Master Plan Element Section XI

Relationship to Other Plans

Adopted February 12, 2020 Township of West Windsor | Mercer County, New Jersey









Relationship to Other Plans Master Plan

Township of West Windsor Mercer County, New Jersey

Prepared for the Township of West Windsor Planning Board

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Section 1: Introduction

The following section provides an introduction to Section XI of the Township's Master Plan, which discusses the relationship of the Township's Master Plan to the plans of neighboring municipalities, as well as the Mercer County Master Plan, the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and the draft State Strategic Plan.



Local planning cannot and should not be conducted within a vacuum. On the contrary, the choices made by one community may have important and far-reaching influences that may affect neighboring communities, municipalities, the greater region, and even the state as a whole. Furthermore, as economic, infrastructure, land use, and transportation trends continue to evolve and become more complex, so too has the importance of examining and addressing these issues at a larger-scale.

In recognition of such, section 40:55d-28(d) of the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) stipules that a Master Plan:

> shall include a specific policy statement indicating the relationship of the proposed development of the municipality, as developed in the master plan to (1) the master plans of contiguous municipalities, (2) the master plan of the county in which the municipality is located, and (3) the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

Accordingly, this Section of the Master Plan is divided into the following sections

❖ Section 2: State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The next section discusses the Master Plan's relationship to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

Section 3: Draft State Strategic Plan

While not required by the MLUL, Section 3 discusses the relationship of the Township's Master Plan to the Draft State Strategic Plan.

Section 4: Mercer County Master Plan

Section 4 analyzes the relationship of the Township's Master Plan to the Mercer County Master Plan.

Section 5: Master Plans of Adjacent Municipalities

Finally, Section 5 discusses the relationship of the Township's Master Plan to the plans of West Windsor's adjacent municipalities.



Section 2: State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The following section discusses the Master Plan's relationship to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.



2.1: Introduction

Recognizing that the state must plan for its future in order to preserve and maintain its social, cultural, economic and natural assets, the New Jersey Legislature adopted the State Planning Act (NJSA 52:18A-196 et seg) in order to better:

> "...conserve [the State's] natural resources, revitalize its Urban Centers, protect the quality of its environment, and provide needed housing and adequate public services at a reasonable cost while promoting beneficial economic growth, development and renewal..."

In an effort to realize these goals, New Jersey adopted the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) in 1992 with the aim of providing a blueprint for future development and redevelopment on an integrated and coordinated statewide basis. Ultimately, the main objective of the SDRP is two-fold:

- 1. To guide future development, redevelopment and economic growth in areas that already contain (or are anticipated to contain) the public services, facilities and infrastructure necessary for such growth, and;
- 2. To discourage development where it may impair, encroach or destroy the State's natural features and environmental assets.

The SDRP seeks to curb development in rural areas and other relatively undeveloped areas of the State and encourage growth within New Jersey's predeveloped corridors, including along transportation corridors, older cities, suburbs with adequate infrastructure, and concentrated rural centers. While it does not take power away from planning and zoning at the municipal level, the SDRP is used as a general guide for a variety of decisions made from the state addressing local matters.

In order to implement its general statewide policies and objectives, the SDRP divides the state into several different "Planning Areas," each with its own specific set of policy objectives that are tailored to each area's unique qualities and conditions. The overarching goal of these Planning Areas is to implement land use policies on the local level that will be consistent with state-wide policies.

The following figure identifies the percentages of the Township which are located in the SDRP's Planning Areas, while Map 1 illustrates the locations of those Planning Areas. A brief description of each Planning Area is also provided on the following pages.

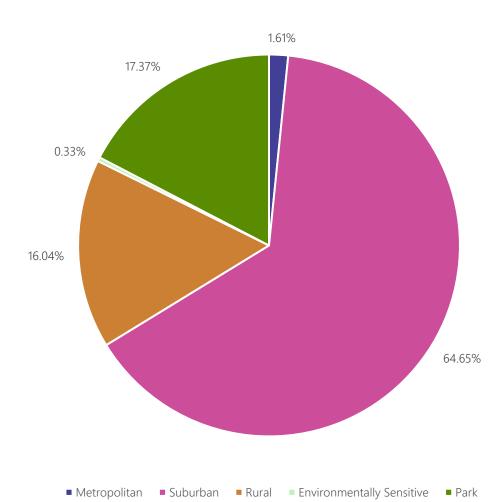
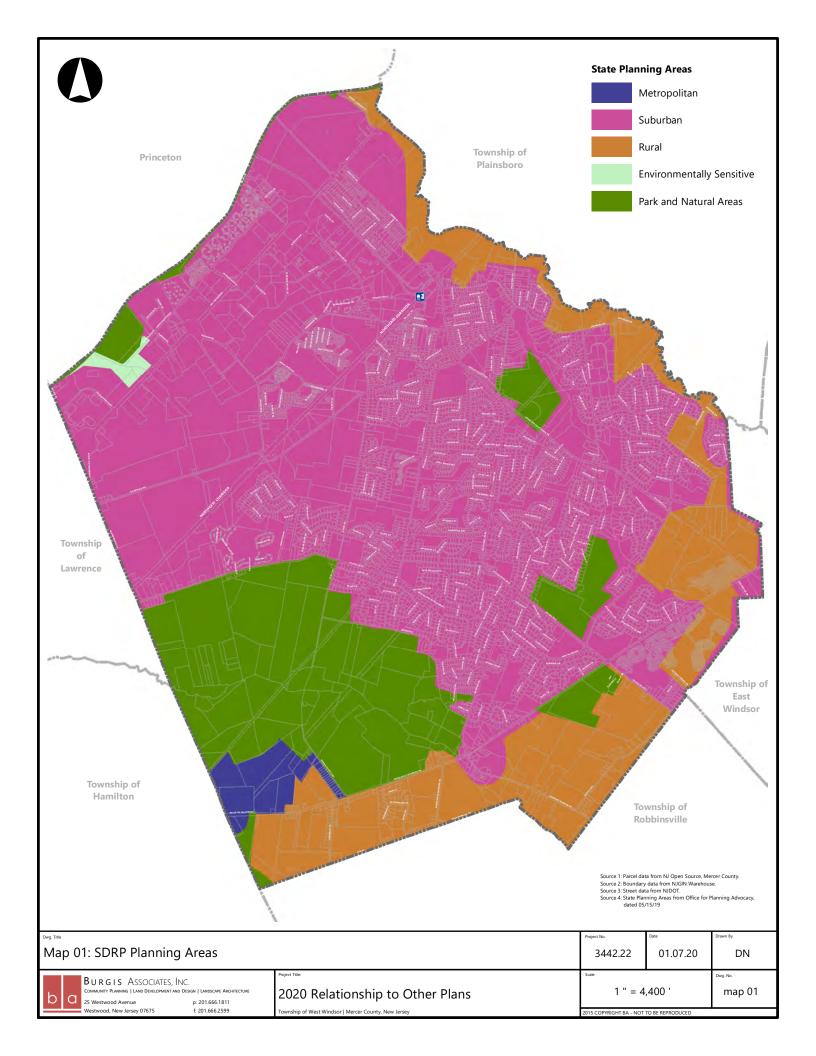


Figure 1: Percentage of SDRP Planning Areas in West Windsor



2.2: Metropolitan Planning Area

West Windsor contains approximately 270.75 acres (0.42 square miles) of the Metropolitan Planning Area, which is located near the southwesterly corner of the Township. This Planning Area includes the majority of Mercer County Community College, as well as several residential properties located along South Post Road.

As established by the SDRP, the Metropolitan Planning Area includes a variety of communities that range from large Urban Centers to nineteenth century towns shaped by commuter rail and post-war suburbs. The majority of these areas are developed with significant, yet aging, investment in infrastructure. As such, there is little vacant land available for development; in fact, unprotected and undeveloped space only accounts for approximately twelve and one-half percent (12.5%) of the entire Planning Area in the State. Much of the development activity that takes place within the Metropolitan Planning Area is consequently infill development or redevelopment.

Accordingly, the SDRP identifies that its intention within the Metropolitan Planning Area is to:

- Provide for much of the state's future development;
- Revitalize cities and towns;
- Promote growth in compact forms;
- Stabilize older suburbs;
- Redesign areas of sprawl; and
- Protect the character of existing stable communities.

2.3: Suburban Planning Area

West Windsor contains approximately 10,860.64 acres (16.96 square miles) of the Suburban Planning Area, which is generally located throughout the northern and central portions of the Township.

As established by the SDRP, the Suburban Planning Area is generally located adjacent to the Metropolitan Planning Area but can be distinguished from it by a lack of high intensity Centers, by the availability of developable land, and by a more dispersed and fragmented pattern of predominantly low-density development.

Accordingly, the SDRP identifies that its intention within the Suburban Planning Area is to:

- Provide for much of the state's future development;
- Promote growth in Centers and other compact forms;
- Protect the character of existing stable communities;
- Protect natural resources;
- Redesign areas of sprawl;
- * Reverse the current trend toward further sprawl; and
- Revitalize cities and towns.

2.3: Rural Planning Area

West Windsor contains approximately 2,699.44 acres (4.21 square miles) of the Rural Planning Area, which is generally located throughout the southerly, easterly, and northeasterly portions of the Township.

As established by the SDRP, the Rural Planning Area comprises much of the countryside of New Jersey, where large masses of cultivated or open land surround rural Region, Town, Village, and Hamlet Centers, and complements other sparse residential, commercial, and industrial sites from typical suburban development. The SDRP acknowledges that while there may be some disagreement about what is "rural"," it is clear that the large contiguous areas of farmland and other open lands interspersed by traditional Centers and carefully planned new Centers provide a quality of life that many residents desire. These areas, along with the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area, serve as the greensward for the larger region and are not currently nor are they intended to be urban or suburban in nature.

Accordingly, the SDRP identifies that its intention within the Rural Planning Area is to:

- ❖ Maintain the environs as large contiguous areas of farmland and other lands;
- Revitalize cities and towns:
- Accommodate growth in Centers;
- Promote a viable agricultural industry;
- Protect the character of existing, stable communities; and
- Confine programmed sewers and public water services to Centers.

2.4: Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area

West Windsor contains approximately 55.94 acres (0.08 square miles) of the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area, which is generally located along the northwesterly and northeasterly undeveloped portions of Nassau Park, the westerly and southwesterly undeveloped portions of the Windsor Greene shopping center, and the rear of an existing Buffalo Wild Wings.

As established by the SDRP, the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area contains large contiguous land areas with valuable ecosystems, geological features, and wildlife habitats. Some of these lands have remained somewhat undeveloped or rural in character, while other areas have experienced advanced levels of development but remain highly vulnerable to natural forces. Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas are characterized by: watersheds of pristine waters, trout streams, and drinking water supply reservoirs; recharge areas for potable water aquifers; habits of endangered and threatened plant and animal species; coastal and freshwater wetlands; prime forested areas; scenic vistas; and other significant topographical, geological, or ecological features. These resources are critically important not only for the residents of these areas, but for all New Jersey citizens.

Accordingly, the SDRP identifies that its intention within the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area is to:

- Protect environmental resources through the protection of large contiguous areas of land:
- Accommodate growth in Centers;
- Protect the character of existing stable communities;
- Confine programmed sewers and public water services to Centers; and
- Revitalize cities and towns.

2.5: Parks and Natural Areas

West Windsor contains approximately 2,918.59 acres (4.56 square miles) of lands designated as Parks and Natural Areas, which are generally located throughout the Township and include the D&R Canal, Mercer County Park, Community Park, the Cranbury Golf Course, and a portion of Rue Farm Park.

One of the goals of the SDRP is to preserve and enhance areas with historic, cultural, scenic, open space, and recreational value. As such, the Plan uses the term "Parks and Natural Areas" to include an array of publicly dedicated land which contributes to the attainment of this goal. These are not lands where the SDRP's other objectives for land use, housing, and economic development can be applied. Rather, these lands represent public investment specifically for resource preservation and the provision of recreational opportunities.

Accordingly, the SDRP identifies that its intention for the Parks and Natural Areas category is to:

- Provide for the protection of critical natural resources;
- Provide public recreational and educational opportunities;
- Ensure the maintenance of associated facilities; and
- Ensure the connection of these lands into a system of open space

2.6: Consistency with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan

Overall, the Township's Land Use Plan is consistent to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. Specifically, the Township's Land Use Plan is designed to meet the two main objectives of the SDRP; that is, it guides future development, redevelopment, and economic growth in areas that already contain or are anticipated to contain public services, facilities, and infrastructure necessary for such growth, while also discouraging development where it may impair, encroach, or destroy natural features and environmental assets.

The Township's Land Use Plan also shares several of the same intents of the SDRP. Some of these intents include: revitalization; the promotion of growth in compact forms; the protection of existing stable communities; reversing the trend of sprawl and preventing future sprawl; the promotion of a viable agricultural economy; protecting critical natural resources; providing recreational and educational opportunities; and promoting the connectivity of open space lands.



Section 3: Draft State Strategic Plan

The final section of this Land Use Plan contains background information which helps form the basis for the land use goals, policies, and recommendations of the Township.



3.1: Draft State Strategic Plan Overview

In October of 2011, the <u>Draft State Strategic Plan (SSP)</u> was developed as an update to the current State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). The intent of the SSP is to increase focus on policies aimed to foster job growth, support effective regional planning, and preserve the State's critical resources. The four overarching goals that serve as the blueprint of the Plan are summarized as follows:

Goal 1:

Targeted Economic Growth.

Enhance opportunities for attraction and growth of industries of statewide and regional importance.

Goal 2:

Effective Planning for Vibrant Regions.

Guide and inform regional planning so that each region of the State can experience appropriate growth according to the desires communication amongst governmental and assets of that region.

Goal 3:

Preservation and Enhancement of Critical State Resources.

Ensure that strategies for growth include preservation of the State's critical natural, agricultural, scenic, recreation, and historic resources.

Goal 4:

Tactical Alignment of Government.

Enable effective resource allocation, coordination, cooperation, and agencies on local, regional, and state levels.

Unlike the existing SDRP, the SSP does not contain any mapping. Thus far in its draft form, the SSP appears to have a greater emphasis on the State's overall economic framework and provide information and goals for New Jersey's various industry clusters.

The Draft Final Plan was approved by the State Planning commission on November 14, 2011 by Resolution No. 2011-08. However, it has not yet been formally adopted by the State.

3.2: Consistency with the State Strategic Plan

In consideration of the above, the Master Plan contained herein is consistent with the Draft SSP. It targets economic growth and advocates for effective growth.



Section 4: Mercer County Master Plan

This section analyzes the relationship of the Township's Master Plan to the Mercer County Master Plan.



4.1: Mercer County Master Plan Overview

The Mercer County Master Plan was adopted by the Mercer County Planning Board on September 8, 2010 and amended in May of 2016. It consists of five (5) elements, each of which have been independently updated on a periodic basis.

Ultimately, the County Plan proposes a regional planning framework for guiding growth and conservation opportunities in the county over the next twenty (20) years. To do so, it relies upon a three-systems approach to regional factors affecting the quality of life in the county. This three-systems as well as their respective policies are identified below:

Economy

Promote the appropriate location and design of new development with opportunities for transit, regional equity, and preservation.

Provide infrastructure and other incentives that promote growth.

Promote housing choice to meet the region's needs.

Transportation

Direct growth to transit corridors and centers.

Promote access management to enhance safety and capacity

Promote compact design, walkable, mixed use centers

Match jobs to housing to reduce long auto commutes to work

Environment

Promote land use patterns that limit stormwater runoff and increase green infrastructure

Promote redevelopment of brownfields and grayfields

Prioritize open space acquisition to complete greenway networks, support compact development, and provide recreation opportunities to underserved populations.

The County Plan supports future growth initiatives that integrate valued aspects of existing development patterns and that contribute to an increasing balance across the region, one which stresses accessibility to places of employment, housing, transportation, food, recreation, and natural and cultural resources. The County Plan further advocates for a balanced growth alternative, one which "favors redevelopment of existing built areas and relies on the preservation of open and agricultural land for the success of both new compact, mixed-use centers, and linear growth corridors developed with context-rich designs."

Accordingly, the Mercer County Master Plan promotes the following broad policies to guide its balanced growth concept:

- Promote appropriate location and design of new development with opportunities for transit, regional equity (i.e. the practice of seeking to ensure that all individuals and families in all communities can participate in and benefit from economic growth and activity throughout the region¹) and preservation.
- Promote redevelopment.
- Promote desirable compact design that supports transit and promotes walking.
- Promote land use patterns that limit stormwater runoff and increase green infrastructure.
- Direct growth to transit corridors and centers.
- Mix uses to promote walkable communities.

4.2: Consistency with the County Master Plan

Overall, the Township's Land Use Plan is consistent to the County Master Plan. Specifically, the Township's Land Use Plan addresses several of the policies identified in the County's three-systems approach, particularly in regard to: promoting a variety of housing choices; promoting the appropriate location and design of new development with opportunities for transit, regional equity, and preservation; encouraging compact design, walkable, mixed use centers; and prioritizing open space acquisition to complete greenway networks.

Likewise, the Township's Land Use Plan is designed to follow many of the same broad policies which guide the County's balanced growth concept. Specifically, the Land Use Plan promotes desirable and compact developments in locations with opportunities for transit and regional equity. It also supports redevelopment in several areas.

¹ Blackwell, Angela Glover and Radkhika K. Fox. "Regional Equity and Smart Growth: Opportunities for Advancing Social and Economic Justice in America." 2004. Funder's Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities.

Section 5: Master Plans of Adjacent Municipalities

This final section discusses the relationship of the Township's Master Plan to the plans of West Windsor's adjacent municipalities.



5.1: Master Plans of Adjacent Municipalities Overview

The following section summarizes the master plans of West Windsor's adjacent communities. As outlined above, one of the primary considerations that influences the Township's land use recommendations is the coordination of local planning efforts with those of neighboring municipalities. Through this coordination, a greater degree of compatibility can be achieved, particularly along shared borders.

5.2: Municipality of Princeton

Located along West Windsor's northwesterly border, Princeton's Land Use Element was adopted on December 12, 1996 and was last amended on December 3, 2009. Princeton's land use plan largely calls for very-low density residential, parkland, and educational/institutional uses along its shared municipal border with West Windsor.

These land uses are largely consistent with those existing and proposed land uses within West Windsor. This is particularly evident in the relationship between Princeton's vision for educational/institutional land uses near the Township's own educational land use category. Furthermore, Princeton's parkland land use category largely coincides with either open space areas in the Township associated with multifamily developments, as well as the D&R Canal.

5.3: Township of Plainsboro

The Township of Plainsboro, which is located along the Township's northeasterly border, adopted its last Land Use Plan in May of 2011. That land use plan calls for a variety of land uses along its shared municipal border with West Windsor, including:

- Residential
- Office
- Institutional
- Farmland
- Public and Private Open Space
- Infrastructure
- Vacant

The majority of the open space, farmland, and residential land uses which are delineated by the Plainsboro Land Use Plan are located immediately adjacent to similar areas in the Township which are also developed with farmland, open space, and residential communities. Furthermore, the institutional and office land uses proposed by Plainsboro's Land Use Plan are generally located within the vicinity of Route 1 and the existing SRI site. As such, these land use categories are largely consistent with those existing and proposed land uses located within the Township.

5.3: Township of East Windsor

The Township of East Windsor is located along West Windsor's easterly border. East Windsor adopted its last comprehensive master plan on October 4, 1993. This plan generally calls for research-office uses, as well as single-family and multifamily residential uses.

The single-family and multifamily residential uses established in East Windsor's Land Use Plan largely coincide with West Windsor's existing and proposed senior living land use categories. In addition, East Windsor's research office district is located immediately adjacent to West Windsor's existing B-2 District and P District, as well as its newly established R-5D multifamily district. East Windsor's last reexamination report, which was adopted on August 5, 2019, only proposed a slight modification to warehousing in a certain portion of the R-O District.

In consideration of the above, these land use categories are generally consistent with those existing and proposed land uses located within the Township.

5.4: Township of Robbinsville

Located primarily along West Windsor's southeasterly border, the Township of Robbinsville's most recent Land Use Element was adopted in December of 2000. This Land Use plan principally calls for low- and moderate-density residential uses and conservation lands along its shared municipal border with West Windsor. These land uses are entirely consistent with those existing and proposed land uses within West Windsor.

5.5: Township of Hamilton

The Township of Hamilton, which is located along the Township's southwesterly border, adopted its last Land Use Plan on June 16, 2011. That land use plan predominantly calls for conservation and residential uses along its shared municipal border with West Windsor. No substantive changes to these land uses are proposed in Hamilton's land use plan.

Accordingly, these land uses are consistent with those existing and proposed land uses in West Windsor, which include residential and educational uses as well as Mercer County Park.

5.6: Township of Lawrence

The Township of Lawrence, which is located along the Township's westerly border, adopted its last Land Use Plan on June 14, 1995. That land use plan calls for a variety of land uses along its shared municipal border with West Windsor, including:

- Open space, residential, and highway commercial uses to the northwest of US Route 1
- * Regional commercial, highway commercial, office industrial, and mixed uses between US Route 1 and the rail line
- ❖ Environmental protection/research and development, neighborhood retail, and open space uses to the south of the rail line

Overall, these land uses are relatively consistent with those existing and proposed land uses in West Windsor. The following is noted:

- ❖ The land use designated by the Township of Lawrence Land Use Plan to the north of the US Route 1 corridor largely coincide with the Nassau Pavilion and Nassau Park commercial developments.
- The office industrial, highway commercial, and regional commercial land use categories which are predominantly located between US Route 1 and the rail line in Lawrence are generally consistent with the planned commercial development envisioned by the Township.
- The open space, environmental protection/research and development, and mixed use developments are largely consistent with the Township's envisioned land uses near the intersection of Village Road West and Quakerbridge Road, as well as with Mercer County Park.

