

# If You're Thinking of Living in:

By RACHELLE GARBARINE

**T**O drive through the 2.9-square-mile Borough of Allendale in heavily developed northwestern Bergen County is to feel a sense of tranquility and spaciousness.

At the core of this community tucked in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains lies Celery Farm Nature Preserve — more than 80 acres of meadows, marsh and woods so thick that they muffle the sounds of traffic whizzing along on nearby Route 17. Nearly as large, with 70 acres, is Crestwood Park and its lake.

The two borough-owned properties help create a feeling of isolation, but that is just a comfortable illusion. Visible from the borough's highest points is the skyline of Manhattan, less than an hour away, and its three-block business district on West Allendale Avenue bustles with browsers drawn by 45 shops.

A jumble of shady lanes and graceful neighborhoods that frame ponds and streams form the remainder of Allendale, which is, except for two small industrial areas, basically a family town.

When Margaret and Robert Mannion decided to leave Brooklyn 18 years ago for a quieter life, they visited Allendale, fell in love with its small-town character and stayed to raise four children.

"The people are friendly and you can go anywhere in town and feel safe," said Mrs. Mannion, whose husband is a self-employed certified public accountant.

The area was settled in the mid-1600's by Dutch and English farmers. In 1848, the tracks of the Ramapo and Paterson Railroad were laid, permitting the early settlers' farming descendants to ship their produce, mainly strawberries, to other parts of New Jersey and to New York by rail. By the 1860's

businesses had sprung up around the station, joined by grist and saw mills along the waterways. Over the next 20 years, the trains also brought summer visitors, and the area began to shift from farmland to vacation retreat. The summer people were followed by developers who carved fields into home sites.

In 1894, Allendale became an independent borough, but growth came slowly, and the community slumbered as a rural outpost through the 1950's, after which it started to attract families who were tired of urban living. Two decades later it was nearly fully developed.

Since then, the borough, through its land acquisition and open space programs, has stemmed the tide of suburban sprawl. Two years ago, for further protection, the Council passed an ordinance permitting historic districts, but so far none has been designated.

John Young, chairman of the borough's Planning Board, said several new zoning laws, including one to guard against oversized houses, are being explored, as are plans to increase the number of parking spaces in the downtown business district, where the borough will invest \$250,000 in improvements such as Belgian-block curbing and gas lights.

While there are major shopping malls in nearby Paramus and on Route 17, residents can find almost everything they want downtown.

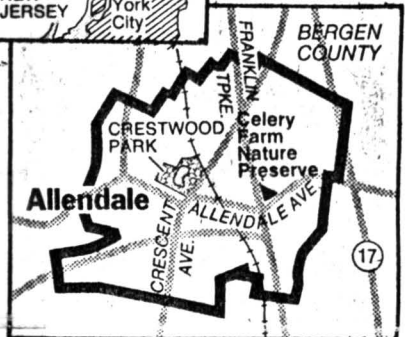
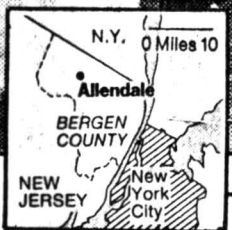
"Because of its size, you're never too far from home," said Judith Bruniogge, a 17-year resident, whose husband, Thomas, is a lawyer with an office in Rutherford. "Some days I spot deer and fox in my backyard."

Among her neighbors is Lou Piniella, former manager of the New York Yankees, who lives just two doors down.

Because the borough offers a prestigious address, homes — from stately colonials to expansive split-levels and con-

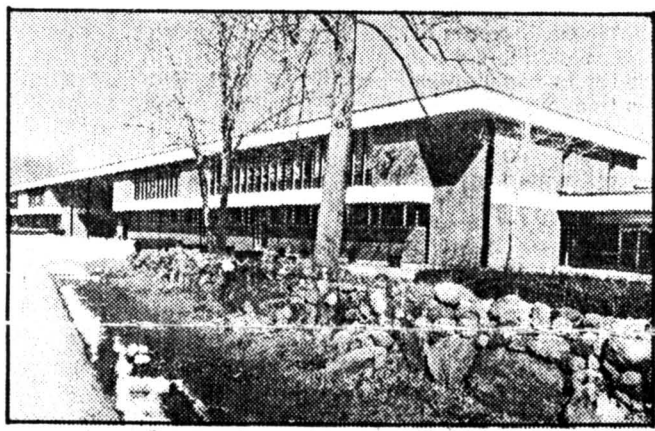
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# Allendale



ABOVE One of the larger single-family houses on Cedar Lane, typical of that area.

LEFT Northern Highlands High School on Hillside Avenue.



The New York Times/Edward Hausner

temporaries set amid tall oaks — are relatively expensive.

According to Arline Kerrigan of the Ridgewood office of Weichert Realtors, older homes on small lots, like those on Brookside Avenue, sell for \$200,000 to \$250,000 while larger homes with more land go for \$274,000 to \$350,000. And some that sit on one acre or more — such as those along Cedar Drive — fetch \$400,000 to \$700,000, with a few, including the newer contemporaries on Carteret Road, commanding close to \$1 million.

The borough has two condominium town-house developments, which together have 40 two- and three-bedroom dwellings priced from \$200,000 to \$295,000. But work is to begin in a few months on Tonus Farm Estates — 45 units spread over 12.5 acres on East Allendale Avenue. Prices for the 2,000- to 2,500-square-foot town homes start at \$400,000, said George McLoof of Mountain Residential Corporation in West Paterson, the developer.

There are just a handful of rentals — mostly in two-family homes. Two-bedroom apartments average \$875 a month, said Mrs. Kerrigan, adding that single-family homes rent from \$1,400.

**S**INCE it has little industry, Allendale's tax rate, \$2.33 per \$100 of assessed value, is high. This is one of the few complaints voiced by residents. It is hoped that a 500,000-square-foot light industrial complex rising off Route 17 will lessen the burden, said Harold Marine, the Borough Administrator.

The borough required the project's developer to contribute \$600,000 to help meet the community's Mount Laurel obligation to provide housing for low- and moderate-income families. Allendale's obligation is for 160 units, but because of the scarcity of land on which to build such housing, it is requesting that the number be reduced to 68. Mr. Young said the

borough could provide those units in several ways, including a housing project for the elderly.

Schools are the community's major expenditure, accounting for 59.97 percent of the budget, but most residents agree they get value for their money. The two elementary schools and the regional high school — Northern Highlands — also serve Upper Saddle River. The high school was one of five in New Jersey cited for excellence in 1987 by the Federal Department of Education.

James G. Hagy, acting superintendent of schools, said the grade schools offer, along with a traditional curriculum, a focus on mathematics and science, classes in vocal and instrument music starting in the fourth grade and classes in French and Spanish beginning in the sixth grade. New this year are courses for students with limited fluency in English, reflecting an influx of Asians.

Most youngsters attend the local high school, which offers diverse academic, business and technology courses, ranging from social study classes on immigrant and minority groups to creative writing and a work-study program in marketing.

The school, which sits on 55 acres on Hillside Avenue, also has 36 clubs, 34 team sports and its own planetarium and television studio. Of last year's graduating seniors, 85 percent went on to four-year colleges, three were named National Merit finalists and one was a Westinghouse scholar.

Residents can join any of 20 civic and social organizations, many of them tied to the schools or the borough's five churches. They also have a choice of recreational activities, centered around the borough's three parks, the two big ones and Memorial Park, on a 1.5-acre site at Park and Brookside Avenues.

One missing element — cultural activities — can be found in nearby towns, from opera in Ridgewood to museums in Ramsey and Ho-Ho-Kus. A popular place for dining out is the Allendale Bar and Grill on West Allendale Avenue, serving American cuisine.

A keen sense of community keeps traditions strong and neighbors close. That is most apparent around holidays, when residents band together and raise funds, as

they have since 1919, to stage yearly events — from a Halloween Parade to a Fourth of July celebration.

"People who live here want a nice town," said Mayor Clarence L. Shaw, adding that they volunteer their time and energy to make sure it stays that way. ■

### Gazetteer

**Population:** 6,070 (1986 estimate).  
**Average household income:** \$99,804 (1986 estimate).  
**Median house price:** \$330,000.  
**Property tax on median house:** \$4,000.  
**Public-school expenditure per pupil:** \$5,309 elementary, \$6,330 secondary.  
**Distance from Manhattan:** 18 miles.  
**Rush-hour commutation to midtown:** 45 minutes on Short Line bus, \$6.85 one way, \$48.95 for 10 trips; 45 minutes on N.J. Transit train to Hoboken, \$4.60 one way, \$124 monthly, then 10 minutes via PATH train, one way \$1.  
**Government:** Mayor (Clarence L. Shaw, a Republican) and six Council members all elected to four-year terms. Council appoints Borough Administrator, now Harold C. Marine.  
**Wildlife Refuge:** The Celery Farm Nature Preserve — a onetime celery and lettuce farm that was made a public preserve in 1981 — is home to a great variety of fauna. Red and gray foxes, deer and more than 200 species of birds, including a peregrine falcon and a bald eagle, have been observed there. Admission to the preserve, encircled by a one-mile nature trail, is free and it is open year-round for hiking, bird-watching and picnicking.