

## October 2017

Dear **Fellow Residents of Harrison Township**,

Recently I was speaking with some residents and referenced our sidewalk program. One of the residents actually chuckled and asked – “do we have a sidewalk program?” The answer is we absolutely have a sidewalk program and we started it as part of our master plan in 2013. Please take a moment to review the **Bike & Pedestrian Path** plan.

[View Plan](#)



### A Community Connected – Let’s Walk Together

The lack of sidewalks and connectivity within our town has long been a concern expressed to the committee and we heard you. This prompted us to create a Sidewalk Program list, which identified the existing areas in town that require sidewalks to connect to a destination (*i.e. Main St, Shop Rite center, etc.*).

As Harrison Township experienced rapid growth in the 1990’s thru the mid-2000’s, it was not a common practice for Planning Board approvals to require developers to include “off-site” sidewalks for interconnectivity. We changed that philosophy several years ago and now we seek to include “off-site” sidewalk improvements (*paid by the developer*) in any approval process to ensure the desired connectivity throughout town.

Failure to develop the necessary sidewalks back in the booming development period is difficult to address with our current tax dollars. Considering the cost of these improvements is significant and the fact that we provide our local municipal services on a very lean annual budget, we had to come up with a solution to address this problem. Thus, we changed our policy on Planning Board approvals to negotiate with current developers seeking approvals to build in Harrison Township to install “off-site” sidewalks.

One of these sidewalk projects will commence soon. Rukenstein & Associates, the developers involved with the Mullica West renovations, will install sidewalks from Mullica West to Main St (along Woodstown Rd) and then south down Main St to connect to the Shop Rite center. They will also install sidewalks from the Mullica Hill Pond to connect to Main St, as well as build a retaining wall to reinforce the hill on the west side of the pond. This is a \$750,000 infrastructure improvement for our community. All paid for by the developer.

And we have more of these in the works that will provide private money to support building the necessary sidewalk connectivity that will truly enhance our hometown.

### Pedal Across Town Or Gloucester County

In addition to the sidewalk projects, the **master Bike & Pedestrian Path** also accounts for developing a path to coincide with the larger County Bike & Pedestrian Path. This is also included in the link provided above.

I am happy to report that the initial stages of the path will be funded in the County’s 2017 Budget. That’s correct, the County is funding this project. The path will include a launching point on Main St off of the deck from the upper parking lot of the Old Mill. A bridge will cross over Mill Road to connect to the existing old train trestle (*this will be refurbished*) and drop down to a path through the municipally owned property in the woods, go under the Bypass and emerge onto **Walters Road** and connect to the **William Wilt Sports Complex**.



This is the initial phase of the project. Eventually, the path will connect to the Heritage Vineyards, extend through **Richwood** and connect to existing paths in **Glassboro** and ultimately **Washington Township**. This is another longtime-coming and exciting project that will be done in phases. That initial phase will commence this year with County funding for the design and engineering of the first phase.

### Fast Growth = Infrastructure Improvements

As stated earlier, Harrison Township experienced unprecedented growth from the mid 90’s through the economic downturn in 2009. Part of the dilemma with that level of growth is the need to invest in infrastructure and resources to serve the residents. This includes our roadways, municipal facilities, equipment, parks/ recreation fields; municipal services, public works staff and yes sidewalks to connect it all together.

We have addressed many of these growing pains in recent years, while also maintaining the 2nd lowest tax rate in Gloucester County. We recognize that taxes in NJ are too high, but as I wrote recently, only 15% of the tax you pay is spent at the local level. If you have not already, I encourage you to read this article on NJ property taxes:

[How to lower NJ Taxes](#)

As a community we share so many common goals and values, which includes quality of life. Understand that we are well positioned for the future and that everything that we have put in motion over the last several years is about providing you and your family with the very best community in New Jersey to live. From the new Inspira Medical Center to the Bike and Pedestrian Plan, the foundation is in place for even better days ahead.



Together for Harrison Township,

**Lou Manzo**  
Your Mayor