
COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN ELEMENT

(Adopted November 17, 2008)

INTRODUCTION

The Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) provides that municipalities may adopt a community facilities plan and a utility service plan as elements of a municipal master plan. These elements are intended to identify existing facilities, assess their adequacy or inadequacy and incorporate recommendations, if additional needs are identified. The MLUL describes each as follows:

A community facilities plan element showing the existing and proposed location and type of educational or cultural facilities, historic sites, libraries, hospitals, firehouses, police stations and other related facilities, including their relation to the surrounding areas.

A utility service plan element analyzing the need for and showing the future general location of water supply and distribution facilities, drainage and flood control facilities, sewerage and waste treatment, solid waste disposal and provision for other related utilities, and including any storm water management plan required pursuant to the provision of PL 1981, c. 32.

This plan includes descriptions of existing and planned municipal, educational and other community facilities. Since the Historic Preservation Plan element contains comprehensive information relative to historic districts and properties, information on historic sites is not repeated in this element. However, Harding's community facilities are complementary to Harding's historic rural character. For this reason, it is important that the maintenance of existing facilities and planning for future municipal projects are undertaken in ways that are compatible with Harding's abundant historic resources.

A separate utility services plan is not required because utility services in the township are limited, and this Master Plan already contains separate Recycling and Stormwater Management Plan elements. Public water and sewer utility services extend into Harding from other communities, but are geographically limited in scope. The areas served and related planning policies are discussed in this element since they are not planned for expansion.

BACKGROUND

Harding's first comprehensive master plan, prepared in 1972,¹ contained an inventory of community facilities, including administration, water supply, storm drainage and sanitary sewage disposal. Community facilities were modest; there was no municipal building and township

¹ Comprehensive Master Plan; Herbert H. Smith Associates and Osborne M. Campbell & Associates; December 1972.

officials maintained official records in their homes. The New Vernon Fire House was used for township meetings; it also contained a small library operated by the Women’s Auxiliary of the Fire Department. The plan simply stated that private wells and on-site sewage disposal systems provided most residents with potable water and waste disposal. By the end of the decade, the Kirby family made possible the construction of a Municipal Building on land located at the intersection of Blue Mill and Sand Spring Roads, providing a centralized place for township administration and contributing to New Vernon Village as the focal point of the community.

The 1984 Master Plan² reflected growth in community facilities in the twelve years that preceded it, including the construction of the Municipal Building, the establishment of the Public Works Garage on municipal property in the heart of New Vernon Village, the construction of the Fire Department Annex on its Bailey’s Mill Road property, and the establishment of the Rescue Squad. The plan acknowledged the presence of public sewers in fringe areas of the township near Route 202, with no plan for expansion into low density areas that comprise the majority of the township.

Volunteerism is the foundation of the high quality of services provided to the public in Harding Township. The Fire Department, Women’s Auxiliary and Rescue Squad are notable examples of organizations to which residents have long been committed to serve as volunteers. In addition, there are numerous boards, committees and community/civic organizations comprised of resident members. The active involvement of the Township Committee, Board members and resident volunteers is particularly evident in the planning and maintenance of community facilities and the provision of services to residents.

GOALS

The planning context for Harding’s community facilities goals is the township’s historic and rural character, its low development density, and its slow growth rate which is likely to diminish further as full build-out is approached. The township is designated within *Planning Area 5* (PA-5 Environmentally Sensitive) by the State Planning Commission. Additionally, the vast majority of the township has been designated within either the *Protection Zone* or *Conservation Zone* by the Highlands Council.³ These designations reflect Harding’s established rural character and the state’s policy to shift growth away from rural, agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas to those where infrastructure is available to support growth. With this underlying assumption, goals related to community facilities and utility services are as follows:

1. To provide for limited community facilities that are appropriate and consistent with the township’s historic and rural character, development density and small population.
2. To promote the stewardship and efficient utilization of existing community facilities in a manner that maintains high quality services, encourages continued volunteerism, and minimizes public expenditures.

² Master Plan, Township of Harding, Morris County, New Jersey; Townplan Associates; December 1984.

³ The township is located in the Highlands Planning Area pursuant to the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act.

3. To ensure that existing facilities are maintained and that any future facilities are designed consistent with the township's historic and rural character and that New Vernon Village remains the focal point of the community.
4. To limit the extension of public water services consistent with the township's overall goal of maintaining its low density of development and its designation as an environmentally sensitive area by the State Planning Commission.
5. To limit the extension of public sanitary sewer services consistent with the township's overall goal of maintaining its low density of development and its designation as an environmentally sensitive area by the State Planning Commission.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Municipal facilities are a reflection of a community's character and values. From a planning perspective, a *community facility* is commonly defined as *a building or structure owned and operated by a government agency to provide a governmental service to the public.*⁴ The essence of a community facilities plan is in its assessment of whether services can be provided adequately utilizing available facilities, or whether new facilities are required to meet the community's present and/or predictable future needs.

Due to its rural nature, small population base, and slow growth rate, community facilities in Harding are limited in scale. Most of Harding's traditional community facilities, as well as cultural institutions, are located in New Vernon Village, a portion of which is a state and nationally-registered historic district. Situated among the residential uses in the village are the Harding Township School, New Vernon Fire Station, New Vernon Post Office, several small-scale commercial uses, two houses of worship, the Municipal Building, Public Works Garage, and two municipal parks. It is the focal point of the community and provides the township with a strong "sense of place." Its preservation as the center of community interaction is important to Harding's traditional community character (see page 11-21 in the Land Use Plan element for a more complete discussion of New Vernon Village and a detailed map of the village). *Figure 15, Community Facilities* displays the location of the community institutions discussed in this plan. It also displays the limited areas in the township served by public water and sewer utilities.

Municipal Administration

Harding's municipal services are administered by an elected five-member Township Committee with administrative offices for staff in the municipal building located on a 14½ acre site at the intersection of Blue Mill and Sand Spring roads in New Vernon Village. The building is referred to as "Kirby Hall" in honor of Marion S. and Allan P. Kirby, who donated the land and funds for construction. The site also contains off-street parking and tennis courts located behind the building.

Dedicated in 1980, the municipal building contains approximately 13,200 square feet of space (including the basement level and two floors above grade) and houses the township's

⁴ The New Illustrated Book of Development Definitions; Harvey S. Moskowitz and Carl G. Lindbloom; 1999.

Administrative Offices, Construction Department, Health Department, and Police Headquarters. It also hosts the Municipal Court, Civil Defense Offices, a small Library, and meeting rooms. The township's website www.hardingnj.org has become an electronic gateway for citizens to access local government, facilitating public awareness of, and access to, information about municipal services, programs and regulations.

Approximately 2,700 square feet of space in Kirby Hall is allocated to the Police Department, a significant portion of which is located in the basement level. Space allocated on the main level of the building contains offices and the main desk, which is accessible to the public during normal business hours. All calls (emergency and non-emergency) are answered/dispatched by the Morris County Communications Center, the cost of which is paid by Harding, on a 24/ basis. Designated shelters to be used in an emergency are Christ the King Church on Blue Mill Road and the Harding School on Lee's Hill Road.

The space allocated to the Department in Kirby Hall is generally adequate for its current needs. However, there is no drive-in facility for the disposition of prisoners, known as a *sallyport*, which is normally required by the NJ Department of Corrections, nor are there separate facilities for female officers if hired in the future.

Future Planning of Administrative Facilities

Generally, Kirby Hall provides adequate space for the current needs of the township's administrative departments. Recently the township replaced windows and made other cosmetic improvements. Due to the age of building, ongoing maintenance has become a priority. In terms of floor space, more rooms allocated for meetings would be of greatest value.

In the near term, construction of the new Library (described below) will allow the use of the current Library space for offices or meetings; the new Library building will also include rooms that could be used for meetings. Continued enhancement of internet-based communications and services will help increase local government efficiency and enhance the quality and speed of the delivery of services to residents.

On a much longer time horizon, if the township finds that it needs to construct a separate police facility, the department's Kirby Hall office and storage space would become available for other municipal services and/or meeting rooms. The accessibility to and visibility of a separate police building are important considerations if a portion of the property is to be allocated for this purpose in the future. The new Library is being constructed on the Sand Spring Road side of the property opposite Bayne Park, which would allow space in the rear portion of the site to be devoted to a separate police facility. If the tennis courts could be relocated to the School property (new tennis courts are under consideration as part of planned recreational facilities) there would be even greater flexibility in the allocation of space on the site for additional municipal facilities.

Harding Library

The Harding Township Library is operated by a non-profit entity funded largely by private donations and annual contributions from the township. It is currently located in a small room on the main floor of Kirby Hall and is managed by a combination of volunteers and paid staff. Prior to its establishment in Kirby Hall, the Library was housed at the New Vernon Firehouse and was operated by the Women's Auxiliary of the New Vernon Volunteer Fire Department.

Over the years demand for Library services has increased while the space allocated to the Library has remained constant. To provide improved facilities and services to township residents, the Association has raised private donations for the construction and operating expenses of a new Library with approximately 8,200 square feet of floor area. The township has agreed to allocate space for its construction on the Sand Spring Road side of the municipal building property to the rear of Kirby Hall. A new centrally-located facility will provide space for residents of all ages to utilize its resources. Construction of the Library in this location is consistent with the Master Plan goal of reinforcing the role and function of New Vernon Village as the center of community interaction.

The layout, orientation and design of the new Library complements Kirby Hall and will facilitate the joint use of meeting rooms in the new building. Collectively the two buildings will form a small municipal complex that is compatible with the township's rural character. To facilitate the Library's location proximate to Kirby Hall, the township has relocated the upper portion of the Sand Spring Road driveway and reconfigured and improved the parking lot to enhance safety and access to both buildings. The New Vernon Garden Club has raised funds for landscaping improvements. A ceremonial groundbreaking was held in May 2008.

Public Works

The Harding Township Department of Public Works (DPW) is located in the heart of New Vernon Village on an 11-acre township-owned parcel of land. The property is also the site of the historic Tunis-Ellicks House, which contains the Historical Society's archives and is used on occasion for public gatherings. The DPW occupies the westerly half of the site, which lies behind Village Road properties, and is accessed via a driveway from Millbrook Road opposite the New Vernon Firehouse. In this location it is geographically central to the township and relatively close to Kirby Hall, but it is also largely hidden from view. DPW facilities on the site include a maintenance garage constructed in 1980, an outdoor storage area, the township's recycling center, and underground fuel tanks. Recent improvements to this property, in fulfillment of the New Vernon Redevelopment Plan (see the Land Use Plan element), include an underground cistern for firefighting purposes, a community parking lot serving the village, and a pedestrian pathway that connects the parking area to the new Post Office.

The DPW is responsible for road maintenance and repairs, snow plowing, roadway litter collection, management of the recycling center, and maintenance of the township's parks, buildings, vehicles and equipment. The Department manages all aspects of the township's recycling facility, including monitoring and reporting functions, and the disposition of all

recyclable material to a facility located in Mine Hill, NJ. The disposal of solid waste in the township is the responsibility of individual property owners who contract with a private waste disposal company. The township contracts once a year for bulk curb-side clean-up, which is typically held September or October.

It is impossible to predict whether future state laws or regulations might impose new requirements on local government that would result in the need for additional public works facilities or a requirement to provide new functions. However, the DPW site and its facilities generally appear adequate to meet Harding's needs in the near term (a five + year time horizon). In the longer term, it is possible that re-configuring existing facilities on the site could provide greater efficiency in space allocation if there is need for new or expanded public works functions or facilities.

Recreation Facilities

Representative of the importance of volunteerism in Harding is the fact that recreational programs for Harding residents are coordinated by the Harding Township Recreation Association (HTRA), which was established in 1969 and operates exclusively with private funding. Programs sponsored/coordinated by HTRA include: ice skating at Bayne Park, baseball, ice and field hockey, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, t-ball and summer day camp at the Harding School. The Open Space Plan element contains comprehensive inventories of parks and recreation resources available in the township, so they are not repeated in this plan.

HTRA recently proposed a plan for the construction of expanded recreational facilities to be located behind the Harding Township School on Lee's Hill Road in New Vernon Village. HTRA is helping to raise private funding for construction and maintenance of the new facilities (described under "School Facilities"), which can be constructed over time under a phasing plan as resources permit. The enhancement of recreational facilities located in New Vernon Village reinforces the importance of the village to Harding's traditional sense of community and place.

Fire Protection and Rescue Service

The New Vernon Volunteer Fire Department and the Green Village Volunteer Fire Department are designated the official fire departments serving Harding Township. Pursuant to a mutual aid agreement, the Morris Township Fire Department provides service to small areas along the township border in the northwestern part of Harding (Military Hill area). Emergency calls (911) for fire protection are received/dispatched by the County's communications system at the township's expense.

Fire Protection

The New Vernon Volunteer Fire Department (NVVFD) was established in 1921 and is headquartered on Village Road in the heart of New Vernon Village. The Department's building is located on a two-acre parcel of land at the intersection of Millbrook and Village Road and contains seven bays, two of which are for ambulances. A smaller annex building with two bays

is located on a three-quarter acre site on Bailey's Mill Road. The Ladies Auxiliary provides support at fire scenes and helps raise funds. Financially, the Department is entirely self-sustaining and raises funds in a variety of ways, including its annual auction, well-known by residents of the community and surrounding towns.

The Green Village Volunteer Fire Company was established in 1922 and is located in Chatham Township near the township's eastern border. The primary area within Harding serviced by the Green Village company includes the northeastern section of the township from Spring Valley Road to the township border and the southeastern section of the township from the Chatham Township border to the Pleasantville-Village Road intersection and along Woodland Road and Dickson's Mill Road.

Water Resources for Fire Protection

The New Vernon Volunteer Fire Department has cataloged and mapped water resources throughout the township with information about the reliability and access arrangements to each source. The Department's Water Source and Site Access Committee provides advice to the Planning Board and Township Committee on available resources for fire safety and related issues. Hydrants for fire-fighting purposes are only available in the areas shown on Figure 15 as being served by public water supplies. However, there are other man-made (pools and cisterns) and natural water sources (lakes, ponds and streams) utilized for fire-fighting purposes. Silver Lake and Mt. Kemble Lake are prominent sources, but there are also drafting points along streams and ponds in other locations around the township.

Accessibility to natural water resources can be problematic due to distance, topography or vegetation. In addition, the reliability of natural water supply sources varies due to periodic drought and siltation. Swimming pools can also be a source of water in a fire emergency. Typical modern pools hold approximately 30,000 gallons (15,000 in winter months) but accessibility may be problematic unless planned for fire protection purposes.

With limited water supply infrastructure available for fire safety purposes, in 1991 the Township Committee established a Water Resources Committee, comprised of representatives of several township boards/commissions, the NVVFD Fire Chief, and residents, to investigate whether adequate water supplies and/or sources existed for fire safety purposes. The committee concluded that while water supplies for residential uses were generally adequate, water resources for fire-fighting purposes was lacking, especially in light of growth that had taken place in preceding years. It recommended consideration of a variety of alternatives to increase the supply water for fire safety, recognizing the need to balance the township's community planning objectives with respect to infrastructure and the costs of implementation.

As a result of the Water Resources Committee's report in the early 1990's the township's land use regulations now require that all new major subdivisions and flag lots be provided with a source of water supply for fire fighting purposes if an existing facility (man-made or natural) is not in reasonable proximity to the development. Underground cisterns with storage capacity ranging from 30,000 to 40,000 gallons of water have been installed in several new subdivisions,

providing a highly dependable and accessible water resource for fire-fighting purposes. Cisterns have also been installed by the township and by the Board of Education in New Vernon Village. One is located in the community parking area behind the Tunis-Ellicks House (also the site of the DPW) and the other is located at the Harding Township School.

As new development continues and very large homes are constructed, the availability and adequacy of water supply sources for fire-fighting remains a concern. The township continues to work with the Fire Department to address issues surrounding the adequacy of existing natural and man-made water sources. In particular, changes in insurance company requirements should be monitored so that appropriate adjustments can be made to the land use regulations with respect to the proximity of water sources for fire safety.

Rescue Service

The New Vernon Volunteer First Aid Squad was founded as a unit of the New Vernon Volunteer Fire Department in 1974. The Squad is administered by a Board of Governors and is headquartered in the Fire Department's Village Road building where ambulances and other emergency equipment are stored. The Squad has an active volunteer group and maintains 24-hour service covering the entire township as well as mutual aid in surrounding areas.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

The Harding Township School system is governed by an elected Board of Education comprised of five members, one of whom also serves on the Madison Board of Education, and is administered by a full-time Superintendent. The Harding Township School, located in New Vernon Village, is comprised of an elementary and middle school (kindergarten through eighth grade) with an on-site Principal/Director of Curriculum. Secondary school education for Harding's children is provided through an agreement with Madison High School. Thirty-two of the 41 students graduating from the Harding School in 2008 will attend Madison High School in the 2008-2009 school year.

Harding's school facilities are located on a 39½ acre site on the northwest side of Lee's Hill Road. The campus is comprised of two buildings separated by a driveway. The Elementary School building was constructed in 1969 while the Middle School is situated in the original building established on the site in 1925. Over the years, numerous additions and alterations have been made to the historic school building (Middle School), with the most recent improvements completed in 2001. These improvements included a new gymnasium, several classrooms and an elevator/stairwell tower to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These improvements enabled the old gym to be transformed into a School Library and Media Center with computers. In addition to building improvements, there are two underground cisterns for fire-fighting purposes on the school grounds.

Modest outdoor recreation facilities are situated on the school property behind the Elementary and Middle School buildings. Existing recreational facilities include an athletic field for soccer and field hockey, a playground area, and a basketball court. Plans for new recreational facilities

at the school are being coordinated by the Harding Township Recreational Association (HTRA). Private funding for construction and maintenance of the new facilities is being raised by several local organizations including HTRA, the Parent Teachers Organization (PTO) and the Harding Township Educational Foundation (HTEF). Improvements under consideration include the construction of a new baseball field, tennis courts, renovation of the existing athletic field and construction of a second field, pedestrian and equestrian pathways, landscaping improvements, off-street parking and rest room/concession facilities. No lighting for athletic facilities is proposed in connection with these improvements.

A four week summer day camp, sponsored by the Harding Township Recreational Association, is offered at the school on a fee basis for Pre-K through 6th grade aged children. Priority enrollment is given to Harding residents. In addition, an after-school program is offered for enrolled K-8 grade children, providing well-supervised indoor and outdoor activities each day that school is in session.

School Enrollment

The table below displays the history of elementary school enrollment in ten year increments over the past 50 years. According to school records, enrollment has ranged between a peak of 477 students in the 1969-70 school year to a low of 163 students in the 1987-88 school year. Enrollment in recent years has remained very stable, in the range of about 325 pupils, with about as many students entering the system as those leaving. Based on current enrollment and class distribution, school officials anticipate a continuation of this relative stability for the foreseeable future.

School Year	Enrollment
<i>Fifty-year trend</i>	
1959-1960	408
1969-1970	477
1979-1980	341
1989-1990	191
1999-2000	354
<i>Current trend</i>	
2003-2004	335
2004-2005	329
2005-2006	322
2006-2007	323
2007-2008	326

Source: Harding Township School

Other than the need for modest cosmetic improvements and HVAC upgrades, Harding's school facilities are generally adequate for the foreseeable future (a five+ year time horizon). One area under investigation is whether providing an on-site special needs education program would be viable since the school experiences significant costs to send children with special needs to other

systems. In addition, recent legislation requires every school system to provide a full-day Pre-K program for students who qualify (household income qualifications) by the 2009-10 school year. The School Board will need to consider how best to meet the new Pre-K requirements and whether children with special needs can be accommodated with programs and/or facilities available at the school.

UTILITY SERVICES

The development density and character of a community is inextricably linked to utility infrastructure available to support development. Utility services are defined as *the generation, transmission, and/or distribution of electricity, gas, steam, communications, and water; the collection and treatment of sewage and solid waste; and the provision of mass transportation.*⁵ In particular, public water supply and sewage disposal services are the prerequisite utility infrastructure needed to support higher density development. The presence or absence of public utilities, especially water and sewer systems, is of prime importance in establishing and/or preserving a community's land use patterns and the density and intensity of new development.

Underlying Principles and Assumptions

This Master Plan is based upon the underlying assumption that the township has and will continue to have limited public water and sewer infrastructure. The permitted low densities in the zone plan are based upon that which is sustainable with individual onsite water and septic systems. In combination with major open space reservations and the overall low density of development, limited water and sewer services was the basis for the township's designation as PA-5, Environmentally Sensitive, in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (the "State Plan"). Funding for the construction of water and sewer infrastructure almost always involves a significant investment by federal and state agencies. As a result, the State Plan emphasizes that areas containing utility services should be targeted for future growth and higher densities because of the major public expense to build and maintain such infrastructure.⁶

A fundamental policy in the State Plan for Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (PA-5) is that public water and sewer services should be confined to "centers."⁷ Public utility services in Harding are largely limited to small border areas of the township. New Vernon Village, which is typical of a "center" as envisioned by the State Plan, is not served by public water or sewer services.

⁵ The New Illustrated Book of Development Definitions; Harvey S. Moskowitz and Carl G. Lindbloom; 1999.

⁶ See "Public Investment Priorities", page 118; The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan; The New Jersey State Planning Commission; March 2001.

⁷ See "Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area – Intent" page 217; The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan; The New Jersey State Planning Commission; March 2001.

Water Supply

The principal source of water supply in Harding is individual private wells. However, public water systems do serve some residents from water systems extending into the township from neighboring communities and Mt. Kemble Lake residents are served by their own water system (see Figure 15, Community Facilities).

The Southeast Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority (SMCMUA), which is owned and operated as a municipal utility by the towns of Morristown, Morris Township, Morris Plains and Hanover, supplies water to a limited portion of Harding via lines extending from Morris Township. Water lines extend south along Mt. Kemble Avenue (Route 202) to Tempe Wick Road, serving the Blackwell and Jenks Road areas, and the Harding Green and Shadowbrook developments. Lines extend southward from Mt. Kemble Avenue along Anthony Wayne Road and Sand Spring Road, with the latter looping back to Morris Township via Sand Spring Lane and James Street (see Figure 15). A pumping station is located on the authority's Sand Spring Road property near I-287. Water lines in the northeast corner of the township are more limited and extend from Morris Township southward along Kitchell Road and Spring Valley Road to Loantaka Way.

The New Jersey American (NJA) Water Company supplies public water to neighboring communities and limited parts of Harding. One water line extends from Bernards Township north along Mt. Kemble Avenue in Harding for a distance of approximately 2,000 feet. In addition, an NJA water line extends into Harding from Chatham Township, but it serves only about 20 homes in the Green Village and Spencer Place/Douglas Road area.

The Mt. Kemble Lake neighborhood is serviced by a water distribution system that is limited to serving Lake residents, and is owned by the Lakeshore Company, the governing entity for this planned neighborhood. Storage tanks above the lake provide water pressure to the neighborhood's 100+ residents. Lakeshore oversees the water system with a combination of volunteer and professional supervision.

Planning Policy

The township's planning policy for public water service should remain consistent with this Master Plan's overall goal of limiting future growth and the township's designation as PA-5, Environmentally Sensitive by the State Planning Commission. As a general policy, water lines should not be extended in Harding Township beyond the areas currently served. As an existing relatively higher density area, New Vernon Village should be monitored to ensure that adequate potable water supply, currently provided by individual wells, will continue. This can be accomplished pursuant to state regulations that require well testing in association with the transfer of property ownership and by quarterly testing of the municipally-owned well at the DPW site.

Sanitary Sewage Disposal

Sewage disposal throughout most of Harding is by individual subsurface sewage disposal systems, with the exception of a limited area between Route 202 and I-287 and fringe areas along the border with Morris Township (see Figure 15, Community Facilities). These areas are connected to the Morris Township sewer system and are included in Morris Township's Wastewater Management Plan. The Morris Township plan does not provide for expansion of the service area within Harding Township.

Planning Policy

The township's planning policy for public sewer service should remain consistent with this Master Plan's overall goal of limiting future growth and the township's designation within Planning Area 5 (PA-5, Environmentally Sensitive) by the State Planning Commission. Sanitary sewer lines and the service area in Harding Township should not be extended beyond the limited higher density area and the scattered border lots currently served. Consistent with this policy, a "carrying capacity" study was undertaken in 2004 to determine whether the township's development density was appropriate for continued reliance on septic systems (see page 3-8 of the Conservation Plan element). As a result, much of the township was subsequently rezoned to a lower development density to maintain the balance between development and environmental impact.

As an existing relatively higher density area, New Vernon Village should be monitored to ensure that safe and adequate sewage disposal, currently provided by individual septic systems, will continue. This can be accomplished with the annual inspection of the municipally-owned system at the DPW site and in the review of nonresidential septic system inspection reports that are required to be submitted to the Health Department once every two years by village businesses.

In response to recent state mandates, the Morris County Planning and Technology Department is preparing a county-wide Wastewater Management Plan. The township is working closely with the County on the Plan to ensure that it reflects the township's utility infrastructure policies, which are consistent with statewide planning policies for PA-5 environmentally sensitive areas.

Other Utility Services

Other utility services include electricity, provided by Jersey Central Power and Light (owned by First Energy Corp.); natural gas in limited areas, provided by Public Service Electric and Gas, telephone and enhanced (FIOS - fiber optic) digital communications. Two area utility maintenance and service facilities are located in the township adjacent to each other at the southern edge of the township between Mt. Kemble Avenue (Route 202) and Interstate 287. Verizon has a facility on a 5.0-acre site while PSE&G has a facility on a 3.2-acre site.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, this plan foresees no major expansion of community facilities or public utility infrastructure. Their size and scope should remain limited, in balance with the township's overall goal of preserving its rural and historic character. This plan contains a number of specific recommendations related to the township's community facilities and public utility services, summarized as follows.

Municipal Administration

1. Consideration should be given to the potential for relocation of the tennis courts from the Kirby Hall site to the Harding School property. A proposed site plan for expanded recreational facilities at the school illustrates that a satisfactory area exists for the construction of several tennis courts.
2. As the township's website is upgraded and refined, arrangements should be made for public access to the township's Master Plan, development regulations and current land use topics.
3. Consideration should be given to developing a specific plan for the reconfiguration of DPW facilities in New Vernon Village to enhance the efficient utilization of the site and allow for future improvements, if needed. Such a plan would be beneficial for long term planning to ensure that the facilities in this location continue to meet Harding's current and future needs.
4. The township administration should continue to explore the potential for efficiency and cost savings that might be realized by sharing services within the region.

Fire Protection

1. The Township Committee should continue to work closely with the Fire Department regarding water supply for fire safety.
2. Consideration should be given to updating the land use regulations with respect to the proximity of fire safety water sources to serve new development.

Utility Services

1. The township should continue to work closely with the County to ensure that Harding's utility service policies are incorporated in the new county-wide Wastewater Management Plan.
2. The Health Department should monitor inspection reports on potable water and sewage disposal in New Vernon Village to ensure that development can continue to be served by on-site systems.

Long Range Planning

1. The township should investigate the feasibility of establishing a community parking area to facilitate linkage with mass transit.
2. A build-out study should be undertaken based on the new lower density zoning established in 2004 to facilitate long range planning of future community facilities.