
I. INTRODUCTION

A. Master Planning

A Master Plan is one of the basic planning tools made available to Municipal Planning Boards by the New Jersey State Enabling Legislation.

A Master Plan deals primarily with the physical development of a municipality, taking into account a wide range of social and economic factors, as set forth in the Municipal Land Use Law (C.40:55D-27). A Master Plan generally comprises a report or statement and land use and development proposals, with maps, charts, diagrams, and text.

Essential to the preparation of a Master Plan are extensive studies of present conditions, development trends, regional factors, and prospects for future growth. These background studies form the basis for establishing a set of policies, standards, and objectives which guide the future physical development of the entire Township which, in turn, forms the basis for a general physical design of the community.

A Master Plan must be comprehensive, including proposals for all major physical elements affecting both public and private property. It must also be long-range, looking as far into the future as is practical and necessary. Because it is both comprehensive and long-range, it must also be general and flexible, and subject to periodic review and revision when warranted. A Master Plan should, therefore, be considered a process rather than a formal polished document.

The effectiveness of a Master Plan is largely dependent upon subsequent revision of the land development ordinance which fosters implementation of certain aspects of the Plan regarding land use, circulation, housing, etc. The adoption of an official map more specifically sets forth, in engineering terms, those facilities and utilities of a more specific and imminent nature. These two implementing documents are enacted by the Township Committee as compared to the Master Plan which is adopted by the Planning Board after formal public hearings.

B. General

Plainsboro Township lies in the southwest corner of Middlesex County. Its westerly boundary with Princeton Township and its southerly boundary with West Windsor and East Windsor Townships are formed by the Millstone River. The northerly boundary with South Brunswick Township from Carnegie Lake easterly to Schalks Crossing Road does not follow a natural or man-made feature, but runs through farmland, open space and developing properties. The balance of the northerly boundary follows local roads and the easterly boundary with South Brunswick and Cranbury Township follows roads and brooks.

The Township was incorporated in 1919 and has a land area of 11.8 square miles. Approximately 48% of Plainsboro Township is currently developed (see Table 1) with the remaining areas consisting of vacant land, wooded acreage, environmentally sensitive lands, open space, and agricultural land. Physically, Plainsboro Township is divided by Route One and the Amtrak (formerly Penn Central Transportation Co.) railroad right-of-way which generally runs north-south through the Township.

Table 1 Existing Land Uses

Existing Land Uses	Total Acres
Commercial	99.21
Industrial	272.57
Institutional	106.20
Mixed Use	298.79
Office	570.11
Other Farm Land – Tax Assessed	405.98
Preserved Farm Land	672.20
Private Open Space	945.94
Public Facilities	268.23
Public Park and Open Space	1636.83
Residential	1776.36
Undeveloped	15.45
Total	7067.85

Source: Township Engineer

The Township has historically been an agricultural community, even before its incorporation. Indeed, the community's economic and cultural roots were established by agricultural activity which, to a large measure, remains even more important today. The character of Plainsboro has changed with suburbanization and growth pressures. Major developers - Princeton University, the Linpro Company, and U.S. Homes - and most recently Merrill Lynch and Bristol-Myers Squibb acquired land holdings and completed extensive projects which significantly contributed to development market forces within Plainsboro.

While dramatic land use changes have occurred in recent years and continue to impact the community, Plainsboro recognizes both the inevitability of accommodating some new suburban growth and its responsibility to encourage conservation and permanent protection of its agricultural and open space heritage. Plainsboro's 1977 Master Plan recognized the agricultural setting of the present R-100/R-150 zones by placing them into a rural residential land use category. Since 1982, Plainsboro has sought to manage and control development through careful planning, providing opportunities for a variety of business and industrial uses and many different types and styles of residential uses and densities. Efforts to protect the agricultural segment of Plainsboro's economy also date back to the Planning Board's work in completing a Farmland Conservation Feasibility Study in the early 1980's and incorporation of transfer of development credits language into the Master Plan and land development ordinance. Over the years, Plainsboro's concern for protecting farmland with its attendant benefits for the farmer, the community and the region has intensified

and, as a result, has placed the Township on the cutting edge of farmland and open space preservation within the county, region, and state. Accordingly, the Planning Board embarked on a Master Plan program which, among other objectives, was to fully explore the feasibility and practicality of all available methods of agricultural land conservation which lead to the development -- with full citizen participation and with due regard for the community-wide effects of agricultural conservation -- of a specific mechanism that would help the community preserve its best farmland.

C. Report Planning Process

The planning process utilized in developing the Master Plan is divided into three (3) phases.

The first phase of the planning process consists of a statement of the principles, assumptions, policies, standards, and objectives developed to guide the preparation of the Master Plan, the land use plan itself, and an evaluation of its many impacts.

The second phase summarizes the existing conditions in the region of which Plainsboro is a part and those governmental land use policies in the region that affect the Township. It includes a review of relevant state, regional, and county plans, population and job projections, transportation policies, and agricultural policies; an analysis of existing land use patterns and trends; and a review of long range development objectives. The land use plans and policies of adjacent municipalities are also reviewed to identify any major existing or potential incompatibilities across municipal boundaries.

The third phase analyzes relevant factors within the Township. These include an evaluation of existing land use patterns and development potential under existing zoning; environmental factors; circulation; recreation and open space; housing; and the present and potential adequacy of public sewer and centralized water systems. The findings from these studies, with particular attention to the Township's agricultural base, lead to the identification of key planning issues. The techniques used in New Jersey and elsewhere to preserve agricultural lands are presented in some detail, given the importance to the Township of its best farmlands. The Master Plan identifies future problems and opportunities and ideas to address them in a comprehensive and thoughtful manner.

Throughout the planning process, open workshop sessions were held by the Planning Board to discuss the findings of completed studies and to formulate development policies. At all times, the public has been given full opportunity to comment about this Master Plan and its contents.

D. Accomplishments, Challenges and Opportunities

The Township of Plainsboro has much to be proud of over the past 25 years. Successful planning and implementation of many small and large plans has led to a variety of successful experiences in the way of physical development and environmental protection and expanding the opportunities for jobs growth, a variety of residential dwelling unit types for many age and income groups, and shaping and supporting the social and physical environment that has and continues to allow residents, employees and visitors to be engaged with one another in a community that is truly special in the State of New Jersey.

In early 2006 the Township received Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission (SPC). In association with such endorsement the Township agreed to review and update the Elements of the Township's Master Plan, including text and maps, based on the most current available information. The Township also agreed to make such Elements consistent with the policies and objectives of the State Plan and State Plan Policy Map; including incorporating the State Plan Policy Map endorsed by the State Planning Commission into the Updated Master Plan. It is in response to this commitment that the Township undertook a comprehensive revision and update to the Master Plan, which was adopted by the Planning Board in January 2009.

Since the adoption of the new, updated Master Plan, the Township has been approached by representatives of the St. Joseph Seminary at 75 Mapleton Road, to consider possible land use and zoning changes to the property intended to preserve the existing character of the property, including its historic buildings. The current proposal being studied would utilize approximately 33 acres of the property for a non-profit educational and cultural arts institution and approximately 12 acres for a non-profit cemetery. To accomplish these changes in use requires Master Plan and zoning changes.

Other major challenges that face the Township involve the continued support and expansion of the ratable base within the community, to provide opportunities for all income levels to live within the community, to adequately maintain all public recreational facilities, and to continue to preserve and enhance the natural environment.

The list of past and ongoing major accomplishments is long and significant and includes the following in no particular order of importance:

1. Land Use

- Adopted comprehensive revisions and updates to the Master Plan on January 20, 2009.
- Received Initial State Plan Endorsement on January 18, 2006 from the State Planning Commission.
- Created the R-100 and R-150 zoning districts that resulted in the permanent preservation of significant amounts of active farmland and the clustering of housing. These two zoning districts received

an award from the New Jersey Chapter of the Sierra Club as being innovative and creative.

- Adopted land use regulations in the R-85 zoning district to protect the character of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Amended the R-300 zoning district to permit the significant clustering of single-family detached housing – which has resulted in the permanent preservation of large amounts of open space.
- Implemented a village area plan that has resulted in the construction of village housing, a village mixed use center and senior housing located in a village style development.

2. Circulation

- Supported the construction of Scudders Mill Road as a functional by-pass of the village area.
- Worked with the County of Middlesex to reconstruct a number of existing intersections.
- Supported the construction of the existing Route 1 overpasses at Scudders Mill Road and College Road and the upgrade of the existing Sayre Drive intersection with Route 1.
- Have overseen the construction of many miles of new sidewalks and bicycle pathways in the Township in accordance with an overall master plan that seeks to interconnect all neighborhoods.
- Implemented traffic calming along Plainsboro Road and Schalks Crossing Road by way of landscaping, landscaped center medians, crosswalks, lighting and signalization.
- Required the construction of new roadways like Wyndhurst Blvd., Campus Road, the extension of Nursery Road into South Brunswick Township, and to interconnect new neighborhoods with existing roadways to further compliment and support the existing roadway network.
- Encouraged and supported the introduction of public bus service into the Township and the establishment of bus stops and shelters.
- Supported travel demand management and the introduction of bus rapid transit.
- Have carefully managed curb cut locations along the Route 1 corridor and along other roadway frontages within the Township.

3. Community Facilities

- Constructed a new municipal complex in the center of the community and preserved the existing historic Wicoff House.
- Constructed a new firehouse.
- Was involved with the West Windsor-Plainsboro Board of Education in the upgrading of the Wicoff School and the construction of two new elementary schools, a middle school and a high school.
- Established the “Preserve” and the Environmental Education Center with the County of Middlesex.
- Involved with the construction of a new municipal library located within the village center.
- Recently approved the construction of a new hospital to be located along the Route 1 corridor.
- Constructed a new public works facility.

4. Open Space and Recreation

- Supported the construction of a public golf course.
- Approved many residential developments that included recreational facilities for their future residents.
- Required the set aside and permanent protection of lands to be used for both active and passive forms of recreation that far exceeds minimum national standards.
- Approved the construction of a village square.
- Have and continue to support connections to the Delaware & Raritan Canal pathway system.

5. Conservation

- Mapped critical environmental features and protected those features to the maximum extent possible.
- Encourage developers to utilize sustainable design standards and philosophies.

6. Economics

- Supported the establishment and redevelopment of the Plainsboro Town Center and the Princeton Meadows Shopping Center.

- Approved the village center mixed use plan.
- Supported non-residential growth and development in the Enterprise Business Park, within the Princeton Forrestal Center and along the Route 1 corridor.

7. Historic Preservation

- Supported the compatible re-use of historic buildings and sites.
- Has sought to ensure the protection of historic buildings and sites when new development is placed nearby.

8. Utilities

- Supported the logical and timely extension of both public water and sewer service for both existing and future development.
- Properly managed stormwater impacts associated with new development activity.
- Developed a Township recycling facility.
- Adopted a wireless telecommunications ordinance that has been used to site new facilities.

9. Recycling

- Have sought to implement recycling that is consistent with State and County requirements.
- Adopted Township standards and regulations.

10. Affordable Housing

- Prepared and adopted a Housing and Fair Share Plan Element.
- Have supported the construction of low and moderate income housing at the local level throughout many years.

11. Other Jurisdictional Agencies

- The Master Plan is consistent with the State Plan and County planning.
- The Master Plan has explored and taken into account planning at the local level with regard to surrounding municipalities and remains consistent with those local planning efforts.

The “Action Plan” sections that appear at the end of each Master Plan Element identifies next steps that can be taken by the Planning Board and others to further promote Master Plan policies, standards, and objectives.