

TRAFFIC GENERATION AND THE PRESERVATION OF THE RURAL RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER OF MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP

A basic goal of the traffic circulation planning in Montgomery Township is to utilize, as much as possible, the existing roadways within the Township. As a result, small-scale "doable" improvements to the existing road system are preferred and generally have the greatest probability of being accomplished. Additionally, small-scale improvements to the road system will provide the greatest possibility of preserving the rural residential character which prevails throughout most of Montgomery Township.

Since all of the existing roadways in Montgomery Township, including State Route 206 (Van Horne Road), have an effect on the prevailing rural residential character of the Township, it is important that the "Land Use Plan Element" portion of the master plan and the implementing "Land Development Ordinance" provisions appropriately limit the amount of traffic that will be generated as a result of the permitted development.

Indeed, recognition of the potential adverse repercussions of increased traffic volumes within and through Montgomery Township has led to modifications and changes to the "Land Use Plan Element" and amendments to the "Land Development Ordinance" in an effort to lessen the amount of traffic to be added to the road system.

As an example, a major modification to the "Land Use Plan Element" was adopted during 1989 when the Township lessened the amount of acreage planned for nonresidential development and also lessened the intensity of the nonresidential development permitted. More specifically, the permitted floor/area ratios (FAR) within the "REO" zoning districts were reduced, the "RD" zoning district was eliminated in its entirety, and the "LM" zoning district (i.e., the prior "MFG" zoning district) was reduced in size, and its permitted FAR also was reduced.

More recently, on December 6, 2001, the Township rezoned approximately 138.1 acres of land north of Route 518 and west of Route 206 into a new "ARH" Age-Restricted Housing zoning district. The property, owned by "Sharbell", was one of those remaining vacant land areas along the Route 518 corridor which was the subject of informal development proposals submitted to the Township by interested land developers.

Previously, almost the entirety of the subject 138.1 acre land area was zoned within the "REO-3" zoning district, which could have resulted in the construction of approximately 451,979 square feet of office space on the subject lands. Under the adopted "ARH" ordinance provisions, the subject land can be developed with 218 age-restricted dwelling units, 30,000 square feet of office space and up to 120 beds in an "Assisted Living Facility".

As quoted hereinbelow from the May 2000 "Master Plan And Development Regulations Periodic Reexamination Report", which was adopted by the Planning Board on June 12, 2000, a threshold reason for the rezoning of the subject property was a consideration of traffic impacts:

"The major problem always associated with the development of the subject "REO-3" lands has been how to handle the traffic which would be generated, particularly the traffic impact along Route 518 and at its intersection with Route 206."

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"Clearly, the proposed rezoning for the age-restricted housing units, plus the relatively small amount of offices (i.e., 30,000 s.f.), will generate little automobile traffic relative to the traffic volume that would result from the approximately four hundred thousand (400,000) square feet of office space which theoretically could be development under the current "REO-3" zoning provisions."

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THE RECENTLY ADOPTED AMENDMENT TO THE TRAFFIC CIRCULATION PLAN ELEMENT

Montgomery Township has continued to benefit from citizen participation and an outward expression of different views regarding the appropriate modification and changes which should be made to the "Traffic Circulation Plan". Most recently, the Montgomery Township Committee appointed a "Transportation Advisory Committee" which commenced meeting on June 6, 2001.

The designated Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) has been studying locations within Montgomery Township where traffic circulation is problematic and where additional future problems are anticipated. Additionally, the TAC is exploring possible ways to improve traffic circulation within Montgomery Township which, at the same time, will help to maintain the existing rural residential character of development which prevails throughout most of the Township. The TAC is receiving ongoing technical input from the Township's Traffic Engineer, John Rea, and from the Township's Special Projects Engineer, Donald Johnson.

As part of its ongoing work effort, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) recommended to the Planning Board that certain new roadways be constructed to help alleviate traffic congestion at the Route 206/518 intersection. In accordance with a long-standing goal of the traffic circulation planning in Montgomery Township, the road plan attempts to diffuse traffic among a variety of alternate routes, rather than channeling traffic to any particular route.

Based upon the recommendations of the Transportation Advisory Committee, the Planning Board adopted an amendment to the "Traffic Circulation Plan Element" portion of the Township Master Plan which recommended a number of new roadways to help alleviate traffic congestion at the Route 206/Route 518 intersection and related Route 206 corridor improvements. The proposed roadway improvements are shown on the two (2) attached aerial photograph maps. Each roadway is proposed to provide for 2-way traffic within a fifty foot (50') right-of-way.