

A Vision for Valley

Development Needs a Purpose. Development Needs a Plan.

“Why don’t we take a stroll down Valley Street?”

This is the question we’d like to ask our family members and neighbors in years to come. And we believe it is possible. We see a future for Valley Street that’s all about community – one that includes vibrant retail, restaurants and small locally-owned businesses, along with green space and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes. We see a Valley Street that’s ripe for reinvention, while preserving what makes this area so special, including its history and diversity.

But first, we need a plan. A plan formulated together by the citizens of this community, the town and forward-thinking developers, driven by a common vision and purpose.

Our Purpose:

Supporters of A Vision for Valley are offering our time, expertise and community-focused passion to work with town officials and developers in order to reach compromises on sensible buildings and spaces that bring in new long-term neighbors, incorporate public space for pedestrians and community-building, encourage economic stability in this corridor and are sustainable for an ever-evolving future.

We are committed to working with municipal leadership to make this street more pedestrian and environmentally-friendly. We support more visible crosswalks, curb bump-outs, landscaping and other traffic-calming measures.

We believe in the importance of our history. The Valley Street corridor is lined with historically significant houses and structures; in fact, the neighborhood is the oldest in the Village of South Orange. We are committed to ensuring that redevelopment in this area is done with respect to this history and the architectural precedent set forth during its beginnings. First and foremost, we support the repurposing of existing buildings. New buildings should be environmentally responsible, resource-efficient, and conform to LEED standards.

We also value diversity. The residents of this neighborhood are an integrated mix of racial, cultural, age and economic backgrounds. The types of dwellings and businesses in the area are also diverse – with a unique mix of single and two-family houses, apartment buildings and small businesses. We believe that diversity of all kinds creates strength and supports growth that sustains it.

Our Plan:

We believe that development, especially large-scale development, needs a purpose and a plan. We are concerned about the ad hoc, piecemeal approval process of non-conforming developments in our neighborhood without a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the Valley Street corridor in place. We are committed to working together with our neighbors and our elected leadership to develop a clear vision for the Valley Street corridor, incorporating guidance by the residents of this neighborhood. Our vision is guided by the following principles:

- 1. Scale and Design of Buildings** - As a historic area and an eclectic, bohemian neighborhood, set at the bottom of a valley, consideration should be given to the precedent set by the existing structures. Specifically:
 - Height of buildings should be 3 stories on the east side of Valley, which is consistent with zoning for the area. Height of buildings on the west side should go up to 5 stories, with highest point near the train tracks.

- We need 15-20 foot setbacks from the road and side setbacks to allow for open space between buildings and pedestrians.
 - Buildings should be repurposed as much as possible -- wonderful examples are Zen Pets, A&D Liquors, and Sadie's.
 - For new buildings, include cues from the past - they should be designed and incorporated with surrounding neighborhood.
 - Neighborhood voices should be heard and valued by developers in their designs.
 - Developers should provide improvements and concessions to the neighborhood (for example, funds set aside for Founders Park by the 4th & Valley developers)
 - Buildings should not be uniform on their façade and should include peaks or decorative cornice details along the roofline.
 - New buildings should be LEED compatible.
- 2. Use of Buildings** - We support creating spaces for new long-term neighbors and small, community-minded business owners.
- COAH/Fair Housing legal requirements should be met with *actual affordable housing units made available in the neighborhood*, rather than payments into an affordable housing trust fund
 - Residences: buildings that can be subdivided into townhouses or condos following the model of “missing-middle” range housing; rentals aimed at a mix of people - older, younger, students, and mix of economics.
 - Retail: Small retail spaces are the most affordable and attractive for local business owners. Large, single-use retail space is not desirable.
 - Neighborhood voices should be heard and valued by developers in determining use of new buildings.
- 3. Traffic & Walkability** - In order to support a vibrant, pedestrian friendly downtown, we need to take important steps all along the Valley Street Corridor to make it a more walkable. Our vision includes:
- Wider sidewalks
 - Bump-outs on street corners with trees and foliage, as well as other landscaping long the street
 - Public walkways through buildings
 - New buildings need “pull-off”s for constant deliveries and loading docks that are able to accommodate large delivery vehicles (unlike 3rd & Valley)
 - 3rd Street needs clearly-marked crosswalks
 - More flashing lights at pedestrian crossings
 - Nodes and clustering of businesses is preferred
 - For new developments, a percentage of space and funding should be dedicated to (local artist) art projects within new buildings (fountains, mosaics, murals) that are accessible to public or along Valley street.

Join us!:

If you live in South Orange or Maplewood and you'd like to join our efforts, you can do a few simple things:

- Sign up for our email list to stay informed about development issues along Valley. Email us at: visionforvalley@gmail.com
- Show your support by placing “Vision for Valley” lawn sign in your front yard. Email us to request a sign at: visionforvalley@gmail.com
- Join the Facebook group “Vision for Valley” to engage with your neighbors about meetings and updates.
- Join us at meetings! Development Committee meetings, Board of Trustees meetings and Planning Board meetings – they're all open to the public and allow for public comment. Bring a friend for moral support!