

League of Women Voters of Mountain Lakes
Route 46 Development Consensus
April 2001

The League of Women Voters of Mountain Lakes recognizes the Mountain Lakes portion of Route 46 as an important part of the Borough. We strongly encourage the Borough and its residents to support the businesses and landowners, and we recommend that the Borough devote resources to improving the appearance and functionality of the highway. Furthermore, the League acknowledges the importance of protecting the recharge area of our most prolific well, located on Route 46, which draws on the aquifer running beneath the highway. The League recommends that all future land-use planning in the Route 46 recharge area reflect foremost a concern for protecting and replacing our drinking water.

Supporting the businesses and landowners

Recognizing the importance of the land and business owners both in terms of their financial contribution to our Borough and in terms of their role in making Route 46 attractive and functional, the League encourages the Borough Council to establish a forum for communication among Borough officials and business and landowners. We suggest a regular roundtable meeting with a defined agenda and an opportunity to exchange ideas. This forum could include Borough Council members, Planning Board members, the Borough Manager and Chief of Police, and interested residents.

Improving the appearance and functionality of the highway

- a. **Creating a Vision.** The League recognizes the importance of creating a vision of the desired physical appearance of the highway, both to encourage support and participation by the stakeholders and to gather assistance in funding the improvements. The League recommends that the Borough consult a professional to draw up a landscaping plan. We suggest that this plan include the installation of the minimum 10-foot landscaped buffer along the right-of-way wherever possible as called for in the Borough's ordinances. We would like to see small flowering trees and/or shrubs used to screen the parking areas and soften the appearance of the numerous telephone poles and sign posts. We ask that attractive lighting also be considered. Curbing and green space would not only make the area more attractive but also improve safety, particularly by delineating driveways. The League also encourages the Borough to take advantage as soon as possible of short-term improvements offered by the Department of Transportation, such as pilot projects of

planting wildflowers on the median and installation and repair of curbs. We further emphasize that all additional plantings would aid in the filtering of pollutants from the air and the water, thereby helping to address the need to protect these resources.

- b. **Funding.** Recognizing the financial constraints of the Borough and the landowners, the League recommends that the Borough pursue outside funding to aid in the planning and implementation of the physical improvements. We suggest that the Borough investigate the possibility of cooperation with Denville and perhaps Rockaway Borough to apply for a Smart Growth Planning Grant from the State Department of Planning. Once a plan is in place, the Borough can request improvements from the Department of Transportation directly or through special programs such as the Good Neighbor Landscaping Program, or the Transportation Enhancements program. The League also recommends investigating the "Adopt a Highway" program. One suggestion was to ask local landscaping firms to maintain stretches of highway in return for the publicity generated by a sign.
- c. **Ordinances.** The League supports enforcing the Borough's ordinances that pertain to the businesses on Route 46, and recommends reviewing the effectiveness of these codes. In particular, the League encourages the Borough Council to investigate rewriting ordinances pertaining to landscaping and signage to include an amortization clause that would give existing businesses a grace period to come into compliance instead of "grandfathering" all nonconforming sites.
- d. **Other.** Although the League does not support the 1996 Master Plan's suggestion of construction of sidewalks along Route 46 in the current building and usage pattern for safety reasons, improvements to pedestrian safety at the Boulevard crossing and the bus stop should be explored.

The League also recommends that the cleaning of highway litter be improved, perhaps by asking for more frequent cleanings by State crews or via "Adopt a Highway" or the help of other civic groups.

Protecting the well recharge area

The League recommends that Borough Council review and consider the recommendations of the Whippany River Watershed Action Committee water management consultant currently analyzing Mountain Lakes' groundwater and surface water management. The League strongly supports the current ordinances protecting our water, and we encourage the Borough to continue regular water testing along Route 46.

Timely accomplishment

The League encourages Borough Council to draw up an action plan and assign a person or a committee to coordinate the improvement programs.