

---

## XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT

---

*"We shape our buildings;  
thereafter, our buildings shape us."*

*- Winston Churchill*

### STATUTORY AUTHORIZATION FOR LOCAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Municipal Land Use Law (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq.*) encourages "...municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands" in ways that promote the general welfare through local plans and zoning. Among its purposes, the MLUL (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2*) highlights the importance of conserving our heritage, as reflected in historic landscapes, buildings and structures, with the following purposes:

- i. *To promote a desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangement;*
- j. *To promote the conservation of historic sites and districts, open space, energy resources and valuable natural resources in the State and to prevent urban sprawl and degradation of the environment through improper use of land;*

Conserving historic sites and districts helps retain the authentic character that enriches our understanding of "place" and allows the past to inform and influence the evolving landscape. The civic design principles of the "pre-sprawl" era provided a strong sense of community through the type, style and arrangement of buildings.

In furtherance of its heritage conservation objectives, the MLUL provides for preparation and adoption of a Historic Preservation Plan Element (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28b.10.*) as follows:

"(10) a historic preservation plan element:

- (a) indicating the location and significance of historic sites and historic districts;
- (b) identifying the standards used to assess worthiness for historic site or district identification; and
- (c) analyzing the impact of each component and element of the master plan on the preservation of historic sites and districts".

This historic preservation plan recounts the story of this place with a brief history (Appendix A) and includes the requisite identification of historic resources. It also reviews how other plan elements will affect historic preservation efforts as it seeks to establish a framework for historic preservation planning and other preservation

---

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

activities that can assure that this heritage is not lost and can inform and inspire future generations.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN BERNARDS**

The following are overarching goals that guide this historic preservation plan:

1. Encourage the preservation of the distinctive character of the historic villages and hamlets of Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner, Franklin Corners, and Madisonville.
2. Coordinate the identification and preservation of historic sites, neighborhoods, and landscapes, archaeological sites, and scenic corridors within the municipality; maintain a municipal central repository of data collected.
3. Encourage the preservation of historic buildings and structures and promote the protection of historic, archaeological, and other cultural resources.
4. Promote the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and structures in ways that respect architectural and historic integrity.
5. Promote and encourage these historic preservation objectives through a combination of strategies: encourage private voluntary initiatives; administer and enforce existing design guidelines and requirements; and utilize Township and other funds, where appropriate.
6. Explore creation of an advisory Historic Preservation Committee as provided in the Municipal Land Use Law.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION POLICIES**

The following policies are intended to advance Bernards Township's Historic Preservation Goals and Objectives:

1. Promote an appreciation of Bernards Township's cultural, physical and architectural resources, and communicate with citizens and stakeholders about the importance of preserving this heritage, bringing together homeowners, shop owners, cultural, educational and environmental organizations, and government agencies;
2. Maintain cohesive neighborhoods; ensure a compatible and harmonious context for historic buildings, structures, sites and districts; and discourage

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

- new construction that would destroy the character of Bernards Township's neighborhoods;
3. Discourage unnecessary demolition, destruction or other actions disruptive of historic resources;
  4. Integrate consideration of historic resources into Bernards Township's land use plan, subdivision and site plan reviews and approvals, economic development plans, and other strategic planning tools;
  5. Establish a municipally appointed Historic Preservation Advisory Committee to help guide township boards and committees and to develop recommendations for specific strategies to achieve Bernards Township's historic preservation goals. The purpose of the Committee should be to advise and advocate rather than control or exercise approval powers. It is not intended for the Committee to be vested with authority to regulate changes to the exterior or interior of a structure. The Committee would, however, regularly review and provide advice regarding proposed exterior site alterations in connection with land use decisions by the Planning Board and the Board of Adjustment.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLANNING IN BERNARDS TOWNSHIP**

As a town proud of its 18<sup>th</sup> century roots, Bernards Township values the historic buildings, structures and districts that remind us of the important role this region played during the Revolutionary War. The villages and hamlets that dot the Bernards countryside reflect a rich heritage spanning nearly 300 years of settlement. Its historic farmsteads and landscapes serve as reminders of the lifestyles of those early settlers and their descendants. Buildings representing different styles and ages, from pre-Revolutionary and Federal-period dwellings to early 20<sup>th</sup> century Bungalow, Eclectic and Colonial Revival houses, create the variety that gives the community much of its physical appeal and special character. Bernards Township's rich heritage is entrusted from generation to generation, enhanced and then passed on.

A key purpose of this Historic Preservation Plan is to chart the way forward toward identifying, preserving, and improving the historic buildings, structures, and streetscapes of Bernards Township so they can continue to play an integral, vibrant role in the community. This plan will help Bernards Township identify and characterize elements of community character and preservation strategies appropriate to the township. Understanding and documenting these historic resources is fundamental to this process. A process of education about a variety of values will be key, including the community values reflected in these resources, their intrinsic value to the neighborhood fabric, and their strong real estate value.

---

## XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT

---

The historic buildings, structures, neighborhoods, streetscapes and landscapes that have shaped the community's identity, provide a unique sense of place. Their charm is a fragile commodity, one that can be easily damaged when style and scale are not respected. As the community evolves and changes over time, important aspects of the community character can be lost. On one level these risks include the disruption of neighborhood cohesiveness, when a massive addition or replacement house violates the scale and rhythm of the neighborhood and removes established landscaping. A more subtle threat involves the slow erosion of Bernards Township's historic fabric, setting and materials, as insensitive change can diminish the quality of historic buildings and landscapes.

This plan promotes and encourages the preservation of those historic resources that exemplify Bernards Township's cultural, social, economic, and architectural history. Historic villages and hamlets, landmark buildings, sites, and architectural styles are among the resources Bernards Township intends to preserve for the education, enjoyment, and general welfare of its citizens and visitors.

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION CHALLENGES**

As Bernards faces the challenges of a new century, the town's historic resources will likely come under attack in some quarters. While the preservation of historic sites and districts serves to promote the value of surrounding properties, many of these sites have the potential for significantly more development. When the real estate development opportunity afforded by the township zoning is sufficiently attractive, historic buildings will come under threat.

#### ***1. Balancing Preservation and the Rights of Property Owners***

One of the most important components of successful historic preservation efforts relates to the needs and rights of owners of historic structures. While historic preservation is sometimes cast as averse to property rights, these values can coexist by working to achieve a balance. A successful balance requires conscious planning and coherent and well-articulated public policies that support preservation goals as well as present-day needs. As Bernards Township moves forward with plans to implement historic preservation goals, the participation of property owners will be a key ingredient for success. Interaction and communication with owners of historic homes and residents of historic districts should build upon a common interest in the values (historic and financial) to be protected.

Increased public education can lead to a broader knowledge of Bernards Township's history as well as a deeper understanding of history's relevance to the present. Future efforts should formalize a learning environment and process and establish a municipal repository where cultural resource and architectural historical data can be maintained.

---

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

### ***2. Protecting Established Neighborhoods***

Recent demolitions have renewed concerns about the loss of character in some of Bernards Township's older neighborhoods not previously recognized for their special interest. There are several small neighborhoods built during the 1930s and early 1940s that are comprised of fine examples of modestly-scaled Colonial Revival styles. Many of these houses still retain a high degree of historic integrity and represent high-quality work of several local builders. These houses were designed with an understanding of the historic prototypes that the Colonial Revival style was based, and more closely resemble the prototypes than the grand landmark Colonial Revival houses, such as the Frothingham-Sloan House at the United States Golf Association.

These small collections of well-crafted Colonial Revival houses enhance the value of all real estate within their spheres of influence and provide a permanent reminder of the scale and character of this place in an earlier time. They are also more affordable to purchase and maintain than their would-be 21st century replacement.

As the historic character of these neighborhoods comes under increasing threat from demolitions (permitted and de facto), subdivisions, new buildings at inappropriate building scale, and inappropriate infrastructure (such as cul de sacs), local policy will determine how neighborhood character is protected or exposed. A continuing trend toward neighborhood deconstruction/reconstruction may change the neighborhood scale that has been prized in Bernards for generations, by setting a new "neighborhood standard".

### ***3. Preserving Architectural Character***

Portions of Bernards Township look much as they did in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the late 20<sup>th</sup> century building and population booms. Particularly significant are the Basking Ridge and Liberty Corner village centers and the hamlets of Franklin Corners and Madisonville with their 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century traditional and high-style buildings, and the pre-war subdivisions of small-scale houses in a variety of historical revival styles. Bernards Township's historic landmarks and streetscapes of historic buildings contribute greatly to the beauty of the townships varied and unique neighborhoods, tree-lined streets and vibrant business districts.

Contributing to the township's distinctive sense of place are such landmark buildings as the Brick Academy, the Van Dorn Mill, the Olde Mill Inn, the two Presbyterian churches, the Boudinot-Ross house, the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead dwelling and barns, the USGA Golf House (designed by John Russell Pope) and Samuel Owen's "Cedar Hill" mansion (now Bernards Township Municipal Building).

In addition, there are numerous private homes that are stylistically noteworthy, many of which are potential candidates for changes to accommodate the needs of a

---

## XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT

---

modern family. The design and construction of complimentary additions, that reinforce the neighborhood scale rather than overpower it, can permit the old established neighborhoods to thrive, which can help prevent undesirable and unfriendly teardowns. Neighborliness extends beyond keeping a neat yard, and remaking a neighborhood

When modern building codes are applied to rehabilitation of existing buildings, the standards are often too costly to allow these projects to proceed. New Jersey's Rehabilitation Sub-code enables building rehabilitation, consistent with preservation objectives to retain original features, to be safer and less costly, while maintaining the original design of the building.

### ***4. Open Space***

In order to preserve the essence of place that anchors community character, it is important to preserve the character-defining buildings on properties acquired for open space, which typically have consisted of centuries-old agricultural tracts. A process to properly identify, document and, where possible, protect historically significant buildings on these properties could utilize a variety of strategies that would avoid costs to taxpayers.

## **HISTORIC SITES AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

### ***Designated Historic Sites And Districts***

A number of historic sites and historic districts in Bernards Township have been listed on the New Jersey and National Register of Historic Places. The State and National Register listing for Bernards Township is provided in Table 1 below. The listing is compiled and maintained by the NJDEP Division of Parks and Forestry, Historic Preservation Office and identifies the general location of sites and districts within the Township.

Listing on the State and/or Federal Register of Historic Places provides protection against destruction of historic resources when state or federal government funding is involved. However, listing on historic registers does not preclude the destruction or substantial alteration of historic resources when no government funds are involved.

The DEP provides the following explanation of the historic places, sites and districts that are listed on the Register:

“The listings for the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places listings include properties and historic districts in New Jersey for which a formal action was taken by the State Historic Preservation Officer or designee. The listings are current through the end of 2005, and the HPO will

## XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT

update these listings on a periodic basis to reflect ongoing additions and corrections.”

**TABLE 1**

<b>NJ DEP - Historic Preservation Office</b> <b>New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places</b> <b>Last Update: 11/21/2005</b>	
<b><i>Bernards Township, Somerset County</i></b> <b><i>NJ</i></b>	
<b>The Brick Academy (ID#2467)</b> 15 West Oak Street SR: 11/25/1975 NR: 7/21/1976 (NR Reference #: 76001185)	<b>Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead (ID#4200)</b> 450 King George Road COE: 5/14/2001 SR: 6/9/2003 NR: 5/5/2004 (NR Reference #: 03000868) (Referred to in COE as "Reverend Samuel Kennedy Parsonage Farmstead")
<b>Alward House (ID#2468)</b> 40 Mount Airy Road SR: 2/5/1986 NR: 3/13/1986 (NR Reference #: 86000388)	<b>Liberty Corner Historic District (ID#2473)</b> Church Street, Lyons Road, and Valley Road SR: 8/16/1991 NR: 10/11/1991 (NR Reference #: 91001477)
<b>Basking Ridge Historic District (ID#2469)</b> North & South Finley and North & South Maple avenues; Lewis, West, Craig & Oak streets DOE: 8/18/1994 (DOE/Owner Objection)	<b>Lyons Railroad Station (ID#2474)</b> Lyons Road SR: 3/17/1984 NR: 6/22/1984 (NR Reference #: 84002805) (Thematic Nomination of Operating Passenger Railroad Stations)
<b>Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church (ID#2470)</b> 6 East Oak Street SR: 10/24/1974 NR: 12/31/1974 (NR Reference #: 74001190)	<b>Lord Stirling Manor Site (ID#2475)</b> 96 Lord Stirling Road SR: 12/1/1976 NR: 5/22/1978 (NR Reference #: 78001795)
<b>Coffee House (ID#2471)</b> 214 North Maple Avenue SR: 3/28/1977 NR: 11/7/1977 (NR Reference #: 77000906)	<b>Veterans Administration Complex (ID#2476)</b> Knollcroft Road north of Valley Road SHPO Opinion: 6/12/1980 DOE: 11/26/1980
<b>Franklin Corners Historic District (ID#2472)</b> Hardscrabble and Childs roads SR: 12/12/1974 NR: 5/12/1975 (NR Reference #: 75001159)	

### ***Existing Formal Surveys***

---

## XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT

---

The *Bernards Township Reconnaissance Level Inventory*, which is part of the 1989 *Somerset County Cultural Resource Survey*, lists 232 historic sites. The absence of stone arch bridges from the inventory is a significant missing link to the Township's early history. The very few that remain should be evaluated for their ability to yield significant information about early Township history, particularly in the face of increasing traffic loading and possible bridge replacements.

### IMPACT OF OTHER MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The provisions of other master plan elements can have direct bearing on the preservation of historic sites and districts. Proposals for future land use, circulation or community facilities can directly affect these resources. As required by statute, the impacts of other components and elements of the master plan on the preservation of historic sites and districts are addressed below.

#### General Objectives

The Master Plan cites the legislated purposes of the Municipal Land Use Law, which have been adopted as General Objectives, including the following purpose:

"10. To promote the conservation of historic sites and districts, open space, energy resources and valuable natural resources in the State and to prevent urban sprawl and degradation of the environment through improper use of land."

#### Land Use Plan

Bernards Township's Land Use Plan calls attention to the importance of conserving community character, both within and beyond the limits of the Township's historic districts. Key recommendations of the land use plan call for scrutiny of bulk and intensity standards that can precipitate change in historic districts and structures.

The Land Use plan discusses a series of planning considerations and policy statements related to managing growth and change in the context of preserving historic character:

- ". . . The rural character that pervades the edges of Bernards Township, which includes scenic vistas, wooded hillsides, agricultural fields, expansive floodplains and historic settlements, is highly susceptible to degradation. . ."
- "Regulatory techniques such as Floor Area Ratio that may be "useful in protecting the character of historic villages or residential neighborhoods, by

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

preventing the introduction of large buildings, which frequently disregard historic architectural styles, village form or neighborhood scale.”

- “The scale and character of historic villages is also a major concern, and Liberty Corner and Basking Ridge stand as testimonials to the historic past of Bernards Township. These mixed-use village areas have a fabric, which is susceptible to damage by the removal and replacement of older and smaller buildings with new larger buildings. Yet, in many cases, prevailing zoning standards permit a building envelope, based on setbacks, coverage and other standards, which can accommodate substantially more development than the historic forms. Strategies should be directed at preventing the removal of older homes or other buildings that play a key role in the streetscape and unique character of these historic areas.”
- “A principal objective of this land use plan is that the highly prized community character and quality of life be protected and maintained, throughout Bernards Township, whether in newly constructed or older suburban neighborhoods, historic settlements or rural portions of the Township. Protecting these features will likely require a combination of regulatory techniques, including carefully crafted strategies to protect and enhance these assets.”
- Floor Area Ratio controls, which are utilized in Bernards’ non-residential districts, should be evaluated for their ability to control against overbuilding in non-residential areas, and adjusted if appropriate.

### **Circulation Plan**

The Circulation Plan includes a goal to “improve pedestrian friendliness throughout Bernards, and especially in the historic settlements of Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner and Madisonville.”

The Circulation Plan concludes that four lanes of traffic are not practical or desirable on two historic township roads, North Maple Avenue and South Finley Avenue.

The Circulation Plan suggests improvements in sight distance and alignment of the Church Street and Valley Road/Lyons Road intersection, which is within the Liberty Corner Historic District and is under Somerset County jurisdiction. Planning for this improvement will require Section 106 review which requires government agencies to take historic resources into consideration when government funds are expended.. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires consideration of historic properties and requires federal agencies to consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment before projects are implemented.

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

The Circulation Plan references recommendations based on the Somerset County Scenic Corridor and Roadway Study pertaining to preserving scenic assets:

- Coordination of circulation, conservation and historic preservation plan policies with scenic resource protection goals.
- Development of an objective rating system based on designation criteria to evaluate candidate local roads as “scenic corridors” or “scenic roadways”. Liberty Corner Road (CR 512) has already been designated as a scenic county roadway.
- Zoning ordinances can provide "scenic zones" based upon the boundaries of the "view shed" observed from a scenic corridor or roadway. Standards for such zones would provide for development that minimizes visual intrusion on the landscape.

### ***Community Facilities Plan Element***

The Community Facilities Plan encourages development of alternative energy facilities on public lands and buildings, which could potentially impact township-owned historic properties.

Bernards Township leases the Brick Academy to The Historical Society of the Somerset Hills and has been supportive of its long-term preservation plan. Similarly, Bernards Township leases the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead to the Friends of the KMS Farmstead, whose goal is to create a new use for the property. These leases are cost effective methods to preserve historic landmarks and provide community amenities.

### ***Farmland Preservation Plan***

The Farmland Preservation Plan identifies a series of priorities that advance the goals of the Historic Preservation Plan, including:

- A priority in preservation / *retention of economically viable working farms* in the Township;
- Retention of scenic rural landscapes that *reinforce community character*, from which residents derive a strong sense of community;
- Retain aspects of the Township’s historic agricultural heritage and remaining built and natural elements of the agricultural landscape,

These priorities, which guide the farmland preservation program, are in harmony with the Historic Preservation Plan and Bernards’ other master plan elements.

### ***Parks and Recreation Plan***

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

Stewardship of historic buildings is a special responsibility that sometimes accompanies open space acquisitions. During 2008, Bernards Township acquired two open space parcels that included historic buildings, the McCollum Farmstead and the Sons of Liberty Farm. Planning for the parcels' intended use for passive recreation provides an opportunity to consider strategies to properly identify, document, and, where appropriate, preserve the historic buildings while avoiding costs to taxpayers. Evaluation of the viability of preserving historic buildings should be done early, since deferred maintenance is the enemy of many of these structures.

### ***Conservation Plan***

The Conservation Plan acknowledges the following recommendation in relation to the conservation of valuable historic resources:

“Basking Ridge and Liberty Corner are areas which exhibit distinct character with respect to historically significant elements. The building, inter-relationship of buildings and relationship to the street, landscaping, signs, lighting and pedestrian orientation all contribute to this character. The Township should consider design standards which would regulate potential demolition and future construction in a manner that maintains the integrity of these areas.”

Environmental sustainability goals support preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings and structures. Preservation is *sustainable development* for many reasons, including:

- The demolition of buildings adds significant amounts of material to landfills. The EPA has determined that building construction debris constitutes approximately one third of all waste generated in this country.<sup>1</sup>
- It frequently requires less material, effort and cost to make an existing building more energy efficient than to replace it with a new building. Also, it is energy expended locally with materials and workers, rather than in the long-distance shipping of manufactured materials.
- The materials that were used to create an existing building required a certain amount of energy to get them there in the first place (i.e. to cut the wood, transport it to the site and to construct the building). That is energy that is embodied in the existing building -- energy that would be destroyed by the destruction of these buildings.
- In calculating the energy used in a building, much is made of how much annual energy is used in the building. Even in a new, energy

---

<sup>1</sup> Donovan D. Rypkema, *Historic, Green and Profitable*, Speech given at the Traditional Building Conference, Boston, March 8, 2007

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

efficient building, the energy saved pales in comparison with that used in construction. “The energy consumed in the construction of a building is 15 to 30 times the annual energy use.”<sup>2</sup>

DRAFT

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

### **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The array of historic landscapes, sites and districts within Bernards Township contribute a cultural richness that enriches the quality of life and reinforces community values within Bernards Township. Protection of these resources serves to enhance the value of all real estate within their sphere of influence, while they also provide a permanent reminder of the scale and character of this place in an earlier time.

This historic preservation plan acknowledges the importance of these resources, which connect Bernards with its past, and calls upon all stakeholders to protect the authentic elements of place that make Bernards special. A review of the other Master Plan elements suggests that the other plan elements of the Bernards Township Master Plan, particularly the Land Use Plan Element, substantially advance the objectives of preserving and protecting historic sites and districts in Bernards Township.

The following specific recommendations are designed to advance the agenda for protecting historic buildings and structures in Bernards Township:

1. Establish an Historic Preservation Committee to
  - a. advise the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment on any application for development submitted to either board for development of any historic site or land within any historic district identified in any component element of the master plan.
  - b. prepare a survey of historic sites.
  - c. advise the Planning Board regarding the Historic Preservation Plan and other Master Plan elements.
  - d. advise the Planning Board regarding the inclusion of historic sites in the recommended Capital Improvement Program.
  - e. prepare written reports as appropriate.
  - f. conduct advisory, educational or informational activities to advance historic preservation.
2. Expand the collection of cultural and historic data in Bernards Township, particularly when development will alter or eliminate historic features.
3. Develop a standard protocol for the recording of historic buildings to be removed, including a photographic record, recorded measurements, etc.
4. Craft an Action Plan for historic preservation activities that includes:
  - a. expanded surveys and documentation of additional historic resources such as out-buildings, stone arch bridges and archaeological remains.

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

- b. education for the citizenry (school curriculum, senior citizens, homeowners, etc.).
- c. securing grants for historic preservation activities.

DRAFT

**APPENDIX A**

**A Brief History of Bernards Township**

*(Adapted from National Register Nominations for Basking Ridge, Liberty Corner, and Olcott Avenue Historic Districts)*

Bernards Township originally included all of Bernardsville and Far Hills Boroughs as well as a small portion of Warren Township. Far Hills was established as a separate municipality in 1921 and Bernardsville followed in 1924. Throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the population in Bernards Township remained relatively constant, rising slowly from 1,790 people in 1810 to 2,558 in 1890. By 1910, the population had risen to 4,608. After Bernardsville and Far Hills were incorporated as separate boroughs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bernards Township's population dropped to 2,293 people. The estimated population of the township as of 2007 was 26,590.

The Lenni-Lenape of the Delaware band of Native Americans (part of the Algonquin peoples), were the first known inhabitants of the Bernards Township area. Scattered throughout Bernards Township are traces of these early inhabitants – arrowheads, tomahawks, hearthstones, hammerheads and camp rubble – which indicate long occupation. One of the areas most intensely used by Native Americans was a campsite along the Passaic on the present Verizon property. A second major campsite area was located along the Passaic River on property now part of the Somerset County Environmental Education Center. A burial ground is known to have existed on the east side of Childs Road on the hillside across from the Indian Graves Brook. In 1717, John Harrison, agent of King George I of England, purchased 3,000 acres for \$50 from Chief Nowenoik of the Lenape, which comprised much of what became Bernards Township, and was known as Harrison's Neck or Harrison's Purchase.

***Basking Ridge***

The name Basking Ridge first appeared in 1733 in the records of the Presbyterian Church and is recorded as being derived from the fact that "the wild animals of the adjacent lowlands were accustomed to bask in the warm sun of this beautiful ridge." "Baskeridge" and "Baskenridge" were commonly used spellings.

At the time of the American Revolution, Basking Ridge was a small village on a hill above the Passaic River, populated by farmers who were descendants of Scottish and English settlers. These yeoman farmers had been in the areas for at least two generations; organized settlement of the area dated to around 1720, about the same time as the Presbyterian Church was founded. In the course of the Revolutionary War, as many as one hundred men from Bernards answered the call to arms.

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

During the Revolutionary period, the most prosperous member of the community was William Alexander, Lord Stirling, whose Palladian mansion stood southeast of the village center. Lord Stirling began to build his countryseat in Basking Ridge in 1761, after inheriting 700 acres of property there. He inherited thousands of other acres as well, but the wealthy and well-educated Lord Stirling seems to have chosen Basking Ridge as the site of his estate for its rural seclusion combined with a road network which provided access to his many business interests in New York and his political interests in Perth Amboy. Intent on recreating a countryseat on the Thames on a low knoll overlooking the Passaic, Stirling's estate, known as "The Buildings," was a local wonder.

Lord Stirling attended the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church, and socialized with its prominent minister, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kennedy, who was both physician and clergyman. Stirling gave up his position in the royal government of New Jersey and lost his considerable fortune by allying himself with the patriot cause during the Revolution. Commissioned as a Brigadier General in the Continental Army, he raised a regiment in the late summer of 1775. Using his home as a headquarters, Stirling brought uniformed excitement to Basking Ridge as the Revolution unfolded, through the coming and going of couriers, visits from General George Washington, and the headquartering of General Nathanael Greene and his brigade there in 1777-78. In December 1776, General Charles Lee, second in command under General Washington, was captured and taken prisoner from Widow White's Tavern by the elite Sixteenth British Light Dragoons.

These events were witnessed not only by the locals, but also by a number of well-to-do New York families who sought a haven from the occupied city and the threats of war. Perhaps best known of the circle to posterity is Elias Boudinot, a delegate to (and later, president of) the Continental Congress. He moved to an estate near Madisonville from his Elizabethtown seat, perhaps on the suggestion of his friend and legal client, Lord Stirling. Another important refugee from New York City was John Morton, who relocated to a farmhouse not far from Boudinot. A wealthy import merchant, Morton became known as the "Rebel Banker" and owned a nearby mill prior to his early demise in 1782.

Only weeks after the war was over, the New York families began to leave Basking Ridge, yet the excitement of the Revolutionary period was long remembered, and colored much of the village's perception of itself throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As early as 1850, Harper's Weekly Magazine published a series on historic houses, and included articles and drawings on the Lord Stirling house and the Widow White's Tavern.

By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was a cultivation of the perception that Basking Ridge was a "colonial" town. That the number of 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings greatly outnumbered the 18<sup>th</sup> century survivors, and the landmark buildings of the war were already demolished, did not hinder the antiquarians. Significantly, local

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

conservatism caused traditional architecture to linger well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so that eclectic and elaborate Victorian-era styles were slow to catch on. New buildings were constructed in the turn-of-the-century Colonial Revival style while existing buildings were often modernized in the same style. Some genuinely old houses, such as the Finley House at 200 South Finley Avenue, were enlarged and improved in the Neo-Georgian mode. Other old houses were moved, including the dwelling at 87 South Finley Avenue, reputed to be the oldest standing house in the village. It was relocated from a side street to a prominent site on the main thoroughfare. Small traditional East Jersey cottages at 147 South Finley and 64 South Maple Avenue were preserved; their additions and minor alterations reflect different generations' varying interpretations of "colonial" architecture.

During the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, partly in response to the aesthetic reforms proposed by the City Beautiful Movement, and partly in response to the call for public amenities promoted by social reformers, there emerged an entire class of civic improvement organizations. Their impact may have been most measurable in small towns and rural places, where there had existed virtually no infrastructure. In Basking Ridge, an improvement society was founded in February 1903. The Basking Ridge Improvement Society exercised a strong impact on the way the village appears and operates today. In fact, many of the village features we associate with its "historic" character actually took shape during this period as a direct result of the society's activities. The society dedicated itself to such high-minded concerns as "law and order," fire protection, and improved educational facilities, but its most lasting accomplishments concern features still visible to anyone who walks or drives through the village: trees, roads and sidewalks, and street lights. Trees may seem like a natural feature of a place as rural as Basking Ridge, but by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, commercial development and lack of a systematic planting program had resulted in shabby looking shade trees at the center of the village. Characteristic of the center of Basking Ridge are raised sidewalks and stone retaining walls necessitated by road cuts and other changes in grade.

### ***Liberty Corner***

First named Annan's Corner, the village was settled in 1722 by John Johnston of Annandale, a Scottish immigrant who purchased from William Penn a large tract of land that comprises the present village center. Annan's son William built a locally famous stone house in 1766, just outside of the present village on Lyons Road. The house, no longer extant, served as a church, a soldier's hostelry, a military hospital, and a school as well as a residence. Farming was the chief occupation of those living in and around the village. In 1838, a Presbyterian Church was established in Liberty Corner, with Rev. James T. English as minister. A new building was constructed in 1868, where Rev. English continued to serve until his death in 1873. English's descendants remain in Liberty Corner today. During the American Revolution, French troops of Comte de Rochambeau camped overnight on this property, August

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

30-31, 1781, en route to Yorktown, Virginia, and final victory from General Cornwallis.

Easy rail transport commencing in 1872 was key to the development of dairying as an industry in Bernards Township, greatly and instantly expanding the market for fresh dairy products. In addition, other dairy products became increasingly important to dairy farmers in and around Liberty Corner, including condensed milk, which came to be preferred by many Civil War veterans accustomed to army-supplied processed milk and butter. The development of the cream separator in the 1870s led to the mechanization and standardization of butter production in centralized creameries, rather than on individual farms. Several creameries were located in Liberty Corner and Basking Ridge.

In 1889, William Childs and his brother Samuel of Bernards Township gave the local dairy industry a boost by opening the first of what grew to be a 105-restaurant chain featuring vegetarian meals and dairy products.

Liberty Corner was linked to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century tourist trade fostered by the railroad and offered lodgings for travelers in the Liberty Corner Hotel, which was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as Bullion's Tavern. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was operated by Dennis Van Lieu and was later renamed the William Allen Hotel. It is no longer extant. Liberty Corner also served as an attractive destination for outings by local vacationers in Bernardsville and Basking Ridge making a daytrip to a "quaint," historical town.

In the early 1920's, taking advantage of available bus service to Lyons station, Charles Romph, a World War I veteran, purchased a tract just north of Church Street, which he subdivided to create a tiny "romantic suburb" of "English Cottage" style bungalows, Liberty Corner's sole residential development until the last quarter of the century.

### ***Education***

In 1750 a classical school, designed to prepare young men for college, was established in Basking Ridge by Dr. Samuel Kennedy, fourth pastor of the Presbyterian Church. For a period of several years, the school was moved to Kennedy's farmstead in the southeastern corner of the Township. After Kennedy's death, Rev. Robert Finley reestablished the academy in 1799 and in 1809 built the Brick Academy. Pupils came from New York City and other states, as well as New Jersey; residents provided lodgings. Finley's first class of four students graduated in 1802 and all entered the College of New Jersey (later renamed Princeton University). Among the Academy students were Samuel Southard (1787-1842), governor of New Jersey from 1832 to 1833 and United States Senator from 1833 to 1842; Theodore Frelinghuysen (1787-1862), United States Senator from 1829 to 1835, vice-presidential candidate with Henry Clay in 1844, chancellor of New York University, and president of Rutgers College; Robert Field Stockton (1795-1866),

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

---

hero of the Mexican War who served as the first military governor of California and as United States Senator (1851-1853); and William Lewis Dayton (1807-1864), United States Senator from 1842 to 1851 and vice-presidential running mate of John C. Fremont in 1856.

Beginning in 1903, the Basking Ridge Improvement Society, which had been organized with the modernization of the local school system as one of their major concerns, worked to have men sympathetic with progressive ideas, including William Childs, elected to the local school board. Childs, who was by then a successful New York City restaurant entrepreneur, attended the local public school as a child, but then had had to travel to Morristown to attend high school. Under Childs, three new multi-room schools were constructed between 1903 and 1905, a remarkable accomplishment for a rural community that resulted in the closure of five outdated schoolhouses. New four-room schools were built in Basking Ridge (1903) and Liberty Corner (1904).

In 1905, the Improvement Society backed efforts by the Board of Education to establish two grades for a new high school in the township – using two rooms in the Bernardsville School. For the first time a public high school education was available in Bernards Township. Prior to that year, the nearest public high school would have been eight to ten miles away in Morristown, or Summit. In his 1904 School Report, Somerset County Superintendent H.C. Krebs singled out Bernards Township for taking the lead – through its ambitious school construction program – in a movement toward “an awakening and an enterprise that augur well for the educational future of the county.” Unlike most other rural communities, Bernards Township was clearly in the vanguard to provide a publicly financed higher education

### ***Transportation***

Even before paved roads to the village were contemplated, Basking Ridge’s citizens wished to be connected to the rest of the world. Although stagecoach lines had served Basking Ridge since colonial days, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century all other modes of transportation were considered inferior to the railroad. By that time, Bernards Township had been bypassed by two railroads, the Morris and Essex through Morristown to the north, and the Jersey Central, through Somerville to the south. Citizens organized and agitated to get a rail line laid through the village, which was finally accomplished in 1872 with the Passaic Valley & Peapack Railroad. The line ran from Bernardsville to Summit, but the Basking Ridge depot was placed so far north of the center of town as to have virtually no impact on the life of the village center (effectively preserving the 19<sup>th</sup> century village streetscape).. Although the Rail Road immediately began promoting the sale of nearly a thousand proposed tiny lots in Basking Ridge, hoping to create a commuter suburb that would provide steady revenue to the railroad, little development occurred there. Instead, to the chagrin of Basking Ridge’s civic boosters, the railroad helped Bernardsville become the dominant town center of the region by facilitating the lifestyle of the enormously

## **XI. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT**

wealthy newcomers. Basking Ridge would continue as an inexpensive summer destination for families of more moderate means, who boarded at several hotels or with local farm families.

DRAFT