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Master Plan

Land Use Element

Township of Weymouth Atlantic County, New Jersey



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Statutory Requirements

The Land Use Plan Element is one of the components of a municipal Master Plan required by the New Jersey municipal land use law. Along with a statement of Goals, Objectives and land use Policies and a housing element, the Land Use Element forms the core of the Master Plan and provides the foundation for other voluntary master plan elements.

The Land Use Plan Element is prepared pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28(b)(2), which sets forth the following four requirements for a municipal Master Plan: (a) a statement relating the Land Use Plan Element to the Master Plan's overall goals and policies to its other elements, as well as natural conditions of the land; (b) the existing and proposed location, extent and intensity of development of land to be used in the future for varying types of residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, educational and other public and private purposes or combination of purposes; and stating the relationship thereof to the existing and any proposed zone plan and zoning ordinance; (c) the existing and proposed location of any airports and the boundaries of any airport safety zones; and (d) an explanation of the population density and development intensity recommended for the municipality.

Purpose

The Land Use Plan Element sets the framework for, and incorporates, the land use implications for all of the other elements of the Master Plan. It establishes policies for the long-term physical development of the municipality and translates the community's vision into a physical pattern that guides the general location of various types of land uses. The Land Use Plan Element also includes goals, policies, and action items that are necessary to achieve the long-term future desired by the community. It is utilized to guide the Township's local decision making and will be implemented through the Township's Zoning Ordinance and Map, as well as other land development regulations.

As identified through public workshops held during the recent Master Plan Re-Examination process and during the development of the Master Plan's statement of Goals and Policies, there are a variety of issues facing the Township. These issues range from conservation of existing natural resources, to revitalization of the villages of Belcoville and Dorothy, to preservation of the quality of life of the Township, to creating a harmonious co-existence between residential and small-scale agriculture. This Plan has been designed to provide the framework and flexibility necessary to address these and other issues.

The 2008 Master Plan Re-Examination Report is provided in *Appendix A*.

Goals

- Achieve a desirable balance of non-residential, residential, open space and agricultural uses.
- Maintain strict performance standards for residential uses such that development compatible with the environment will be assured and negative impacts on individual sites and community infrastructure will be minimized.
- Provide for a wide range of housing densities and housing types to meet the varied income and age level needs as well as to preserve established residential areas.
- Meet affordable housing obligations
- Continue to maintain the high quality of existing housing stock and the character of existing residential areas.

Process

The Weymouth Township Planning Board developed a public process that was designed to solicit a diversity of input into the process of development of this Land Use Element. In order to guide the work with the consulting planning professional, a committee composed of the following people was established:

Eileen Miller, Chair, Planning Board
Sharon Van Duyne, Chair, Zoning Board of Adjustment
Jim Pridgeon, Chair, Environmental Commission
Jill Baxter, Planning Board Member
Karen Giffin, Planning Board Member

A series of public meetings were held by the committee over the course of the summer and fall of 2009. Two public presentations were made to the full Planning Board and the recommendations of the committee formally transmitted to the Planning Board on January 13, 2010.

State and Regional Planning Policy

Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan

Over eighty two percent of the land area of the Township is located within the New Jersey Pinelands Management Area. This area is comprised of 6,425 acres out of the total land area in the Township of approximately 8,064 acres. In addition, approximately 73% of the population and 72% of the housing units are located within the Pinelands

zone (source: New Jersey Pinelands Commission). The Pinelands Village of Dorothy allows for residential and commercial development on a minimum lot size of five acres. The remaining portions of the Pinelands portion of the Township are designated as Forest zones with lot sizes ranging from ten acres up to twenty five acres per residential unit. Very recently, the Pinelands Commission has stated that it will review the conservation and development designations with the municipalities under its jurisdiction based upon an Ecological Integrity Assessment conducted by the Commission. The Commission has also begun implementation of new clustering schemes for future residential development within in portions of the Pinelands as well. This Land Use Element is designed to provide guidance in the designation of areas for development and for open-space set asides as a result of potential clustering provisions in future zoning ordinance changes.

Wild & Scenic River System

The Township joined with other municipalities and the National Park Service to cooperatively protect and manage the Great Egg Harbor River as part of its designation into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system. A significant portion of the area of the township that is not within the Pinelands management area falls within the River Management zone.

Coastal Area Facilities Review Act

The portion of the Township located immediately adjacent to the Great Egg Harbor River falls within the Coastal Area Facilities Review Act (CAFRA). This legislation provides for regulation of development within the state's coastal areas by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Through a series of performance standards and density restrictions, new development along the Great Egg Harbor River is regulated by this program.

Council on Affordable Housing (COAH)

On November 22, 2004 COAH adopted its third round methodology and rules, which are effective December 20, 2004. These rules were revised and became effective June 2, 2008. This new methodology required the Township to undertake a review of the housing element and fair share plan. Components of the new methodology include "growth share" and "rehabilitation share".

The growth share determines the affordable housing unit obligation *based* upon projected development, with affordable housing units allocated based on the number of dwelling units built and the number of jobs created in the Township based on the square footage of non-residential development. The third round includes the period 1999 through 2014.

The Township updated its Housing Plan Element in 2006 in response to the third round rules.

Inventory of Existing Conditions

Location and Background

Weymouth Township is located in western Atlantic County, New Jersey and represents the remaining portion of what had once been a very large political subdivision consisting of nearly one third of the area of the entire county. With a formal history dating from the year 1694, Weymouth Township spawned a number of newer municipalities such as Hamilton Township, the City of Estell Manor, and Corbin City.

Today the Township is principally comprised of the two villages of Dorothy and Belcoville along with mostly low density and undeveloped areas lying between these centers.

The Township location is shown on the *Map One* entitled, *Township and Region Location Map*. It is comprised of approximately 8064 acres, or 12.4 square miles. The Township had a population of 2,257 residents as captured by the United States 2000 Census. This population was housed in a total 909 housing units.

Physical and Environmental Features

Weymouth Township contains a diversity of very important natural features that include the Great Egg Harbor River, South River, rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species, extensive forests, groundwater resources, and various forms of agriculture. The municipal Environmental Commission has completed a Natural Resource Inventory for the Township which identifies and examines the geology, hydrology, soils, vegetation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species and other areas of local, regional and national ecological significance found within the Township.

The detailed information contained within the Natural Resources Inventory (NRI) is extremely useful in helping the Township identify and protect its significant natural resources. This is especially true with respect to site-specific development proposals or with respect to the identification of land parcels that might be suitable for open space protection. However, the NRI can also be used on a broader scale to use as a basis for Township-wide planning. Areas that clearly present either constraints to future development or opportunities for preserving large, intact natural systems can also be derived from the NRI.

Another source of data that is important to understanding the environmental constraints for development within the Township is the Ecological Integrity Assessment prepared by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission.

Among some of the most important large scale natural and physical features that affect future land use are the presence of wetlands, high quality river systems, soil type, the presence of rare species habitat and large intact forests.

Wetlands and Surface Waters

Weymouth Township contains a diverse complex of freshwater and coastal wetlands. Approximately twenty three percent of the Township is comprised of wetlands that are chiefly associated with the two major river systems that pass through the Township. Over 35 miles of river, stream and unnamed tributaries include the Tuckahoe River, Stephens Creek, Cedar Brook, South River and the Great Egg Harbor River.

Wetlands serve many important functions. They provide flood storage and stream flow attenuation during wet periods and sustain stream flow by releasing stored water during dry periods. They filter out pollutants in stormwater runoff, thus protecting water quality, and they provide habitat for important species of plants and animals. New Jersey's major wetlands are found on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's National Wetlands Inventory aerial maps, county soil surveys, and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's more detailed wetlands maps. A more accurate wetlands delineation can be obtained from specific site visits, when wetlands can be identified by vegetative, soil, and hydrologic features.

The Weymouth Township Environmental Resource Inventory contains detailed maps of wetland areas in the Township that are based upon the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection data source. The New Jersey Pinelands Commission and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regulate the disturbance and protection of wetlands.

Within the portion of the Township that falls outside of the Pinelands Protection Area, wetlands are protected by two major state laws. The N. J. Freshwater Wetlands Act defines a wetland as an area that is inundated or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions, commonly known as hydrophytic vegetation. The state classifies wetlands into three (3) categories: Exceptional wetlands include those which discharge into trout production waters or those which support habitat for threatened or endangered species. Ordinary wetlands include certain isolated wetlands, detention facilities, and drainage ditches. Intermediate wetlands are all wetlands that are not defined as exceptional or ordinary. Exceptional and intermediate wetlands must have a buffer, or transition area, within which any disturbance is regulated by the NJDEP. Buffers range from 25 ft. to 150 ft. around NJDEP-regulated freshwater wetlands.

In coastal areas under the jurisdiction of the Coastal Areas Facility Review Act (CAFRA), tidal wetlands are protected by the 1970 Wetlands Act. This act requires a 300 ft. buffer around tidal wetlands.

Freshwater wetlands within the Township that fall within the Pinelands Protection Area are regulated by the NJ Pinelands Commission and require a 300 ft. buffer around wetland within which disturbance due to development is not permitted.

The Township Natural Resource Inventory provides a summary of the various types of wetlands found within the Township.

Table 1: Wetland Types and Acreage – Weymouth Township, New Jersey

Wetland Type	Acreage
Agricultural Wetlands (Modified)	3.09
Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	51.63
Coniferous Scrub/Shrub	12.78
Coniferous Wooded Wetlands	239.82
Deciduous Scrub/Shrub	166.50
Deciduous Wooded Wetlands	240.41
Mixed Forested Wetlands (decid)	202.83
Mixed Forested Wetlands (conf)	162.43
Mixed Forested Scub/Shrub (decid)	138.08
Mixed Forested Scrub/Shrub (conf)	37.01
Saline Marshes	251.61
Other Wetlands	28.44
Totals	1534.58

The wetlands are depicted on *Map Two*, entitled *Wetlands*. As can be seen from this map, the majority of wetlands in the Township are found in the eastern portion of the municipality associated with the South River and in the western most section of the township in association with the Tuckahoe River.

Geology/Soils

The geology of a region is the supportive base for soils, vegetation, and water. There is a complex interrelationship between the geologic environment and an area’s natural resources. Weymouth Township is entirely composed of the geologic features generally associated with the Outer Coastal Plain of New Jersey.

Certain soil types are associated with periodic flooding and erosion. Alluvial soils are subject to periodic flooding and have a low depth to seasonal high water table.

Weymouth Township has areas with alluvial soils. These include: Atsion Sands, Berryland Sands, Lakehurst, and Manahawkin Muck. These soils types provide significant constraints for development.

Map Three depicts the soil types in the township with significant development constraints. The location of these soils is very closely aligned with the surface waters and wetlands. This relationship is depicted on *Map Four*.

Rare Species

The New Jersey Office of Natural Lands Management within the Department of Environmental Protection maintains the Natural Heritage Data Base --- a compilation of known occurrences of rare species. This data base lists twenty species of plants, herptiles, songbirds, and raptors that occur within Weymouth Township and which are considered rare from a global, federal, or state perspective. Much of this information, while valuable from a standpoint of review for site-specific development proposals, is not as useful as a robust tool for planning land use on a municipal-wide scale. This list of rare species is provided in *Appendix B*.

In an effort to provide information to guide land use planning in the protection of the habitat for rare species, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish & Wildlife, developed the Landscape Project. This effort has been designed to provide users with peer-reviewed, scientifically sound information that is easily accessible and can be integrated with the municipal land use planning process.

The method for delineating critical areas is relatively straightforward. First, the relevant classes for each habitat type (forest, grassland, forested wetland, emergent wetland and beach) are extracted from the NJDEP's LU/LC data layer. Dissolving the different LU/LC classes for each habitat type creates contiguous habitat polygons. Using boundaries between habitat types and major roads (county level 500 and above), contiguous patches for each habitat type are delineated. Each patch is then assigned a unique link ID. Imperiled species occurrence areas are then intersected with habitat patches. Habitat patches are classified based on the status of the species present as follows:

- **Rank 5** is assigned to patches containing one or more occurrences of at least one wildlife species listed as endangered or threatened on the Federal list of endangered and threatened species.
- **Rank 4** is assigned to patches with one or more occurrences of at least one State endangered species.
- **Rank 3** is assigned to patches containing one or more occurrences of at least one State threatened species.
- **Rank 2** is assigned to patches containing one or more occurrences of species considered to be species of special concern.

- **Rank 1** is assigned to patches that meet habitat-specific suitability requirements such as minimum size criteria for endangered, threatened or priority wildlife species, but that do not intersect with any confirmed occurrences of such species.

Within Weymouth Township, the Landscape Project depicts a number of areas with a rank of 3 or less. However, two areas are ranked as a 5, or as important for the rarest of species. *Map Five, Highly Ranked Rare Species Habitat*, depicts the forest in the western portion of the township (associated with the Tuckahoe River) as supporting three federally ranked threatened or endangered species. The wetlands associated with the South and Great Egg Harbor Rivers are depicted as important Foraging Areas for the American Bald Eagle.

Vegetation/Forests

Weymouth Township includes large tracts of forest – occurring in a variety of vegetative community types. The Township is also a part of a much larger extent of forest found within the southern Pine Barrens. These vast forests serve as important habitat and provide ecosystem services such as protection and recharge of the drinking water supply and have positive impacts on the local and regional climate. From a regional perspective, the forests of the southern Pine Barrens act as a critical linkage and wildlife corridor between the vast marshes of the Delaware Bay and the more northerly core Pine Barrens forests.

The Weymouth Township Natural Resource Inventory emphasizes the importance of the Township’s forests to maintaining a variety of social and ecological conditions. The Environmental Commission has started work on a Community Forestry Management Plan to provide a guide for the long-term management of this resource and it will aid in the education of stewardship of forests. However, while some of the forest is located within open space lands or within public management, the majority of the Township’s forest resources are undeveloped and held by private interests. A sound land use planning approach is necessary to insure that future development of the Township minimizes the negative impact on this resource.

In 2008, The New Jersey Pinelands Commission completed a project entitled “An Ecological-integrity Assessment of the New Jersey Pinelands: A Comprehensive Assessment of the Landscape and Aquatic and Wetlands Systems of the Region”. This study is designed to provide a land-use planning perspective by focusing “on the big picture” by evaluating the current ecological status of the entire Pinelands Area and the ecosystem that it represents.

The Pinelands ecological-integrity assessment was guided by three basic principles concerning landscape, aquatic, and wetland-drainage integrity. The principles were based on the results of ecological studies conducted in the Pinelands and elsewhere. Landscape integrity focuses on species that move across wetlands and uplands and

processes that operate at a regional-landscape level. Aquatic integrity deals primarily with processes that operate at the watershed level and the species and communities that are influenced by the quantity and quality of surface waters. Wetland-drainage-integrity focuses on upland land uses that affect the quantity and quality of groundwater flowing to palustrine wetlands. These three integrity measures were used to determine the overall ecological integrity of the 938,173-acre (379,827-ha) Pinelands Area.

- **Landscape Integrity.** Conservation of characteristic Pinelands plant and animal species and communities, including wide-ranging species, requires the protection of relatively *large* tracts of Pinelands habitat, including upland forests, wetlands, and water bodies.
- **Aquatic Integrity.** Conservation of characteristic Pinelands water quality and lake, pond, and stream communities and the indigenous plant and animal species that make up these communities requires the protection of associated watersheds.
- **Wetland-drainage Integrity.** Conservation of characteristic Pinelands palustrine wetlands and the indigenous plant and animal species that inhabit these wetlands requires the protection of adjacent uplands that influence the hydrologic integrity of the wetlands.
- **Ecological Integrity.** The overall ecological integrity of the Pinelands is a composite of landscape-, watershed-, and wetland-drainage-integrity measures.

The integrity of each of these measures is ranked on a scale from 10 through 100 (100 being the highest rank of integrity). When the data is extracted for the municipal boundaries of Weymouth Township, a clear trend emerges. If one were to look at only the areas ranked as the highest, or 100, on the scale of integrity, it can be seen that large portions of the Township's forests are of the highest importance to the overall systems-level ecological function of the Pinelands.

Map Six, Areas of Highest Wetland Drainage Integrity, depicts an area most closely associated with the forests located in the central portion of the Township with a integrity ranking of 100. Somewhat smaller areas with a ranking of 100 are also located near the Tuckahoe River.

Map Seven, Areas of Highest Aquatic Integrity, depicts areas with a ranking of 100 for this measure. This map shows somewhat similar portions of the Township than that depicted in Map Six. However, the majority of the central forested portion of the township are included.

Map Eight, Areas of Highest Landscape Integrity, again shows areas ranked as having the highest score of 100 being located in a generally similar area of the Township as the previous measures.

Map Nine, Areas of Highest Ecological Integrity, is an average of the landscape, wetland drainage and aquatic scores and results in the overall ecological integrity score. The areas shown on this map, represent the portions of the Township that scored only the highest rank of 100.

It should be noted that in each of the above mapped summaries, there are many areas with scores of less than 100 (from 90 downward to 10). Only those areas with the highest possible scores were included in this Future Land Use Plan in a effort to depict only the most valuable natural habitat found within the Township.

Combined Environmental Constraints

Each of the above described sources of ecological and natural resource information can be combined in an effort to realize an overall picture of the constraints and opportunities for future land use in the Township. By examining these data, the Planning Board can identify the geographical portions of the Township that can accommodate additional residential and commercial development and those areas where low intensity uses and conservation activities might be the most appropriate when environmental resources are considered.

Map Ten, Combined Environmental Constraints, depicts the combined data layers consisting of the Ecological Integrity Assessment (score of 100), the presence of freshwater and saline wetlands, soils with significant constraint for development, and habitat for rare species with the highest rank (5).

It can be seen from examination of the map that the Township has generally three areas with environmental constraint for future residential and commercial development: the forests and wetlands associated with the Tuckahoe River and generally west of Cape May Ave.; the central forests and wetlands of the Township generally located near Estell Avenue; and the eastern most portion of the Township located between the South River and the Great Egg Harbor River (with the exception of the area associated with Belcoville).

Population Characteristics. Table 2 outlines characteristics of the Township's population by race and sex. The percentage of females is slightly higher than that of males. In addition, the median age of the population of Weymouth Township is 39.4 years. The total number of residents 62 years old and above is 846 or 37.5% of the population of the Township.

Table 1: Population Characteristics – Weymouth Township, New Jersey

Population Characteristic	Number	Percent of Total
Male	1085	48.1
Female	1172	51.9
White	2076	92.0
Black or African American	108	4.8
Asian	18	0.8
Other Race	23	1.0
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	86	3.8

Source: U.S. Census Data

Housing Characteristics. Table 3 depicts basic housing data for the Township. The number of housing units increased by 20 percent (or 152 units) during the decade of the 1990s. Fifty seven of these additional housing units were Manufactured Homes located in the Oaks of Weymouth development.

Table 2: Housing Characteristics – Weymouth Township, New Jersey

Characteristic	1990	2000	Percent Change
Number of Housing Units	757	909	20
Median Housing Value	\$90,000	\$119,000	32
Number of Manufactured Homes	110	167	65.8

Source: U.S. Census Data

Appendix C provides a comprehensive Profile of Demographic, Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics.

Existing Land Use

Approximately 12.43 percent of the Township is currently developed as either residential or commercial uses (approximately 991 acres in development). The majority of this development occurs within the village of Dorothy (*Map Eleven, Existing Residential and Commercial Development*). The village of Belcoville accommodates additional development associated with Route 50 and nearby streets. River Road located along the Great Egg Harbor River is also largely developed with single-family residences.

Nearly all commercial land uses occur along Tuckahoe Road in Dorothy and along Route 50 in Belcoville(with the exception of a relatively small number of home-based businesses that are associated with residential land uses).

As described earlier in this plan, the villages of Dorothy and Belcoville represent the historic pattern of development in the Township – both having been centers of growth in different chapters of the Township’s history. Each village has grown in relatively small, but steady rates.

The largest single development, and the one that currently has the greatest amount of permitted future residential development, is the Oaks of Weymouth located along Eleventh Ave. and on the municipal border with the City of Estell Manor. This development was given approvals in the earliest days of the New Jersey Pinelands Act and has resulted in over 200 units being built with over 200 additional units approved for future construction. The Oaks of Weymouth is age restricted community and the residents rent the land parcels from the management/ownership entity (the prefabricated, modular units are owned by each resident).

Approximately only 2.6 percent of the Township is considering as in a agricultural use. This includes such uses as pasture and cropland. Most of this agricultural use is associated with residential uses and consists of horse farms, small scale live-stock operations, and the growing of vegetables.

The other significant use of land within the Township is that of protected, open space. A total of approximately 1089 acres is owned by either the municipal government, the New Jersey Natural Lands Trust or the NJDEP Division of Fish & Wildlife. This equals approximately 13.7 percent of the area of the Township. These areas are depicted on *Map Twelve, Protected Open Space*.

Existing Zoning

With respect to current land use regulations, the Township can generally be grouped into one of two categories: that portion of the Township located with the Pinelands Management Area; and that portion located outside of the Pinelands. The current zoning districts are depicted on *Map Thirteen, Existing Zoning Districts*.

Pinelands Management Area

As described above, the majority of the Township is located within this category. Existing municipal zoning is in full compliance with the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan and there are two major zoning themes – forest conservation and village development associated with Dorothy. The zoning districts in the Pinelands are described below:

- **Pineland Village Residential.** This area is comprised of the portion of the Township located east of Tuckahoe Road and west of Maple Ave. A second area is located on either side of Cape May Avenue. This district allows for single family homes on lots consisting of a minimum of five acres.

- **Pineland Village Commercial.** This district is located along the western side of Tuckahoe Road. The district allows for a variety of service and retail oriented commercial uses as well as secondary residential uses on a minimum lot size of five acres.
- **Pinelands Forest Area 10.** This area represents the majority of the Township located between Cape May Ave. and the Tuckahoe River. A second area with this zone is located along Eleventh Ave and north along Burnett Ave. Single Family residences are permitted on a minimum lot size of ten acres.
- **Pineland Forest Area 20.** Largely located within the forest in the central portion of the Township, this zoning allows for single family residences on a minimum lot size of 20 acres.
- **Pineland Forest Area 25.** This zone found along the Tuckahoe River and requires a minimum of 25 acres for development of single family residences.
- **Pinelands Forest Area Mobile Home.** This zone conforms with the location of the Oaks of Weymouth development described above. Planned-unit mobile home development is permitted on lots as small as 5000 square feet.

Outside of the Pinelands

There are four zoning districts located in the portion of the Township that is outside of the Pinelands area. Two of these are associated with the village of Belcoville:

- **Commercial.** This zone allows for a variety of commercial uses including retail, service, and restaurants. Located along state Route 50, this zone requires a minimum of five acres for these uses.
- **R-2.** This zone allows for single family residences on a minimum lot size of 20,000 square feet. This district represents the area of the Township associated with the historic development of Belcoville village.

The area adjacent to the Great Egg Harbor River is zoned for residential land uses:

- **R-1.** Single Family residences on a minimum lot size of one acre.

The last zoning district in the Township is generally associated with the wetlands located between the South River and the Great Egg Harbor River. However, a Townhouse development is located within the northern portion of this district.

- **RR.** Allows for single family residential development on a minimum of five acres.

Suitability of Existing Zoning When Compared to Nonconforming Parcels and Land Uses

There are a few areas of the Township where either the historic land use pattern or the configuration of land parcels is in conflict with the zoning district scheme. These conflicts can be determined from a number of sources. However, the primary sources relevant to Weymouth Township are the parcel configuration, existing housing types, and the recent history of requests for relief before Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Existing Parcel Configuration

Map Fourteen, Land Parcels, depicts the configuration of existing lots within the Township.

In the area of the Township located east of Tuckahoe Road and between Twelve Avenue and Fourteenth Avenue is an area consisting of very small lots of only one eighth acre in size. While most of the housing units in this neighborhood reside of various combinations of these small lots, the majority of the lots associated with these residences do not meet the minimum lot size of five acres required in the PVR zone.

The village of Belcoville consists of many undersized lots, especially those associated with the commercial establishments located along Route 50. In addition, there are a number of multi-family residential units that do not conform with the single-family restrictions of the R-2 zone. In addition, most of the “as built” dwellings do not meet the various setback requirements of this zone.

The area located along the Great Egg Harbor river consists of a number of existing lots developed as single family residences. Many of these lots do not meet the minimum lot size of 1 acre required by the R-1 zone.

The Lenape Landing Townhouse Development located within the northern portion of the R-R zone is also a nonconforming land use since the R-R zone allows for single family residences on a minimum of 5 acres and does not accommodate this type of multi-family development.

Zoning Board of Adjustment Applications

The type and frequency of applications heard by the Zoning Board of Adjustment can often provide information about any trends or issues associated with the municipal land use regulations. Sometimes repetitive applications for very similar variances can indicate a problem with specific standards within a zoning ordinance and may suggest needed revisions to the ordinance.

During the period from March 2007 through June 2009 a total of seventeen applications were heard by the Weymouth Township Zoning Board of Adjustment. Three of these applications involved decks within the Oaks of Weymouth development. Adjustments to the setback provisions for this zone have already been implemented by the Township Committee. Two applications were heard involving undersized lots located along Riverside Drive. Three applications were heard involving undersized lots located within the portion of the township bounded by Tuckahoe Road and Pennsylvania Avenue (Pinelands Village Residential Zone). There were no other trends indicated within the remaining applications before the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Future Land Use Plan

Cluster Development in the Pinelands

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission has recently indicated that it will pursue the implementation of mandatory clustering within portions of the Forest Area in Weymouth Township. This change in land use regulations mandates a style of development that allows reduced minimum lot sizes in exchange for the preservation of open space or other desirable features of a property. According to communications from the Pinelands Commission, “clustering does not necessarily change the number of homes, but the individual lot sizes are smaller than that which would occur under a conventional lot layout. Development can be directed toward appropriate locations of a property, such as areas close to roads and other infrastructure, while natural resources such as critical habitat for rare plant and animal species can be protected.”

In a meeting before the Township Planning Board, representatives from the Pinelands Commission indicated that Weymouth Township is a likely candidate for mandatory clustering and that there are large holdings of undeveloped lands within the Township that would be appropriate for this new provision.

In an effort to play a positive and proactive role in helping to guide the application of a potential clustering provision in the land use regulations, this plan provides a basis for identification of the best locations where physical development should occur as a result of higher density (or smaller lot sizes). The following principals were used to identify these locations:

Sensitivity to Environmental Constraints and Important Natural Resources

The previous section of this plan provide a strong basis for determining the most appropriate locations for new, high density residential development in the Township. Those areas that do not contain significant wetlands, habitat for rare species, poor soils,

or do not rank high for the Pinelands Commission’s Ecological Integrity Assessment would be the most appropriate for new, high density residential development. These important areas are depicted on *Map Ten*.

Minimization of Additional Public Infrastructure

Much of the undeveloped portion of the Forest Area in Weymouth Township does not contain existing, improved roadways. Given the large, ongoing public cost of maintenance of this public infrastructure, any future clustering of new development should occur adjacent to existing, improved, municipal or county roadways.

Cost of the Provision of Public Services

The cost of providing services like fire protection, trash collection, snow plowing, schools and many other public services can be minimized through the location of new development in areas that are not only compact, but are also adjacent to existing development where those services exist.

Preservation of the “Sense of Place” for the Villages of Dorothy and Belcoville

The Planning Board has identified a policy of preserving and improving the physical and historical nature of the villages of Dorothy and Belcoville. Any new clustered, high density development should be located in a manner that respects the existing “boundaries” of the two villages by providing some separation between them and the new development. Further, the new development should be designed in a manner that mimics or acknowledges the nature of the historical development of the villages of the Township. This should include goals such as walkability, ecologically sustainable design, and the minimization of light pollution. Any new land use ordinance that permits or mandates clustering should provide clear subdivision and design standards to achieve this goal.

Potential Clustered Development Locations

Using the above criteria, two potential locations within the Forest Area of the Township are appropriate locations for higher density residential cluster developments. These are shown on *Map Fifteen, Potential Locations for Clustered Development*.

Each of these locations avoid direct impact to the most important environmental resources found within the Township, are separated physically from the existing villages, and are located within areas where existing, improved roads exist.

Small-scale Agriculture

The practice of small-scale agriculture and more specifically, the establishment of small scale animal farms has been a public issue in recent years in Weymouth Township. Land use conflicts have occurred between adjacent residential uses and small animal farms. Complaints regarding smells, manure management, and fencing have been raised by some residential land use owners while the owners of animal farms have expressed concern about their right to a quiet enjoyment of a traditional rural pastime.

The current standards in Weymouth Township for the keeping of farm animals are fairly minimal: the property must be at least two acres in size and animal fencing must be located a minimum of fifty feet from any property boundary. There are no limits on the number or type of animals that can be kept and there are no definitions on the type of activity that is associated with the keeping of horses or farm animals.

Much of the public debate centering around the issue has included questions regarding the number of animals that can be kept, the minimum acreage that must be provided, the location and type of fencing, manure management, and what type of safeguards are in place to ensure the enjoyment of neighboring residential uses.

During the course of the development of this Future Land Use Plan, it became apparent to the Planning Board that the approach needed to sufficiently address this land use conflict should be based upon a broader participation of the public. It was decided that a special committee comprised of both farm animal owners and residential interests should be organized. This committee should be given adequate time to examine each of the issues and to develop a consensus driven approach to develop recommendations on land use guidelines to the Planning Board.

The Planning Board has identified the following issues that should be considered by a future committee:

- Parcel Size to Number of Animals Ratio. The number and type of farm animals permitted on a farm should be governed by the size of the acreage available to the farming operation;
- Animal Fencing. The location and type of animal containment fencing should be reviewed and standards recommended that result in a standard that allows farmers to make good use of their property and that also results in adequate function, distance from neighbors, and esthetics;
- Manure Management. The Planning Board feels strongly that the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Manure Management Rules to protect water quality be integrated into the committee's recommendations;

- Animals. Best management practices for the keeping of farm animals should also be addressed in the land use recommendations based upon standard sources of information such as the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. These should include turn-out, pasture rotations, stabling and stall standards.
- Commercial Operations. Improved definitions and standards for commercial or large scale agricultural operations should be developed. Riding academies, large scale boarding facilities, training facilities and similar operations should be examined and permitted where appropriate. Issues of Light Pollution should also be addressed.

The Planning Board will work with the Township Committee to develop an advisory committee and a timeline for the small-scale agriculture/farm animal effort.

Villages of Dorothy and Belcoville

The Planning Board identified a need to revitalize the village centers of Dorothy and Belcoville during the Master Plan Re Examination process. This effort should be centered around the existing village footprint and should focus on the unique historical context of each of the two villages as well as issues such as environmental sustainability and light pollution.

Revitalization means mobilizing community efforts and energy to improve the village center. It means identifying projects - and activities - that will make it a more vibrant, attractive, and livable place, and organizing the people and money needed to make it happen. This process can be thought of as consisting of two basic components: the physical improvements in the village and the social or community-based activities necessary to improve the village environment. Some examples of these include:

Physical improvements:

- Community centers
- Recreational space and facilities
- Sidewalks, landscaping, benches
- Roads, traffic calming, parking, bike paths, and other transportation improvements
- Water and sewage capacity
- Schools
- Retention of US Post Office facilities
- Improvements to historic buildings
- Business improvements
- New infill development

Activities: The vitality of a community is defined by the shared sense of belonging to that community – seen in the activities that take place – and the level of involvement in those activities, such as:

- Public celebrations (festivals, concerts and fairs),
- Civic functions (school activities, libraries, post offices, churches, and recreation facilities),
- Support of local businesses where people congregate (general stores, hardware stores, coffee shops, beauty salons, etc.).

What links all of these activities together is volunteer efforts to make it happen. Often this will take place around one structure or improvement, like improvements to a community center or town green. Or perhaps a committee is formed to organize a harvest festival.

The Vermont Downtown Program (a state supported initiative) provides a very good summary of some of the key strategies for a successful village revitalization. In a publication on this subject, it recommends that successful revitalization processes generally seem to begin in one of two ways. The first arises from a general sense that there are problems or threats in the village center, but no one is quite sure what to do. This in turn leads to a community “visioning” process, identifying both problems and assets, setting goals, and planning for the projects and activities that will lead to a more vibrant community. The “doing” may come later, usually with the people involved in the planning effort stepping forward to lead the various projects.

As an alternative, a group of people may come together to do a specific project – restore an historic building into a community center, or create a sidewalk or path so people can safely walk around the village center. At some point, some of these groups expand their purpose, and begin to take on additional projects leading to a revitalization process.

Components of Village Revitalization

- Local leadership. Successful revitalization efforts come about as a result of local leadership. Key players are typically the elected officials, local volunteer groups (like the historical society and environmental commission), and the planning board. Other local organizations, like schools, might also play an important role.
- Existing assets. One of the lessons learned from downtown revitalization is that a community should base its efforts on improving what it already has, not in reinventing itself into something new – a lesson that applies equally well in village centers. Since most village centers are historic, the preservation of the historic structures is frequently an early focus of village groups – town halls, granges, schools, libraries, or churches – whether they continue their traditional use or are adapted for a new function. Conservation and improvement of natural resources such as paths, trails, riversides and streambanks are also popular local projects. A community often may need to improve town greens, sidewalks, bike paths, water and sewage systems, transportation improvements, and other infrastructure. Finally, many communities have traditional events – like fairs, harvest dinners, music events, holiday gatherings – which are existing assets that help define the community and can play a very prominent role in a revitalization process.
- Incremental. Revitalization takes place over time, and through a *series* of projects and activities. Very rarely is there “just one thing” that will fix all problems. Successful communities understand that revitalization is a *process*, not one big project, and develop a variety of projects and activities that will lead to long term improvement of the village center. Patience pays off in the end.
- Growth and planning. Villages are not frozen in time. They have evolved over the years, and there will likely be changes in the community in the future. Among other changes, this means there will likely be growth in the community, which needs to be

guided in order for the village center to remain an attractive place to live. Successful village centers have thought through various growth issues, including residential infill, where new residential growth areas might be located, and where new commercial development would best fit within the village fabric. Strip development and low density housing generally are not consistent with historic village patterns, and can detract from their attractiveness and viability. A number of communities have adopted a design review process as part of their site plan review in order to ensure that development is designed to enhance, rather than detract, from the existing village environment.

Weymouth Township has an excellent start toward village revitalization in many of these areas. A central “village green” exists adjacent to the municipal building. Dororthy has its own Post Office and the central feature of the railroad. Belcoville has a traditional pattern of village development that with some well-planned physical improvements can result in a recreation of a livable community.

It is the recommendation of this plan that a community-visioning workshop be established to begin the process of identifying assets, leadership, and one or two “doable” incremental strategies.

Recommendations for Changes to the Land Use Regulations

The previous sections of this plan provide the rationale and context for the development of specific recommendations for changes to the existing land use regulations of Weymouth Township. These recommendations are as follows:

- In the R1 Zone, R2 Zone, C, and a portion of the PVC Zone (bounded by Tuckahoe Road and Pennsylvania Ave.) there are a number of lots that do not meet the bulk area, lot width, or setback requirements. The majority of these lots are currently developed for residential uses. Relatively minor additions and accessory uses on these lots routinely require the owners to appear before the Zoning Board of Adjustment to request variances. This plan recommends a provision be added to the Township Land Use Code that permits these activities in circumstances where the nonconforming feature is not increased and where the existing lot coverage standards are not exceeded. This should be a standard that is applied across all zoning districts in the Township.
- The Lenape Landing Townhouse Development located within the northern portion of the R-R zone is a nonconforming land use since the R-R zone allows for single family residences on a minimum of 5 acres and does not accommodate this type of multi-family development. Consider the establishment of a Townhouse-oriented district that reflects the existing footprint of this type of development;
- Working with the Pinelands Commission, develop a Cluster Ordinance that takes into account the environmental analysis contained in this plan and that generally locates future cluster development in the areas recommended herein;
- Establish a working group or advisory committee to address the issues of small-scale agriculture and develop recommendations for land use guidelines for farm animals based upon the issues identified by this plan;
- Establish a community-visioning workshop to begin the process of village revitalization for Dorothy and/or Belcoville based upon the general recommendations provided in this plan.

Appendix A

Master Plan Goals & Objectives



Appendix B

Natural Heritage Data

Appendix C

United States Census Data