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VILLAGE OF ASBURY

# The Village of Asbury Strategic Community Vision Plan.

June 2023

Together North Jersey Vibrant Places Program

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## About Together North Jersey

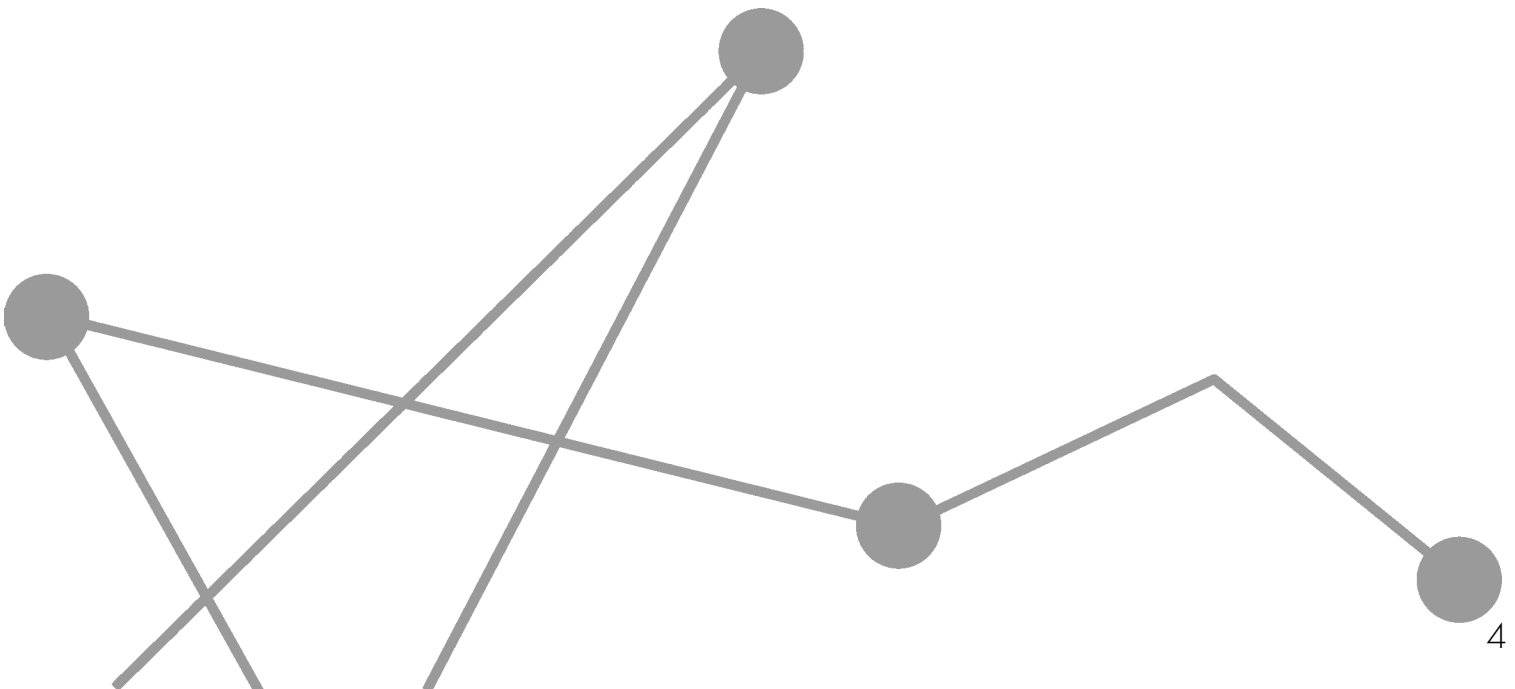
TNJ was created in 2011 to develop the first comprehensive plan for North Jersey's future. Funded by a \$5 million federal Sustainable Communities grant and approximately \$5 million in leveraged funds from members, the TNJ planning effort brought together a coalition of almost 100 diverse partners – counties, municipalities, educational institutions, nonprofits, businesses, and other stakeholders – to develop the TNJ regional plan.

The TNJ planning process identified a shared vision for a prosperous North Jersey future consisting of four themes: Competitive, Efficient, Livable and Resilient. The Plan was issued in November 2015. Since then, TNJ partners have reconvened to advance implementation of the Plan. NJTPA and the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University (VTC) currently coordinate the TNJ Forum and Task Forces, with each of the four Task Forces dedicated to furthering one of the Plan's four themes.

The TNJ planning region consists of the 13 counties in the NJTPA planning area: Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth, Morris, Ocean, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren.

### TNJ Vibrant Places Program

Funded by the NJTPA, the TNJ Vibrant Places Program provides VTC staff support and technical assistance to advance local initiatives that align with the vision of the Together North Jersey Plan. Eligible applicants for the program include municipal and county governments or non-governmental organizations. The Vibrant Places program is supported by NJDCA through market analysis and subject matter expertise.





# Project Overview

In 2022, TNJ awarded the Musconetcong Watershed Association assistance to develop a community vision plan for the Village of Asbury. The project activities were carried out from January to June 2023. The TNJ team conducted extensive background research and public outreach activities, including a community questionnaire that received over 70 responses, a tabling event in the Village, and two meetings with local stakeholders to brainstorm potential strategies for the future of Asbury, and to collect feedback on preliminary recommendations. Informed by the outreach results, TNJ worked with the advisory group to identify the Village of Asbury's strengths and challenges. The TNJ team then identified four goals:

- Foster cooperation among local stakeholders
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure
- Improve access to and amenities of recreational areas
- Improve economic vitality

Drawing on case example research and community outreach results, the TNJ team crafted a set of recommendations to achieve each identified goal. In addition, TNJ partnered with NJDCA to produce a study of market conditions in the region to identify opportunities for economic development.

## What is a Community Vision Plan?

A Community Vision Plan engages community members to reimagine and reinvent public spaces. The placemaking process results in quality places that are unique and engaging and that reflect local culture, values and other unique community characteristics. Placemaking can also support economic development efforts in commercial areas by creating well-managed spaces and conveying a sense of community ownership and pride.

# About the Project Area

## The Village of Asbury

The Village of Asbury is a population center in Franklin Township, Warren County and Bethlehem Township, Hunterdon County, New Jersey. Due to its geographic location, Asbury is within the New Jersey Highlands and the Musconetcong Watershed.

The Village of Asbury extends beyond the boundaries of the Asbury Historic District, which has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1993. While the Village's borders are not officially noted on any plans or maps, nearby residents on CR 643 and 632, as well as those on Maple Ave and south of the Musconetcong River identify as residents of Asbury. The Historic District designation was based on the Village's historic economic, industrial, and religious importance to the area, especially given its strategic location on the Musconetcong River. Furthermore, Asbury's architecture was deemed representative of the original architectural character of the region, with structures dating from the 1800s. Today, Asbury is home to important regional organizations and stakeholders, including the Asbury Carbons, the Asbury United Methodist Church, a 6-acre public recreation field, and the Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA), while local activities include several farms, two local eateries, a farmer's market, and a post office.

The Village of Asbury is characterized as a linear settlement bound by two County Roads, 632 and 643, and three local streets, Maple Ave, Kitchen Rd, and School St, and is split between two municipalities and two counties: Franklin Township in Warren County, and Bethlehem Township in Hunterdon County. This area is served by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. The housing stock in Asbury is representative of the region, with structures primarily dating from or resembling 18th and 19th century northwestern New Jersey housing. One notable feature of most dwellings is the presence of outbuildings ranging from tiny outhouses to small barns, and several with modern garages. These outbuildings may present an opportunity to promote accessory dwelling or commercial units, some of which could even remain partly serving their current purposes as sheds or garages.

There is also a precedent of adaptive reuse in Asbury: one of the two churches in the Village was converted into condos around the time of its historic designation, and a former school building has been occupied as a dwelling for at least 20 years.

# Planning Process

## Plan Review and Case Example Research

The TNJ team conducted a review of relevant municipal, county, state, and regional documents to understand the existing planning and regulatory framework in the Village of Asbury. Given Asbury's location within several jurisdictions, the TNJ team reviewed planning and zoning documents from several county and regional entities to identify the overall goals and challenges for each jurisdiction. The plan review helps put the Village of Asbury in context within each of these jurisdictions. Despite its small population and land area, Asbury was mentioned at or was noted at least once in the following plans:

- New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (2001)
- Musconetcong River Management Plan (June 2011 Update)
- New Jersey Highlands Economic Sustainability Plan (2022)
- Musconetcong Watershed Zoning Analysis (2022)
- Warren County Transportation Master Plan (2021)
- Hunterdon County Growth Management Plan (in process)
- Franklin Township Zoning Map and Ordinances (2022)
- Franklin Township Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan (2008)
- Bethlehem Township Zoning Map and Ordinances (2020)
- Asbury Historic District National Registry Documentation (1993)

Additionally, the TNJ team conducted case example research to identify context-appropriate economic development strategies from similar communities. However, this proved challenging since most places comparable to Asbury wish to maintain their communities exactly as they are. A report summarizing the results of the plan review and case example research can be found in Appendix A.





## Advisory group

The TNJ team worked with the Musconetcong Watershed Association to establish a Village of Asbury Advisory Group consisting of key local stakeholders. TNJ held two Advisory Group meetings to solicit feedback and input. Membership consisted of representatives from the NJ Highlands Council, the Musconetcong Watershed Association, the Asbury United Methodist Church, and the Avenues in Motion TMA as well as a local farmer.

The Advisory Group helped TNJ identify the Village's strengths and weaknesses and identify feasible and community-supported recommendations to build on existing assets and address issues. Notes from the Advisory Group meetings can be found in Appendix B.

Technical advisory meetings with local stakeholders and members of the Voorhees Transportation Center also discussed an expansion of recreational opportunities. Members agreed that Asbury is a secluded recreational oasis that allows for relaxation and slowing down to the pace of the river. The group called for branding and programs that reflect this unique characteristic. Specifically, members recommended finding "ways to encourage people to walk and create exercise opportunities," and "expand the Island Park to make access easier to get to the water". One concern throughout these discussions was the challenge of parking and car access to these recreational areas. While additional parking at the MWA trailhead might increase accessibility for those who are traveling via car, protecting water quality from non-point source pollution and decreasing GHG emissions should be vital considerations, so alternative parking arrangements should be encouraged.

## Public outreach activities

The TNJ team conducted an online public questionnaire in March 2023 that was circulated by the stakeholders to their respective members, it was also promoted online on the websites and social media pages of the various stakeholders, as well as NJTPA's and TNJ's. In addition, the project team conducted a tabling event with the MWA in mid-March at the Asbury Coffee Mill, where the survey was promoted with flyers and paper copies handed out to patrons of the coffee shop and other pedestrians.

Overall, there were 55 complete responses, which were analyzed and summarized in Appendix C. The responses were aggregated and categorized based on three overarching recommendation topics found later in this report:

- Transportation
- Recreation
- Economic Development

**Transportation:** The Village's size and peaceful ambiance was the number one response for what makes the Village of Asbury unique. However, there were various responses that pointed out how this peace stands in contrast to the high-speed traffic cutting through the middle of downtown. Respondents indicated that they would be more inclined to walk or bike in Asbury if there were slower traffic speeds and improved bicycle and pedestrian amenities, such as bike lanes, crosswalks, and better sidewalks. Respondents of the survey also expressed that safer crossings, sidewalks and slower traffic would help to increase trail usage along the Musconetcong River. Residents and visitors see traffic safety as a necessity, listing various traffic-related concerns as major issues facing the Village. Written responses included speeding, truck traffic, and fragmented sidewalks in disrepair. Furthermore, some respondents had concerns of incompatible development, the threat of changes to the historic character, and inaccessibility. These are all elements that can be and are impacted by a place's transportation network.

**Recreation:** According to the outreach survey conducted in March 2023, recreation and trail usage is one of the top three reasons that visitors chose to visit the Village of Asbury. Residents and visitors expressed that the trails are one of the top three favorite spots in Asbury to spend time. Respondents provided some recommendations for how they would like the trails and recreational services to improve, actions like 'increasing access to river' and 'public restrooms.' Community events were also described as a strategy for getting residents and visitors out into nature.

**Economic Development:** Residents and visitors who responded to the survey expressed an interest in more business and retail variety throughout the Village. Visitors explained that they would be more likely to visit the Village of Asbury if it contained a greater variety of businesses and economic activities. When asked about specific examples for increasing visitation, the most frequently written response was the expansion and increased presence of a farmer's market. Additional responses ranged from restaurants to breweries, bookstores, and a hardware store.

While small retail development is requested by the Village's residents and visitors, retaining the Village's historic character ranked highly in the outreach efforts. Residents and visitors also requested a greater appreciation and showcasing of the local history through signage and paths that highlight the Village's history.

## NJDCA Market Analysis

A market analysis of the Village of Asbury was conducted by the Local Planning Services of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs in March of 2023. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the population characteristics of communities located in and around the Village of Asbury, and to inform the development of strategies for increasing visitation and recreational tourism. Three locations were determined by a different drive distance from the center of Asbury: five-minute drive, ten-minute drive and fifteen-minute drive. The locations were analyzed using the U.S. Census American Community Survey and a profile describing each was prepared by an ESRI Business Analyst. Full Community profiles for the 5-minute and 10-minute area are included in Appendix D.

**Figure 1. Demographics of the three study areas around the Village of Asbury**

	5-minute	10-minute	15- minute
Median income	\$113,608	\$93,332	\$102,285
Median age	46	44	43

\*Figures from ESRI forecast for 2022, using U.S. Census Bureau 2010 decennial Census data

### ESRI Tapestry Segments (15-minute drive)

Tapestry segments were created by ESRI to better forecast and analyze shifts in markets and growth in new markets. The 67 categories group together neighborhoods that share demographics, behavior, socioeconomic status, and geographic features. The NJ Department of Consumer Affairs utilized these segments to determine which types of markets are located near the Village of Asbury. Economic analysis determined that there are three distinct markets within a 15-minute drive of the Village of Asbury:

- **Savvy Suburbanites** (26.1%)- A suburban category that is occupied with middle to high income empty nesters, who are well educated and passionate about gardening and recreation. Their love of being outdoors and of food, wine and cultural events, support the Village of Asbury's goals to increase events, cultural activities, and restaurants.
- **Parks and Recreation** (19.5%)- A category made up of middle-income, hardworking suburbanites who feel established in their neighborhood and neighborhood amenities. This may be a more challenging group to appeal to, as they will be more resistant to travel outside their neighborhood; however, the highlighting and strengthening of Asbury's unique aspects may persuade individuals to visit. Strengthening accessibility through transportation improvements can also increase visitation from this group.



- **Green Acres** (11.1%)- A category that includes rural living, or families and individuals that thrive on self-reliance. Like Savvy Suburbanites, this category has a penchant for gardening and outdoor recreation. These interests were well considered when researching and outlining possible strategies for the Village of Asbury.

## Consumer Behavior: Recreation

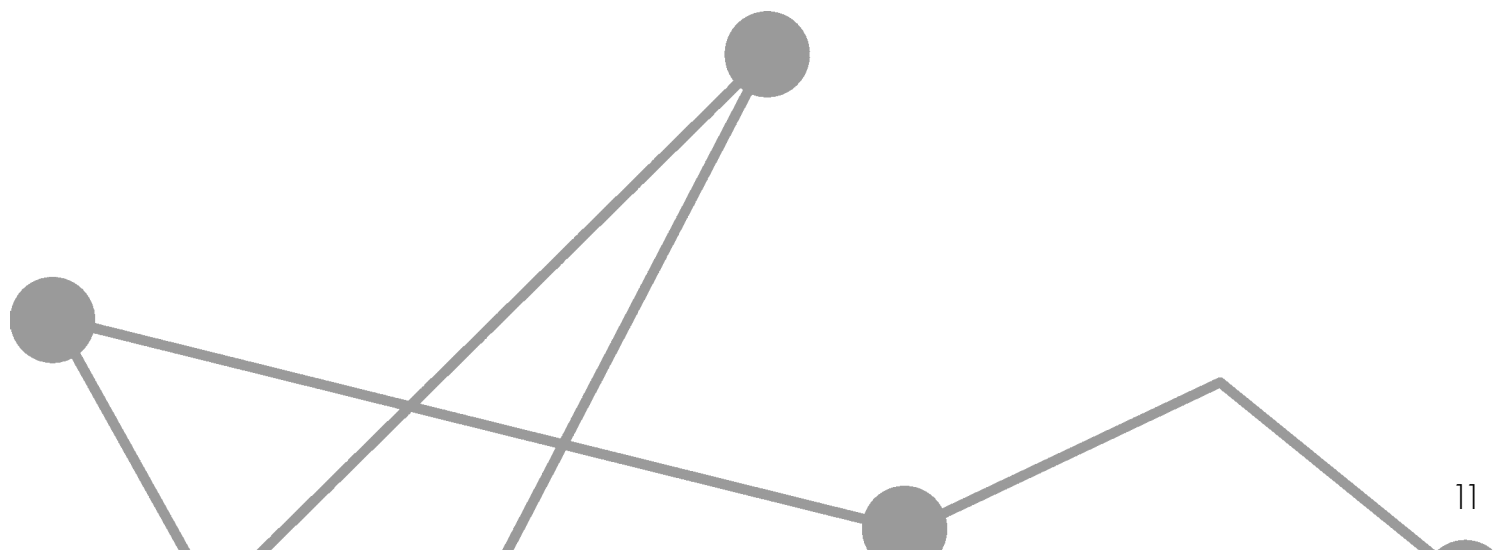
The recreational activity expenditures for the 15-minute drive segment suggest a population that values recreation. Each recreational expenditure exceeds the national average by at least 22%. Expenditures relevant to the future of the Village of Asbury are outlined in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Breakdown of Household Budget Expenditures for 15-minute area**

Expenditure	Spending Potential Index (U.S. Average=100)	Average Amount Spent	Total Amount Spent
Fees for Participant sports	141	\$184.50	\$3,325,113
Fees for Recreational Lessons	155	\$248.34	\$4,475,528
Membership Fees for Social/ Recreation/ Health Clubs	142	\$401.91	\$7,243,162
Docking and Landing Fees for Boats and Planes	142	\$15.05	\$271,303

\* Figures from ESRI forecasts for 2022, using Consumer Expenditure Surveys 2018 and 2019, Bureau of Labor Statistics

The consumer behavior of households within the 15-minute study area is encouraging to the economic future of Asbury see figure 2. With the expansion of recreational offerings, the Village of Asbury will likely capture some of this economic activity within its bounds.



## Consumer Behavior: Restaurants and Food

The 15-minute study area also has a high demand for food and dining. An average household spends over \$7,000 each year on groceries, and over \$5,000 on dining (See Figure 3). Both grocery and restaurant dining expenditures are 26% higher than the national average. The Village of Asbury can capture some of this economic activity through the creation of farmer's markets, local food stores, restaurants, and eateries.

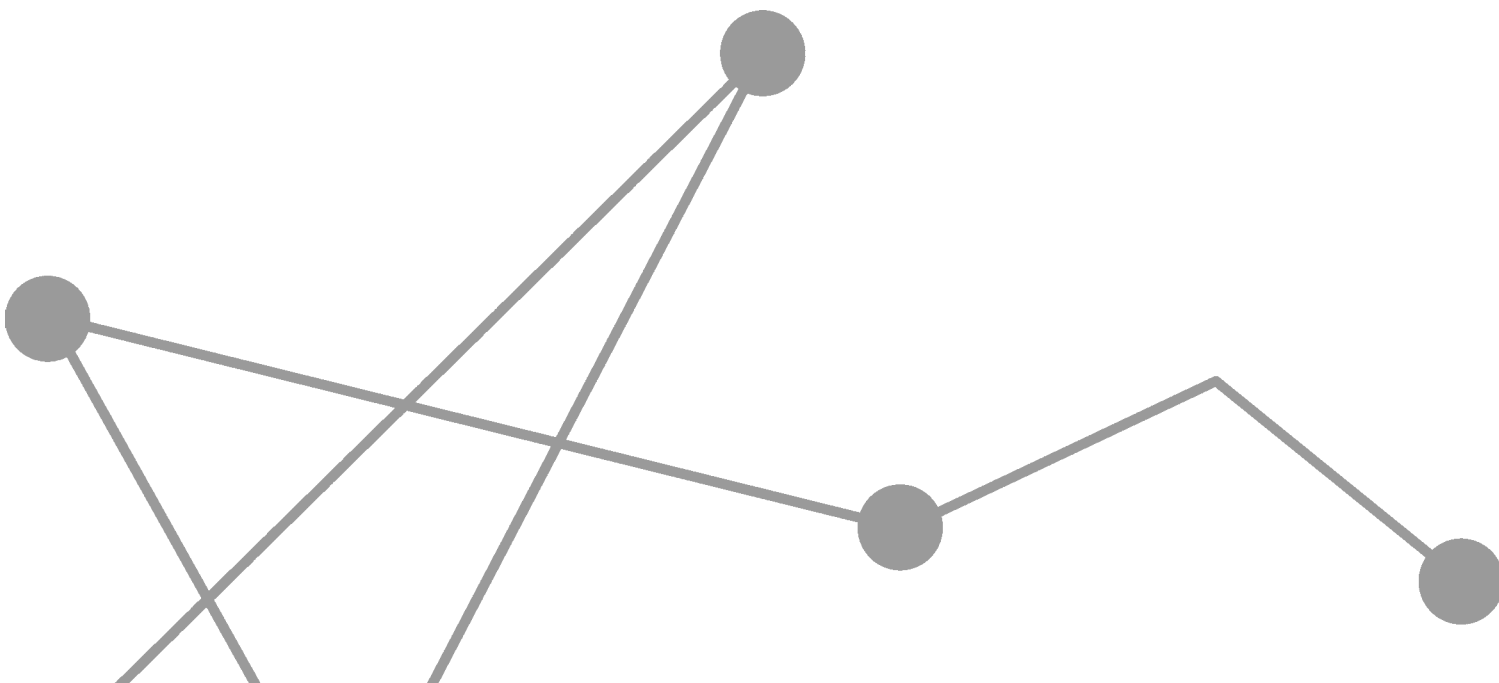
**Figure 3. Breakdown of Household Budget Expenditures for 15-minute area**

Expenditures	Spending Potential Index (U.S. Average = 100)	Average Amount Spent	Total Amount Spent
Food at Home	126	\$7,806.02	\$140,680,179
Food Away from Home	126	\$5,454.84	\$98,307,118

\*Figures from ESRI forecasts for 2022, using Consumer Expenditure Surveys 2018 and 2019, Bureau of Labor Statistics

### Key Takeaways from Study Area (15-minutes):

Strategic economic development for the Village of Asbury can be guided by (NJDC's economic analysis and) the key definitions of the local markets. Though varying in socioeconomic status, each market consists of middle-age populations seeking recreational activities in and around nature. These 18,022 households have a total of over \$15 million to spend on recreational activities per year and over \$238 million to spend on groceries and dining per year.



# Recommendations

The TNJ team drew on the Task 1 Plan Review, the market analysis, the community survey and feedback from the Advisory Group to identify four goals for the Village of Asbury, as well as a set of strategies to achieve these goals. These goals are:

1. Foster cooperation among local stakeholders.
2. Improve access to and amenities of recreational areas.
3. Improve economic vitality.
4. Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and safety.

## Goal 1: Foster cooperation among local stakeholders.

As an unincorporated village split by two counties and two townships, the Village of Asbury lacks a clear and defined organization responsible for its growth and maintenance. The Village would benefit greatly from fostering cooperation to implement and manage the Village's community visioning plan. It is recommended that an organization be created, comprising of the various stakeholders within and around the Village, to ensure efficient, effective, and equitable cooperation through the management and implementation of the visioning plan.

### Strategy 1: Establish the Village of Asbury Implementation Team

As part of the process for developing this Vision Plan for the Village of Asbury, the project team, in collaboration with the Musconetcong Water Association, established a project advisory committee to provide insights, guidance, and local knowledge into the planning process. What has become clear through this project planning process and the development of this plan, is that the unique jurisdictional status of the Village (two municipalities, two counties, etc.) requires a need for a formalized way of collaborating on implementation and recommendations, such as the establishment of a Village of Asbury Implementation Team (Implementation Team).

The Implementation Team can be comprised of a variety of stakeholders, many of whom have participated in this planning process, who can convene regularly to collaborate and plan next steps on implementing the recommendations presented in this plan. As a starting point for this Implementation Team, the MWA can take on an administrative role and act as a secretary or convening body to facilitate the planning and execution of meetings. Other members of this Implementation Team can include municipal representatives from Franklin and Bethlehem Townships, county representatives from Warren and Hunterdon County, local businesses, community, and faith-based organizations, such as the Asbury United Methodist Church and other concerned individuals.



The NJTPA's Plan Implementation Working Group Guide, Putting the Plan in the Hands of the People: The 1,2,3's of creating a Plan Implementation Working Group, can provide the Village with a step-by-step organizational framework to facilitate implementation of a community plan, including suggested structures for a series of three thematic educational, organizational, and action-oriented meetings. This guide is attached as Appendix E.

## **Strategy 2: Clearly define the Village of Asbury boundaries**

Once the Implementation Team has been established and is up and running, it would be beneficial to the implementation process for the Team to clearly define and establish the boundaries of the "Village of Asbury." While the Village is often seen as synonymous with the Historic District, its boundaries are not as firmly established, with home and businesses outside of the historic district considering themselves as part of the "Village." Knowing who and what is included within the Village boundaries will help solidify partnership and ensure that no one or no entity is left out of the implementation process. Consider the implementation of "gateway" features to demarcate the boundary at the Village entrances.

## **Goal 2: Improve access to and amenities of recreational areas.**

Recreational areas like fields, trails and waterways are sites of exploration, exercise and community and are therefore vital components of healthy communities. Rivers can intrigue residents and expose them to a variety of new information about water systems. Forests can provide exploration for individuals of all ages. Local and nearby recreational fields can host community activities like soccer or softball. These sites are essential for residents to get outside and get exercise, a health benefit that can improve physical and mental health issues. Additionally, recreational spaces can provide economic benefits through tourism and usage fees.

The Village of Asbury is fortunate to have access to a variety of different forms and types of recreational areas: the Musconetcong River, Franklin Township Recreational Fields, the river coastline, and other preserved areas. However, these resources can be challenging to access, and are under supported by programs and amenities. The Musconetcong River provides an opportunity to expand water recreation like fishing and boating and the various natural areas provide an opportunity for hiking, walking, bird watching and exploring. Specific improvements can make engaging with nature easier, whether through instruction or guidance, to increase the variety of activities possible at each location.

## Strategy 3: Improve Wayfinding throughout the Village

Wayfinding, or the set of actions and strategies used to make a space navigable, can assist the Village of Asbury to become more cohesive and consistent. Specific strategies for the Village are inspired by the 8 Principles of Wayfinding<sup>1</sup>.

In addition, a pedestrian wayfinding system can help increase pedestrian activity by providing simple directions to key areas, the distance in miles, and the estimated time it takes to walk there. Many people overestimate the time required to walk to a location, and often choose to drive as a result. Having signs for certain landmarks can also help people discover new things about a place that may have not been apparent to them, such as historic sites, parks and public space, or trails.

### 3.1 Create clear and consistent signage

#### 3.1.a: Implement Directional Signs

These signs can assist visitors to get to their location of interest, and to understand what other important landmarks or sites are around. This will ensure that visitors feel more comfortable moving around the space. Directional signs can also include the measure of distance from one area to another point of interest. For example, a directional sign near the Asbury Coffee Mill may specify that the Musconetcong River is .25 miles in the southeast direction. The signage could also include approximate walking time. See figure 4 for a rendered example of a directional signs that could be used in the Village of Asbury.



Figure 4. A potential wayfinding sign for the Village of Asbury which contains directional indicators, activity indicators and points of interest. Rendering by TNJ team.

*3.1.b: Implement Sign Labels to define activities and conditions.*

Each of the recreational locations within the Village of Asbury have unique conditions that allow for particular activities to occur. Some spaces are best used for fishing, others, for bird watching. Signage at each location would indicate possible activities the space can accommodate. This would be particularly helpful for increasing visitation at sites that sit removed from the road. Figure 5 provides an example of several sign labels for a park in Oregon.



Figure 5. South Falls Area sign at Silver Falls State Park, Oregon.

*3.1.c: Implement Interpretive Signs to describe significance.*

Interpretive signs are used to explain the importance, the history, or the mechanics of a particular location. These types of signs allow visitors to learn about the space without requiring a knowledgeable individual or tour guide. Figure 6 provides an example of an interpretive sign at Mill Hill Park. The sign provides visitors information about the history of the Mill and explains the significance of the location. In the Village of Asbury, interpretive signs can explain information about different historic homes, the history of Asbury Carbons, and the river ecosystem. Currently, the Village has interpretive signs at the entrance to Musconetcong Island Park and next to the Historic Asbury Mill that were added through the restoration process.

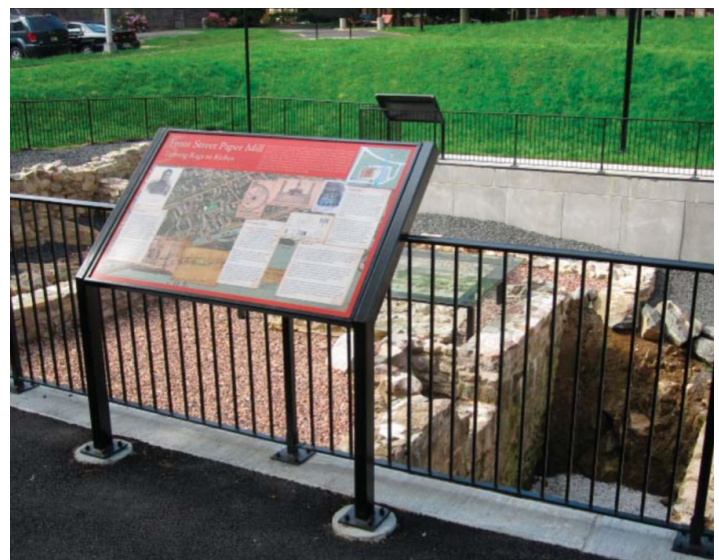


Figure 6. Interpretive sign at Mill Hill Park<sup>22</sup>



### 3.2: Clearly define pathways

Clearly marked and defined pathways between each of the recreational spaces and landmarks can also increase the ease at which visitors explore the town. The MWA trail has begun this process by creating clear markings and defined paths. Movement between the downtown and the recreational fields as well as from the center of the Village to the Island Park would benefit from clearly defined pathways. Well-structured paths can also be a strategy for storytelling of the Village's history. If a walking tour is designed, pathways should move in a way that makes sense for the story.



Figure 7. shows the current pathway between Old Main Street and the Recreational Fields, which is denoted by a small sign beside the telephone pole. The figure below provides a rendering that showcases a potential clearly defined pathway with clear signage and aesthetic landscaping.

### 3.3: Create a village-wide tourism map

A small, visitor friendly map can highlight some of the recreational amenities, landmarks, and trails. The map could also include designated “regions”, like a historic main street, river front and recreational fields. Delineating between these areas could be as simple as naming them or color coding them on future maps.

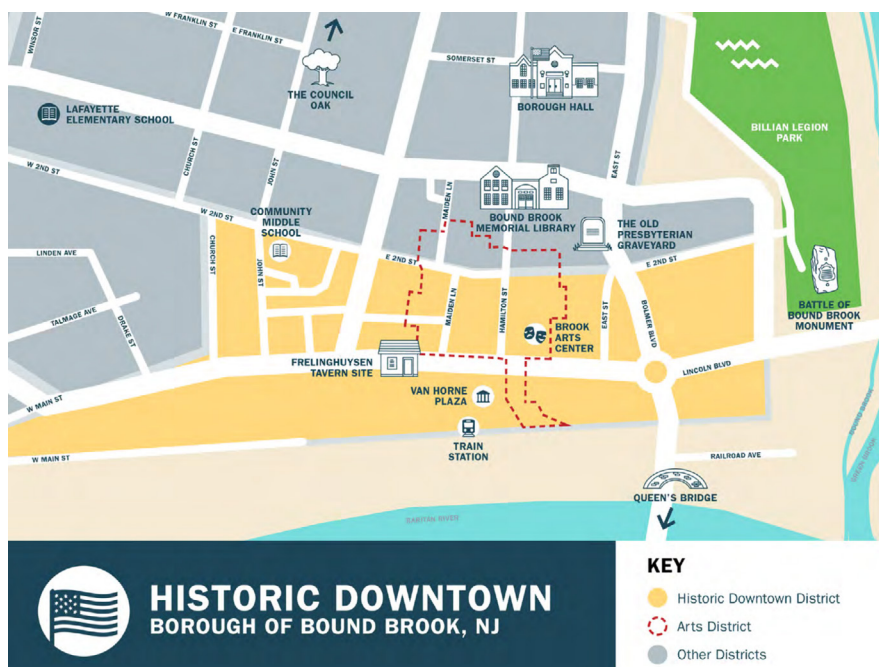


Figure 8. Downtown Bound Brook Wayfinding Map

### 3.4 Establish a Village Logo

Creating a visual representation of the Village will be helpful for strengthening local pride and solidifying the area’s identity. The logo should be simple, easy to understand and reflective of a characteristic in Asbury that sets it apart from other communities. Town logos often include a significant landmark to represent. Developing matching marketing materials will also be useful to ensure that signs, flyers, maps and websites all appear consistent and cohesive.

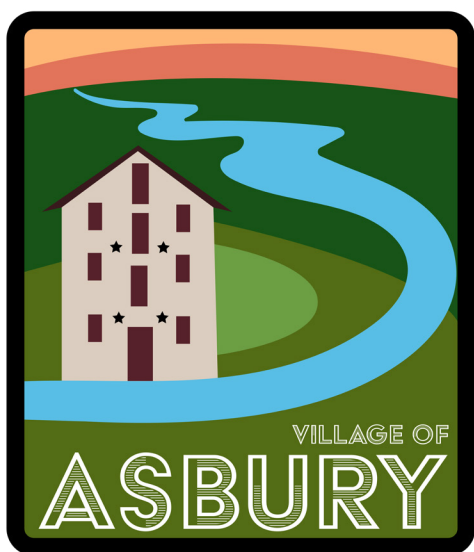


Figure 9a. An example Logo created by VTC staff



Figure 9b. The logo for Clinton, New Jersey includes the beloved red Mill that Clinton is often known for<sup>23</sup>



## Strategy 4: Expand and Maintain Trails and Linkages

The New Jersey Trails Plan expresses the importance of trail networks that “provide everyone with access to a full range of outdoor recreation activities, transportation alternatives within and among communities and quality trail experiences<sup>2</sup>”. The current trail in Asbury, located along the Musconetcong River and maintained by the Musconetcong Watershed Association has been a main draw for visitors. Additions to this trail are planned and will increase the trail offering to 3.3 miles and further expansion of trails could potentially increase recreational activities in the Village.

### 4.1 Establish Farm-side Trails

One method available for the Village of Asbury to increase trail offerings is to work with local farm owners to develop a system of trails alongside farmland. As agriculture is a unique and celebrated aspect of the Village of Asbury, having farm-side trails can both increase recreational use as well as provide marketing for local farms. Additionally, these trails can provide off-road transportation for nearby residents who may want to walk into the center of the Village.

#### More about farm-side trails

- The creation of farm-side trails can take a variety of forms. The Trans Canada Trail, a countrywide trail, weaves its way through farmland and pastures and aspects of its planning process is included within the 2005 report “A guide to Using and Developing Trails in Farm and Ranch Areas”. This guidebook outlines how both farm owners and planners can work together to develop an accessible trail that maintains the privacy of local farmers.
- Local farm owners are also able to create their own private trails that are then open to the public, or to paying visitors. Grieg Farm in Red Hook, NY has created a set of trails that wind around their dairy and fruit farm (See Figure 10). The owners benefit from this trail as visitors often end their hike at the farmer’s market.



Figure 10. Grieg Farm Trails



#### **4.2: Ensure Maintenance of Trails**

To build the Village of Asbury's identity as a place to reconnect with nature and engage in recreational activities, the maintenance of trails is essential. To ensure that, management of trails should be designated to a consistent group or entity, such as the Village of Asbury Implementation Team. To bolster capacity, the Implementation Team may look to local organizations and schools to access volunteer labor. Raritan Valley Community College, which is located 30 minutes southeast of the Village has an environmental club devoted to local forest and stream clean ups. Nearby Warren County Community College and Centenary University may also provide guidance. More information can be found on their websites.



Figure 11. Strategy 4.2 can provide consistent and reliable maintenance that will benefit the recently completed Muscentong Island Park in the Village of Asbury.



## Strategy 5: Improve Recreational Facilities

Increased availability of facilities and activities can help encourage residents to get out and engage with the community. These activities may also help to draw in visitors. Recreational and celebratory events can also draw in visitors as well as their friends and family and solidify a sense of community pride and identity. Improving facilities nearby for visitors can make the experience more convenient and enjoyable. The beautiful Musconetcong River is celebrated and loved by residents and visitors alike. Encouraging continued activity in and along the river will allow residents and visitors to engage more fully with the river. Events can also be tied to other community assets, such as the local history and agricultural sector.

### 5.1. Install a Kayak Launch

Increasing access to the Musconetcong River for recreational purposes was a common request from survey respondents and technical advisory members. An easy-to-use boat launch can increase access for kayakers specifically (See Figure 12). The Musconetcong River is broken up into two parts by the dam located next to the Asbury Mill. Kayakers need boat launches on either side to facilitate a quick transfer out of the water and into the water. A potential location for the first boat launch would be along the MWA trail to the southeast of the Musconetcong Watershed Association building. On the opposite side of the river, access points from the Musconetcong Island Park and the Historic Asbury Mill could provide two other boat launch locations. Kayak launches vary in size and design, the chosen design for these locations will be dependent on budget, available space, and needs.



Figure 12. Boat Launch in Ten Mile Creek County Park, Washington County, PA

## **5.2 Provide Restroom near trail heads.**

Survey respondents, as well as advisory group members, requested a restroom along or near the MWA trail. A traditional outdoor restroom facility could be expensive to build and maintain. Portable units, such as a Porta-Potty is another possibility, as they are both cost effective and lower effort. Another alternative is to allow visitors to utilize the composting toilet on the bottom level of the Musconetcong Watershed Association. This may prove logistically challenging and would require additional work on the part of MWA. The third alternative is to provide composting toilets near the edge of the trail. In addition to providing a restroom amenity, this composting toilet can serve to educate visitors on how composting works. The greatest challenges with this option are to ensure that individuals know how to use the toilet, that they are respectful of the process, and that the system be monitored and maintained to ensure water quality protection of the Musconetcong River. The composting toilet is more expensive and requires manual maintenance, and may be vulnerable to the colder months, however, it aligns closely with environmental concern and the goal to protect the Musconetcong River<sup>3</sup>.

## **5.3 Add a playground area near the Franklin Township Recreational Fields**

The Franklin Township Recreational fields provide 5.5 acres of soccer fields and green space. The addition of a children's playground to this area would increase the recreational opportunities for children of all ages and interests. While any traditional playground would operate well here, a natural playground would be consistent with the Village of Asbury's connection to the environment (See Figure 13). Special attention should be paid to ensuring opportunities for intergenerational use to encourage the very young and old to enjoy the space together.



Figure 13. Example of Nature Playground in Glens Falls, NY. Designed by Natural Playgrounds. <sup>24</sup>



### Goal 3: Improve economic vitality.

A vibrant and diverse local economy provides a variety of benefits to a community. Varied businesses offer different types of jobs and careers for residents and potential residents, thereby diversifying the workforce. Appropriately-scaled businesses with different types of products and services can work to improve the quality of life in an area, particularly if the businesses are within walking distance. Restaurants and other food establishments offer a place for residents and visitors to refuel after recreational activities or before a cultural event. Local food stores or farmer's markets can stimulate the local farm economy and provide healthy and local produce to households in the nearby area.

The Old Main Street, which runs through the middle of the Village of Asbury would be an excellent location for additional appropriately-scaled retail, restaurants and stores. Improving economic vitality would also encourage small-scale development that fits within the current context and serves the current population and their needs.

### Strategy 6: Activate the Village with Events

#### 6.1 Expand River-based and Trail-based events

Events celebrating and surrounding the Musconetcong River help to highlight the importance of the river to the region. Each year the city of Rahway and the Rahway River watershed association hosts a "Rahway Riverfest" to celebrate the river (See Figure 14). This citywide event includes live music, environmentally friendly craft workshops, food, and games. While the Village of Asbury is significantly smaller, an event like this can be implemented with support of local vendors, organizations, and the Musconetcong Watershed Association. The framework used to celebrate the grand opening of the Musconetcong Island Park in April of 2023 may be helpful for implementation. The MWA trail is a rich resource and setting for engaging in educational activities.



Figure 14. Volunteers and attendees making eco-crafts at the Rahway River Fest.<sup>25</sup>

Some potential nature- or trail-based tourism ideas could include:

- **Kayak Tours:** Currently, both MWA and Kayak East, a third-party organization, offer kayak trips through Asbury and along the Musconetcong River<sup>4</sup>. With the additional river access point at the Island Park, a kayak trip leaving from Asbury or arriving in Asbury is possible. These trips could be instructional, provide educational tours or simply a fun ride down the Musconetcong River.
- **Fishing Lessons or Fishing Meet Ups:** The new Island Park allows for a small meet up of fisherman. Lessons can encourage newcomers to participate and learn proper techniques. Hunterdon County in New Jersey hosted a fishing clinic through the recreation program in late April 2023<sup>5</sup>. MWA has collaborated with People Enjoying Active Conservation of the Environment in New Jersey (PEACE-NJ) to promote safe ways to enjoy the outdoors, especially for underserved communities.
- **Family or children's nature scavenger hunt:** This activity requires the making and printing of a unique nature scavenger hunt sheet for the area. Often, this means listing various objects, insects and animals that can be seen while walking the pathway. Children can then search for these items as they walk.
- **Bird Watching Groups:** Like fishing groups or lessons, bird watching groups can help encourage residents and visitors to get outside and engage with nature. Supporting these bird watching groups may mean starting a Village-wide birding group with meetings once a month, or adding structures along the trails that enhance the experience. A bird blind is often used in areas where birding is frequent. A bird blind is a structure that allows the viewer to remain unseen to a bird and therefore allows for a more up-close view. Figure 15 provides an example of one type of bird blind.



Figure 15. Simple bird blind structure at Tonaquint Park in Utah <sup>26</sup>



## 6.2 Plan bike races and tours

The bucolic and picturesque views throughout the Village of Asbury make it a prime recreational route for cyclists. Street improvements in terms of safety are the most important recommendations for increasing cycling around the area, though some recreationally focused efforts may also contribute. Planning cycling tours, or races can establish the Village of Asbury as a cycling-friendly area and may also provide economic benefits for any vendors in the area. The races and tours can conclude at the Asbury Coffee Mill where participants can gather, establish a cycling community, and purchase coffee or food. Boro Bean, a coffee shop in Hopewell, NJ has become a popular destination for street cyclists and can provide a nice example for the Village of Asbury's potential (See Figure 16).



Figure 16. Sunday cyclists enjoying a break at Boro Bean, a popular cyclist stop in Hopewell, NJ. <sup>27</sup>

### 6.3 Share the Village history through events

Both the public questionnaire and the input from the project advisory committee underscore the importance of history in defining the character of the Village of Asbury. Many people noted that they enjoyed traveling through the Village to experience rich history, feeling like they were traveling back in time to another era in history. Few places in New Jersey feel this untouched by time and the Village Implementation Team should work with the municipalities, local businesses, and other stakeholder partners to create events that celebrate the richness of history and the unique character that history brings to this place.

Some examples of potential events, include:

- **Mill Tour:** The Historic Asbury Graphite Mill represents the Village's historic importance of graphite, and the manufacturing plant across the Musconetcong represents graphite's present importance. This unique connection to graphite should be highlighted and incorporated into town-based activities<sup>6</sup>.
- **Drawing Class:** In 1990s, Asbury Carbons, purchased the U.S. graphite and lubricants division of Dixon Ticonderoga Co., a well-known company that makes the famous #2 pencils. Asbury could host a drawing class that incorporates the mill's history and architecture with the use of these Ticonderoga pencils. The fun and creativity that comes with making art ensures that individuals of all ages can participate and be engaged. The actual format of this activity varies depending on resources and interest.
- **Historic Scavenger Hunt:** Similar to the nature-based scavenger hunt, the historic scavenger hunt could be self-led and would require the printing out of maps or checklists and hosting a location for where individuals can acquire it. Gardner Village, a historic town in Utah, offers an engaging scavenger hunt that incorporates natural spaces as well as local restaurants and vendors<sup>7</sup>.
- **Historic Architecture Walk:** This walk can be a volunteer-led program, or a self-led program that allows visitors to travel through the Village with information about each building and its architectural features.

#### In Practice...

- \* The Proud Neighbors of Collingswood hosts a yearly walking tour that reviews the different types of architecture around several neighborhoods. The tour cost \$5 to participate and ends at a local brewery<sup>8</sup>.
- \* Hopewell Public Library and the Hopewell Valley Heritage week hosted a walking tour in 2019 that covered the historic homes in the area. Attendees were required to register but did not have to pay a fee<sup>9</sup>.
- \* New Brunswick's historical walking tour can be accessed on the cities' website and allows visitors to travel and observe at their own pace<sup>10</sup>.

## Strategy 7: Showcase and celebrate the local Farm economy

The Village of Asbury contains and is surrounded by a variety of local farms that produce fresh vegetables, fruits, grains, cheeses, and meats. These local businesses provide beauty and sustenance to the local economy, and therefore can be instrumental in helping the Village achieve its goals.



Figure 17. Vendors and visitors along Washington street in Toms River for the annual Harvest Arts Festival

### 7.1. Host Farm-based events:

Harvest festivals, pumpkin picking and small-scale agriculture fairs engage local farms and connect them with visitors and residents. These events can be hosted on the local farms or stationed at a neutral venue like the Franklin Township Recreational fields or the firehouse. Closing a side street like “School Street” may be preferred, as it allows through traffic along Main Street.

The Toms River Business Improvement District hosts a Harvest Arts Festival in October. Washington Street is closed to allow for vendors, food trucks, beer and wine gardens and local artist stands to populate the roadway (See Figure 17).



## **7.2. Establish a local Farmers' market**

Several of the local farms surrounding the Village of Asbury already participate in farmer's markets around New Jersey. As a result, the Village of Asbury has an opportunity to establish its own local farmers' market with greater ease, and presumably with less guidance. The Village can establish a Community Food Systems (CFS) Steering Committee to connect stakeholders in the farming and dining communities and encourage collaboration. The steering committee for the CFS can take responsibility of this event and continuously check in about improvements or assistance. The local community will benefit from the increased access to fresh and local food, and the event can encourage visitors. Farmer's Markets have become popular around New Jersey, Figure 18 shows the Highland Park Farmer's Market in Central New Jersey.



Figure 18. Scenes from the weekly Highland Park Farmer's Market.<sup>28</sup>

## **7.3. Promote Farm-to-table dining**

The use of local farm produce and meat to create dishes in a local restaurant supports these local farms, increases the quality of dining options, and allows for a reduction in vehicles miles traveled. With the great number and variety of farms in and around Asbury, a farm-to-table restaurant is a viable possibility. The nearby Juniper Hill restaurant in Annandale, NJ, sources ingredients from several farms in the area<sup>11</sup>. In Hopewell, NJ, the Brick Farm Tavern sources most of their ingredients from their farm, Double Brook, and additional ingredients are sourced from other local farms<sup>12</sup>. The Village can also establish a CFS to connect stakeholders in the farming and dining communities and encourage collaboration. The USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE) has created a guiding document: Community Based Food System Assessment and Planning which can assist with establishing a committee and working through developing a thorough plan<sup>13</sup>.

## Strategy 8: Encourage Healthy and Focused Growth

A common request from both stakeholders and survey respondents was to increase the variety of retail and dining along the downtown. Some specifically called out for a brewery or a bakery and others requested a corner store or an antique store. To support this type of intentional growth and development, the Village of Asbury can engage in several actions.



Figure 19. Small town consultants conduct a town visit as part of a planning process for a rural community <sup>29</sup>

### 8.1 Seek guidance on revitalization at the appropriate scale.

Prior to moving forward with any revitalization action, it is essential to clarify how the Village will proceed and how development will be supported. Respondents and stakeholders alike expressed an interest in seeing small-scale development but were also fearful of large-scale developments like warehousing and big box stores. This balance needs to remain a consideration and held as a gauge throughout. Goals can be developed through a local committee on their own, or through a partnership.

- **Join Downtown New Jersey:** Once established, the Village of Asbury Implementation Team should consider joining Downtown New Jersey (DNJ). DNJ is an excellent resource for the Village of Asbury to rely on throughout its downtown revitalization. The organization is a collection of businesses, professionals, government agencies and other agencies passionate about downtowns. In addition to webinars and reports, Downtown New Jersey keeps track of relevant legislative changes and updates that may challenge or support downtown development. Online and in person workshops and conferences on various topics may also provide guidance for Asbury.
- **Hire a small-town consultant:** Following the creation of a working or implementation committee, hiring outside consultants may be an effective strategy for targeting specific goals like economic revitalization. Consultants that specialize in small, rural downtowns will be best equipped to lay out a plan and set of action steps to achieve the intended and decided goal. Working with a consulting organization can provide resources and guidance that may be useful.

## 8.2 Rezone for greater variety of businesses

According to the Franklin Township's 2021 zoning map, the northern portion of the Village of Asbury is C-1, or Village commercial. This area allows for a variety of commercial activities ranging from markets and restaurants, to kayak rentals and barber shops. The southern section of the Village is zoned R-.75, or Village Residential, which restricts use to "single-family detached dwellings, agricultural uses, public utility structures and civic buildings". While this type of zoning may help curb excessive development, it is barring small and local businesses out, when they could be providing services from small accessory units or already existing buildings. Rezoning to allow for mixed use development, can help reduce costs for businesses as it will bypass the expensive and time-consuming variance process. Reducing parking requirements listed in zoning codes can also reduce the cost a small business would need to invest. Frenchtown, NJ updated its Land Use Ordinance and Village Center Plan in 2019 to encourage small businesses into downtown and to reduce the costs and challenges that businesses owners face (See Figure 20). The updates expanded the list of accepted uses to limit any lengthy and costly variance that may have been required in the past. It also streamlined applying for signage and rid of any parking requirement for new businesses<sup>14</sup>.



Figure 20. Downtown Frenchtown, NJ <sup>30</sup>



### **8.3 Support Accessory Commercial Units (ACUs)**

The Village of Asbury has a wealth of small, accessory building units that stand separate from single-family homes. These buildings, sheds, and garages can be rented out, or utilized by small, local businesses to sell products, and provide services to the town. Precipice Coffee in Ellsworth, ME has taken advantage of a shed on the owner's property and converted the space into a coffee shop and roastery (See Figure 21). This will be helpful for encouraging new commercial services into the downtown and encouraging already existing economic activities to further develop through established store fronts. The Village of Asbury Implementation Team, once established, could work with Franklin and Bethlehem Townships to help draft ordinances that would allow ACUs<sup>15</sup>.



Figure 21. Precipice Coffee in Ellsworth, ME operates out of a small converted shed, located beside the owner's residential property. Hours are designated to neighbor-friendly times and parking is limited to 15 minutes<sup>31</sup>.

### **8.4 Encourage Adaptive Reuse**

The beautiful and historic buildings along the Village of Asbury's main street offer unique spaces for buildings and other uses through an adaptive reuse process. Adaptive reuse is the refurbishing of old, under-utilized buildings with the intention of using it for an alternative purpose. An example already stands in Asbury; the historic schoolhouse now is a set of apartments. Survey respondents and stakeholders expressed interest in this type of development as it is sensitive to the current level of development and can act as a form of downtown activation. Throughout surveying and stakeholder meetings, the potential of adaptive reuse for several currently standing buildings was mentioned. Some individuals expressed interest in converting the stable into an art center, education center or a small-scale craft market. To illustrate this potential request, a rendering was created with a potential design for the stable (See Figure 22 on the next page).



Figure 22. A rendering representing a potential Adaptive reuse of the currently underused Stable located on Old Main Street in the Village of Asbury, NJ. Designs show a new community art venue as well as a lawn for outdoor concerts and an arts market.

To encourage this type of development, local jurisdictions can work to address the main barriers that adaptive reuse developers face<sup>16</sup>.

Accumulating sufficient funding at a variety of levels:

- Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit- a tax credit that helps to reduce taxes for properties in a historically designated area<sup>17</sup>.
- New Jersey Asset Activation Planning Grant from NJEDA can help to support the planning and feasibility process for activating an under-utilized public asset.
- Financial incentives in the form of tax credits or write-offs that promote adaptable reuse. The city of Phoenix, AZ offers coverage of fire plan and permitting fees up to \$7,000.
- Grants and loans through local historic preservation programs.



Ensuring Ordinances and Zoning encourage Adaptive Reuse:

- To ensure sufficient affordable housing options, the city of Lambertville created an inclusionary overlay zone district which allows for the adaptive reuse of nonresidential buildings into affordable housing (Ord. No. 05-2019)<sup>18</sup>. The Village of Asbury, Franklin, and Bethlehem Townships could create a similar overlay zone district to allow for adaptive reuse in appropriate areas.
- Local ordinances or reuse programs can provide more comprehensive technical support which may reduce the costs of applications and speed up processes. Phoenix has an adaptive reuse program which streamlines the process, provides development support, regulatory relief and incentives<sup>19</sup>. The City of Los Angeles has an adaptive reuse ordinance which outlines the process and provides clear cut guidelines to support potential developers<sup>20</sup>.
- Incorporate any adaptive reuse goals into local plans, municipality plans and regional plans
- Create a comprehensive list with information about available buildings, the required refurbishing process and potential organizations that may utilize the space.

### **8.5 Set Clear Village-wide Design guidelines**

The Village of Asbury has a distinct aesthetic, a result of the various 18th and 19th century homes and buildings that line the quaint streets. This unique style is a favorite aspect of the Village for residents and visitors alike, and so consistency with this style is important. To keep this consistent and cohesive look, the Village of Asbury could create a set of design requirements or guidelines to monitor the aesthetics of any development.

#### **In Practice...**

The Historic Preservation Commission of the Township of Hopewell created a set of design standards for homes within the historic district or with a historic designation. These guidelines are outlined and described in a handbook that includes information like exterior maintenance, roofing, as well as additions and new construction<sup>21</sup>.

### **8.6. Plan for shared off-street parking to support the revitalization of the Village and to allow for safe access to the Village's amenities.**

As with many historic villages, Asbury has limited parking that inhibits economic vitality and the expansions of use, while negatively impacting safety. An analysis of the uses and existing parking, in conjunction with revitalization/redevelopment opportunities, should be considered to recommend locations for future parking opportunities in the Village. It is important to couple this with pedestrian crosswalk enhancements and other streetscape improvements to make the Village more pedestrian friendly.

## Goal 4: Improve bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and safety.

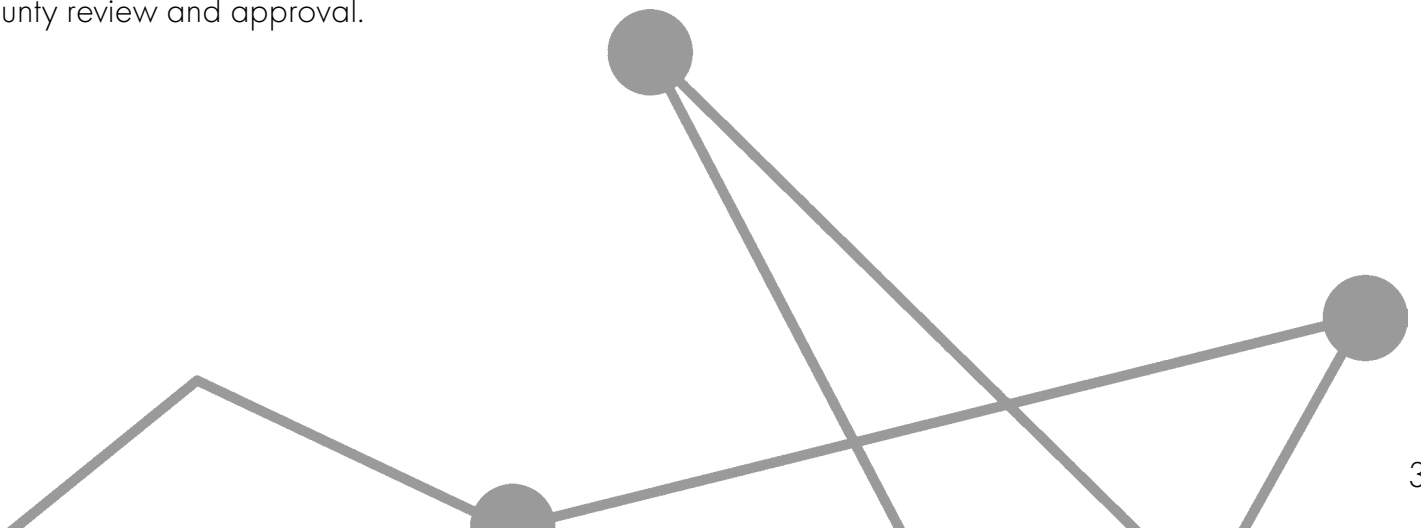
The existing road network actively works against the Village's interests by enabling high speeds, large trucks, and cut-through traffic. This high speed through-way makes it an attractive location for unwanted uses, such as warehouses.

*"Generally, the design speed of roadways with traffic calming devices shall be equal to the posted speed limit or statutory speed of the roadway. Traffic calming devices assist in maintaining this design speed (and adherence to the speed limit) by physically limiting the speed at which the design vehicle may traverse the device. The goal is to moderate vehicle speeds along the roadway, and to improve the safety and functionality for all road users" (NJDOT, 2015, p. 15-2).*

The Village of Asbury should propose traffic calming solutions appropriate to its scale and context to achieve its goals: a safe and well-connected bicycle and pedestrian network to enable residents and visitors to get around the Village safely without having to drive everywhere. In addition to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, the Village should explore traffic calming solutions that promote lower speeds for all drivers, which in turn could lead to a decrease in cut through traffic, particularly heavy vehicles. Both of these goals are consistent with Village residents' concerns about retaining Asbury's quaint, historic character and not welcoming warehouses and other incompatible land uses.

*"Traffic calming devices that affect turning speeds at intersections (reduced turning radii, forced turn island, diagonal diverter, median barrier, curb extension, realigned intersection) should have a speed profile of 10 mph. This is consistent with AASHTO policies, which state that vehicles turning at intersections designed for minimum-radius turns operate at low speed (less than 10 mph)" (NJDOT, 2015, p. 15-2).*

With these goals in mind, we propose the following strategies for the Village of Asbury to consider adopting. All of the listed strategies are in line with the Complete Streets approach to planning and design, and can be incorporated into municipal, county, or regional plans to ensure Asbury remains connected to its environs. However, it should be noted that Asbury's two largest roads, Old Main St and Asbury Bloomsbury Rd, are both County Routes, so any improvements along those roads would require County review and approval.



## Strategy 9: Implement Intersection Treatments

### 9.1: Implement all-way Stop intersections

The installation of all-way stops at all intersections would help lower speeds and can improve safety at intersections. While initial suggestions were centered around installing traffic lights at the entrances to Asbury, these were viewed very unfavorably by residents because they would detract from the Village's historic character. However, the residents and stakeholders also acknowledged the dangers posed by the existing layout, and stop signs were viewed as a favorable solution. All roads intersecting Old Main St have stop signs, so this would only require adding eight new stop signs at existing intersections, stopping all traffic at each intersection. Figure 23 provides an example of an existing four-way stop located in Hillsborough, NJ.

The Village should consider three- or four-way stop signs, marked crosswalks, and reduced curb radii at the following intersections:

- Main St and Maple Ave
- Old Main St and School St
- Old Main St and Asbury Bloomsbury Rd and Kitchen Rd
- Old Main St and Asbury Anderson Rd



Figure 23. Aerial view of a four-way stop in Hillsborough, NJ source: Google Maps



## 9.2 Improve crosswalks and install a midblock crossing on Old Main Street

The Village should paint high visibility crosswalks at the corner of every intersection along Old Main St to provide additional comfort and guidance for pedestrians, while also signaling to drivers that they must stop for crossing pedestrians. Several midblock crossings were added to downtown Somerville's Main Street as a way to increase pedestrian safety (See Figure 24).

A midblock crossing should also be installed on Old Main St halfway between School St and Asbury Bloomsbury Rd/Kitchen Rd. The distance between these two intersections is nearly one-quarter mile, which takes about six minutes to walk, assuming a walking speed of 3 ft/s. To maximize safety and visibility, a HAWK beacon, or a pedestrian-activated beacon could be installed in conjunction with a raised crosswalk.

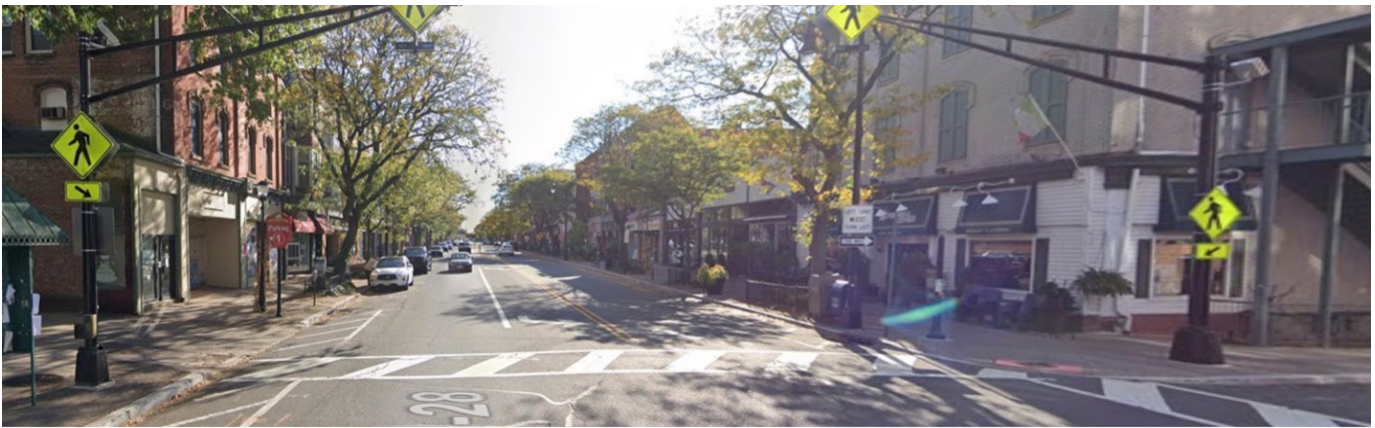


Figure 24. Pedestrian HAWK beacon on Main Street in Somerville, New Jersey

If a midblock crossing were to be installed, then a complete sidewalk network for the Village or along Old Main St would be necessary.



Figure 25. provides a rendering of several midblock crossings on Old Main Street in Asbury.

### 9.3 Reducing turn radii

The Village should work to implement a reduction in curb radii at select intersections where existing turns are too accommodating to vehicles turning at high speeds, in particular at the intersections of Old Main St and Maple Ave, and Old Main St and CR 632. The reduction could be accomplished with a physical extension of the curbs to narrow the turn, or the Village could turn to cheaper and quicker solutions to achieve the same result, such as installing pylons, bollards, or short speed bumps that would require cars or large trucks to slow down to make the turns.

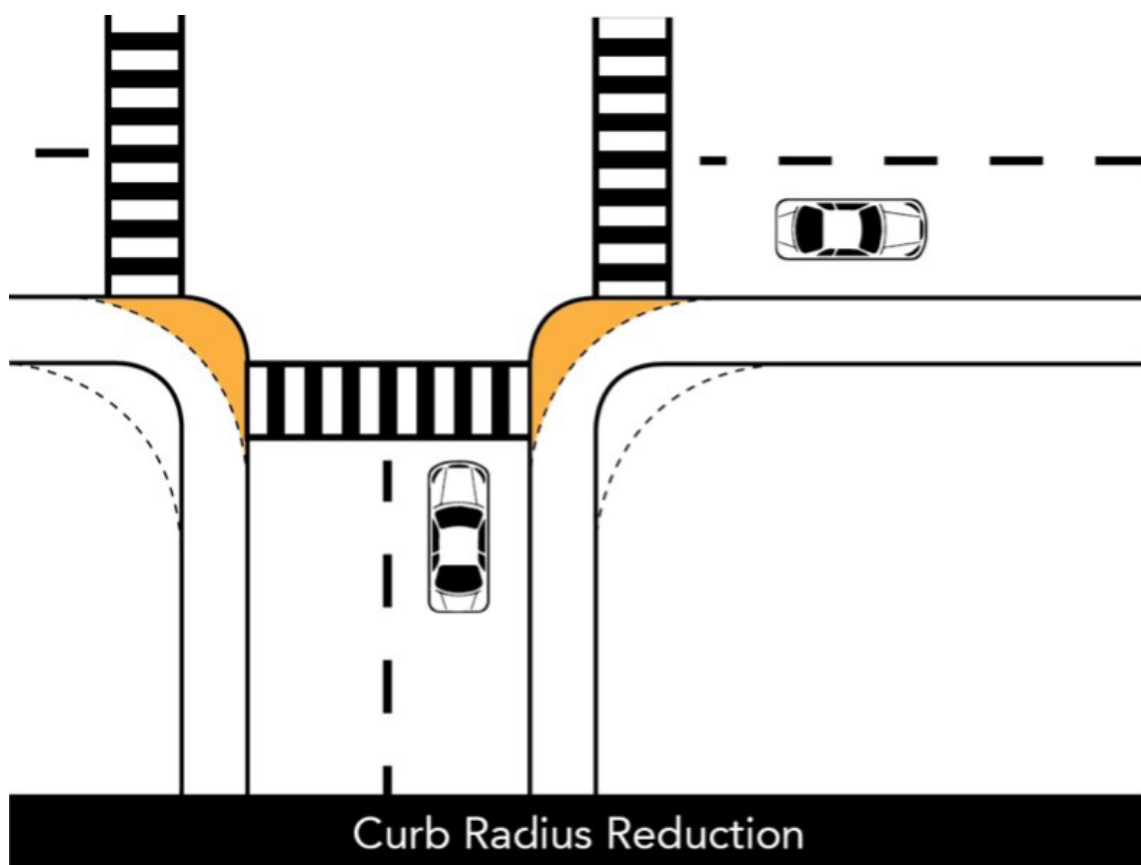


Figure 26. Illustration of how an additional bulb out, or set of bollards can reduce the turn radius for vehicles and thereby reduce speed<sup>32</sup>.



## Strategy 10: Improve Pedestrian Infrastructure

### 10.1 Complete the sidewalk network

To comply with ADA requirements, sidewalks should provide a minimum of 5 feet of unobstructed path to accommodate two wheelchairs passing each other and to allow wheelchair users to turn around. When slopes are present, the inclines should follow the same requirements of ramps, which should not exceed a 5% grade, or a ratio of 1:20 (NJDOT, 2017). There are existing sidewalk segments along Old Main St, but those on the eastern side near the church are original slate sidewalks that have shifted and been worn out over time. Curb cuts and sidewalk segments were recently replaced in downtown Clinton, NJ to ensure that each crossing and sidewalk is ADA accessible (See Figure 27).



Figure 27. ADA compliant sidewalks in Clinton, NJ source: google maps

The Village should work with municipalities and property owners to complete ADA-compliant sidewalks at the following locations:

- From Asbury Anderson Rd to Smith Ln
- From Adrienne Ct to Old Main St
- From Mill Stone Farm (Bloomsbury Rd) to Old Main St
- From Hidden Acres Farm (Kitchen Rd) to Old Main St
- From Halls Mill Rd to Old Main St

While some of the proposed streets for sidewalk installation are up to one mile away from Old Main St, the sidewalks wouldn't be used just for going to the center of the Village. Installing sidewalks can promote walking to neighbors or can even provide a safer trip to the school bus stop. Additionally, the sidewalks can be used by bicyclists to ride into town, to the trails, or to the river. Riding a bicycle on the sidewalk is legal in New Jersey, with a few exceptions in larger cities, such as Jersey City or New Brunswick, and can also be prohibited by local ordinances in core business areas, such as the northern edge of Nassau St in Princeton.

## **10.2 Maintain historic sidewalk character, where possible**

To preserve the historic character of the Village, several stakeholders agreed that an effort should be made to rehab any old historic sidewalks, when possible (See Figure 28 and 29). There are certain provisions and exceptions in the ADA Standards for Accessibility; for new design and construction, exceptions to compliance apply where it is structurally impracticable to meet the requirements, but efforts should be made to make the path as accessible as possible. As for alterations to historic properties, they shall comply “to the maximum extent feasible, with the provisions applicable to historic properties in the design standards specified in § 35.151 (c),” otherwise “alternative methods of access shall be provided pursuant to” those requirements (ADA, CFR 35.151).



Figure 28: An example of historic slate sidewalks



Figure 29. Current condition of the historic sidewalk along Old Main Street in the Village of Absury



### **10.3 Improve pedestrian lighting**

Pedestrian-scale lighting should be installed to provide actual and perceived sense of security while walking at night or in dark conditions. Pedestrian-scale lighting is especially important at crosswalks to increase visibility for drivers at night or during inclement weather. See figure 30 for a great example of improved pedestrian scale and design-aware lighting.

### **10.4 Improve streetscape design**

Improve the design characteristics of the streetscape through the installation of planters, wider sidewalks, decorative lighting, and amenities like benches or outdoor dining areas. Add improvements that create a more pedestrian friendly environment and help enhance the visual and functional use of the streetscape.



Figure 30. Pedestrian scale lighting in downtown Princeton provide light and stay consistent with the downtown aesthetic. Flower planters also contribute to the ambiance.

## Strategy 11: Improve bicycle infrastructure

To accommodate bicycle infrastructure, the Village should limit some on-street parking and narrow the travel lanes to allow enough space to install painted and/or buffered bike lanes. Along Old Main St., instead of installing bike lanes, the Village can consider narrowing the paved roadway by several feet on each side to decrease impervious surface and install sharrows on main roads, and “Share the Road” signs upon entering the Village. If this is the chosen option, other tools to slow vehicular traffic speeds should be considered as well, such as installing speed humps at regular intervals along Old Main St.

In addition to providing clear road signage and bike lanes, conveniently located and clearly marked bicycle parking should be made available at key establishments, such as the recreational field, offices, eateries, the post office, near trailheads, and at the river access. Having all-in-one bicycle service stations at major bike parking sites or other key areas, such as near the river, the trailheads, and the recreational field, is an effective tool to help people who need to do any minor tuning to their bikes before getting back on the road (See Figure 31).

Finally, a wayfinding system similar to the one recommended for pedestrians should be installed for cyclists to help them orient themselves and have a sense of not only how long their trip might take, but to highlight routes that are specifically catered to bicyclists.



Figure 31. New bike repair stations in Toledo, OH provide backup support for local cyclists <sup>33</sup>



## Strategy 12: Improve Driver Behavior and Implement Traffic Calming

### 12.1 Gateway treatment

Originally proposed in the Warren County Transportation Master Plan, gateway treatments use visual cues and physical alterations to alert drivers to a change in street type, which is particularly helpful on high-speed county roads. Furthermore, they “can help instill a sense of place, supporting placemaking and downtown development” (NJTPA, 2021, p. 49).

Ideally, this strategy would be implemented in conjunction with one or all of the other strategies, as a strong wayfinding system can help mitigate several traffic-related concerns.



Figure 32. A rendering prepared by VTC staff to illustrate a potential gateway treatment for Old Main Street in Asbury, NJ.



## 12.2 Narrow travel lanes along Old Main Street.

Currently, Old Main St is listed as a 22' wide, two-lane road, while CR 632 is a two-lane, 24' foot road when approaching Asbury from the east and west. While 12' lanes might be appropriate for an Interstate Highway, roads that cut through communities where people live and walk around should be designed at an appropriate scale. The minimum width suggested in NJDOT's Roadway Design Manual is of 10' in traffic calming areas, which includes areas with posted speed limits of 25 mph or less. The town should also consider narrowing Old Main St, and the sections of Asbury Bloomsbury Rd and Asbury Anderson Rd when approaching the Village limits.

Road width has been shown to influence driver behavior; the wider a road or travel lane, the faster people tend to drive because of the driver's perceived safety/room for error with extra room within a lane, or the distance from objects such as sidewalks, road signs, or vegetation.



Figure 33. Roads of interest

### 12.3 Conduct a speed study

Conducting a speed study in the Village of Asbury would offer crucial information for decision-makers by systematically documenting driver behavior. Though the outreach effort for this study indicated that residents felt that high speed was an issue, documenting that fact with data collected could provide a clearer justification for adopting specific strategies to reduce speed or identify additional tactics to make the Village of Asbury a safer place for all.

The Avenues in Motion TMA (AIM) provides technical assistance to many counties in the region, including Warren County. One of the services they provide is conducting speed studies and drafting technical reports detailing the findings. Once established, the Village of Asbury Implementation Team should contact AIM and work with the County to conduct such a study for the Village.



Figure 34. A DIY speed limit reminder written in chalk by Village residents along Old Main Street.



## 12.4 Implement raised or decorative crossings

A raised crossing (e.g. raised walkway) is a marked pedestrian crosswalk at an intersection or a mid-block location constructed at a higher elevation than the adjacent roadway. It combines the benefits of a raised speed reducer with enhanced visibility for the pedestrian crossing. They are appropriate for roads with speed limits of 35 mph or lower. Raised intersections should include marked crosswalks, and they can be paired with stop or yield signs, and curb extensions.

Making aesthetic improvements to crosswalks can also provide traffic calming. Using brick pavers, for example, can provide aesthetic improvements, help create a sense of “place” and draw attention to the intersection by providing a visual contrast to the roadway (See Figure 35). In addition, paved crosswalks provide a tactile experience for a driver, further reinforcing the need to slow down when approaching.



Figure 35. Sidewalk pavers with a historic emblem in downtown Denville.



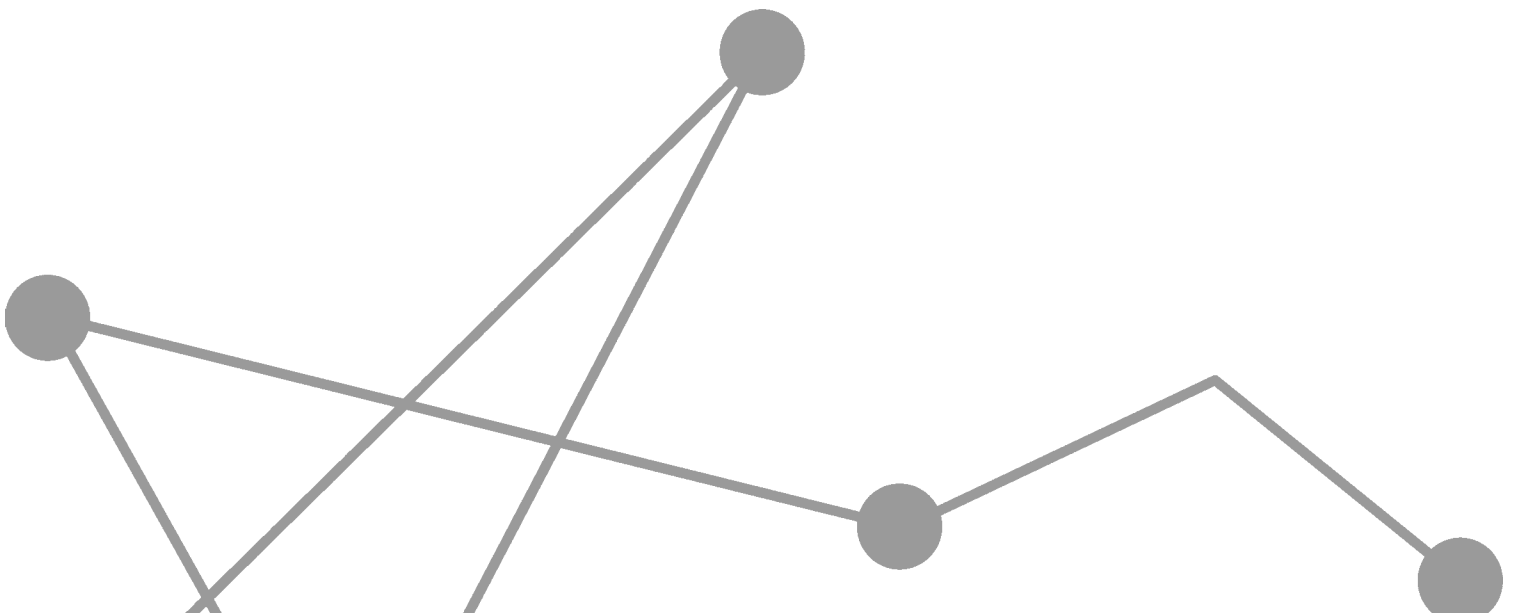
### Strategy 13. Participate in and align implementation with the upcoming Warren County Complete Streets Implementation Plan

Through the NJTPA Subregional Studies Program, Warren County will be undertaking the development of a comprehensive Complete Street policy implementation plan with a focus on rural and small-town strategies. It will primarily focus on all county and a selection of local roads. Complete Streets policies provide for the needs of all roadway users including motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, transit vehicles and riders, and freight. The plan will also include a variety of Complete Streets implementation strategies and include the development of street typology guidelines and recommendations for up to five strategic locations.

The Village of Asbury Implementation Team, and the municipalities within the Village, should actively participate as stakeholders in this county-wide initiative. As part of the planning process the county will be conducting extensive outreach. It is important that Village stakeholders participate in this outreach to ensure that the issues, challenges and potential solutions addressed by this vision plan are incorporated into the county-wide initiative. Conversely, the county Complete Streets implementation plan process will provide additional opportunities for detailed analysis of county roads in the Village and further development of more refined and detailed strategies and solutions that the Village might consider. Future implementation of the recommendations contained in this vision plan should seek to and will benefit from alignment with recommendations and strategies that develop through the Complete Street implementation plan process.

#### Funding

State and local funding is available to assist with the implementation of the identified strategies. Projects will be eligible for different types of funding, depending on the action and intended goal. Appendix F provides a list of potential public and private funds and grant programs that support economic development, recreation improvements, placemaking, road safety, historical restoration and agriculture.



## Appendices

Appendix A: Tech Memo 1: Plan Review and Case Example Research

Appendix B: Advisory Group Meeting Notes

Appendix C: Public Questionnaire Summary

Appendix D: NJDCA Market Analysis Report

Appendix E: Putting the Plan in the Hands of the People: The 1,2,3's of creating a Plan Implementation Working Group

Appendix F: Funding Matrix

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## Endnotes

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