



2022 MASTER PLAN UPDATE PLAINSBORO TOWNSHIP - CHAPTER II

Plainboro Township, New Jersey

DATE: October 17, 2022



Acknowledgments

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Peter A. Cantu

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II. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES, PRINCIPLES, ASSUMPTIONS, POLICIES AND STANDARDS (SOPAPS)

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I. VISION AND PRINCIPLES

A. VISION

Plainsboro Township envisions a future focused less on physical growth and more on stewardship of its unique character, including efforts to enhance the viability and vibrancy of its established growth patterns. The Township continues to grow in its own unique way, however, residential areas are substantially built out. Its current character was formed by unprecedented residential growth in the later part of the last century. At the same time office development largely occurred in the Princeton Forrestal Center, shopping centers and schools were built, and farmland was being preserved. A traditional mixed-use Village Center was constructed and over time has become the Township's major community focal point. As a result, the Township's well-landscaped areas, open spaces, and thoughtfully planned and built environment have distinguished it from other communities. Over the next 10-year master planning horizon the Township will:

- Direct new development to appropriate locations and recognize the need to allow appropriate adaptive re-use and redevelopment of existing areas.
- Protect its natural resources and established agricultural areas from development pressures.
- Ensure that its unique landscape remains for future generations to experience and enjoy.
- Improve and connect its transportation infrastructure to support all modes of transport.
- Continually provide and improve spaces for shopping, services, schools, employment, and leisure activities to meet the needs of its residents and the region.
- Capitalize on its diverse population to become a unique destination within the region.
- Population is holding steady when comparing the 2010 to the 2020 US Census which showed an increase of 1,085 residents.

The Township recognizes the challenges it has faced in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic on social, mental, and physical well-being. Pandemic related changes have occurred that

have and will continue to impact the Master Plan. For instance, greater numbers of people working from home, more frequent outdoor dining, increased take out and pick up activity, near empty parking lots, changes to the business environment, and more home delivery of goods and services.

The Township is also aware that climate change and global warming is a very real issue that has manifested itself in warmer winters and cooler summers, more frequent and intense storm events, and road closures due to local flooding.

The impacts of the pandemic and climate change have been addressed in this Master Plan because both have and will continue to impact how the community matures. The pandemic and pressing concerns arising from the impacts of climate change present a new lens through which the Township sees its future.

B. PRINCIPLES

- Continue a development pattern that is coordinated with available community facilities and public works and is compatible with the ability to provide essential services and facilities such as schools, roads, stormwater management, and recreational opportunities.
- Maintain open communications with community stakeholders to ensure that their current needs are being respectfully considered.
- Planning must be data driven to ensure future needs and trends in housing, infrastructure, and community facilities can be provided.
- Ensure that all applicable planning activities consider the needs of all people regardless of age, ethnicity, or physical capability.
- Create a regulatory framework that addresses the impacts of climate change on the Township.
- Maintain a multi-modal transportation system that helps people connect to each other, local business, public spaces, natural resources, and the larger region.
- Continue to utilize a framework of Township Interdepartmental Coordination in making land use decisions.
- Continue to review, update, and supplement the Master Plan and the Township Zoning and Subdivision and Site Plan Review ordinances and regulations as new data becomes available, and as community needs and circumstances change.

II. POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

A. LAND USE

Policy: Land use planning in Plainsboro will seek to establish a balance of uses that support the current village center, provide for a diversity of housing opportunities, allow for the growth of commerce and employment opportunities, provide for appropriate infrastructure to support growth, protect the Township's natural resources and open space, and consider all environmental impacts of such development.

Objectives:

1. Review the Township Zoning and Subdivision and Site Plan ordinances and make changes as necessary that promote and maintain Plainsboro's unique character that is defined by its walkable neighborhoods, diversity of housing options, protected agricultural land, scenic vistas, and vital business districts.
2. Continue the development and creation of well-integrated compact and mixed-use walkable areas using a grid street pattern, when possible, while discouraging undesirable land use patterns of sprawl and leapfrogging development.
3. Preserve and protect farmlands by supporting right-to-farm regulations and by protecting existing agricultural uses from non-compatible uses on adjacent or nearby properties.

B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Policy: The Township will pursue through zoning and other regulatory measures development that will increase the tax base without disturbing the fragile residential-agricultural-open space balance in the Township, including identifying areas in the Township appropriate for expanded economic activity, especially compact and mixed-use development.

Objectives:

1. Recognize the potential benefits associated with the adaptive reuse of existing non-residential areas into mixed-use commercial centers that may include housing.
2. Continue to recognize farmland as an agricultural business, including urban farming, and direct development to more appropriate areas of the Township that are already supported by existing public utility and transportation infrastructure.
3. Encourage the design of new development to be mixed-use and supportive of multi-modal transportation options.
4. Consider the need for site design guidelines to better integrate new developments into the existing building fabric and natural environment that is unique to the Township.

C. HOUSING AND FAIR SHARE

Policy: Provide a range of housing types to meet the needs of the varied resident population of the Township as well as to preserve the character of existing residential areas.

Objectives:

1. Consider alternatives to creating affordable housing that are not in conflict with Township ordinances, County regulations, or State rules or policies related to the production of such housing.
2. Adopt regulations that allow, where appropriate, mixed-use developments that create neighborhoods that are characterized by social interaction and a mutually supportive mix of residential and nonresidential uses.
3. Support design that ensures that streets, buildings, private and public outdoor spaces work together to create a unique sense of place and community for residents, shoppers, and employees alike.
4. Promote public health in housing by connecting neighborhoods to commercial centers and public spaces that encourages residents to safely walk and bike.

D. UTILITIES

Policy: Ensure a range of quality and sufficient utility services to adequately accommodate existing and future Township needs in a cost-effective manner.

Objectives:

1. Maintain and amend as necessary existing regulations that require utility infrastructure for new development and redevelopment to be installed underground.
2. Ensure that high quality water supplies are being provided across the Township, including sufficient pressure for fire suppression.
3. Ensure that investment in water and sewer infrastructure improvements is directed towards areas of the Township where development is encouraged.
4. Promote programs that support the appropriate disposal of solid waste for residents and businesses.
5. Promote recycling that is compatible with state and county recycling regulations.
6. Provide for the collection, disposition, and the recycling of materials designated in the Township recycling ordinance.
7. Continue to educate the public on the importance of recycling.

E. CIRCULATION

Policy: Continue to promote a comprehensive and coordinated circulation system to support the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

Objectives:

1. Make it easy, safe, and enjoyable to get around town without a car by promoting, constructing, and maintaining safe and attractive sidewalks, bike paths, and multi-use trails.
2. Implement traffic calming as warranted.
3. Promote a high degree of connectivity among streets, sidewalks, and bike paths.
4. Discourage the construction of dead-end and cul-de-sac roads.
5. Work toward reducing vehicle emissions and ambient noise levels from traffic by providing infrastructure for electric vehicles in accordance with the provisions of the NJ Electric Vehicle Law requiring the installation of EV charger facilities for all new development and redevelopment.
6. Support Township-wide or area-wide bus and/or van shuttle services to transport people to and from residential areas, employment centers, community centers including the Township Library, the hospital, and the neighboring town's train station.

F. COMMUNITY FACILITIES, PARKS, & RECREATION

Policy: Ensure the provision, maintenance, and expansion of parks and recreation facilities are adequate for existing and future Township needs.

Objectives:

1. Continue to collaborate with the School District to determine the need for and location of additional school facilities, including building expansions, and seek to leverage existing facilities for Township recreation programs where possible.
2. Meet the service needs of the Township by providing adequate space for the Township administration, court, police department, public works, planning and zoning, and other departments.
3. Provide recreational access for people of all ages and abilities and give priority for park land acquisition and development to neighborhoods which have the most serious park deficiencies.
4. Encourage small recreation and public spaces within new mixed-use developments that are adequately sized to accommodate both informal gathering and programmed events.
5. Promote the viability of active shopping and entertainment experiences for families, shoppers, diners, workers, visitors, and residents.

G. ENVIRONMENT/CONSERVATION

Policy: Enact regulations and programs that protect the Township's natural resources, open space, streams and creeks, and wildlife, in order to maintain a healthy environment for current and future residents and businesses.

Objectives:

1. Permanently protect open spaces including critical areas such as open waters and stream corridors, hilltops, wetlands and associated buffers, the natural terrain including steep slopes, ponds, and wooded areas either through permanent conservation or similar easements, zoning regulations or conditions of development approval.
2. Manage flooding and encourage water recharge by utilizing porous pavement where possible on public lands, grading away from buildings, and utilizing stormwater catchment areas, landscaping, and other suitable water management tools and utilize best management practices that require private development to do the same.
3. Permanently protect freshwater wetlands, wildlife habitats and corridors, and ensure the protection of groundwater quality by adopting and enforcing local regulations and ensuring that all residents and businesses are complying with state laws.

H. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Policy: Safeguard the heritage of the Township by preserving resources which reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, and architectural history, and promote the continued enjoyment of these historic sites.

Objectives:

1. Work with the Museum/Recreation and Community Services Department to update the Township's List of Historic Resources.
2. Promote programs that educate residents about and celebrates the history of the Township and the historic sites within its borders.
3. Review the Township Zoning and Subdivision and Site Plan Review ordinances to ensure the highest degree of protection of historic resources.
4. Encourage the proper maintenance and preservation of historic settings and landscapes.

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