhoods.</p>

⁷ 2020 New Jersey Scientific Report on Climate Change, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, June 2020
<https://www.nj.gov/dep/climatechange/docs/nj-scientific-report-2020.pdf>

	<p>Because the 2009 Village of Ridgefield Park Bergen County, New Jersey Master Plan Reexamination identifies the OP-1 and OP-2 zones as areas in which to designate senior housing requirements, effort should be made to ensure that seniors residing in those areas will have adequate access to destinations, services, and social connections throughout the village.</p> <p>The village should continue its consideration of designating redevelopment areas in parts of the downtown as a means to promote economic and housing development that is consistent with the historic character of Main Street. The block between Spruce Avenue and Lincoln Avenue appears to be an appropriate area to evaluate for redevelopment, as it currently consists of considerable pavement, dated facades, and uses not conducive to pedestrian engagement. There is a hardware and plumbing store on that block, and effort should be made to retain local businesses such as this in the business district.</p>
LAND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS that encourage compact, mixed-use development	
<p>Permitted Uses Permitted uses define the types of land uses allowed as of right within a particular zoning district.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> a mix of uses within the commercial centers—retail, services, entertainment, residential—that promotes walking and encourages visitor activity.</p>	<p>The zone that encompasses the village’s downtown business district permits a mix of uses, confining residential uses to upper floors. The district is immediately adjacent to and within walkable distance from residential areas.</p> <p>This portion of the assessment—Land Development Standards—evaluates the Central Business Historic District (C-1(H)), which is the core of the village’s downtown area. The district encompasses the properties on either side of Main Street running for approximately three blocks from north to south and centrally located in the town, as well as properties on either side of Mt. Vernon Street west from Main Street to the railroad tracks, and properties along portions of Spruce Avenue and Grove Street. Uses permitted within this district include but are not limited to a wide array of retail sales of goods and services such as hardware stores, florists, drugstores, confectioneries, art galleries, craft and antique shops, jewelers, furniture stores, appliance stores, book and stationary stores, supermarkets, computer and electrical sales and services, department stores, apparel shops, and liquor stores. Professional offices, banks, travel agencies, undertakers and funeral parlors, tailor and shoe repair shops, butcher shops, barbershops and beauty parlors, real estate agencies, post offices, and public facilities are also permitted. Delicatessens, bars or taverns, and restaurants are also permitted, as well as movie theaters and other indoor amusement facilities. Conditional uses include places of worship, social or recreational buildings, gas stations, and residential above retail.</p>
<p>Prohibited Uses Prohibited uses are the types of land uses not allowed within a particular zoning district.</p>	<p>Any use not designated as a principal permitted use, an accessory use or a conditional use in the Ridgefield Park Village code is prohibited from any zone district in the village. Marijuana establishments and advertisement structures</p>

 <p><i>Looking for:</i> prohibition of uses that conflict with goals for a center area or district, in particular uses that do not support a compact center and/or walkability.</p>	<p>are specifically prohibited in all zones. Outdoor sales by the merchants in the C-1(H) zone, which encompasses the village's central business district and downtown center, are subject to a special permit by the Ridgefield Park Village Board of Commissioners. No ordinance specifically prevents drive-through establishments throughout the town. A drive-through prohibition helps to ensure that pedestrian and vehicular conflicts do not occur, enhances the pedestrian environment considerably, and is appropriate in districts that are specifically intended for pedestrian accessibility, as is the case with the C-1(H) zone. The Skymark Redevelopment Area in the OP-2 zone does permit drive-throughs for stand-alone buildings only, and the village should consider limiting this allowance in that zone to enhance pedestrian mobility and safety in what is intended to be developed into a compact, mixed-use area.</p> <p>The village should review the municipal zoning requirements to ensure that the code stipulates that drive-through facilities are prohibited in the C-1(H) zone and throughout the village, aside from in the OP-2 zone where appropriate.</p>
<p>Building Setbacks Setbacks establish the distance a building is required to be located from the front, side and/or rear property lines.</p>  <p><i>Looking for:</i> limited setbacks in commercial centers in order to create greater street activation, encouraging a more active, inclusive, pedestrian-friendly environment.</p>	<p>In Ridgefield Park's central business district C-1(H) zone, the minimum lot area is 5,000 sq. ft., the minimum lot width is 50 feet, and the minimum lot depth is 100 feet. The front- and rear-yard setback requirements are 20 and 30 feet, respectively. The side yard setbacks are seven feet for one side and eight for the other.</p> <p>The village should consider eliminating the front yard setback in the C-1(H) district in order to activate the street by bringing buildings to the front lot line, enhance the pedestrian environment, and ensure that future Mt. Vernon Street redevelopment blends with the existing Main Street streetscape.</p>
<p>Lot Coverage Lot coverage is that portion of a zoning lot which, when viewed from above, is covered by a building. Greater lot coverage allows for greater density, a key component to a successful mixed-use center.</p>  <p><i>Looking for:</i> greater allowable lot coverage percentages in center and mixed-use districts.</p>	<p>In Ridgefield Park's central business district C-1(H) zone, the maximum building coverage allowable is 70%, and the maximum impervious surface coverage allowable is 90%.</p> <p>To promote compact development, the village may want to consider increasing lot coverage allowances in the C-1(H) zone to 80%, which would enhance the compact, walkable character of the zone and allow for limited new redevelopment opportunities. The village may also want to consider reducing allowable maximum impervious surface coverage for new development to 80% (See General Recommendations 2 and 3 about green infrastructure and managing stormwater, respectively).</p>
<p>Building Height Building height requirements dictate how tall the buildings in a given district can be.</p>	<p>In Ridgefield Park's central business district C-1(H) zone, the maximum allowable building height is 40 feet. The maximum number of stories is not specified in the zoning code.</p>

 <p><i>Looking for:</i> minimum building heights that encourage density within the mixed-use center area or district.</p>	<p>The village should consider increasing building height requirements in the C-1(H) district along sections of Mt. Vernon Street to permit residential apartments and multi-family units and development of a “transit village,” considering the possibility that there is potential for development of a transportation hub at the train station. The addition of smaller housing units would provide housing opportunities consistent with the 2009 Village of Ridgefield Park Bergen County, New Jersey Master Plan Reexamination recommendation to provide “a variety of housing types for various income levels...and senior citizen housing.” This could be accomplished through density bonus development incentives that promote transit-oriented development in the vicinity of the train station or with a mixed-use overlay zone. Increased densities in the downtown would contribute to greater long-term vitality in the village’s commercial center. However, an effort to increase residential density must be accompanied by strategies to address parking demand.</p>
<p>Design Standards Design standards can be used to preserve and enhance the unique visual qualities in a district, reinforcing goals such as establishing a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.</p>  <p><i>Looking for:</i> specific design standards for buildings, infrastructure, and landscaping that promote a vibrant, walkable mixed-use center environment.</p>	<p>In recognition of the extensive endurance of original architecture features in the C-1(H) district, the village has historic district building and design requirements for all buildings in the Central Business Historic Zone (C-1(H)). The village historic preservation commission advises the planning board and board of adjustment on applications for development concerning the exteriors of buildings with commercial uses visible from a public street and exterior alterations in the district based on the "Building Design Guidelines for the Ridgefield Park Central Business Historic District," although there is no link to that specific reference.</p> <p>General design criteria statements for the village are present in the code for traffic access, circulation, parking, lighting, drainage, water supply and sewage facilities, usable open space, arrangement of buildings, landscaping, and wetlands. The design and performance standards section of the code states that “all developments shall conform to design standards encouraging sound development patterns within the village. Where an Official Map and/or Master Plan have been adopted, the development shall conform to them.”</p> <p>Sidewalks in the “commercial” zones are required to be at least eight feet wide, although this does not specify the central business district historic zone, or any particular zone, to be included as commercial. Typical subdivision design standards are also described in the code.</p> <p>The historic design guidelines applicable to the central business district are largely focused on components like facades and materials being consistent with the existing historic character of Main Street. The village appears to have no standards for the central business district that focus specifically on enhancing the pedestrian environment.</p>

Ridgefield Park should consider developing and enacting a form-based code to guide development and redevelopment within the central business district, with a focus on enhancing pedestrian activity. This would serve to ensure consistency with community design guidelines is required, rather than relying on the advisory role of the historic preservation commission. The 2003 *Ridgefield Park Design Guidelines for Main Street*, which includes guidelines and graphics for streetscape, architectural elements, and signage standards, could be adapted and expanded as a form-based code. Defining required design standards more specifically may also help to avoid confusion in that the code references a design guidelines document with a different title from the 2003 design book. (See General Recommendation 1: Consider Form-Based Codes)



Grocery Store on Main Street in Ridgefield Park Village

General Recommendation 1: Consider Form-Based Codes

The [Form-Based Codes Institute](#) defines a form-based code as “a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law. A form-based code offers a powerful alternative to conventional zoning regulation.” Such codes consider the relationships between buildings and the street, pedestrians and vehicles, public and private spaces and the size and types of streets and blocks. A form-based code also establishes rules for parking locations and limits, building frontages and entrance location(s), elevations, streetscapes, window transparency, and block patterns (i.e., no oversized “super blocks”). Since form-based code can be customized, the code for one area might be focused on preserving and enhancing the character of the neighborhood while the goal elsewhere might be to foster dramatic change and improvements. Often, a community’s form-based code can accomplish both with a more tailored approach to community character than conventional zoning (see: [AARP Livability Fact Sheets](#)).

Form-based codes are regulatory, not advisory. They are drafted to implement a community plan. The five main elements of a form-based code are:

1. **Regulating Plan:** a plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply.
2. **Public Standards:** specify elements in the public realm: sidewalk, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees, and furniture, etc.
3. **Building standards:** regulations controlling the features, configurations, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm.
4. **Administration:** a clearly defined and streamlined application and project review process.
5. **Definitions:** a glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.

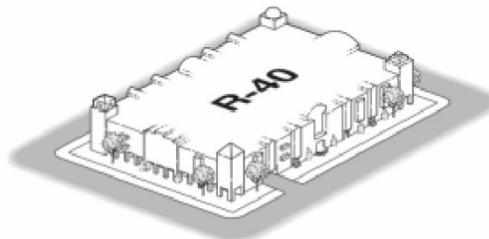
Conventional Zoning

Density use, FAR (floor area ratio), setbacks, parking requirements, maximum building heights specified



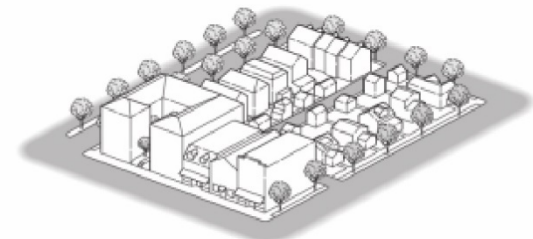
Zoning Design Guidelines

Conventional zoning requirements, plus frequency of openings and surface articulation specified



Form-Based Codes

Street and building types (or mix of types), build-to lines, number of floors, and percentage of built site frontage specified



Source: <https://formbasedcodes.org/definition/>



Historic Train Station and White Park in Ridgefield Park Village (Google Maps)



Historic Train Station in Ridgefield Park Village (Google Maps)

There is a train station at the west end of Mt. Vernon Street along the West Shore Rail line. It is currently zoned for single- and two-family residential use and occupied by a commercial business. Although the rail line had been a passenger line in the past, and there is a hope that it could be converted in the future, it is currently freight only and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.



II. Housing

Does Ridgefield Park Village have a supply of housing that is both affordable to older people and consistent with their needs? Does it have the necessary policies, plans and programs in place that will provide a range of housing options into the future?

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY PROFILE	
<p>Cost Burden</p> <p>A household is considered housing cost-burdened if it spends more than 30% of its gross income on housing. This report uses this measure over other indicators of affordability because the U.S. Census Bureau compiles statistics on the actual number of households that are experiencing this condition, whereas many other metrics rely on inferences from summary statistics.</p>	<p>Percent of all households that are cost-burdened (2017 5-year ACS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ridgefield Park Village: 45.7% ■ Statewide: 40.7% <p>Percent of homeowner households that are cost-burdened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ridgefield Park Village: 38.2% ■ Statewide: 34.3% <p>Percent of households headed by someone 65+ that are cost-burdened:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ridgefield Park Village: 46.9% ■ Statewide: 46.1% <p>Ridgefield Park generally has higher rates of housing cost burden than the state, whether overall, or looking only at homeowner households, or looking only at households headed by someone 65 or older. For these reasons, Ridgefield Park should consider strategies to expand housing options.</p>
<p>Median Household Income</p> <p>Median household income gives an idea of the purchasing power of the “typical” household in an area. Places with lower household incomes will tend to have higher rates of housing cost burden, all other things being equal, because lower-income households have a harder time paying for most things, including housing.</p>	<p>Median Household Income (2017 5-year ACS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ridgefield Park Village: \$72,191 ■ Statewide: \$76,475 <p>Bergen County incomes tend to be higher than elsewhere in the state, but Ridgefield Park is among a handful of exceptions, with a median household income that is lower than the statewide median.</p>
<p>Average Residential Value</p> <p>The average value of owner-occupied housing units in a jurisdiction gives an idea of how expensive it would be for a current non-resident to buy a home in that place.</p>	<p>Average Residential Value (2017):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ridgefield Park Village: \$308,184 ■ Statewide: \$367,049 <p>Unusually for Bergen County, the average home value in Ridgefield Park is less than the average value for the whole state. Home values are also lower relative to incomes: statewide, the median household needs close to five years’ worth of income (4.80) to purchase the average-priced home, whereas the median-income household in Ridgefield Park needs slightly more than four years’ income (4.27) to purchase the average-priced local home. Because of Ridgefield Park’s lower average home value, a household earning the statewide median household income</p>

		would need only four (4.03) years' worth of income to purchase the average-priced home in Ridgefield Park, making the village a relative bargain for households seeking to move in from elsewhere.
Type Housing type refers to the configuration of a unit, typically ranging from single-family detached homes to multi-family buildings to mobile homes. The presence of a range of housing types helps promote affordability and attracts a wider range of family types, from singles to families to older adults.	Ridgefield Park Village: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SF Detached: 40.2% ■ SF Attached: 2.5% ■ Duplex: 28.8% ■ Multi-Family: 28.4% ■ Other: 0.1% 	New Jersey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SF Detached: 53.6% ■ SF Attached: 9.5% ■ Duplex: 9.4% ■ Multi-Family: 26.5% ■ Other: 1.0%
	The village's housing stock is more diverse than that of the state as a whole, with a lower percentage of single-family detached units (which make up a majority of units statewide) and a much higher share of duplexes. The village has a lower share of rowhouses and townhouses ("single-family attached") than the rest of the state and has slightly more apartments in larger buildings.	
Size A range of sizes, as measured by the number of rooms in a dwelling, is another indicator of affordability and aging-friendliness. For older adults, fewer rooms can be less expensive to own/rent and easier to maintain. (Units with fewer than four rooms are more likely to be apartments rather than single homes; the importance of this distinction is covered in the "Type" section above.)	Ridgefield Park Village: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 4 to 6 Rooms: 47.7% ■ 7 to 8 Rooms: 19.0% ■ 9+ Rooms: 6.5% ■ Median # Rooms: 5.1 	New Jersey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 4 to 6 Rooms: 48.4% ■ 7 to 8 Rooms: 22.8% ■ 9+ Rooms: 14.2% ■ Median # Rooms: 5.7
	The village's housing stock is not as skewed toward large units as is the statewide distribution (as per the 2017 5-year ACS), with a similar percentage of four to six room houses, a smaller percentage of seven- and eight-room houses, and a share of units with nine or more rooms that is less than half the statewide percentage. Ridgefield Park thus has more of the kinds of smaller units that are likely to meet the needs of older adults than is true statewide.	
Tenure Tenure refers to the conditions under which land or buildings are held or occupied. For this analysis, the distinction is between owners and renters.	Ridgefield Park Village: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 53.6% owner ■ 46.4% renter 	New Jersey: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 64.1% owner ■ 35.9% renter
	The village has a significantly larger share of renters than is true for the state. Almost half of Ridgefield Park households are renters, compared to a little more than a third statewide. Almost universally throughout the state, renter households are more likely to be cost-burdened than households that own their homes. This has long been associated with a statewide shortage of rental housing, especially multi-family housing. But homeownership can also be a trap in a down market when older people are forced to remain in larger homes they own so they do not sacrifice equity they have accumulated. In addition, as housing costs rise, households may want to sell their homes and rent smaller, less costly dwellings. An insufficient supply of rental units may preclude this option.	

LAND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS and REGULATIONS that support a mix of housing options

Permitted Housing Types

Permitted housing types are the types of housing allowed as of right within the various zoning districts. Having a range of types helps promote affordability and also provides access to more options to attract different types of residents, from singles to families to older adults.





Looking for: allowance for a range of housing types, from single-family detached to multi-family, with more density in the mixed-use walkable portions of town.



Ridgefield Park's zoning supports a wide range of housing options, including single-family detached, single-family attached, two-family, townhouses, and multi-family dwellings.

The breakdown of residential units by type indicates that the village's on-the-ground housing stock mix is diverse, with more than half the housing stock being of a type other than single-family. Relative to the state as a whole, there is a high number of duplexes and larger apartment buildings with five or more units in Ridgefield Park. However, the high percentage of 65+ households that are cost-burdened (46%), combined with the high proportion of renter households paying rents generally slightly higher than the statewide median gross rent, suggests the need for more affordable, smaller dwelling units and alternative living arrangements. The village does have a higher percentage of 65+ residents living with other relatives compared to the state, although this may not be a viable option for many residents as they age or as households grow in size.

Two-family units are explicitly permitted in the R-2 zone and can be constructed as a new building, an expansion of a one-family residence to a two-family dwelling, or a modification in an existing two-family dwelling.

Although there are a variety of housing types permitted in the residential zones of the village, there appears to be a deficient supply of lower-cost, smaller units for older residents to rent or own. Through redevelopment, the downtown area could support residential growth that could potentially fulfill this need. Effort should be made to promote residential development in the downtown that would be targeted to older village residents. A potential means to diversify living arrangements so that more older residents may have the option to reside with family members in town would include the allowance of accessory dwelling units (See Accessory Apartments in this section). This may also enable older homeowners in the village to rent an accessory unit out of their own home to help offset property tax costs. This study did not determine whether older residents tend to rent or own their homes, or whether the town has an overall higher rate of renters than owners due to choice or limited housing options. The village should consider conducting a survey of its older residents to assess their housing needs.

<p>Subdivision Standards Subdivision standards provide rules, regulations, and standards to guide land subdivision. Large minimum lot sizes discourage a mix of uses and contribute to sprawling land-use patterns. Requiring large minimum lot sizes effectively prevents a mix of housing types and affordability levels within neighborhoods, which can prevent residents from remaining in their neighborhoods as their needs and circumstances change. Large minimum frontage requirements contribute to sprawl.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> subdivision regulations that permit compact development, allow for a mix of lot sizes.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park's subdivision regulations are typical of many suburban communities throughout New Jersey. The village's area and bulk regulations do establish relatively smaller residential lots size minimums, and the community's residential neighborhoods are compact and generally walkable. In an effort to retain dwindling open space, address issues of increasing impervious surface, and avoid drastic changes to neighborhood character in the R-2 zone—the village set relatively high lot size and minimum side yard requirements for multifamily housing in the residential zones. Although this may offer benefits to community character, it may also be prohibiting continuation of the development pattern that had resulted in an apparent harmonious mixing of multi-family and single units within the residential neighborhoods of the village.</p> <p>To allow for more development of smaller/more affordable residential units, particularly in residential areas adjoining the C-1(H) zone, but also outside the downtown area, the village should consider conducting an evaluation of existing area, yard, and bulk requirements to identify changes that would allow for more diverse housing in the village. Community design standards can be maintained through adopted design criteria for residential development. Consider ways to expand the existing stock of “missing middle” housing in the village.</p> <p>The village should also consider exploring limited incentives, such as density bonuses, increased building height limits, or of-right zoning controls that would expand further the current number of single-family attached units, townhomes, duplexes, and/or multi-family units. Such units would be better suited to the needs and finances of older residents seeking to down-size (as well as of younger first-time home buyers). Although projected population increase in the village is expected to occur in the redevelopment areas in the southeastern portion of the village as per the 2019 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, allowing for greater housing diversity in the village's residential zones would help to maintain a mixed-income and mixed-age community and enhance economic activity in the central business district by providing for greater pedestrian traffic.</p>
<p>Inclusionary Housing Requirements These policies typically require a fixed percentage of affordable housing to be included as part of new residential development. This promotes ongoing social and economic integration.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> an inclusionary housing requirement.</p>	<p>The village 2019 Housing Element & Fair Share Plan proposes a number of affordability mechanisms to address the present and future needs for affordable housing, including a rehabilitation program administered through a shared services agreement with Bergen County; extension of existing expiring affordability controls; and inclusionary development construction projects—two of which are located in the central business district C-1(H) zone.</p> <p>The village should consider strategies, outlined in this section, that expand housing choice and affordability. These objectives can be achieved while protecting local housing supply and neighborhood character. The village should also consider the</p>

	<p>possibility of eliminating or reducing requirements for non-residential and residential development fees within the C-1(H) district or the study area (or portions of the study area), as identified in Figure 2 of this report, as an incentive to encourage development that includes a residential component.</p>
<p>Universal Design Universal design is the concept of designing all products and the built environment to be aesthetic and usable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or status in life. Universal design provides even surfaces, passages wide enough for wheelchairs, and appropriately designed bathrooms and kitchens, particularly for older adults.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> a universal design policy or program.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park does not have a universal design standard or policy. Although the concept is gradually becoming more widely understood, it has yet to be adopted formally by many communities. A universal design standard would help to ensure that the needs of residents of various abilities and mobilities are being addressed.</p> <p>Ridgefield Park should consider adopting a universal design approach for all new and renovated residential development in the village, with consideration of constraints that may be imposed on this approach by the historic nature of the downtown.</p>
<p>Accessory Apartments An accessory apartment, also called an accessory dwelling unit or in-law suite, is a separate independent dwelling unit installed as part of a single-family home property. The accessory unit is a full, self-contained dwelling unit (i.e., it includes a kitchen), has a separate outside entrance, and is typically smaller than the “primary” part of the home. Accessory apartments can be attached to the main home, above a garage, or stand-alone as an independent structure. For older residents, they may provide a means of acquiring income or assistance with home maintenance or daily tasks. They can also increase the availability of smaller, more affordable units in a community, or allow for people to move in with relatives as they age.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> accessory apartments as a permitted use.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park does not currently permit accessory apartments in any district. As per municipal ordinance, no portion of an accessory structure is permitted to be used as living quarters.</p> <p>Ridgefield Park should consider allowing accessory apartments in the R-1 and R-2 zones, subject to conditions that limit the impact such units might have on the surrounding neighborhood. Conditions might include: a limit of one accessory apartment per lot, a requirement that the principal dwelling or accessory apartment unit be owner-occupied, a minimum lot size, a limit on the size of the accessory apartment to no more than a percentage (ex. 30%) of the gross floor area of the house, and/or restricting new entrances to the side or rear of the home. There are a variety of design considerations that can be applied to accessory dwelling units to ensure that they fit the character of the neighborhood. “Tiny homes” are a type of accessory dwelling unit that is generally less than 400 square feet in size and should not be restricted by imposing a minimum square footage for permitted accessory dwelling units that is too low to allow for these types of units.</p>
<p>Home Sharing Home Sharing offers another alternative housing choice option. According to the National Shared Housing Resource Center, homeowners participating in a home sharing program offer “accommodation to a home sharer in exchange for an agreed level of support in the form of financial exchange, assistance with household tasks, or both.”</p> <p>The community is also a beneficiary of home sharing. Shared living makes efficient use of existing housing stock, helps preserve the fabric of the neighborhood and, in certain cases,</p>	<p>In Ridgefield Park, alternative housing options for older residents are in short supply. The 116-unit/seven-story Marlboro House Cooperative, although not a senior-housing facility and consisting of entirely market-rate units, offers the only option aside from traditional owner-occupied or rental housing in the village. There is typically a waitlist to join. Across Main Street from Marlboro House is the Lombardi Tower, which consists of 40 rental units dedicated to fair share affordable senior housing. A redevelopment plan for the OP-2 zone provides for development of age-restricted housing.</p> <p>With approximately 25% of its population being aged 55 or older and exhibiting a higher poverty rate for residents over aged 65 compared to the general population</p>

helps to lessen the need for costly chore/care services and long-term institutional care.

A home sharer might be an older resident, a person with disabilities, a working professional, someone at-risk of homelessness, a single parent, or simply a person wishing to share his or her life and home with others. For these people, shared housing offers companionship, affordability, mutual support, and much more.

Home Sharing can offer a more secure alternative to other roommate options. Many programs have staff who are trained to screen each program applicant carefully through interviewing, background checking, and personal references.



Looking for: housing options that could simultaneously reduce cost-burdens and isolation and facilitate aging in place.

in the village, there is a need to evaluate housing strategies that are affordable enough for older residents to remain living in the village. Twenty-six percent of Ridgefield Park residents who are 65 and older live alone, and isolation can contribute to myriad health risks. In addition, nearly 47% of Ridgefield Park's households aged 65 and older are housing cost-burdened. These conditions are likely to become more severe because the number of people 65 and older has grown considerably, and this trend is projected to continue into the future.

The village code does not address home sharing directly, although boarding houses, lodging houses and rooming houses are addressed in the chapter concerning motels and hotels. An annual license, with an associated fee of \$150 - \$200 and public noticing requirement, is required from the village to register a property as such.

The forgoing factors suggest that Ridgefield Park should consider allowing and supporting home sharing as an innovative strategy to provide an option, particularly for older residents, that enables them to either secure housing that is affordable or to earn supplemental income to support their expenses of home ownership. The latter would additionally support any efforts to provide housing that is affordable to people of all ages and to increasing economic activity in the village.




Tiny house in White Mountain National Forest, New Hampshire - Andrea Davis (UnSplash)





III. Transportation

Does Ridgefield Park Village have the transportation infrastructure, policies and plans in place to address the transportation needs of older residents by encouraging multi-modal options and walkability?

WALKABILITY	
<p>Street Network Density</p> <p>New Jersey Future has developed municipal-level metrics to characterize compactness and walkability. One of those measures is street network density (SND), which is measured by route-miles of local road per square mile. A high SND signifies a well-connected, grid-like street network. Such networks ensure that physical proximity actually translates into ease of access—by providing multiple linkages among properties and neighborhoods so that local traffic is not forced onto a few “main” roads for every local trip. These linkages are important to pedestrians as well as drivers since pedestrians cannot generally cross private property or leap fences or streams and thus in most places are constrained to walking along the street.</p>	<p>New Jersey Future’s Creating Places to Age report identifies six categories of street network density. The categories are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Very high: 20 or more route-miles of local road per square mile ■ High: at least 15 but fewer than 20 route-mile of road per square mile ■ Good: at least 10 but fewer than 15 routes of road per square mile ■ Medium: at least five but fewer than 10 route-miles of road per square mile ■ Low: at least two but fewer than five route-miles of road per square mile ■ Very low: fewer than two route-miles of road per square mile <p>Ridgefield Park Village’s street network density is 15.4 local road route-miles per square mile, putting it in the “high” category. The village’s SND value is more than 50% greater than the median street network density over all 565 municipalities in the state, which is 9.75.</p> <p>Ridgefield Park should consider using its street network density classification to help market the town as a walkable, mixed-use center, particularly as it invests in downtown or Main Street destinations. Expenditures to improve walkability and connectivity could be included in the village’s capital improvement plan and phased in over time so that the investments are manageable. To track progress over time, the village could post a map at the village hall and on the village’s web site of all proposed improvements. To celebrate its accomplishments and inform its residents, each year the map could be annotated to identify completed projects and those slated for the upcoming budget year.</p>
<p>Sidewalks</p> <p>Sidewalks provide many benefits, including pedestrian safety and mobility, and they encourage healthier lifestyles.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> 1) the presence of sidewalks that connect people with area destinations, particularly transit; 2) development regulations that require installation of sidewalks along the frontage of all public streets; 3) sidewalks that accommodate those with disabilities.</p>	<p>The village regularly inspects sidewalks in partnership with a sidewalk safety group and reimburses residents for repairing tree damaged sidewalks. In the village’s development regulations, sidewalk installation is determined by the approving authority and, where required, must be a minimum of 8’ wide in a commercial zone and 4’ wide in all other zones. The general legislative code requires sidewalks in the R-1 and R-2 residential districts to be at least 3’ wide, with the exception of allowances for decreased width to accommodate existing shade trees.</p>

	<p>There are no bicycle racks downtown and no dedicated bicycle lane along Main Street, although space is limited to install one. The town is looking to do a bicycle and pedestrian plan for school children and is considering expanding this to include aging-friendly strategies.</p> <p>Ridgefield Park should consider adopting a resolution endorsing a complete and green streets policy and develop ordinance standards and guidelines for improvements consistent with complete and green streets principles along the village's major corridors, including Main Street, Mt. Vernon Street, Euclid Avenue, Park Street, Cedar Street; and throughout the C-1(H) district and along Railroad Avenue in anticipation of future pedestrian-oriented redevelopment and waterfront redevelopment, as well as in the village's redevelopment areas. The redevelopment areas offer an excellent opportunity to implement the policy in new construction.</p> <p>An adopted complete and green streets policy should include elements to make bicycling a safe and desirable option for residents of the village. Specific actions to implement bicycle route improvements should be identified to enhance pedestrian mobility around the village. With a high street network density, bicycles could be an efficient means of travel within the community, and the village should develop a bicycle and pedestrian plan that aims to create a network of routes that connects community destinations (the downtown, civic facilities, parks, and the forthcoming redevelopment neighborhoods) to each other and to residential neighborhoods.</p> <p>See the NJDOT Model Complete Streets Policy and Guide as a resource for developing the village policy. After adoption of a complete and green streets policy, the village green team could complete Sustainable Jersey actions for green infrastructure planning and implementation based on the model policy. To help control flooding and improve stormwater management, the village should be proactive in incorporating green infrastructure techniques into any implemented complete streets strategies. (See General Recommendation 2: Consider Complete and Green Streets)</p>
<p>Crosswalks Crosswalks at intersections provide a way to make drivers more aware of and deferential to pedestrians. They should also accommodate people with disabilities easily.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park's land development regulations and subdivision standards appear to be silent on requirements for crosswalks. The village is considering dedicating money from the capital budget to crosswalk improvements and is very interested in implementing complete streets strategies to improve pedestrian safety. There are a few noted roadways that function as through-streets where cars travel over the speed limit, particularly Mt. Vernon Street and Bergen Avenue. On Euclid Avenue, which is in the vicinity of the library and community center, speed limits</p>

 <p><i>Looking for:</i> 1) highly visible crosswalks; 2) light timing that favors pedestrians of various abilities, including timed pedestrian signals; and 3) safe spaces in the median of larger crossings.</p>	<p>are maintained, although cars do not readily stop for pedestrians at intersections. Crosswalks along this road are not highly visible and the existing open/green space median does not extend into the crosswalk, which would provide a safety and rest area while crossing. (See Figure 3: Euclid Avenue and Park Street Pedestrian and Bicycle Activity in Ridgefield Park Village.) The busy intersections of Park Street/Main Street and Mt. Vernon Street/Main Street do not have strong street lighting or pedestrian enhancements such as highly visible signage or push-to-walk buttons.</p> <p>The village should consider conducting a pedestrian and bicycle audit to identify locations of dangerous street crossings where crosswalks or street crossings need to be installed or improved and identify specific strategies to address those locations. Pedestrian crossing improvements and traffic calming measures should be prioritized along pedestrian routes to community facilities and throughout the central business district.</p> <p>Ridgefield Park should consider establishing basic standards for crosswalks that are consistent with an adopted complete and green streets policy and incorporate these standards in its subdivision and site plan requirements. The village should also include regular crosswalk improvement projects in its capital improvement program planning. At particularly problematic intersections or crossings, the village could consider employing pop-up traffic calming techniques to temporarily install curb bump-outs, crossing islands, narrowed travel lanes, signage and road markings, speed tables, round-a-bouts, and other traffic calming practices. This would be a low-cost way to test which traffic-calming methods are most effective. The local creative placemaking group could integrate these projects into their initiatives to create a consistent and engaging visual image of the village.</p>
PARKING	
<p>On-Street Parking</p> <p>On-street parking provides protection for pedestrians and noise disturbance buffers for activities such as outdoor dining on sidewalks, as well as convenient access to destinations.</p>  <p><i>Looking for:</i> ample on-street parking in the central business district.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park has on-street metered parking available throughout much of its central business district.</p> <p>The village could establish a development principle that calls for maintaining the current wide-spread availability of on-street parking throughout the C-1(H) zone, as development within the district may be proposed over time, and to provide parking for new development in the redevelopment areas. Metered parking should extend along Mt. Vernon Street and potentially along Spruce Avenue as these areas in the C-1(H) district redevelop. Depending on the nature of waterfront redevelopment, metered parking could also be considered along Railroad Avenue.</p>

Parking Requirements

Parking requirements dictate the amount of parking that must be provided with new development. In center areas, too much parking can have a negative impact on walkability and requiring it can be a deterrent for mixed-use development since it is a cost without a return on investment. Requirements should also take into consideration available transit options, both bus and rail, which might allow for a reduction (or elimination) of parking requirements.



Looking for: techniques such as lowered parking minimums, on-street parking, off-site parking, fee-in-lieu of parking and shared parking provisions in center areas.

As noted above, the downtown has metered on-street parking. Finding parking in the downtown has been expressed as an issue by residents. There are two public lots within a block of Main Street—one is near the IGA grocery store on Park Street, and the other is on Cedar Street. The Cedar Street lot is underutilized. The local creative placemaking group is looking into using art to improve wayfinding in town and could incorporate parking signage into their initiative.

The village's minimum parking standards for the uses permitted in the C-1(H) district are:

Retail (non-restaurant): 1 per 300 square feet of building floor area (BFA) (with a minimum area of 10,000 square feet)

Professional/Service: 1 per 250 feet of BFA

Schools/Churches/Government/Clubs/Residential: Varied (same as R-2)

Joint-use parking facilities are permitted with conditions.

An appropriate first step to parking management would be for the village to conduct a parking inventory and usage estimates. An aerial snapshot of the central business district shows the considerable amount of downtown area consumed by surface parking lots. (See Figure 4: Surface Parking in Downtown Ridgefield Park Village.) The village could consider establishing a parking authority to plan for and manage parking in the central business district and redevelopment areas. To limit impervious surfaces and promote compact pedestrian-oriented development, the village could consider alternative parking strategies, such as structured parking, reduced parking ratios, promoting shared parking, improved wayfinding signage that directs patrons to underused lots or spaces, allowance or incentives for off-site parking to count toward parking requirements (incentives include contribution to an off-street parking trust fund), and efforts to promote transit-oriented development relying on bus transit that requires less parking for resident commuters or visiting patrons/employees.

Parking Design

Parking lot design is critical to walkability in a downtown or center area. Parking areas should be designed to get people—in addition to cars—in and out safely and should be made aesthetically appealing. They should also employ green infrastructure to mitigate stormwater runoff.



Looking for: surface parking in rear of buildings, ingress and egress from side streets/alleys where possible, green infrastructure, landscaping, pedestrian walkways and connections, structures designed with active first floor and compatible with adjacent buildings and architecture.

Landscaping requirements for parking areas in the village apply to a buffer zone for off-street parking with six or more vehicles that abuts a street or residential zone. There are no requirements in the village's land use code for parking lot landscaping or green infrastructure and stormwater management.

The village should consider incorporating green infrastructure strategies in municipal surface parking lot design, which can yield numerous benefits including improved pedestrian environments, added green spaces, reduced heat-island impacts, and significantly reduced off-site stormwater flows. Many green infrastructure techniques can be integrated seamlessly into parking lot design, including permeable paving, bio-swales, and raingardens. The [New Jersey Developers Green Infrastructure Guide](#) demonstrates green infrastructure strategies to implement stormwater best management practices into development, including parking lots.

Consideration should also be given to pedestrian connectors to/from parking areas. Safe and accessible pedestrian pathways include those that are sufficiently lighted, easily navigated by individuals of all mobilities, and clearly marked or delineated.

Figure 3: Euclid Avenue and Park Street Pedestrian and Bicycle Activity in Ridgefield Park Village (Google Maps)

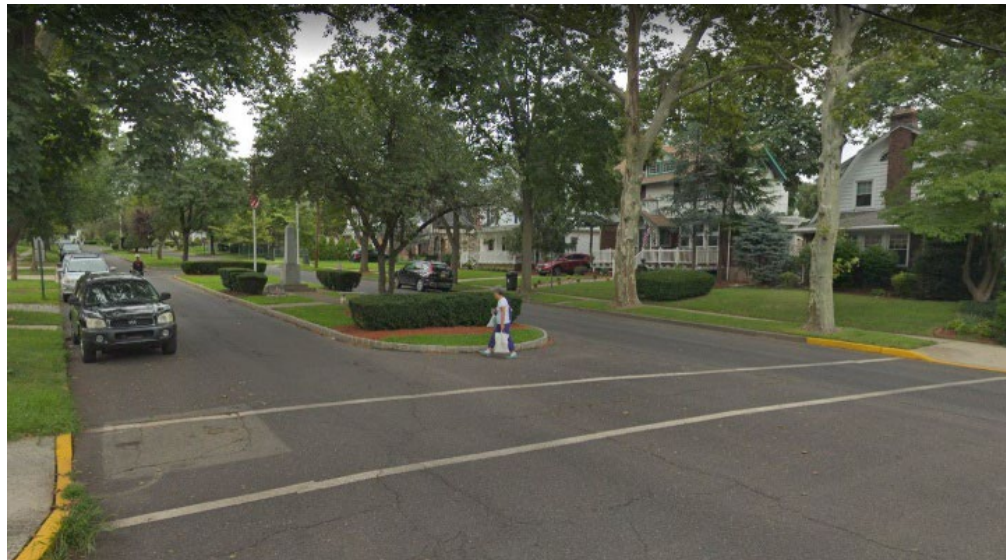
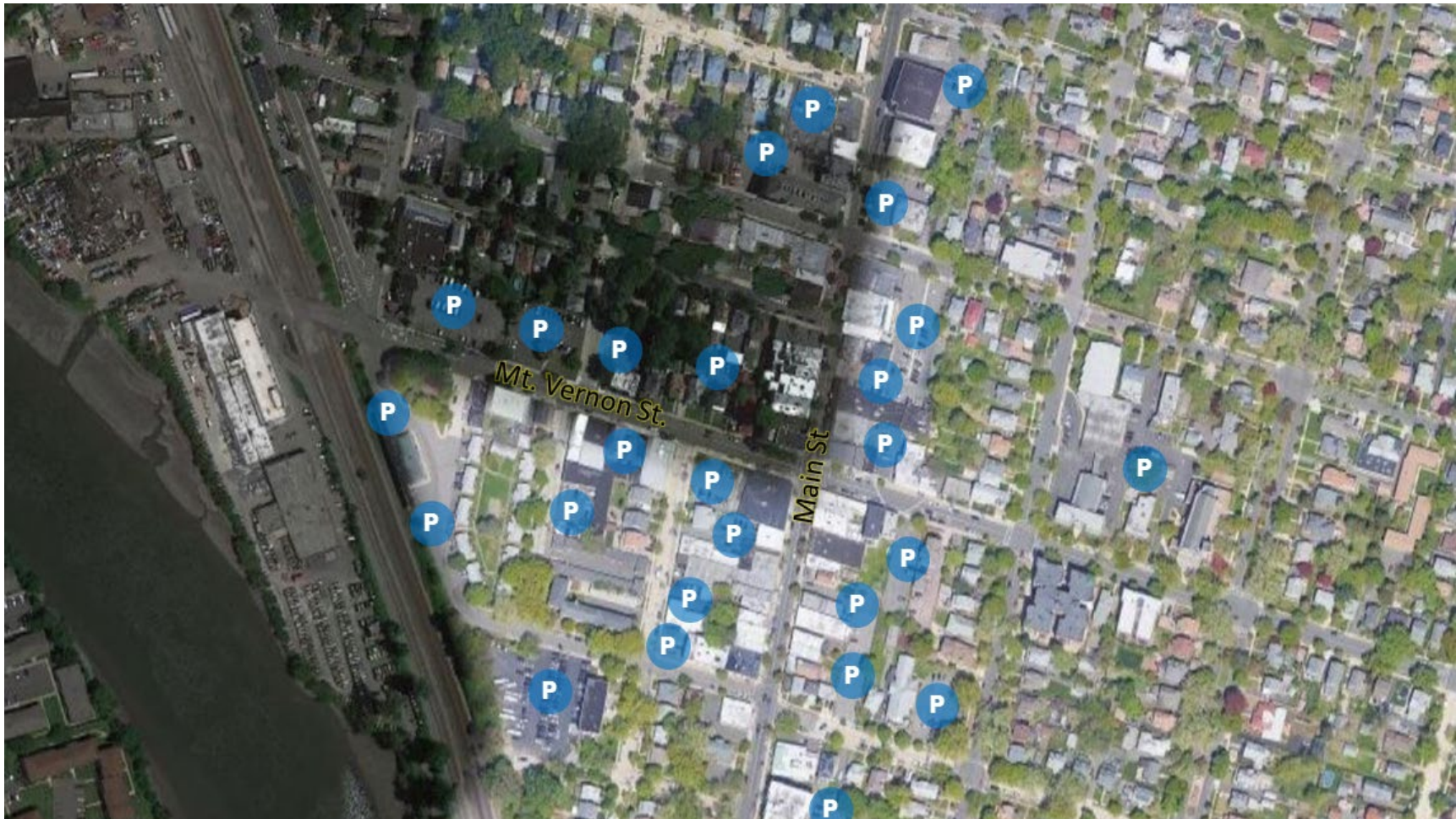


Figure 4: Surface Parking in Downtown Ridgefield Park Village



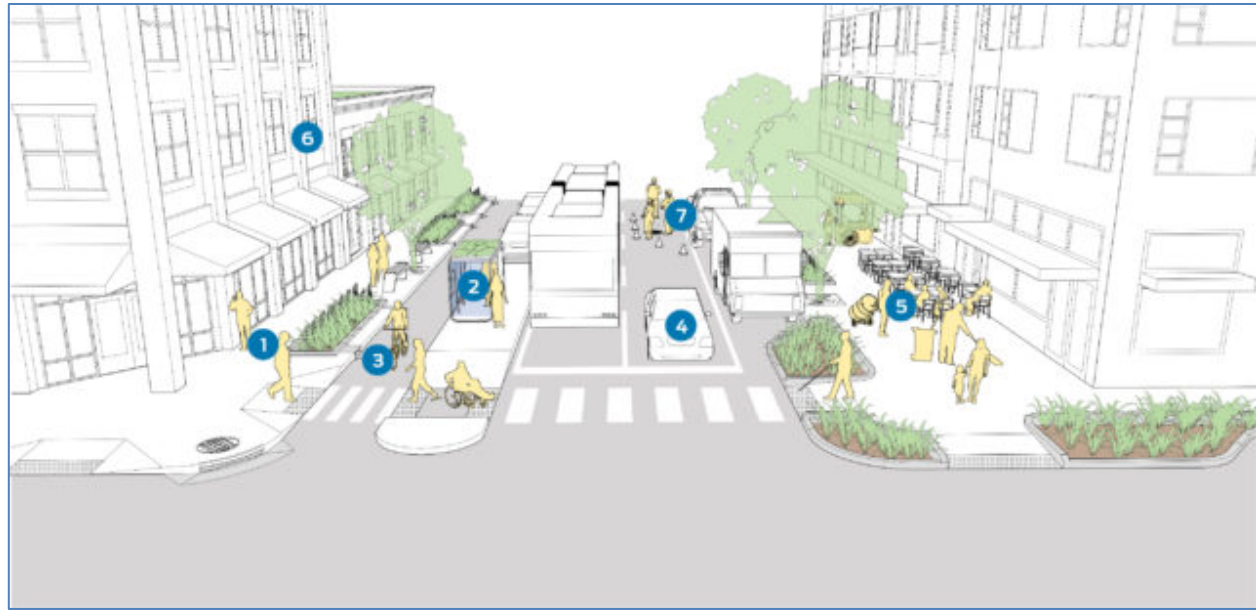
Note: Parking lots identified from visual inspection of aerial only.

General Recommendation 2: Consider Complete and Green Streets

What Are Complete and Green Streets?

People experience “community” as a complex web of interactions among physical features—the homes they live in, the stores they depend upon for goods and services, the streets they drive on, the sidewalks they walk on, and the parks, playgrounds and public gathering places they frequent. Streets encompass typically over 70% of city-owned public space.⁸ Smart Growth America’s Complete Streets Local Policy Workbook⁹ notes that a complete streets system—one that is safe, comfortable, and convenient for people walking, bicycling, riding public transportation, and driving—can play a vital role in animating a community’s social and economic life. Furthermore, a tightly integrated, well-connected street network can promote social interaction, enhance accessibility, encourage aging in place, and enhance community health and safety.

Streets not only serve a vital civic function, they can also contribute to community appearance, improve the pedestrian environment, and expand a community’s inventory of natural resources by integrating green street functions into the design. Green streets incorporate non-structural management practices within the right-of-way that mimic the natural water cycle to capture, filter, reuse and/or absorb stormwater and ensure that streets remain usable and safe during storm events for all people, regardless of mode. In addition to stormwater management, green streets reduce [heat-island impacts](#) and improve air quality by [removing and sequestering air-borne carbon dioxide](#)



Key to the Graphic

- 1 – People walking
- 2 – People using transit
- 3 – People bicycling
- 4 – People driving motor vehicles
- 5 – People conducting business
- 6 – People residing
- 7 – People working/performing maintenance

PLEASE NOTE: In 2018, New Jersey Future launched the New Jersey Green Infrastructure Municipal Toolkit (gitoolkit.njfuture.org), a website dedicated to green infrastructure planning. The toolkit is an interactive, online resource that includes detailed information, expert guidance and a variety of tools that cities and towns can use to make green infrastructure a mainstream stormwater management strategy in public- and private-sector development projects. The primary audience for the toolkit is local elected leaders. Important secondary audiences include appointed officials such as planning board, zoning board and environmental commission or green team members, municipal engineers and planners, municipal administrators/managers, and public works superintendents.

⁸ See <https://www.pps.org/article/streets-as-places>

⁹ <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/cs-local-policy-workbook.pdf>

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Local Bus Service

Local buses function as a means for people to travel to important destinations within a place or in neighboring places. This service is critical for people who do not or cannot drive, as it connects them to necessary shopping and services in a way that regional bus and rail cannot.



Looking for: high number of bus stops per square mile of developed land.

There are 46.9 NJ Transit bus stops per square mile of developed land in Ridgefield Park, which is extremely high. Five bus stops serve the village's business district on Main Street—at Park Street (near the municipal building), at Mt. Vernon Street, and at Cedar Street (two blocks west of the library). No transportation stops directly at the library, but a paratransit fixed route stops at the civic center, which is about two blocks north of the library. [Bergen County Community Transportation](#), [Meadowlink](#), and [other fee-for-service providers](#) offer curb-to-curb transportation options for older residents. Nearly all village residents are within a ¼ walk of a bus stop. (See Figure 5. Transportation—Bus Stops and Figure 6. Bus Stops in Ridgefield Park Village.)

In the scope of the pedestrian and bicycle audit recommended above, Ridgefield Park could also assess whether older residents are deterred from patronizing the bus service either because the walk to a bus stop is not manageable or because the bus service does not go to desired locations and there are gaps that need to be addressed. The village should evaluate its busiest bus stops throughout town to determine if sufficient lighting and sheltered seating are provided for older residents. NJ Transit will arrange for, and bear the cost of, [installing bus shelters](#) at bus stops provided that a local sponsor, public or private, will agree to accept responsibility for maintenance and liability. Sponsors are permitted to advertise on the structures.

Rail

Rail transit offers access to regional destinations to which older residents might not otherwise travel if driving were the only option.



Looking for: presence of a rail station.

There are no passenger rail stations located in Ridgefield Park, although there is direct bus service to New York City. As noted previously, there is a train station at the west end of Mt. Vernon Street—occupied by a commercial business and just outside the C-1(H) zone. The train station property is currently zoned for single- and two-family residential. Although the rail line had been a passenger line in the past, it is currently freight only. There is a hope that it could be converted to a passenger line in the future, but that appears to be unlikely.

Ridgefield Park should capitalize on the extensive bus network in the community, ensuring that residents can easily utilize it to access key destinations within the village—such as the municipal building, downtown shops and services, and community parks and facilities—as well as regional destinations. Ride-share programs or services are increasingly being used to enhance neighborhood circulation and overall mobility of older individuals.

STREETS

Connectivity

A well-connected local street network offers multiple options and shorter distances for traveling between destinations. Without this connectivity, high density and mixed use can end up meaning that you can see your destination out your window, but a long walk or drive would be needed to get to it. Local road density (miles of local road per square mile) is one measure of how fine-grained the local street network is and thus of how long the average local trip is likely to be.



Looking for: high local road density, greater than 10 miles of road per square mile.

Ridgefield Park has 15.4 route miles of road per square mile. This is a high rating, as the median over all municipalities is only 9.75 route-miles per square mile.

New development and redevelopment should be designed to contribute to, enhance, and maintain Ridgefield Park's efficient, interconnected network of streets, particularly near and within the downtown area. The village should also consider capitalizing on its high connectivity to establish a network of bicycle routes connecting key destinations. Bicycle circulation and safety improvements can be implemented through a complete and green streets policy, and the village should consider formally adopting a policy.

Vehicle Lanes

The number of vehicle lanes of traffic has an impact on walkability.



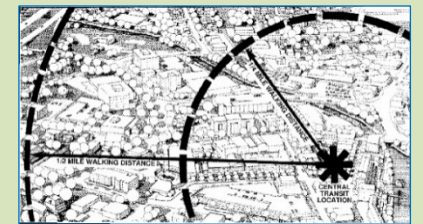
Looking for: reduced vehicle lanes, particularly in center areas to promote walkability.

The streets serving Ridgefield Park's downtown are narrow, have sidewalks and on-street parking, and generally allow for safe pedestrian activity.

As part of a pedestrian and bicycle audit, the village could consider an assessment of local streets to determine where driver sight-line visibility may impact pedestrian safety and identification of locations where pedestrian crossings could be better marked or timed. (See Figure 7. Intersections in Downtown Ridgefield Park Village.) Traffic calming or buffering measures could be implemented at problematic locations based on an adopted complete and green streets policy. Potential improvements could be tested by experimenting with various pop-up demonstrations, discussed above in the Crosswalks section of this report, to evaluate alternative solutions and help acclimate motorists to changing roadway patterns.

Why ¼ mile walking distance?

Estimating a distance people are willing to walk depends on many factors and is not easily generalized. A quarter-mile is commonly cited as the distance people are willing to walk to transit stations, public facilities, and retail destinations, although many people will walk greater distances, and community design can help to encourage higher rates and distances for walking and physical activity.^{10, 11, 12} One study found that having a positive attitude about walking and the perception of a shorter walking distance were correlated with a greater desire to walk.¹³



¹⁰ Yang, Y., & Diez-Roux, A. V. (2012). Walking distance by trip purpose and population subgroups. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 43(1), 11–19.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2012.03.015>

¹¹ The 2017 United States Report Card on Walking and Walkable Communities. <https://physicalactivityplan.org/projects/walking/Walking-report-card-FINAL.pdf>

¹² NJ Transit (1994). Planning for Transit-Friendly Land Use: A Handbook for New Jersey Communities: June 1994: Prepared for the Federal Transit Administration. <https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/561>

¹³ Hatamzadeh, Y. (2019). Do People Desire to Walk More in Commuting to Work? Examining a Conceptual Model Based on the Role of Perceived Walking Distance and Positive Attitudes. *Transportation Research Record*, 2673(7), 351–361.

Figure 5. Transportation—Bus Stops

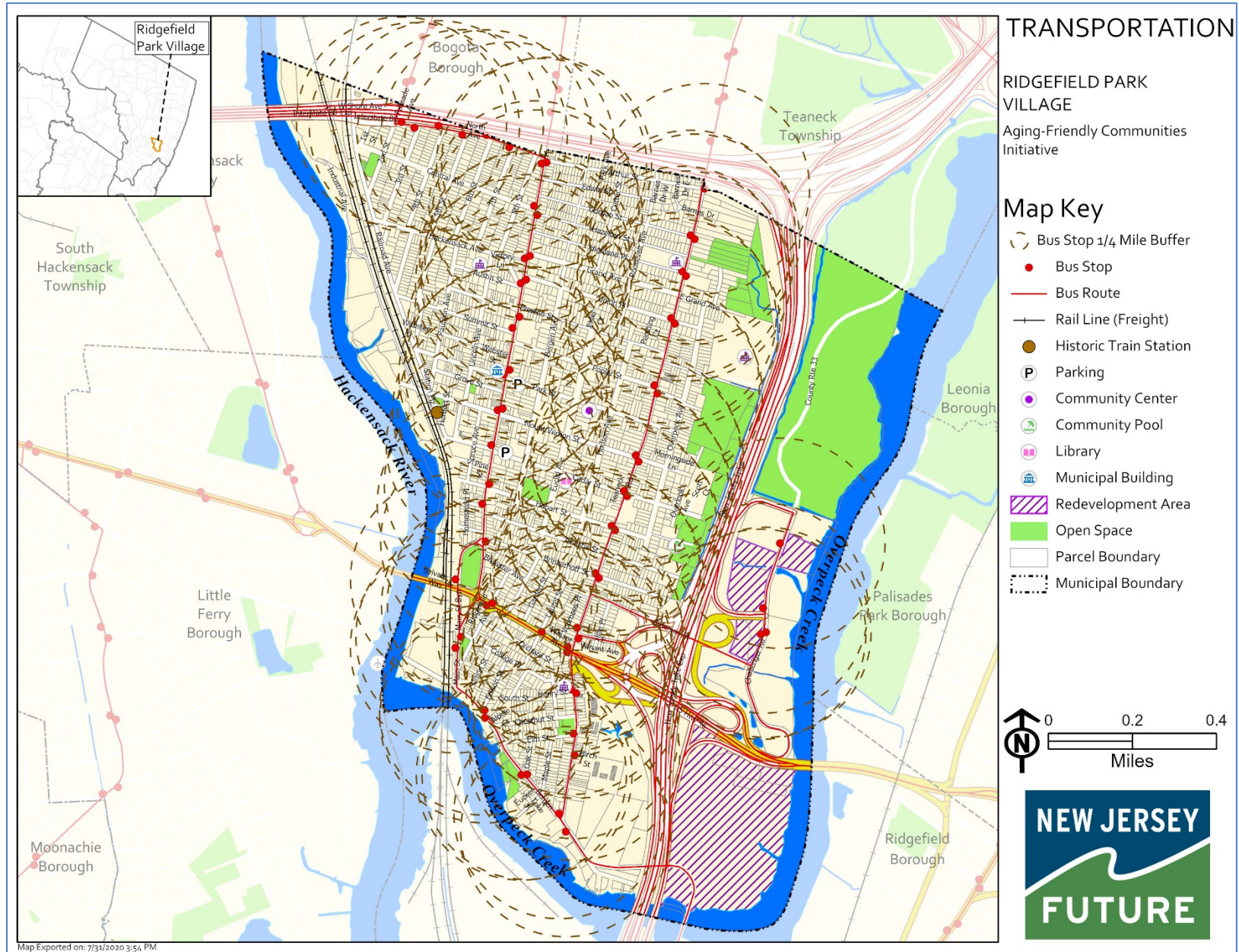


Figure 6. Bus Stops in Ridgefield Park Village (Google Maps)



Bus stop at Ryan-Lombardi Towers



Bus shelters on Main Street near Mt. Vernon Street

Figure 7. Intersections in Downtown Ridgefield Park Village



Main and Park Street Intersection



Mt. Vernon Street and Lincoln Avenue Intersection



IV. Public Spaces and Amenities

Does Ridgefield Park Village provide access to public spaces, amenities, and programs for older residents?

PUBLIC SPACES, FACILITIES

Community Centers

Amenities such as recreation centers, senior centers, and libraries provide access to learning, information, entertainment, exercise, and socializing opportunities, which are critical to healthy aging.





Looking for: community centers and libraries with walking access.

The Ridgefield Park Public Library is centrally located in the town at 107 Cedar Street on a one-way street. The library is approximately 0.15 mile east of the municipal parking lot on Cedar Street and 0.18 mile from Main Street. Less than a quarter mile to the north of the library, the Ridgefield Park Civic Center is at 159 Park Street, approximately 0.18 mile east of the municipal parking lot on Park Street and less than a quarter mile east of Main Street. These facilities are within walking distance of each other and the downtown. Half of the civic center is devoted to senior citizens and half to youth. It includes a nutritional center and offers programming to senior residents. Ridgefield Park Seniors Club meetings are hosted there twice a month.

There are no community facilities or civic spaces along the Main Street corridor. There is consideration of having a farmer's market in the church parking lot on Cedar Street, which is about a block from Main Street. Although a beneficial addition to the community, it would not offer a permanently present civic space. On a small stretch of Grove Street at the intersection with Main Street, the village previously held an event in which a portion of the street was blocked off to cars and set up as a pedestrian space. Some residents complained of the lost thoroughway to Main Street, however, the space successfully attracted people and created a social atmosphere.

To enhance pedestrian access to existing facilities, the village should evaluate sidewalks and crosswalks in the vicinity of and along the route to the library and civic center from all residential neighborhoods for any impeding obstacles such as: unsafe crossings or crosswalks; insufficient pedestrian crossing phase lengths at signalized intersections; physical obstacles such as utility poles; cracked, missing, or uneven sidewalks; poorly marked crosswalk striping; or a lack of traffic calming measures—all of which detract from the pedestrian environment. Pedestrian movement between the civic facilities and the downtown is also important so that people can more easily achieve trip efficiency by accessing multiple destinations on a single excursion. The role of bus routes and schedules, as well as bicycle routes and racks, could also be incorporated into a pedestrian plan that promotes access to these facilities and the C-1(H) district, which are clustered conveniently in the central portion of

	<p>town. Residents in the north of town or south of Highway 46, may find it difficult to reach these destinations without a vehicle.</p>
<p>Public Street Furniture Street furnishings provide opportunities to rest during the course of business and offer opportunities for interpersonal connection.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> public furnishings in and along the way to public facilities.</p>	<p>Based upon a walking tour through the downtown area and a brief visual survey of aerial photography, public furniture and amenities appear to be limited or not present along the village's Main Street in the C-1(H) district, with the exception of four benches near the intersection of Mt. Vernon Street and one bench at the intersection of Webster Street. There is no outdoor seating in the vicinity of the library aside from two small pedestal benches in the median of Euclid Avenue at the war memorial. The municipal building has no outside seating, but there are two benches located at the parking lot on Park Street less than 0.2 mile from the municipal building. The civic center has two outdoor benches at the facility entrance, and there is seating within several of the public parks throughout the village.</p> <p>The village has a shade tree ordinance requiring that shade trees be planted 30 feet apart along all streets.</p> <p>Ridgefield Park should consider including a survey of street furniture in any bicycle and pedestrian audit it undertakes, particularly in those areas frequented by older adults, such as the civic center, library, and downtown destinations such as the post office or municipal building if applicable. Furniture should be located at and along the way to these facilities, along routes to parks, and at bus stops to ensure safe walking conditions and rest stops for older residents. Street furnishing placement should be coordinated with shade tree locations so that there are sufficient places to rest in the shade at facilities and along walking routes.</p>
<p>Joint Use of Facilities Joint use of facilities offers additional locations for providing services and a way to leverage taxpayer money. Joint use is typically governed by a formal agreement, setting forth the terms and conditions for shared use of public property or facilities.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> joint use of community facilities.</p>	<p>The village does not have formal joint-use agreements with establishments in town, but the village board of recreation can typically utilize schools. The local creative placemaking group is endeavoring to use private spaces for community art display and events.</p> <p>Because there is a considerable residential area in the northern portion of the village that is not within a quarter mile of a park facility, and there is little unbuilt land on which to develop a community park, the village could consider pursuing joint-use agreements with select properties such as the neighborhood church or the elementary schools. Agreements can either provide a means for the village to provide programs or to use a shared space with public improvements such as seating and picnicking areas. (See Figure 8: Ridgefield Park Village Parks & Public Spaces.)</p>

OUTDOOR, GREEN SPACE

Parks/Green Spaces/Trails

Open space in towns and cities provides many advantages: formal and informal sport and recreation, preservation of natural environments and the provision of green space, which helps improve air and water quality, and improves mental health. This is a benefit to residents of all ages.



Looking for: parks and outdoor spaces that are accessible on foot.

Ridgefield Park has several park facilities dispersed throughout the town. Facilities are equipped with seating and many provide shade trees, although none are natural areas; all parks in the village have active recreation improvements or are manicured for passive recreation. The centrally located Fellowship Park, with tennis courts and a community garden, takes up a block of Hobart Street located one block east of Main Street between Euclid and Bergen Avenues. There is a green median that extends on Euclid Avenue from Preston Street in the north through south to Hobart Street, including an installed parklet war memorial with small pedestal benches at the intersection of Cedar Street where the library is located.

There is also community garden at McGowan Park, which is located at the southern boundary of the village along Overpeck Creek on Bergen Turnpike. There are bus stops directly adjacent to McGowan Park and at Chestnut Street Park (baseball, softball, and soccer fields), which is also in the southern portion of town south of Highway 46. A bus stop also provides access to Ferris Park—at the western extent of the neighborhood south of Highway 46—containing a play area and designed for passive recreation with horticultural gardens and a stand of mature trees. Just to the north of Highway 46 from Ferris Park is Brewster Park, which contains a play area, covered picnic tables, and a fenced paved circular area with basketball nets.

The northeastern neighborhoods of the village are served by Overpeck County Park—over 80 acres of passive and active recreation facilities along Overpeck Creek east of the turnpike—although this park appears to only be accessible by vehicle. Several municipal park facilities are concentrated in this area, being just south of the jr.-sr. high school and providing athletic fields and courts, including Veteran's Park and Hobart Street Field to the south of the school. Dexheimer Park is at the site of the school and includes a track and field facility. The northwest section of the village contains only one park, Hunter Park, which has a play area, tennis court, and basketball court.

There are two park facilities located in the central business district. Vogt Park is a small park with a play area, basketball court and picnic seating on the corner of Grove Street and Lincoln Avenue. White Park is a small grassy area with shade trees and picnic tables at the corner of Mt. Vernon Street and Railroad Avenue across the street from the historic train station.

Projects underway or being considered include a trail and boardwalk in the natural area north of the jr.-sr. high school, a pedestrian walkway over the

	<p>turnpike from the school to Overpeck County Park along the creek, and a walkway along the Hackensack River at the west end of Mt. Vernon Street.</p> <p>For any development in excess of 10 dwelling units, the code requires a minimum of 15% of the total land area to be developed as usable recreation area or landscaped area with benches.</p> <p>Most residents in Ridgefield Park live within a quarter mile buffer of a park facility, with the notable exception of residents in the north-central section of town. (See Figure 8: Ridgefield Park Village Parks & Public Spaces.) Although the town is surrounded on three sides by waterways, there is very little public access to those waterways. The village maintains a kayak/canoe storage and launch site to the Hackensack River in the vicinity of a private aquatic recreation club at 24 Industrial Avenue.</p> <p>The village should take steps to ensure that residents in the north-central section of town have pedestrian access to a park facility by pursuing joint-use agreements, enhancing mobility and transportation to community facilities from this area, or developing new amenities. The trail and boardwalk being proposed in the natural area located in the northeastern corner of town west of the turnpike would greatly reduce this gap in pedestrian access to facilities, but not entirely. (See Figure 9: Ridgefield Park Village Parks & Public Spaces Gaps Filled.)</p> <p>Because Ridgefield Park Village lacks a trail system or notable natural areas, the village should consider opportunities to create more public access and linkages to the remaining natural features in the village, including the natural area in the northeastern corner of town, potentially with accesses along E. Grand Avenue and at the end of Hazelton Street on Teaneck Road; along the Hackensack River and Overpeck Creek in areas currently zoned for light or heavy industrial uses, but that could be targeted for floodplain restoration and management to mitigate stormwater runoff; and in the OP-2 redevelopment area, which is currently undeveloped and partially within the FEMA flood hazard area.</p> <p>Pedestrian access to the Hackensack River is problematic due to current land uses and the industrial zoning of the entire riverfront. The 2009 Village of Ridgefield Park Bergen County, New Jersey Master Plan Reexamination recommends establishing buffer areas along the Hackensack River and Overpeck Creek to create pedestrian walkways and waterfront recreation corridors. It suggests designating an open space overlay zone along the</p>
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	<p>Overpeck Creek west of McGowan Park and south of Bergen Turnpike. Much of this area is underdeveloped and flood prone, and it would provide stormwater and flood protection benefits as well as provide access to natural areas for residents if it were converted to open space with pedestrian and ecosystem restoration improvements. The proximity of the Hackensack River to the commercial corridor suggests that conversion of the Hackensack River riverfront to open space with pedestrian access would serve to enhance the downtown business corridor and access to it from neighborhoods northwest and southwest of the downtown. The village should consider projected <i>increases</i> in precipitation and extent of flooding as a result of climate change in determining the width of any designated riparian buffer.</p> <p>The proposed pedestrian walkway over the turnpike to Overpeck County Park would provide pedestrian access to over 80 acres of open space. Design of the walkway should consider factors that may affect the ability of an older person to navigate to and across the walkway, including connectivity to village pedestrian and bicycle routes, inclines or stairs, shaded seating for rest, lighting, and the potential to include a bicycle lane. Veteran's Park is directly across the highway from Overpeck County Park, and access to/from Veteran's Park from/to Poplar Street requires navigating a significant set of stairs that may be difficult for older residents. A comprehensive pedestrian access route to Overpeck County Park should be developed in conjunction with the walkway.</p> <p>The village should consider developing an open-space and recreation plan or master plan element that adheres to an adopted complete and green streets policy, outlines long term goals, sets a schedule to implement improvements, and delegates maintenance responsibility with the objective of developing an integrated pedestrian access network connecting all neighborhoods and commercial areas to all of the village's parks, green spaces, and community destinations. The village green team, aided by a pedestrian and bicycle audit, would provide a partner and resource in identifying connector routes and opportunities for improvements such as bikeways, green infrastructure, or natural restoration. Any new development or redevelopment should incorporate sufficient open space to promote pedestrian activity.</p> <p>The village could consider increasing the minimum required land area from 15% to 20% for apartment building projects to develop usable recreation or landscaped areas with benches. Consideration should be given to the openness and easy access to open space facilities from walkways. For example, most parks are bordered by fencing or guard rails with only one or few entry points.</p>
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	<p>There may be opportunities to create amenities in park facilities that are outside the fenced areas of playsets or ball fields.</p>
<p>Green Infrastructure Green infrastructure is an approach to managing rainwater and snowmelt by enabling it to infiltrate into the ground where it falls or by capturing it for later reuse. Examples include street trees, pervious pavement, rain gardens, rain barrels, green roofs, vegetated swales, and bio-retention basins. Green infrastructure helps to reduce flooding, improves public health, provides jobs, raises property values, beautifies neighborhoods and downtowns, and supports wildlife.</p> <p> <i>Looking for:</i> municipal policy or ordinance that maximizes installation of green infrastructure.</p>	<p>Ridgefield Park is a combined sewer overflow (CSO) community and has considered green infrastructure options as a CSO mitigation strategy but determined cost to be a prohibiting factor.</p> <p>With the recently updated state stormwater regulation, the village is required to adopt a local stormwater ordinance with minimum best management practices for incorporating green infrastructure to meet groundwater recharge standards and stormwater runoff quantity and quality standards for major development projects in Ridgefield Park. There are measures the town can take to exceed the minimum requirement of the stormwater rule and apply green infrastructure standards to all development. For example, green infrastructure can be integrated into roadway or parking design in conjunction with the implementation of a complete and green streets policy. Doing so would enhance the pedestrian environment and expand the community's inventory of natural resources. The Water Resources Program at Rutgers Cooperative Extension is a good source of information and technical assistance. The New Jersey Future Municipal Green Infrastructure Toolkit includes detailed information and a variety of tools that cities and towns can use to plan, implement, and sustain green infrastructure in public and private sector development projects. The New Jersey Developers Green Infrastructure Guide offers technical resources and examples for designing green infrastructure. The Sewage Free Streets and Rivers campaign provides information about solutions for communities to develop sustainable long term control plans to reduce sewage outfall in CSO communities. The Stormwater Utility Resource Center provides information to help determine if a stormwater utility is right for your municipality.</p>

Figure 8: Ridgefield Park Village Parks & Public Spaces

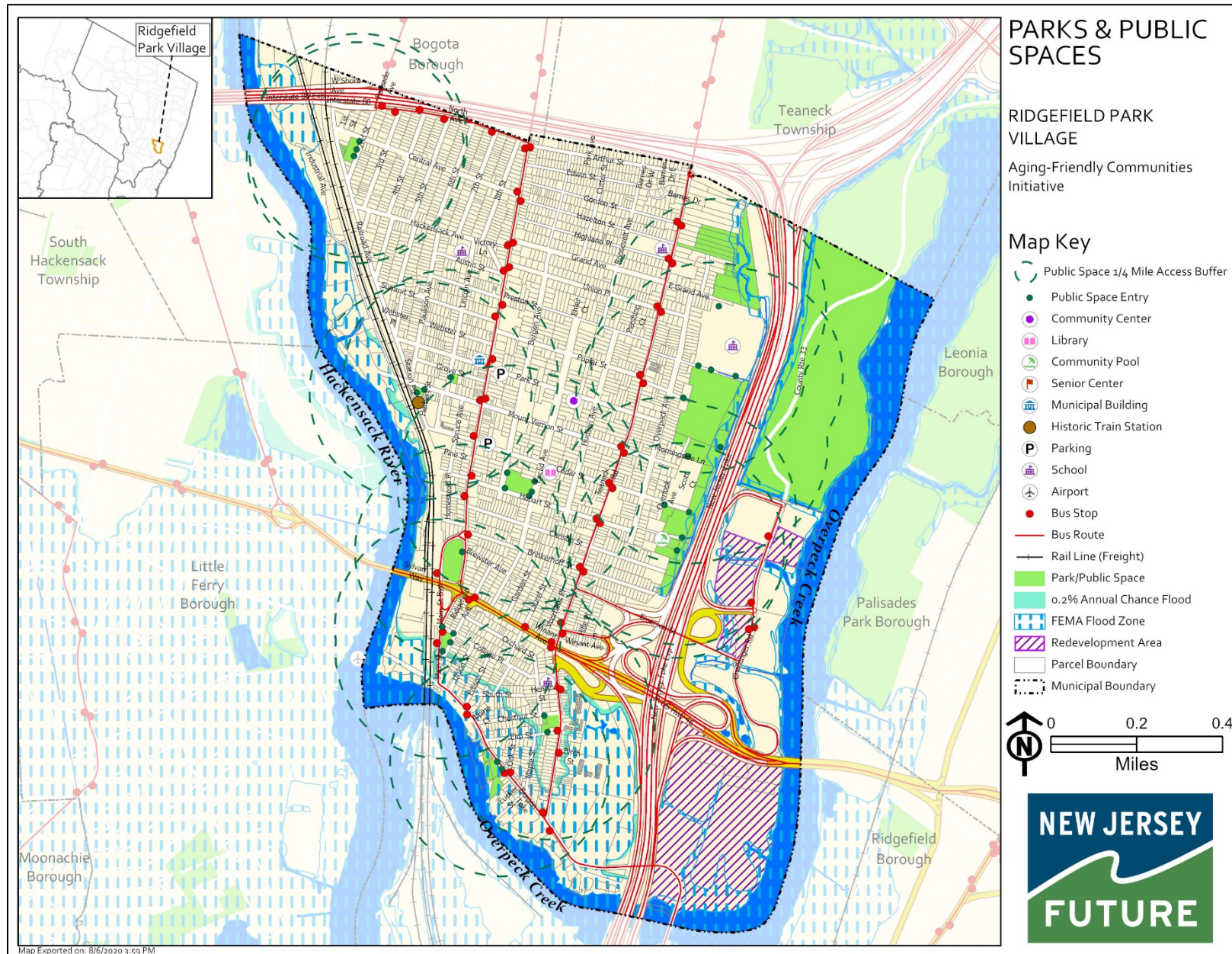
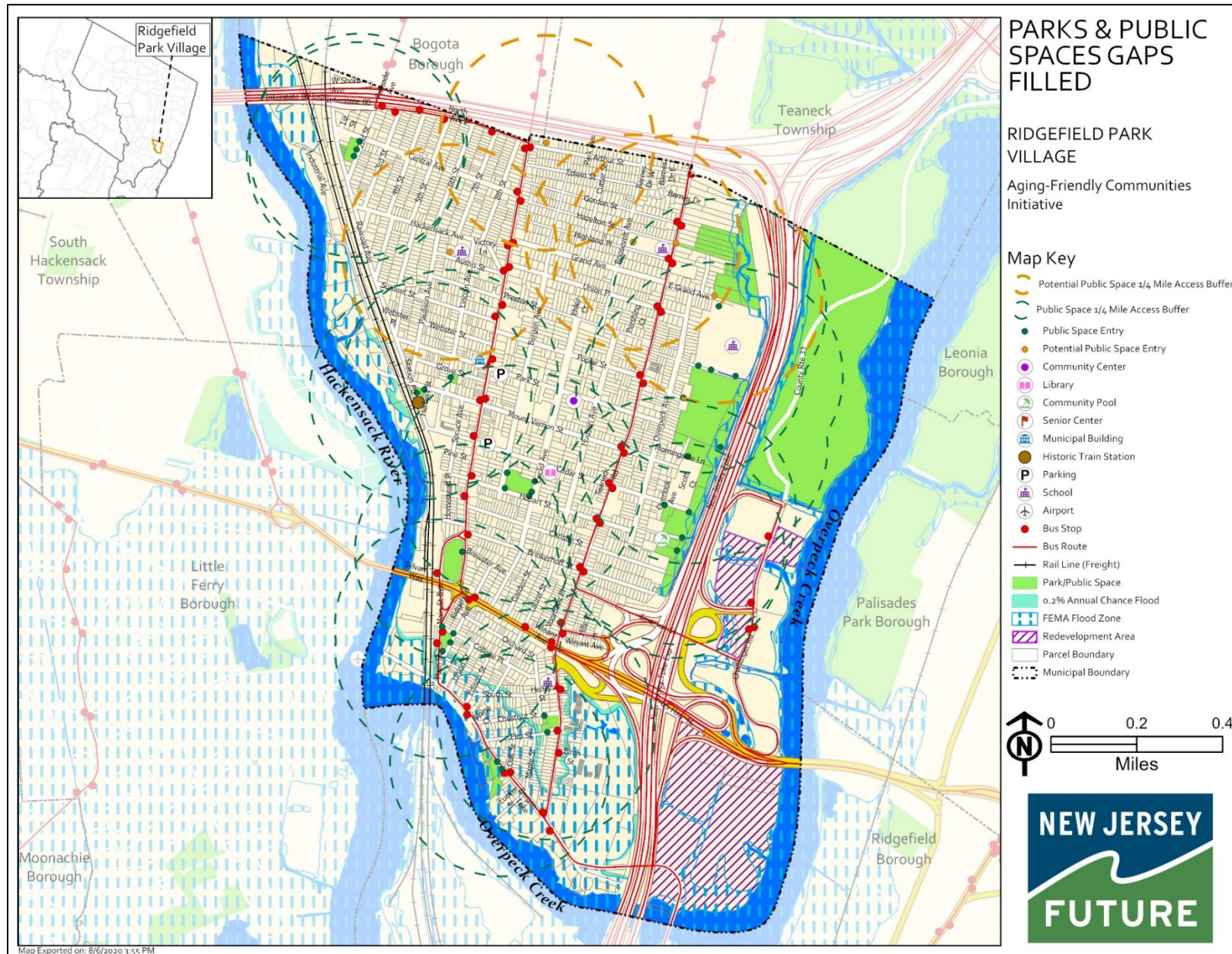


Figure 9: Ridgefield Park Village Parks & Public Spaces Gaps Filled



General Recommendation 3: Consider Ways to Strengthen Your Town's Stormwater Ordinance

Reference excellent guidance and resources that applicants for development permits can use. For example, “[f]or guidance on site evaluation, construction specifications and details, the applicant shall refer to Rutgers Cooperative Extension’s [Green Infrastructure Guidance Manual](#) for New Jersey;” and “[f]or road or highway projects, the applicant shall, at minimum, follow USEPA guidance regarding [Managing Wet Weather with Green Infrastructure: Green Streets](#) (December 2008 EPA-833-F-08-009) and may also reference the [Urban Street Stormwater Guide](#) published in 2017 by NACTO, the National Association of City Transportation Officials (ISBN 978-1-61091-812-1).”

Include a strong, clear definition for redevelopment. Omit language that indicates your ordinance’s definitions are the same as, or based on, definitions in [New Jersey’s stormwater rules](#) (NJAC 7:8). Sample definition:

“Redevelopment” means land-disturbing activity that results in the creation, addition, or replacement of impervious surface area on an already developed or disturbed site. Redevelopment includes but is not limited to: the expansion of a building footprint, addition or replacement of a structure, replacement of impervious surface area that is not part of a routine maintenance activity, and land disturbing activities related to structural or impervious surfaces. It does not include routine maintenance to maintain original line and grade, hydraulic capacity, or original purpose of facility, nor does it include emergency construction activities required to immediately protect public health and safety.

Apply ordinance requirements to redevelopment projects as well as new development. Sample language:

Where redevelopment that adds, replaces or disturbs (alone or in combination) greater than 5,000 square feet [*or a smaller area, if the ordinance applies also to minor development*] of impervious surface results in an alteration to more than 50% of impervious surfaces of a previously existing development, the entire existing development shall meet the requirements of this ordinance.

Require onsite stormwater retention for the water quality storm (1.25” over two hours). Sample definition:

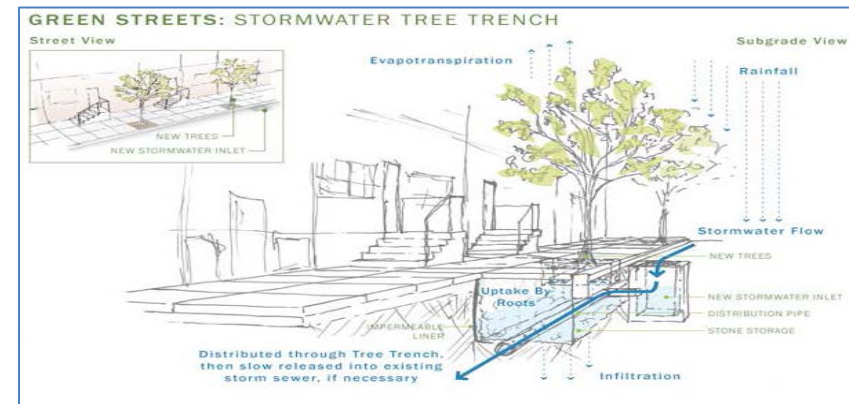
Onsite stormwater retention is achieved with a natural or constructed, surface or subsurface area or facility designed to retain water for an extended period of time for the purpose of filtering stormwater runoff

through vegetated permeable soils, evapotranspiration, or infiltration capture stormwater runoff for beneficial reuse such as irrigation.

Define “major development” with a smaller area of disturbance than is required in the state’s model ordinance. The state’s threshold is one acre of disturbance or one quarter acre of new impervious surface. The Sustainable Jersey draft model ordinance suggests major development be defined as a site that adds or replaces (alone or in combination) 5,000 square feet of impervious surface or disturbs one half acre or more of land. Depending on land-use characteristics, some cities or towns may prefer a smaller threshold (see italics in definition below). Sample language:

“Major development” means any development or redevelopment, as defined by this section, that adds or replaces (alone or in combination) 5,000 square feet or more of impervious surface, or that provides for ultimately disturbing one half acre [*or one quarter acre, or 5000 square feet*] or more of land. Major development includes both private and public projects or activities. Disturbance for the purpose of this rule is the placement of impervious surface or exposure and/or movement of soil or bedrock or clearing, cutting, or removing of vegetation.

Extend ordinance applicability to minor development as well as major development. The Sustainable Jersey draft model ordinance suggests the minor development threshold for complying with the ordinance be projects that exceed 1,000 square feet. Some municipalities have adopted an even smaller threshold (Princeton’s minor development threshold is 400 sf; Millburn’s is 250 sf).



Summary of Recommendations

Following is a listing of the recommendations presented in the four categories of the built environment evaluated in the preceding sections.



Mixed-Use Center

Presence of a Center

- The village should conduct an economic and market analysis to identify the kinds of businesses that can be supported by the local and regional economy, then seek mixed-use redevelopment that would create a sustainable downtown economy and increase residential units above commercial along Main Street based on the outcomes of the analysis.
- Considering the quaint historic character of Main Street, the village should also evaluate strategies that would promote mixed-use redevelopment along Mt. Vernon Street at higher densities, including around the existing rail station, which should be rezoned to a mixed-use district to enable transit-oriented development.
- A transit evaluation should determine the potential for the train station to be developed into some sort of transportation hub, particularly with bus instead of rail service. If appropriate, the village should identify strategies, such as density bonuses or an overlay zone, that would be consistent with transit-oriented development along Mt. Vernon Street.
- The village should incorporate enhancement of the riverfront industrial properties currently existing on the west side of the rail tracks and along the Hackensack River into any downtown revitalization program to provide pedestrian access from Mt. Vernon Street to the river and promote environmentally compatible uses along the river.
- The village should consider conducting a housing assessment in conjunction with an economic and market analysis to evaluate ways to maximize residential density in the study area while retaining community character. Consideration should also be given to potential negative impacts of locating any senior housing in close proximity to a transportation hub. To increase housing and stimulate economic development, there is a potential opportunity to create mixed-use development on underutilized church or other privately-owned properties in the study area through a contractual agreement that would enable the current owner to retain certain uses after the property were redeveloped for mixed-use.
- Noted lacking features in the C-1(H) zone are civic and green spaces. It is recommended that the village identify opportunities for street activation, pedestrian seating, gathering locations, and green infrastructure in the downtown; and consider integration of civic and green spaces as a condition into any redevelopment projects along Mt. Vernon Street, particularly for multi-family housing projects.
- The village ranks relatively well on the net activity density metric and has good street connectivity surrounding the central business district. Connecting areas south of Highway 46 and east of the New Jersey Turnpike to the broader community should be a consideration in redevelopment and circulation plans.

Policies and Programs

- Ridgefield Park should consider the formation of a special improvement district that encompasses the central business district to serve as a vehicle to fund necessary improvements exclusively within the district.
- The village should consider participation in the [Main Street New Jersey](#) program to develop focused streetscape improvement strategies and long-term economic stabilization strategies in its central business district.

Plans

- In Ridgefield Park, being over the age of 65 means one is more likely to be living in poverty, rather than less likely, as is the case for New Jersey as a whole. Demographic trends described in the 2000 master plan or the 2009 master plan reexamination reports do not assess poverty rate in the community and do not assess socioeconomic demographics by age group. The village should update its master plan to reflect the evolving and projected socioeconomic characteristics of the village's aging population in order to define aging-friendly strategies the village could adopt to respond to the community's emerging needs. Community design for mixed ages and incomes should be integrated into municipal planning and policies.
- Considering the planned large-scale redevelopment projects expected along the Overpeck Creek, the master plan land use element should identify strategies to integrate the two sections of the village while retaining the historic, small-town quality of the existing downtown and the natural resource benefits of the Overpeck Creek stream corridor. The village's master plan update should seek to incorporate redevelopment that occurs in the OP-1 and OP-2 zones into the existing community character and ensure that it is consistent with redevelopment goals in the C-1(H) zone and promotes Complete and Green Streets and pedestrian mobility not only within the redevelopment areas, but also between those areas and the village neighborhoods. Seniors residing in those areas should have adequate access to destinations, services, and social connections throughout the village.
- The block between Spruce Avenue and Lincoln Avenue appears to be an appropriate area to evaluate for a redevelopment plan, as it currently consists of considerable pavement, dated facades, and uses not conducive to pedestrian engagement. There is a hardware and plumbing store on that block, and effort should be made to retain local businesses such as this in the business district. The village should continue its consideration of designating redevelopment areas in parts of the downtown as a means to promote economic and housing development that is consistent with the historic character of Main Street.

Land Development Standards

- The village should review the municipal zoning requirements to ensure that the code stipulates that drive-through facilities are prohibited in the C-1(H) zone and throughout the village, aside from in the OP-2 zone where appropriate.
- The village should consider eliminating the front yard setback in the C-1(H) district in order to activate the street by bringing buildings to the front lot line, enhance the pedestrian environment, and ensure that future Mt. Vernon Street redevelopment blends with the existing Main Street streetscape.
- To promote compact development, the village may want to consider increasing lot coverage allowances in the C-1(H) zone to 80%, which would enhance the compact, walkable character of the zone and allow for limited new redevelopment opportunities. The

village may also want to consider reducing allowable maximum impervious surface coverage for new development to 80%. (See General Recommendations 2 and 3 about green infrastructure and managing stormwater, respectively.)

- The village should consider increasing building height requirements in the C-1(H) district along sections of Mt. Vernon Street to permit residential apartments and multi-family units and development of a “transit village,” considering the possibility that there is potential for development of a transportation hub at the train station. The addition of smaller housing units would provide housing opportunities consistent with the 2009 Village of Ridgefield Park Bergen County, New Jersey Master Plan Reexamination recommendation to provide “a variety of housing types for various income levels...and senior citizen housing.”
- Rather than relying on the advisory role of the Historic Preservation Commission, Ridgefield Park could consider developing and enacting a form-based code to guide development and redevelopment within the central business district with a focus on enhancing pedestrian activity.



Housing

Land Development Standards

- The village should consider conducting a survey of its older residents to assess their housing needs for options such as accessory dwelling units or shared housing.
- To allow for more development of smaller/more affordable residential units, particularly in residential areas adjoining the C-1(H) zone, but also outside the downtown area, the village should consider conducting an evaluation of existing area, yard, and bulk requirements to identify changes that would allow for more diverse housing in the village while maintaining community design standards through adopted design criteria for residential development. Consider ways to expand the existing stock of “[missing middle](#)” housing in the village.
- The village should also consider exploring limited incentives, such as density bonuses, increased building height limits, or of-right zoning controls that would expand further the current number of single-family attached units, townhomes, duplexes, and/or multi-family units. Allowing for greater housing diversity in the village’s residential zones would help to maintain a mixed-income and mixed-age community and enhance economic activity in the central business district by providing for greater pedestrian traffic.
- The village should consider the possibility of eliminating or reducing requirements for non-residential and residential development fees within the C-1(H) district or the study area (or portions of the study area) as identified in Figure 2 of this report as an incentive to encourage development that includes a residential component.
- Ridgefield Park should consider adopting a universal design approach for all new and renovated residential development in the village, with consideration of constraints that may be imposed on this approach by the historic nature of the downtown.
- Ridgefield Park should consider allowing [accessory apartments](#) in the R-1 and R-2 zones, subject to conditions that limit the impact such units might have on the surrounding neighborhood. There are a variety of [design considerations](#) that can be applied to accessory dwelling units to ensure that they fit the character of the neighborhood.

- Ridgefield Park should consider allowing and supporting home sharing as an innovative strategy to provide an option, particularly for older residents, enabling them to either secure housing that is affordable or to earn supplemental income to support their expenses of home ownership.



Transportation

Walkability

- Ridgefield Park should consider using its street network density classification to help market the town as a walkable, mixed-use center, particularly as it invests in downtown or Main Street destinations. Expenditures to improve walkability and connectivity could be included in the village's capital improvement plan and phased in over time so that the investments are manageable.
- Ridgefield Park should consider adopting a resolution endorsing a complete and green streets policy and develop ordinance standards and guidelines for improvements consistent with complete and green streets principles along the village's major corridors, including Main Street, Mt. Vernon Street, Euclid Avenue, Park Street, Cedar Street; and throughout the C-1(H) district and along Railroad Avenue in anticipation of future pedestrian-oriented redevelopment and waterfront redevelopment, as well as in the village's redevelopment areas.
- To help control flooding and improve stormwater management, the village should be proactive in incorporating green infrastructure techniques into any implemented complete and green streets strategies.
- The village should consider conducting a [pedestrian and bicycle audit](#) to identify locations of dangerous street crossings where crosswalks or street crossings need to be installed or improved and identify specific strategies to address those locations. Pedestrian crossing improvements and traffic calming measures should be prioritized along pedestrian routes to community facilities and throughout the central business district.
- The village should develop a [bicycle and pedestrian plan](#) that aims to create a network of routes that connects community destinations (the downtown, civic facilities, parks, and the forthcoming redevelopment neighborhoods) to each other and to residential neighborhoods.
- Ridgefield Park should consider establishing basic standards for crosswalks that are consistent with an adopted complete and green streets policy and incorporate these standards in its subdivision and site plan requirements.
- At particularly problematic intersections or crossings, the village could consider employing [pop-up traffic calming techniques](#), to temporarily install curb bump-outs, crossing islands, narrowed travel lanes, signage and road markings, speed tables, roundabouts and other traffic calming practices. This would be a low-cost way to test which traffic-calming methods are most effective. The local creative placemaking group could integrate these projects into their initiatives to create a consistent and engaging visual image of the village.

Parking

- The village could establish a development principle that calls for maintaining the current wide-spread availability of on-street parking throughout the C-1(H) zone, as development within the district may be proposed over time, and to provide parking for new development in the redevelopment areas.
- Metered parking should extend along Mt. Vernon Street and potentially along Spruce Avenue as these areas in the C-1(H) district redevelop. Depending on the nature of waterfront redevelopment, metered parking could also be considered along Railroad Avenue.
- To initiate a parking management strategy, the village could conduct a parking inventory and determine usage estimates. The village could consider establishing a parking authority to plan for and manage parking in the central business district and redevelopment areas.
- The village should consider incorporating green infrastructure strategies in municipal surface parking lot design, which can yield numerous benefits including improved pedestrian environments, added green spaces, reduced heat-island impacts, and significantly reduced off-site stormwater flows.
- Consideration should also be given to pedestrian connectors to/from parking areas. Safe and accessible pedestrian pathways are sufficiently lighted, easily navigated by individuals of all mobilities, and clearly marked or delineated.

Public Transportation

- In the scope of the pedestrian and bicycle audit recommended above, Ridgefield Park could also assess whether older residents are deterred from patronizing the bus service either because the walk to a bus stop is not manageable or because the bus service does not go to desired locations and there are gaps that need to be addressed. The village should evaluate its busiest bus stops throughout town to determine if sufficient lighting and sheltered seating are provided for older residents.
- To expand mobility and options for transportation, the village could consider ways to promote ride-share programs or services.

Streets

- New development and redevelopment should be designed to contribute to, enhance, and maintain Ridgefield Park's efficient, interconnected network of streets, particularly near and within the downtown area. The village should also consider capitalizing on its high connectivity to establish a network of bicycle routes connecting key destinations.
- As part of a pedestrian and bicycle audit, the village could consider an assessment of local streets to determine where driver sight-line visibility may impact pedestrian safety and identification of locations where pedestrian crossings could be better marked or timed. Traffic calming or buffering measures could be implemented at problematic locations based on an adopted complete and green streets policy.



Public Spaces and Amenities

Public Spaces and Facilities

- To enhance pedestrian access to existing facilities, the village should evaluate sidewalks and crosswalks in the vicinity of and along the route to the library and civic center from all residential neighborhoods for any impeding obstacles.
- Ridgefield Park should consider including a survey of street furniture in any bicycle and pedestrian audit it undertakes, particularly in those areas frequented by older adults, such as the civic center, library and downtown destinations such as the post office or municipal building if applicable. Furniture should be located at and along the way to these facilities, along routes to parks, and at bus stops to ensure safe walking conditions and rest stops for older residents. Street furnishing placement should be coordinated with shade tree locations so that there are sufficient places to rest in the shade at facilities and along walking routes.
- Because there is a considerable residential area in the northern portion of the village that is not within a quarter mile of a park facility, and there is little unbuilt land on which to develop a community park, the village could consider pursuing joint-use agreements with select properties such as a neighborhood church or the elementary schools. Agreements can either provide a means for the village to provide programs or to use a shared space with public improvements such as seating and picnicking areas.

Outdoor and Green Space

- The village should take steps to ensure that residents in the north-central section of town have pedestrian access to a park facility by pursuing joint-use agreements, enhancing mobility and transportation to community facilities from this area, or developing new amenities.
- Because Ridgefield Park Village lacks a trail system or notable natural areas, the village should consider opportunities to create public access to the remaining natural features in the village, including the natural area in the northeastern corner of town, potentially with accesses along E. Grand Avenue and at the end of Hazelton Street on Teaneck Road; along the Hackensack River and Overpeck Creek in areas currently zoned for light or heavy industrial uses, but that could be targeted for floodplain restoration and management to mitigate stormwater runoff; and in the OP-2 redevelopment area, which is currently undeveloped and partially within the FEMA flood hazard area.
- The 2009 Village of Ridgefield Park Bergen County, New Jersey Master Plan Reexamination recommends establishing buffer areas along the Hackensack River and Overpeck Creek to create pedestrian walkways and waterfront recreation corridors. It suggests designating an open space overlay zone along the Overpeck Creek west of McGowan Park and south of Bergen Turnpike. The proximity of the Hackensack River to the commercial corridor suggests that conversion of the Hackensack River riverfront to open space with pedestrian access would serve to enhance the downtown business corridor and access to it from neighborhoods northwest and southwest of the downtown. The village should consider projected increases in precipitation and flooding as a result of climate change in determining the width of any designated riparian buffer.
- Design of the proposed pedestrian walkway over the turnpike to Overpeck County Park should consider factors that may affect the ability of an older person to navigate to and across the walkway, including connectivity to village pedestrian and bicycle routes,

inclines or stairs, shaded seating for rest, lighting, and the potential to include a bicycle lane. A comprehensive pedestrian access route to Overpeck County Park should be developed in conjunction with the walkway.

- The village should consider developing an open-space and recreation plan or master plan element that adheres to an adopted complete and green streets policy, outlines long term goals, sets a schedule to implement improvements, and delegates open space maintenance responsibility with the objective of developing an integrated pedestrian access network connecting all neighborhoods and commercial areas to all of the village's parks, green spaces, and community destinations. The green team, aided by a pedestrian and bicycle audit, would provide a partner and resource in identifying connector routes and opportunities for improvements such as bikeways, green infrastructure, or natural restoration.
- Any new development or redevelopment should incorporate sufficient open space to promote pedestrian activity. The village could consider increasing the minimum required land area from 15% to 20% for apartment building projects to develop usable recreation or landscaped areas with benches.
- With the [recently updated state stormwater regulation](#), the village is required to adopt a local stormwater ordinance with minimum best management practices for incorporating green infrastructure to meet groundwater recharge standards and stormwater runoff quantity and quality standards for major development projects in Ridgefield Park. There are measures the town can take to exceed the minimum requirement of the stormwater rule and apply green infrastructure standards to all development.



Next Steps

Undertaking each of the recommendations listed above and described in detail in the preceding sections of this assessment would entail a series of administrative actions, policy changes, financial investments, planning, design, and construction initiatives. This would be a long-term commitment and would require the use of community resources, both financial and personnel. Regardless of which or how many recommendations the village elects to pursue, a critical step in undertaking the recommendations is to develop a detailed implementation program that reflects the goals and aspirations of the community and defines community priorities. Setting such priorities will require the municipality to determine which projects are most critical, which ones can be undertaken most readily, and which projects are going to have the greatest impact on improving community aging-friendliness.



Ridgefield Park Village Civic Center Youth Room

A complete implementation program encompasses:

1. a breakdown of actions to accomplish each recommendation the municipality wishes to pursue;
2. a phasing program and schedule specifying when each action is undertaken in a logical sequence;
3. an estimate of the costs of each action, including planning, design, construction, and maintenance where relevant;
4. a likely source of project funding; and
5. the identification of who will be responsible to marshal the project through the implementation process, including building necessary community support and engagement.

The first step in developing an implementation program is to identify and prioritize specific objectives to advance the recommendations of the assessment. The next section provides a list of actionable objectives for which an implementation program can be developed.

Action Objectives

- Conduct an economic and market analysis in conjunction with a housing assessment to target specific mixed-use development projects aimed at revitalizing the downtown and promoting a pedestrian environment.
- Conduct a transit evaluation to consider long-term development of a bus hub in Ridgefield Park Village and appropriate zoning and development regulations for the historic rail station.
- Evaluate municipal acquisition of the train station property to pursue a public-private partnership aimed at downtown revitalization.
- Change zoning to increase density and types of development permitted along Mt. Vernon Street.
- Evaluate the block between Spruce Avenue and Lincoln Avenue for consideration for a redevelopment plan.
- Provide pedestrian access from Mt. Vernon Street to the Hackensack River.
- Change zoning to promote environmentally compatible uses along the waterways in the village.
- Create spaces for street activation, pedestrian seating, gathering locations, and green infrastructure in the downtown.
- Change zoning to require civic and green spaces as a condition of any redevelopment projects along Mt. Vernon Street, particularly for multi-family housing projects.
- Designate a special improvement district that encompasses the central business district to serve as a vehicle to fund improvements exclusively within the district.
- Participate in the Main Street New Jersey program to develop focused streetscape improvement strategies and long-term economic stabilization strategies in the central business district.
- Update the master plan to: reflect the evolving and projected socioeconomic characteristics of the village's aging population in order to define aging-friendly strategies the village could adopt to respond to the community's emerging needs; integrate community design for mixed ages and incomes into municipal planning and policies; promote community engagement and a vibrant downtown atmosphere; incorporate redevelopment that occurs in the OP-1 and OP-2 zones into the existing community character and ensure that it is consistent with redevelopment goals in the C-1(H) zone and promotes complete and green streets and pedestrian mobility not only within the redevelopment areas, but also between those areas and the village neighborhoods; identify strategies to create an interconnected pedestrian network between all neighborhoods of the village while retaining the historic, small-town quality of the existing downtown and the natural resource benefits of the Overpeck Creek stream corridor.

- Update the land use code to better encourage compact, mixed-use and environmentally sustainable development by: explicitly prohibiting drive-throughs in the C-1(H) district and other areas; eliminating the front yard setback in the C-1(H) district; increasing lot coverage allowances in the C-1(H) zone; reducing allowable maximum impervious surface coverage for new development; and increasing building height requirements in the C-1(H) district along sections of Mt. Vernon Street to permit residential apartments and multi-family units.
- Develop and adopt a form-based code to guide development and redevelopment within the central business district, with a focus on enhancing pedestrian activity, and to codify the advisory role of the Historic Preservation Commission to uphold community design standards.
- Conduct a survey of older Ridgefield Park residents to assess their housing needs and their willingness to pursue certain strategies.
- Change zoning to diversify housing in the village and particularly expand the existing stock of “missing middle” housing in the village, with specific focus on evaluating existing area, yard, and bulk requirements.
- Provide incentives, such as density bonuses, increased building height limits, or of-right zoning controls that would expand further the current number of single-family attached units, townhomes, duplexes, and/or multi-family units in the village.
- Eliminate or reduce requirements for non-residential and residential development fees as an incentive to encourage development that includes a residential component.
- Adopt a universal design policy or ordinance for all new and renovated residential development in the village.
- Change zoning to permit accessory apartments in the R-1 and R-2 zones.
- Change zoning to permit home sharing; and take steps to actively promote home sharing in the community.
- Develop a marketing campaign to promote the town as a walkable, mixed-use center.
- Include built environment improvement expenditures in the village capital improvement plan, phased in over time.
- Adopt a resolution endorsing a complete and green streets policy and develop ordinance standards and guidelines for improvements consistent with Complete and Green Streets principles along the village’s major corridors, including Main Street, Mt. Vernon Street, Euclid Avenue, Park Street, Cedar Street; and throughout the C-1(H) district and along Railroad Avenue in anticipation of future pedestrian-oriented redevelopment and waterfront redevelopment, as well as in the village’s redevelopment areas.

- Change zoning to incorporate basic standards for crosswalks into subdivision and site plan requirements based on an adopted complete and green streets policy.
- Conduct a pedestrian and bicycle audit to identify locations of dangerous street crossings where crosswalks or street crossings need to be installed or improved and identify specific strategies to address those locations based on an adopted complete and green streets policy. The audit should also assess local streets to determine where driver sight-line visibility may impact pedestrian safety and identification of locations where pedestrian crossings could be better marked or timed. In the audit, include an assessment of pedestrian connectors to/from parking areas to ensure that safe and accessible pedestrian pathways are sufficiently lighted, easily navigated by individuals of all mobilities, and clearly marked or delineated. In the audit, also assess whether older residents are deterred from patronizing the bus service and evaluate the busiest bus stops throughout town to determine if sufficient lighting and sheltered seating are provided for older residents. Also evaluate sidewalks and crosswalks in the vicinity of and along the routes to the library and civic center from all residential neighborhoods for any impeding obstacles.
- Conduct a survey of street furniture and shade tree placement, particularly in those areas frequented by older adults, such as the civic center, library, and downtown destinations. This could be incorporated into a bicycle and pedestrian audit.
- Develop a bicycle and pedestrian plan that aims to create a network of routes that connects community destinations to each other, the downtown, and to residential neighborhoods.
- Develop an open-space and recreation plan or master plan element that, adheres to an adopted complete and green streets policy, outlines long term goals, sets a schedule to implement improvements, and delegates open space maintenance responsibility with the objective of developing an integrated pedestrian access network connecting all neighborhoods and commercial areas to all of the village's parks, green spaces, and community destinations.
- Install temporary pop-up traffic calming techniques such as curb bump-outs, crossing islands, narrowed travel lanes, signage and road markings, speed tables, round-a-bouts and other traffic calming practices as a low-cost way to test which traffic-calming methods are most effective at certain locations.
- Change zoning to establish a development principle that calls for maintaining the current wide-spread availability of on-street parking throughout the C-1(H) zone.
- Install metered parking along additional streets such as Spruce Avenue or other areas of the C-1(H) district that are targeted for redevelopment.
- Conduct a parking inventory and determine usage estimates within the village.
- Establish a parking authority to plan for and manage parking in the central business district and redevelopment areas.

- Develop ride-share programs or services to enhance neighborhood circulation and overall mobility of older individuals.
- Develop green infrastructure in municipal surface parking lots and incorporate green infrastructure into facility designs, as part of an adopted complete and green streets policy.
- Ensure that residents in the north-central section of town have pedestrian access to a park facility by pursuing joint-use agreements, enhancing mobility and transportation to community facilities from this area, or developing new amenities.
- Create public access to the remaining natural features in the village, including the natural area in the northeastern corner of town, waterfronts along the Hackensack River and Overpeck Creek, and in the OP-2 redevelopment area.
- Change zoning to establish buffer areas along the Hackensack River and Overpeck Creek to create pedestrian walkways and waterfront recreation corridors, with consideration of projected increases in precipitation and flooding as a result of climate change in determining the width of any designated riparian buffer.
- Change zoning to increase the minimum required land area set aside for apartment building projects to develop usable recreation or landscaped areas with benches.
- Adopt a stormwater regulation that exceeds minimum requirements for incorporating green infrastructure, meeting groundwater recharge standards, and meeting stormwater runoff quantity and quality standards.



About New Jersey Future

New Jersey Future is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that promotes sensible growth, redevelopment and infrastructure investments to foster vibrant cities and towns, protect natural lands and waterways, enhance transportation choices, provide access to safe, affordable and aging-friendly neighborhoods and fuel a strong economy. New Jersey Future does this through original research, innovative policy development, coalition-building, advocacy, and hands-on strategic assistance. Embracing differences and advancing fairness is central to New Jersey Future's mission and operations. To effectively advance its mission, New Jersey Future is firmly committed to pursue a culture of greater justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion through its programs, internal operations, and external communications. <https://www.njfuture.org/>

About the Authors

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Tanya manages New Jersey Future's land use planning work. She provides strategic assistance to help communities implement smart planning policies and practices that foster resilient and vibrant places for all community members. Her main focus areas include climate change adaptation, place-based economic redevelopment, and aging-friendly neighborhoods. She holds an M.S. in Geography and a B.A. in Biology, both from Rutgers University. Prior to joining New Jersey Future, she was a senior planner in the Somerset County Planning Division, where she managed the division's GIS initiatives and staff, conducting data analyses to perform regional wastewater planning, flood risk research, and transportation assessments. Tanya also has extensive experience working at New Jersey land trusts, where she identified and prioritized lands for preservation at local and regional scales.

Tim Evans, Director of Research

Tim Evans is responsible for the original research and data analysis that support New Jersey Future's policy development and ensures that all of the organization's products and media communications are quantitatively accurate and defensible. He frequently provides data and advice to colleague organizations, serving as an informal research consultant to the smart growth community at large. His analysis and commentary have been featured by a wide range of state and national media outlets. He holds a B.S. in mathematics from Ursinus College, an M.S. in statistics from the University of Virginia, and a master's in city and regional planning from the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. Prior to joining New Jersey Future, he worked for six years as a mathematical statistician for the Bureau of the Census in Washington, D.C.

New Jersey Future Aging-Friendly Reports

- Municipal Strategies to Diversify Housing Stock for an Aging Population: A Case Study Report, August 2020, <https://www.njfuture.org/2020/08/11/a-guide-to-diversifying-housing-options-for-an-aging-population/>
- Where We Are Growing? Implications of Recent Demographic Trends in New Jersey, New Jersey Future, September 2017, <https://www.njfuture.org/research-publications/research-reports/implications-of-recent-demographic-trends/>
- Creating Places to Age in New Jersey: Housing Affordability and Aging-Friendly Communities, New Jersey Future, December 2015 <https://www.njfuture.org/research-publications/research-reports/places-to-age-2/>
- Creating Places to Age in New Jersey, New Jersey Future, January 2014 <http://www.njfuture.org/research-publications/research-reports/places-to-age-nj/>
- Creating Places to Age: A Municipal Guide to Best Land-Use Practices, New Jersey Future, January 2014 <http://www.njfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Creating-Places-To-Age-in-New-Jersey-Municipal-Best-Practices.pdf>

PLEASE NOTE

In addition to the sources listed above, more than 50 terms throughout this report are [hyperlinked](#) to resources that provide additional information about programs, regulations, recommended strategies, pertinent research materials, and/or articles that supplement narratives throughout this document. Readers who wish to obtain additional information or source documents are encouraged to click on and explore the links.

Appendix

A. Community Statistics Analysis

- Total population, cited individually and also used to compute net activity density, is from the Census Bureau's Annual Population Estimates program.
- 2017 5-year American Community Survey is the source for population by age, households by age of householder, housing cost burden, living arrangements of the adult population, median household income, housing units by year structure built, housing units by number of units in structure, housing units by number of rooms, and tenure.
- Developed acres, cited individually and also used to compute net activity density, is from the Department of Environmental Protection Land Use/Land Cover mapping project https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2019/19_0079.htm.
- Acres permanently preserved or environmentally constrained, and acres still developable, are based on additional analysis by researchers at Rowan and Rutgers universities that overlays the DEP Land Use/Land Cover data with other data sources that describe lands that have been permanently preserved or are otherwise regulated and cannot be developed.
- Average residential value is from the New Jersey Data Book <https://njdatabook.rutgers.edu/>.
- Employment, which is one component of net activity density, is from the New Jersey Department of Labor's Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrljoiYWlwMzIIZTMtYTQyMy00M2NjLWFhOGEtZDY1NWQ2MDRIZjRhIiwidCI6IjUwNzZjM2QxLTM4MDItNGI5Zi1iMzZhLUUwYTQxYmQ2NDJhNyJ9>.
- Local street network density was computed by New Jersey Future from a database of road segments maintained by the New Jersey Department of Transportation. Municipal totals exclude limited-access highways and their attendant ramps, which are not part of the "local" road network.

B. Community Profile

Ridgefield Park Village Demographic Profile

Aging-Friendly Land-Use Assessment

Introduction

New Jersey Future has assembled a municipal profile in conjunction with the **Aging-Friendly Communities Initiative** that is being undertaken with funding from **The Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation** whose support made this project possible. The profile is intended to offer a current statistical snapshot of key demographic and economic characteristics of the Village of Ridgefield Park, particularly as they relate to the Village's older residents. To provide context, Ridgefield Park's values for the data items presented here are compared to statewide values. The data presented in this handout have been extracted from of a larger data set that has been assembled and includes the following data items.

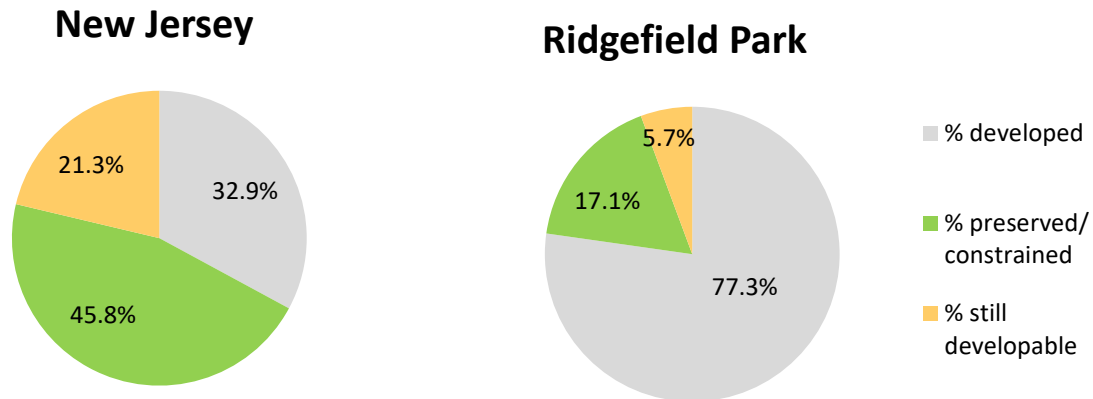
- 2007 land-use patterns: percent developed, percent preserved or constrained, and percent still developable
- Percent built-out (developed acres as percent of all developable, i.e. with preserved/constrained lands removed from denominator)
- Net activity density (population + employment per developed square mile)
- Street network density (route-miles of local road per square mile)
- Presence of a center (New Jersey Future methodology)
- Median block size
- Total population
- Population by age group
- Percent living in poverty: all residents and residents 65+
- Median household income
- Household income distribution
- Percent vacant housing units
- Percent owner vs renter
- Living arrangements of the 65+ population
- Housing units by type / number of units in structure
- Average residential value
- Years of median household income to purchase average-valued home
- Median gross rent
- Percent of households that are cost-burdened: all households and households headed by someone 65+

Village Demographic Overview

Like most of the lower half of Bergen County, Ridgefield Park is mostly built-out—that is, most of its land that *can* be developed *has* been developed—and at fairly urban densities. It has a well-defined, mixed-use downtown, typical of many of the state’s older suburban towns that pre-date the rise of the automobile. Also typical of higher-density older suburban downtowns, Ridgefield Park’s housing stock is more diverse than the state’s as a whole, less dominated by single-family detached homes and with more apartments and duplexes than are found in the state’s newer, more car-dependent suburbs. Not coincidentally, Ridgefield Park has a higher percentage of renter households than the state, and higher than most newer suburbs.

2007 Land Use Patterns

Ridgefield Park is much more developed than the state as a whole, and most of what remains has either been permanently preserved (as parkland, for example) or cannot be built on due to environmental constraints. The village has a small amount of developable land remaining, meaning that most new development is going to be redevelopment or infill.



In fact, Ridgefield Park is 93.2% built-out—that is, almost all of its land that can be built on (excluding land that has already been preserved or is environmentally constrained) has already been built on.

Smart-Growth Metrics

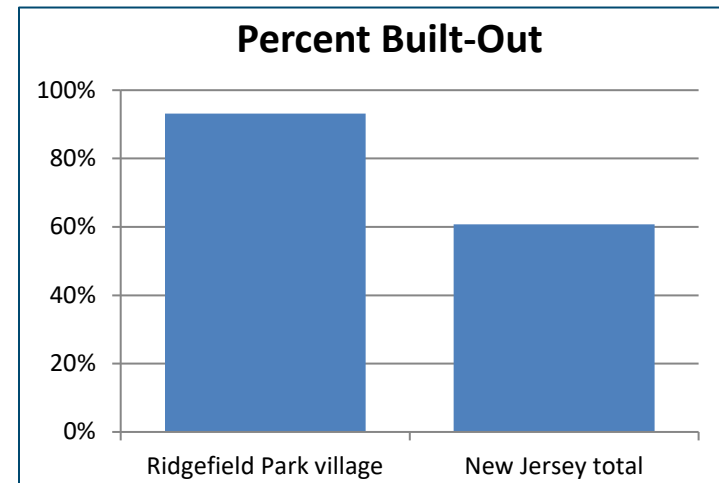
New Jersey Future has developed four municipal-level metrics of compactness and walkability: net activity density (population + jobs per developed square mile, for 2007), presence of a mixed-use center, street network density (as measured by route-miles of local road per square mile), and median block size (in acres).

Ridgefield Park's **net activity density** is 12,026 people + jobs per developed square mile, ranking it in New Jersey Future's "small city / urban suburb" category, the second-highest. The median net activity density among all 565 municipalities in the state is 5,244, so Ridgefield Park's net activity density is more than double the municipal median.

New Jersey Future characterizes Ridgefield Park as being a **center**, with a well-defined mixed-use downtown.

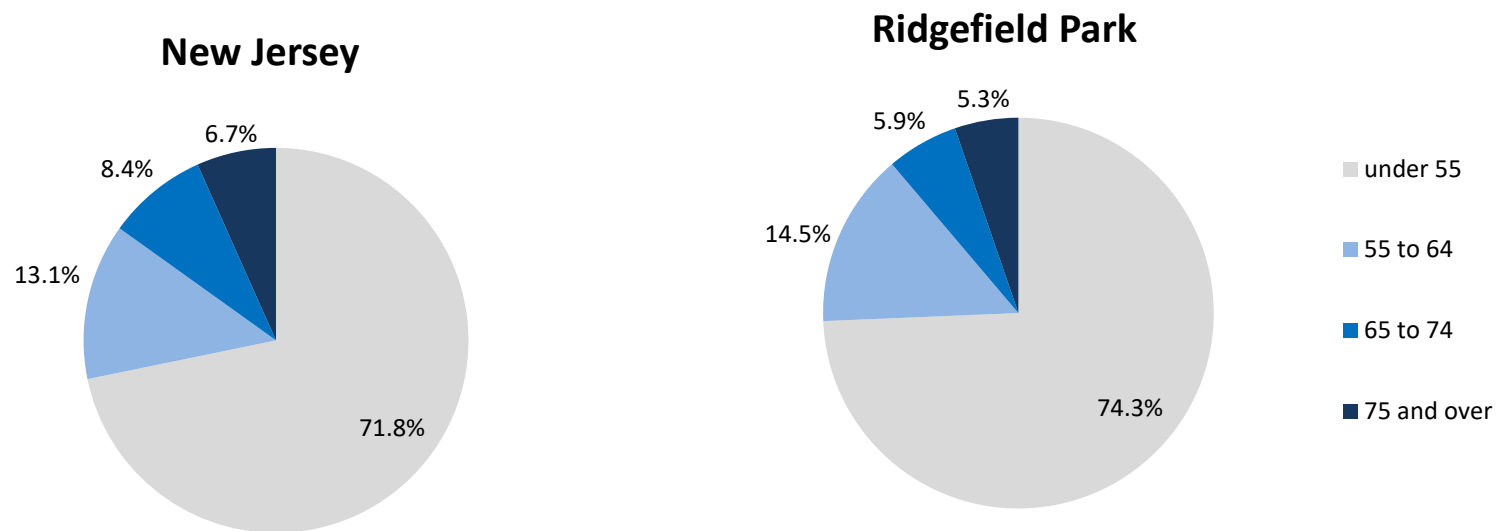
Ridgefield Park's **street network density** is 15.4 local road route-miles per square mile, putting it in the "high" category, the second highest. The median over all 565 municipalities in the state is 9.75.

Ridgefield Park's **median block size** is 3.81 acres, putting it in the "very good" category, the second-best. The median municipality in the state has a median block size of 5.18 acres, meaning Ridgefield Park's street network, with its smaller blocks, is more walkable than the typical municipality's.



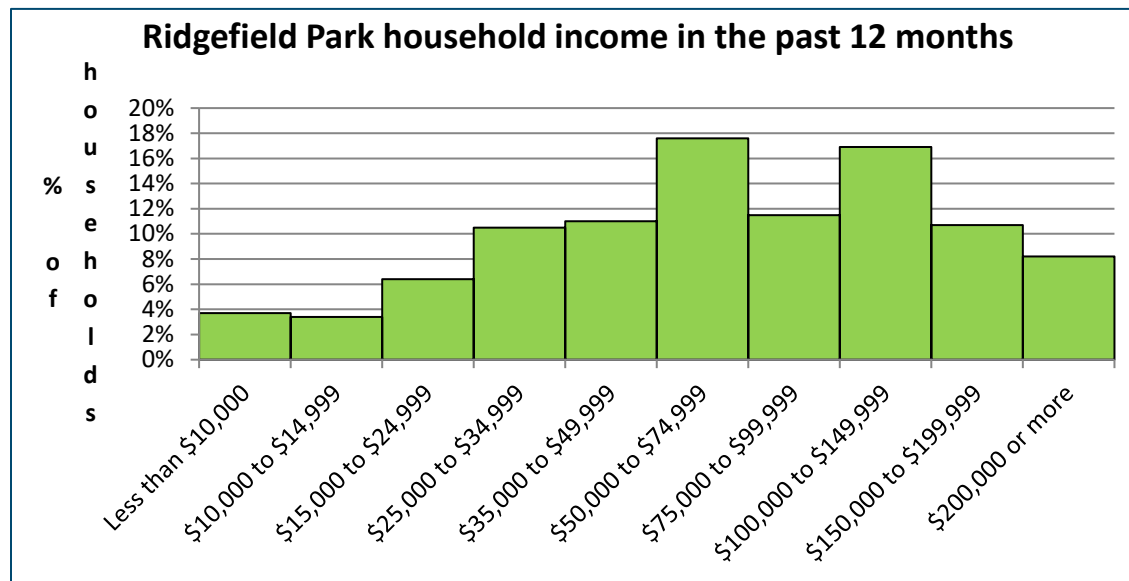
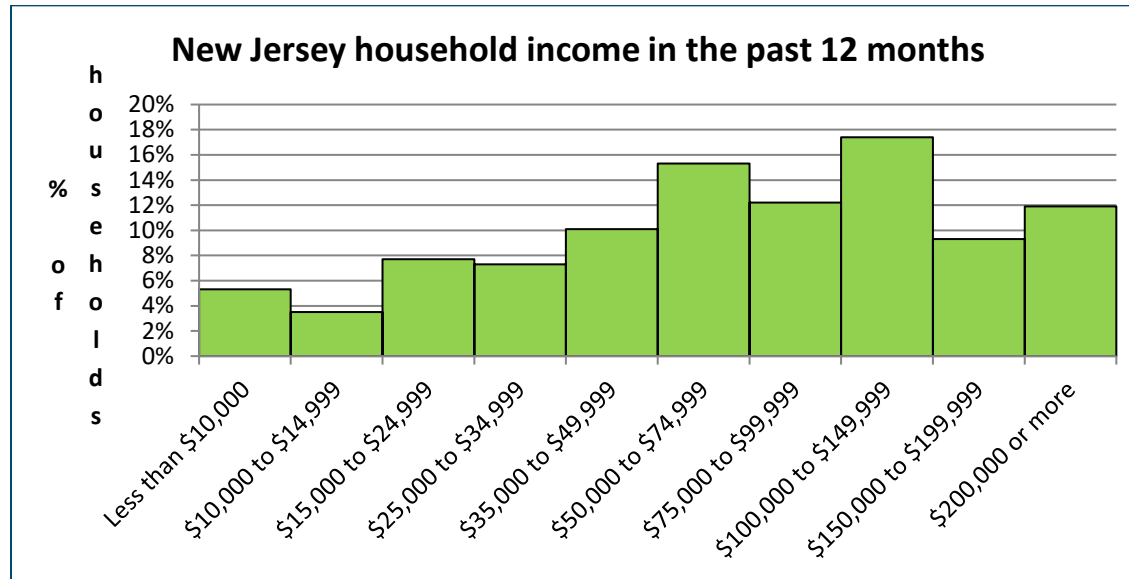
Age Distribution

The total 2018 population of the town was 13,009 individuals. Ridgefield Park's population is generally a bit younger than the state as a whole, with a smaller percent of its population aged 65 and older—11.2% in Ridgefield Park compared to 15.1% statewide.



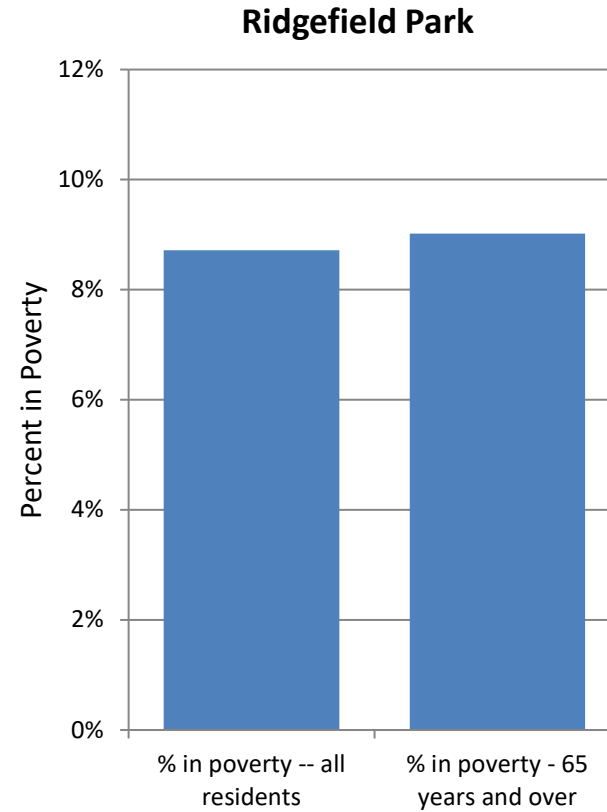
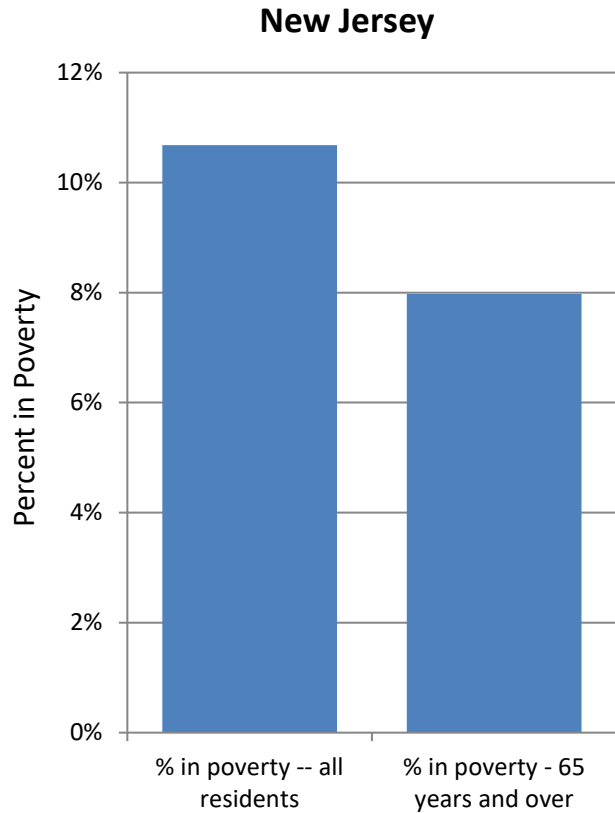
Income Distribution

Ridgefield Park's income distribution resembles that of the state as a whole but with slightly fewer households both at the very bottom and at the very top.



Poverty

Ridgefield Park's overall poverty rate of 8.7% is slightly less than the statewide rate of 10.7%. In contrast, its poverty rate for people age 65 and older is slightly higher than the corresponding statewide rate—9.0% vs. 8.0%. Ridgefield Park's poverty rate for residents 65 and over is slightly higher than its overall poverty rate, the reverse of what is true statewide. In Ridgefield Park, being over age 65 means you are *more* likely to be living in poverty, rather than *less* likely, as is the case for New Jersey as a whole.

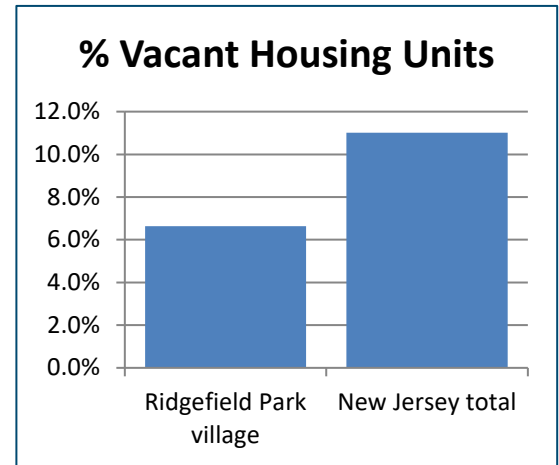
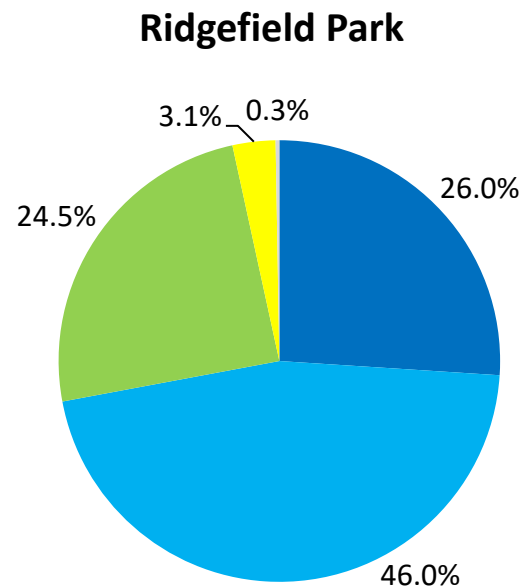
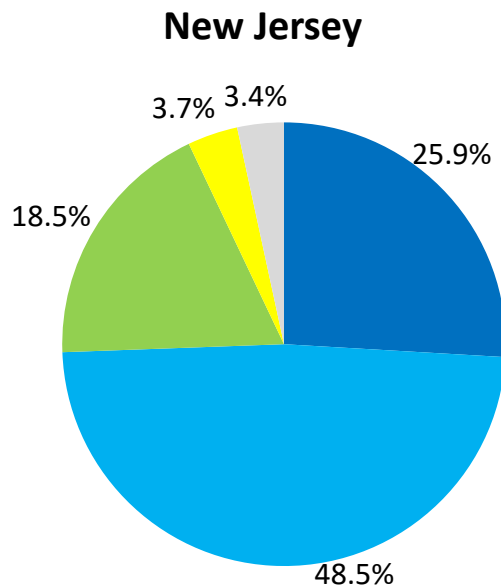


Housing Vacancy

Ridgefield Park's housing vacancy rate is a little more than half the statewide rate—6.6% vs. 11.0%.

Living Arrangements of the 65+ Population

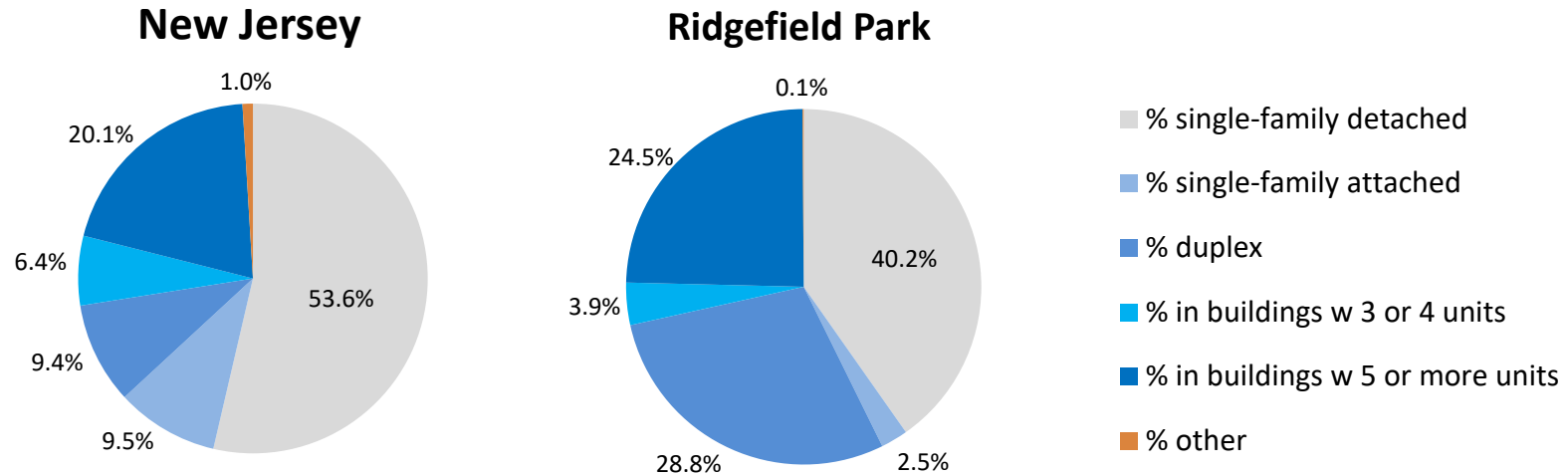
Ridgefield Park residents who are 65 or older are about as likely to live alone as is true statewide—about 26% of the 65+ population. Ridgefield Park's 65+ residents are more likely to be living with other relatives—24.5% of the 65+ population in Ridgefield Park, compared to only 18.5% statewide.



- % living alone
- % householder living with spouse, or spouse of householder
- % living with other relatives
- % living with non-relatives (incl. unmarried partner)
- % in group quarters

Housing Stock

Ridgefield Park's housing stock is more diverse than the state's and is less dominated by single-family detached houses (which make up only 40.2% of all units in the village). It has a higher percentage of units in larger apartment buildings than the state as a whole (24.5% vs. 20.1%), and a much higher percentage of duplexes (28.8% vs 9.4% statewide).



Household Income and Housing Prices

Ridgefield Park's median household income of \$72,191 is about 94% of the statewide median of \$76,475, while its average home is worth only about 84% of the average home value for the whole state. The ratio of home values to income in Ridgefield Park is thus a bit lower than it is for the state as a whole: statewide, the median-income household needs 4.8 years' worth of income to purchase the average-priced home, whereas in Ridgefield Park it is only about 4.25 years. Because Ridgefield Park's average home value is lower than the state's, the median statewide household income goes farther there than in the state overall: the statewide median-income household needs just over four years' worth of income to purchase the average Ridgefield Park home.

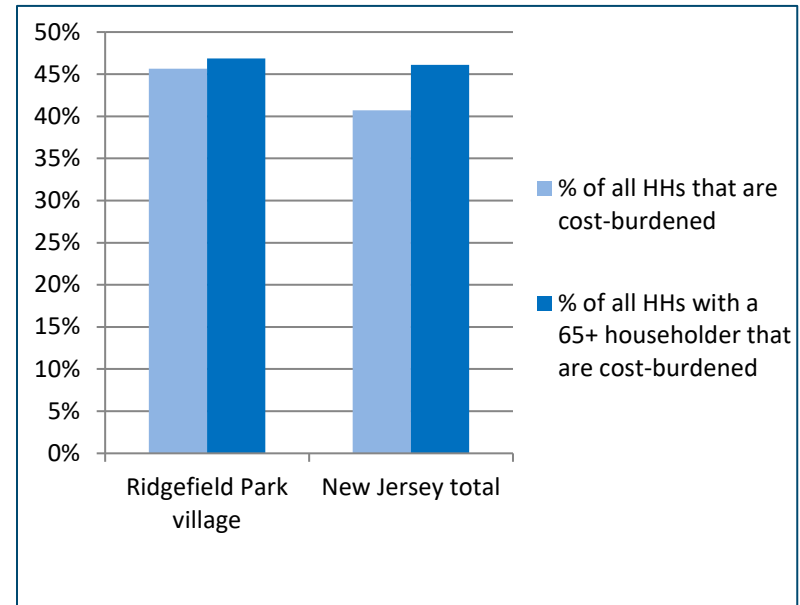
Jurisdiction	Median household Income 2017	Average residential value 2017	Years local median HH income to purchase avg home value	Years state median HH income to purchase avg home value
Ridgefield Park Village	\$72,191	\$308,184	4.27	4.03
New Jersey Total	\$76,475	\$367,049	4.80	4.80

Housing Cost Burden

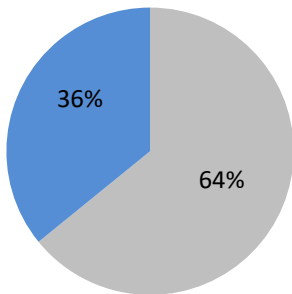
Ridgefield Park's rate of households that are housing cost-burdened (i.e. paying at least 30% of their gross income on housing costs) is higher than the statewide rate—45.7% vs. 40.7%. When looking only at households headed by someone 65 or older, Ridgefield Park is about even with the state—46.9% vs. 46.1%. Statewide, the likelihood of being housing cost-burdened is higher for households headed by someone 65+ than for the general population, while in Ridgefield Park it is about the same.

Tenure

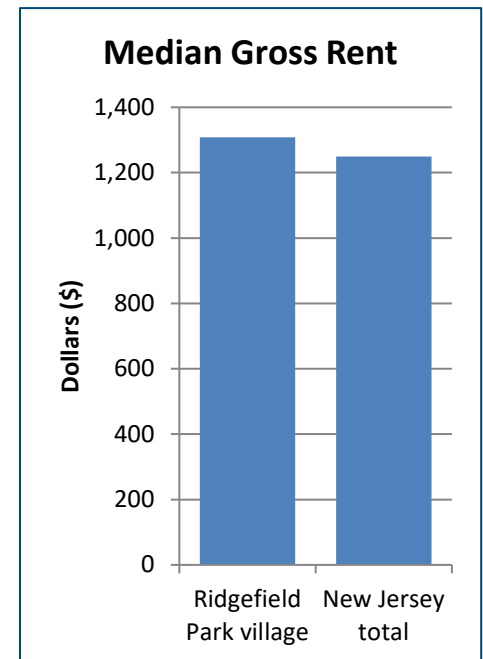
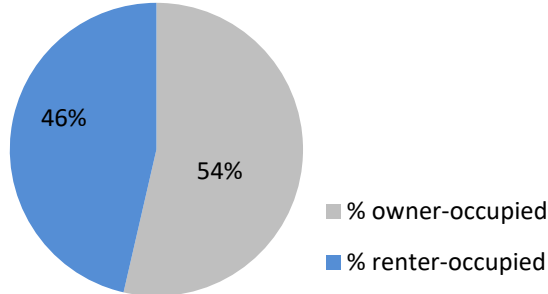
A little more than half (53.6%) of Ridgefield Park households own their homes, as compared to almost two-thirds (64.1%) statewide. For Ridgefield Park's substantial share of renter households, rents are generally slightly higher than statewide: Median gross rent for Ridgefield Park is \$1,308 per month, compared to a median of \$1,249 for the state.



New Jersey

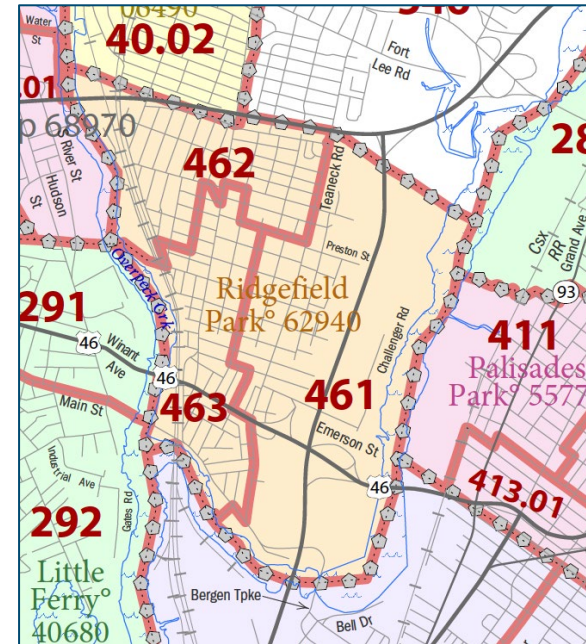
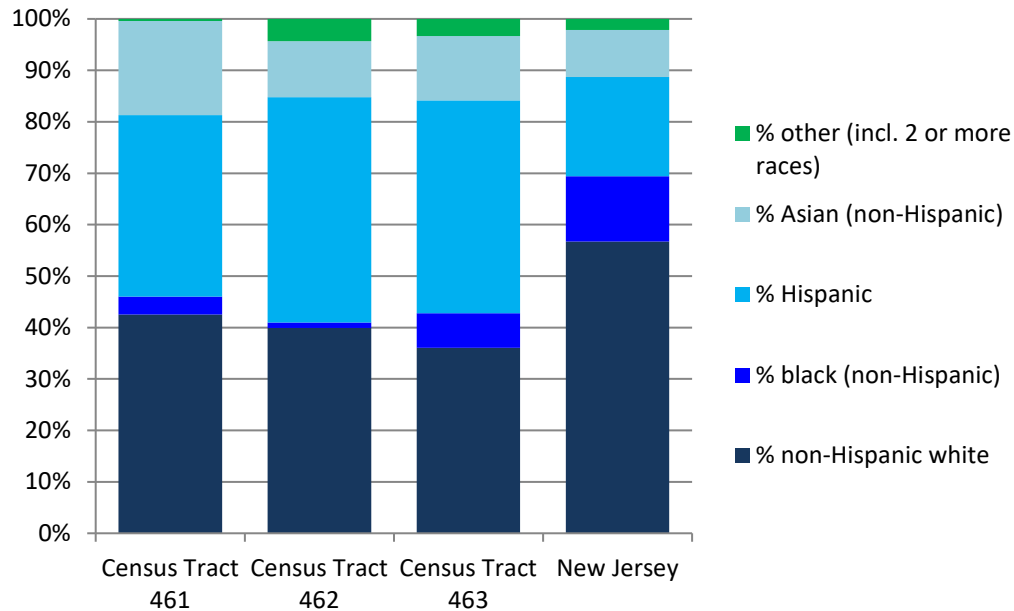


Ridgefield Park



Internal Diversity

Ridgefield Park is subdivided into three census tracts –census tracts roughly correspond to the concept of a neighborhood. All three census tracts have higher percentages of Asian residents, and much higher percentages of Hispanic residents, than the state as a whole. In no tract does any racial subgroup constitute a majority; Tracts 462 and 463 (in the northwest and southwest, respectively) are plurality Hispanic, and Tract 461 (the east side of town) is plurality non-Hispanic white.



Addendum

Village of Ridgefield Park Aging-Friendly Communities Initiative
Implementation Planning Observations and Priorities
Summary of 12/11/20 Implementation Planning Workshop



This summary statement and the priority actions matrix are based on the implementation planning workshop discussion and voting activity of the workshop. At the workshop, best practices of implementation planning were reviewed, and the Ridgefield Park steering-committee for the aging-friendly land-use assessment project provided input to prioritize the recommendations in the *Creating Great Places to Age: Aging-Friendly Land-Use Assessment for the Village of Ridgefield Park* report.

Observations

- There is a need to engage the public and help the community understand how the changes outlined in this project would benefit the community.
- The existing community arts group functions as a public input group and can serve as a starting point for soliciting feedback on implementation priorities and as a catalyst for initiating a broader aging-friendly initiative in the community.
- The village's master plan update will incorporate aspects of the aging-friendly land-use assessment. This is a critical component to effectively guide community design.
- Downtown redevelopment should encourage people to visit and linger. Street activation tactics can help to do this and should be part of master planning and downtown revitalization designs.
- Visitors to the downtown typically are "in and out," doing what they need to do then leaving. There are little opportunities for social interactions. Development of civic spaces would provide those opportunities as well as an economic co-benefit.
- Economic development of the downtown is needed to assist businesses. The Main Street economy is the core of community life and should be promoted. Businesses at historic preservation committee meetings have expressed a need for the municipality to provide more support. There is no commissioner (member of the governing body) assigned to interface with the business community or be responsible for downtown issues or opportunities. Issues that have come up include the need for wayfinding, changes to signage rules, and maintenance concerns including litter. Application to the Main Street New Jersey program would be an appropriate strategy for the Village to pursue.
- Main Street businesses may have an interest in development of a special improvement district, particularly if it can be implemented as a short-term project as a way to pilot the strategy.
- Downtown redevelopment and revitalization should be paired with development of waterfront access. The planning board has been discussing Hackensack Riverfront improvements and public access in the area of Mt. Vernon Street.
- There is a need to retain and increase housing in the middle-income range, particularly in the form of smaller apartment units. Rents can be more moderate for smaller units, depending on the market.

- New development projects should aim to provide more units that are suitable for older residents, although there is no ordinance or legal mechanism to do this. A universal design ordinance may be an appropriate strategy. This would entail stipulations for design features such as door width.
- Village leadership sees a need for an additional seven to eight story senior housing building in the downtown. Conducting a housing survey of older residents would assess the demand for that and identify their housing needs.
- Designation of a redevelopment area in the downtown—in the area between Spruce and Lincoln Avenues—should be a consideration for increasing residential in the downtown and implementing compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented downtown revitalization tactics.
- Land-use code changes should be implemented to align with downtown redevelopment designs described in the aging-friendly land-use assessment report.
- There is some discussion in the village for providing a local bus service for senior citizens. Bus or ride-share services would improve mobility for older residents throughout the community and provide access to facilities such as Overpeck County Park, the Civic Center, or the downtown.
- Aside from mention of a “green strip” design in the village’s land use plan, there is no discussion or implementation of an open space or recreation plan for the village. Enhancing and providing public access to river greenways and natural areas is a priority for the village, necessitating an implementation strategy—particularly since the COVID-19 crisis has placed a greater emphasis on outdoor use. Outdoor spaces for people to gather, as well as for pedestrian connectivity and mobility around town, are important considerations.
- The village does not have a complete and green streets policy. Adopting and implementing one would be an appropriate place to begin implementing many of the design features identified as priorities in the village.

Next steps

- Municipal leaders and staff, including the Board of Commissioners, Planning Board, other boards and committees, and relevant departments, need to review this summary statement to provide feedback and do a “reality check” to identify actions that are feasible and doable in the village and will have the support of decision-makers.
- The Village should designate a steering committee to oversee aging-friendly implementation.
- The Village should conduct a public meeting to inform development of an aging-friendly land-use implementation plan and educate the public.

Priority Actions for Implementation of Aging-Friendly Land Use

Actions are grouped into two categories—primary (1) and secondary (2).

Action	Description	Land Use Category	Priority
Integrate Master Planning	Update the master plan to: reflect the evolving and projected socioeconomic characteristics of the village's aging population in order to define aging-friendly strategies the village could adopt to respond to the community's emerging needs; integrate community design for mixed ages and incomes into municipal planning and policies; promote community engagement and a vibrant downtown atmosphere; incorporate redevelopment that occurs in the OP-1 and OP-2 zones into the existing community character and ensure that it is consistent with redevelopment goals in the C-1(H) zone and promotes complete and green streets and pedestrian mobility not only within the redevelopment areas, but also between those areas and the village neighborhoods; identify strategies to create an interconnected pedestrian network between all neighborhoods of the village while retaining the historic, small-town quality of the existing downtown and the natural resource benefits of the Overpeck Creek stream corridor.	Mixed-Use Center	1
Apply for Main Street New Jersey Program	Participate in the Main Street New Jersey program to develop focused streetscape improvement strategies and long-term economic stabilization strategies in the central business district.	Mixed-Use Center	1
Provide River Access from Downtown	Provide pedestrian access from Mt. Vernon Street to the Hackensack River to use the river as an asset in downtown revitalization.	Mixed-Use Center	1
Designate a Downtown Redevelopment Area	Evaluate the block between Spruce Avenue and Lincoln Avenue for consideration for a redevelopment plan.	Mixed-Use Center	1
Designate a Special Improvement District	Designate a special improvement district that encompasses the central business district to serve as a vehicle to fund improvements exclusively within the district.	Mixed-Use Center	1
Require Civic and Green Spaces in Downtown Development	Change zoning to require civic and green spaces as a condition of any redevelopment projects along Mt. Vernon Street, particularly for multi-family housing projects. Change zoning to increase the minimum required land area set aside for apartment building projects to develop usable recreation or landscaped areas with benches.	Mixed-Use Center	1

Action	Description	Land Use Category	Priority
Adopt Downtown Land-Use Code Changes	Update the land-use code to better encourage compact, mixed-use and environmentally sustainable development by: explicitly prohibiting drive-throughs in the C-1(H) district and other areas; eliminating the front yard setback in the C-1(H) district; increasing lot coverage allowances in the C-1(H) zone; reducing allowable maximum impervious surface coverage for new development; and increasing building height requirements in the C-1(H) district along sections of Mt. Vernon Street to permit residential apartments and multi-family units.	Mixed-Use Center	1
Implement Downtown Street Activation	Create spaces in the downtown for pedestrian seating and gathering, incorporating green infrastructure.	Mixed-Use Center	1
Conduct a Housing Survey of Senior Residents	Conduct a survey of older Ridgefield Park residents to assess their housing needs and their willingness to pursue certain strategies.	Housing	1
Incentivize Downtown Residential Development	For example, eliminate or reduce requirements for non-residential and residential development fees as an incentive to encourage development that includes a residential component. Explore potential opportunities to create mixed-use or residential development through contractual partnerships with privately-owned properties in the study area, such as church properties.	Housing	1
Increase Missing Middle Housing Stock	Provide incentives, such as density bonuses, increased building height limits, or of-right zoning controls that would expand further the current number of single-family attached units, townhomes, duplexes, and/or multi-family units in the village.	Housing	1
Adopt Universal Design Standards	Adopt a universal design policy or ordinance for all new and renovated residential development in the village.	Housing	1
Develop an Open Space and Recreation Plan	Develop an open-space and recreation plan or master plan element that adheres to an adopted complete and green streets policy, outlines long term goals, sets a schedule to implement improvements, and delegates open space maintenance responsibility with the objective of developing an integrated pedestrian access network connecting all neighborhoods and commercial areas to all of the village's parks, green spaces, and community destinations.	Open Spaces / Facilities	1
Adopt Zoning Changes for River Greenways and Natural Areas	Change zoning to promote environmentally compatible uses along the waterways in the village and to establish buffer areas along the Hackensack River and Overpeck Creek to create pedestrian walkways and waterfront recreation corridors with consideration of projected increases in precipitation and flooding as a result of climate change in determining the width of any designated riparian buffer. Create or enhance public access to the remaining natural features in the village, including the natural area in the northeastern corner of town, waterfronts along the Hackensack River and Overpeck Creek, and in the OP-2 redevelopment area.	Open Spaces / Facilities	1

Action	Description	Land Use Category	Priority
Conduct a Survey of Street Furniture	Conduct a survey of street furniture and shade tree placement, particularly in those areas frequented by older adults, such as the civic center, library, and downtown destinations. This could be incorporated into a bicycle and pedestrian audit.	Open Spaces / Facilities	1
Adopt a Complete and Green Streets Policy and Ordinance	Adopt a resolution endorsing a complete and green streets policy and develop ordinance standards and guidelines for improvements consistent with complete and green streets principles along the village's major corridors, including Main Street, Mt. Vernon Street, Euclid Avenue, Park Street, Cedar Street; and throughout the C-1(H) district and along Railroad Avenue in anticipation of future pedestrian-oriented redevelopment and waterfront redevelopment, as well as in the village's redevelopment areas.	Transportation	1
Identify and Map a Bicycle and Pedestrian Town-Wide Circulation Network	Develop and implement a bicycle and pedestrian plan that creates a network of routes and dedicated bicycle lanes that connect community destinations to each other, the downtown, bus stops, and to residential neighborhoods.	Transportation	1
Change Zoning along Mt. Vernon Ave.	Change zoning to increase density and types of development permitted along Mt. Vernon Street (ex. overlay).	Mixed-Use Center	2
Develop a Marketing Campaign to Promote the Downtown	Develop a marketing campaign to promote the downtown as a walkable, mixed-use center.	Mixed-Use Center	2
Budget for Implementation	Include improvements that can be phased in over time—such as street furniture, wayfinding signage, traffic calming measures, bicycle circulation and safety improvements, or sidewalk/crosswalk installations/repairs—to the downtown area in the village's capital improvement program.	Mixed-Use Center	2
Conduct an Economic and Market Analysis	Conduct an economic and market analysis in conjunction with a housing assessment to target specific mixed-use development projects aimed at revitalizing the downtown and promoting a pedestrian environment.	Mixed-Use Center	2
Acquire Historic Train Station and Incorporate into Downtown Redevelopment	Evaluate municipal acquisition of the train station property to pursue a public-private partnership aimed at downtown revitalization.	Mixed-Use Center	2

Action	Description	Land Use Category	Priority
Adopt a Form-Based Code	Develop and adopt a form-based code to guide development and redevelopment within the downtown area, with a focus on enhancing pedestrian activity, and to codify the advisory role of the Historic Preservation Commission to uphold community design standards.	Mixed-Use Center	2
Develop a Home Sharing Program	Change zoning to permit home sharing and take steps to actively promote a home sharing program in the community.	Housing	2
Diversify Housing Types	Change zoning to diversify housing in the village and particularly expand the existing stock of "missing middle" housing in the village with specific focus on evaluating existing area, yard, and bulk requirements.	Housing	2
Permit Accessory Dwelling Units	Change zoning to permit accessory apartments in the R-1 and R-2 zones.	Housing	2
Implement Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Management	Develop green infrastructure in municipal surface parking lots and incorporate green infrastructure into facility designs, as part of an adopted complete and green streets policy. Adopt a stormwater regulation that exceeds minimum requirements for incorporating green infrastructure, meeting groundwater recharge standards, and meeting stormwater runoff quantity and quality standards.	Open Spaces / Facilities	2
Improve Access to Park Facilities	Ensure that residents in the north-central section of town have pedestrian access to a park facility by pursuing joint-use agreements, enhancing mobility and transportation to community facilities from this area, or developing new amenities.	Open Spaces / Facilities	2
Test Techniques with Pop-Up Demonstration Projects	For example, to test pedestrian safety techniques, install temporary pop-up traffic calming techniques such as curb bump-outs, crossing islands, narrowed travel lanes, signage and road markings, speed tables, roundabouts, and other traffic-calming practices as a low-cost way to test which traffic-calming methods are most effective at certain locations. Temporary pop-up demonstrations can also test street activation and civic spaces in the downtown.	Transportation	2
Codify Pedestrian Design Standards	Change zoning to include design standards and basic minimums for installation and widths of sidewalks, crosswalk design, and curb extensions into subdivision and site plan requirements based on an adopted complete and green streets policy.	Transportation	2

Action	Description	Land Use Category	Priority
Conduct a Bicycle and Pedestrian Audit and Survey	Conduct a pedestrian and bicycle audit to identify locations of dangerous street crossings where crosswalks or street crossings need to be installed or improved and identify specific strategies to address those locations based on an adopted complete and green streets policy. The audit should also assess local streets to determine where driver sight-line visibility may impact pedestrian safety and identification of locations where pedestrian crossings could be better marked or timed. In the audit, include an assessment of pedestrian connectors to/from parking areas to ensure that safe and accessible pedestrian pathways are sufficiently lighted, easily navigated by individuals of all mobilities, and clearly marked or delineated. In the audit, also assess whether older residents are deterred from patronizing the bus service and evaluate the busiest bus stops throughout town to determine if sufficient lighting and sheltered seating are provided for older residents. Also evaluate sidewalks and crosswalks in the vicinity of and along the routes to the library and civic center from all residential neighborhoods for any impeding obstacles.	Transportation	2
Provide Local Transportation Service	Develop ride-share programs or local bus services to enhance neighborhood circulation and overall mobility of older individuals.	Transportation	2
Conduct a Transit and Bus Hub Evaluation	Conduct a transit evaluation to consider long-term development of a bus hub in Ridgefield Park Village and appropriate zoning and development regulations for the vicinity of the historic rail station.	Transportation	2
Develop a Parking Management Program for the Downtown	Conduct a parking inventory and determine usage estimates within the village. Establish a parking authority to plan for and manage parking in the central business district and redevelopment areas. Change zoning to establish a development principle that calls for maintaining the current widespread availability of on-street parking throughout the C-1(H) zone. Install metered parking along additional streets such as Spruce Avenue or other areas of the C-1(H) district that are targeted for redevelopment.	Transportation	2