

Six Burlington County towns listed among best places to live in state

By: ED MOORHOUSE (Sun, Feb/24/2008)

Six Burlington County towns are among the 100 best places to live in New Jersey, according to New Jersey Monthly magazine.

Shamong is rated sixth on the list, featured in the March issue of the magazine.

"I think that people find that (Shamong) has a fairly unique community spirit and it's in a really good location," Shamong Mayor Jon Shevelew said.

Tabernacle is ranked 23rd, New Hanover is 47th, Medford Lakes is 50th, Medford is 79th, and Riverton is rated 94th.

Research was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute.

According to the magazine, researchers considered eight categories that best represent the quality of life in the state's 566 municipalities: property taxes, home values, population growth, land development, employment, crime rate, school performance and proximity to services.

"We would rank high in all of those categories," Shevelew said. "We can still say we're one of a few municipalities that don't have a (local-purpose) tax, and our school systems have always done well. Development in town is fairly limited, so I think that keeps property values high. All of those factors play into it and it's a unique community."

Chatham Township in Morris County was rated No. 1.

According to the magazine, household income was not considered and home values were measured by their rate of increase over five years rather than by current prices.

To compare land development, towns with relatively slower growth and more open space were rated more favorably. Tabernacle and Shamong are among the towns on the list that have the most open space.

"We always knew that this was a great place to live and it was always our little secret. I guess the secret's out," Tabernacle Mayor Kim Brown said. "I think we have some of the friendliest people around."

Towns with lower unemployment and crime rates also scored higher, as did municipalities located closer to hospitals, according to the magazine.

"I'm a life-long Medford resident," Medford Township Councilman Bob Martin said. "I've been here for 61 years and to me, Medford has always excelled in safety and in schools. It's open, it's rural, it's close to everything and the quality of life here is wonderful.

"It's nice for Medford and our neighbors to be recognized," he said.

