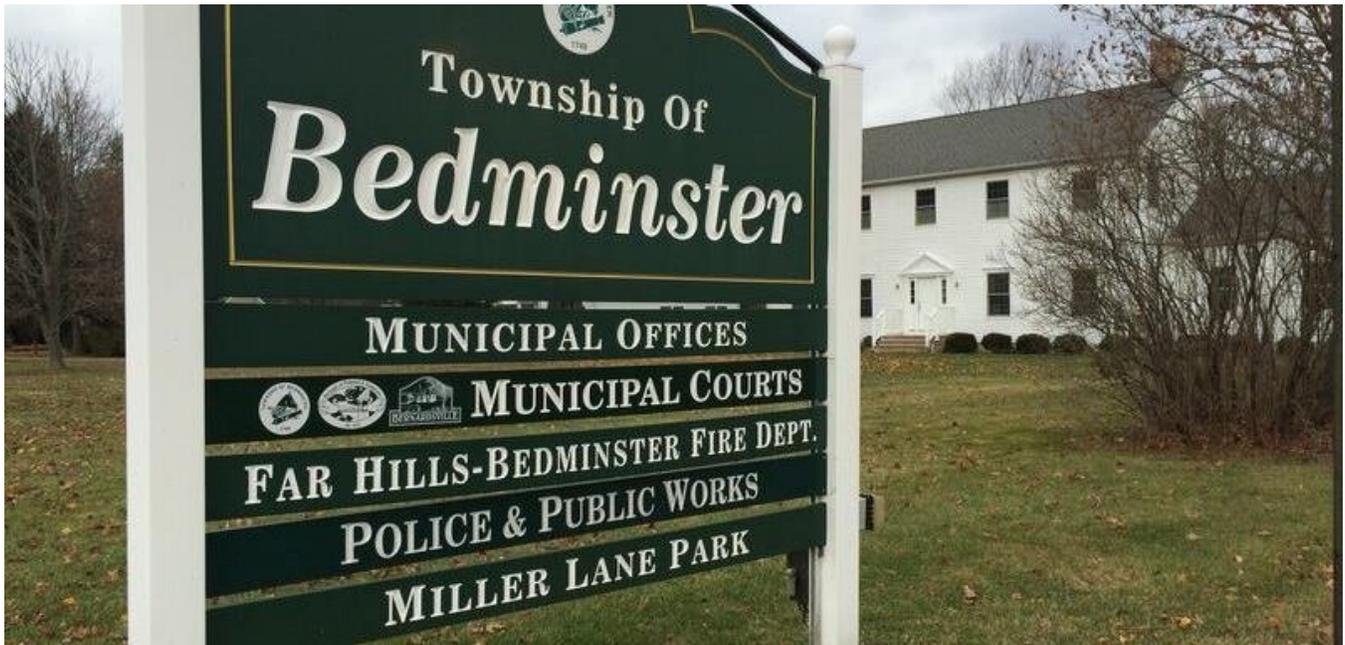


***Plan Endorsement Recommendation Report***  
***Bedminster Township***



New Jersey Department of State  
Office of Planning Advocacy  
Barry Ableman, Principal Planner  
July 14, 2023

*Much of the details in this report come from information supplied by Bedminster Township during the Plan Endorsement process as well NJ DCA, NJ DA, NJ DEP and NJ DOT's O&C*

*This document is a recommendation report prepared by the Office for Planning Advocacy (OPA) as staff to the State Planning Commission (SPC or Commission), based on input of our partner agencies, and Bedminster Township. OPA will post this report and other material related to the Bedminster Township Plan Endorsement petition on our website. You can contact our office by email regarding petitions for Plan Endorsement by providing contact information, including name, organization, address, and e-mail address to [osqmail@sos.state.nj.us](mailto:osqmail@sos.state.nj.us).*

*Documents submitted by Bedminster Township for Plan Endorsement can be found here: <https://nj.gov/state/planning/plan-endorsement.shtml> and include the Township's Master Plan, Amendments, Redevelopment Plans, etc.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Bedminster Township (hereafter Bedminster or the Township) first was designated with two centers, Bedminster Village Center and Pluckemin Town Center on September 20, 2001, prior to the formal Plan Endorsement process being established. Bedminster received various extensions over the ensuing years and expired on March 31, 2023.

The Township’s interest in pursuing Plan Endorsement was discussed on April 7, 2020 at a prepetition meeting with representatives from the Township, state agencies and the Somerset County Planning Department. Bedminster Township’s primary objectives in seeking Plan Endorsement is to maintain its partnership with the State Planning Commission (SPC or Commission), state agencies and Somerset County, and have the SPC modify the center boundary to include the former AT&T through the plan endorsement process to ensure that the AT&T property is eligible for NJ Economic Development Authority (EDA) Emerge funding.

The local planning goals, objectives and vision for the Township remain consistent with the State Plan, through the Centers and Planning Area boundaries are being amended to reflect the Commission’s mapping policy concerning areas that flood. The Township received Substantive Certification from State of New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing in 2009; in 2021 signed settlement agreement with the NJ Fair Share Housing Center and adopted Land Use Element and Housing Element where sufficient affordable housing opportunities will be available.

## BACKGROUND/ CHRONOLOGY

On February 21, 2020, Frank Banisch, the Township’s planner submitted material on behalf of the Township to seek plan endorsement and continue their designated centers. In April 2020 a prepetition meeting was held, the Township’s and submitted their Municipal Self-Assessment Report after was endorsed by the Township Committee on December 21, 2021. A waiver from further visioning was granted by Office of

<b>Bedminster Township, Somerset County</b>		<b>Planning and Endorsement Chronology</b>	
<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>	
<b>Master Plan Adopted</b>	<b>1979</b>		
<b>Consistency with State Plan</b>	<b>2/24/1995</b>	<b>Master Plan Encourages growth in Centers</b>	
<b>Kirby v. Bedminster Decision</b>	<b>April, 2000</b>	<b>NJ Attorney General Amicus brief upholding Master Plan consistency with State Plan</b>	
<b>Pluckemin Town Center Designation</b>	<b>9/20/2001</b>		
<b>Bedminster Village Center Designation</b>	<b>9/20/2001</b>		
<b>Master Plan</b>	<b>1/16/2003</b>	<b>Comprehensive Update</b>	
<b>Master Plan Reexamination</b>	<b>2018</b>		
<b>Somerset County Hazardous Mitigation Plan</b>	<b>July 2019</b>	<b>Bedminster Chapter</b>	
<b>Request to seek PE</b>	<b>2/21/2020</b>	<b>To Continue Center Designation</b>	
<b>Master Plan Reexamination</b>	<b>Jan-21</b>		
<b>Housing and Fair Share Element</b>	<b>1/21/2021</b>	<b>Signed Agreement with Fair Share Housing Center</b>	
<b>Somerset County AT&amp;T Land Use Study</b>	<b>October, 2021</b>		

Planning Advocacy Executive Director Donna Rendeiro on **XX XX, 2023** because of their efforts to engage the public during discussions about the redevelopment of the AT&T property in 2020 and 2021 and the public comments they received in 2021 for before the Land Use Element, Housing Element, and Fair Share Plan Element were adopted.

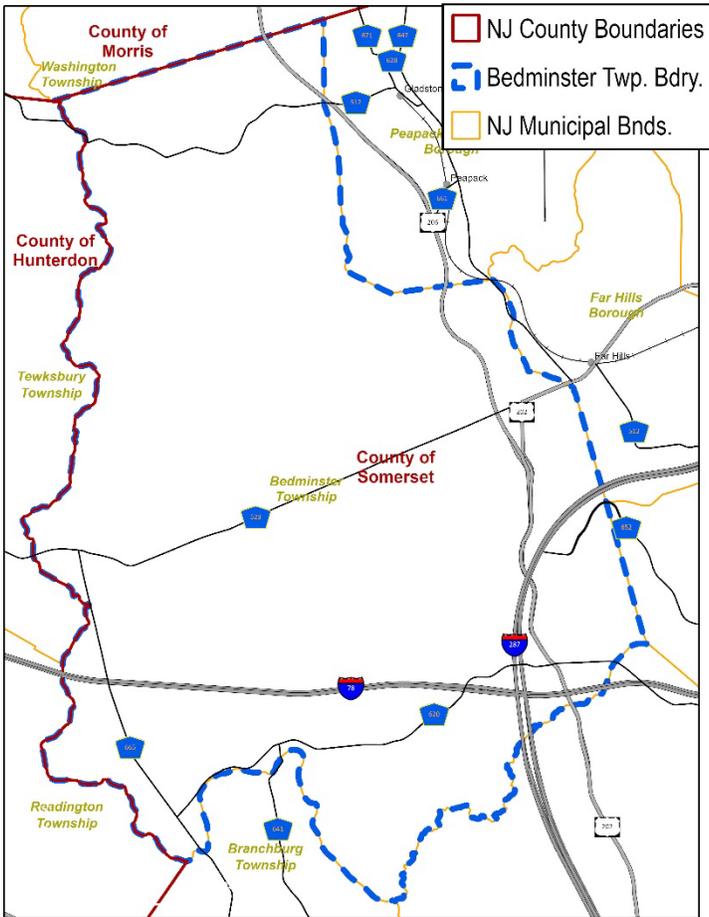
Bedminster Township planning foundation and vision are linked to the State Plan seeking to encourage development in the Pluckemin and Bedminster Centers while preserving the Township's farmland assessed land outside of these centers. Approximately 2/3 of the Township taxable property is farmland assessed.

## **LOCATION & REGIONAL CONTEXT** *(largely from Bedminster's MSA)*

### **A Planned Township** – *(History from Bedminster Township's MSA)*

Bedminster is a Somerset County municipality of 26.5 square miles, located in the northwest portion of Somerset County, bordering Tewksbury Township in Hunterdon County to the west and Chester Township in Morris County to the north. A little more than 987 acres of the northern portion of Bedminster is located in the Highlands Preservation Area, and does fall under the purview of the State Plan.

In the southern portion of the Township, I-78 runs east/west and I-287 runs north/south. Pluckemin's center is where I-287 and I-78 cross. Further north of that intersection is where US-206/US-202 diverge and form the Bedminster's center. US-206 runs north/south from the bottom of the Township to the top. Route 202 also runs north/south until it diverges to go northeast.



Bedminster was first settled in 1710 and played a role during the Revolutionary War where the Pluckemin Continental Artillery Cantonment Site served as the country's first military artillery training academy. It is on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1798, the New Jersey Legislature incorporated Bedminster.

From those early days until today, the Township is strategically positioned with respect to a number of employment centers, Newark is approximately 35 miles away, New Brunswick 20 miles, and New York City 45 miles. The Newark Liberty International Airport is 35 minutes away. Train service and the road network also make Bedminster an ideal location for companies like AT&T to locate. Although AT&T is relocating from their 1.1 million square campus to a smaller space, but keeping their corporate presence in Bedminster. In addition to AT&T, the affluent community is home to Verizon Wireless of the East LP, and Jubilant Life Sciences.

In addition to being a business center, several prominent golf courses and horse farms are located in Bedminster.



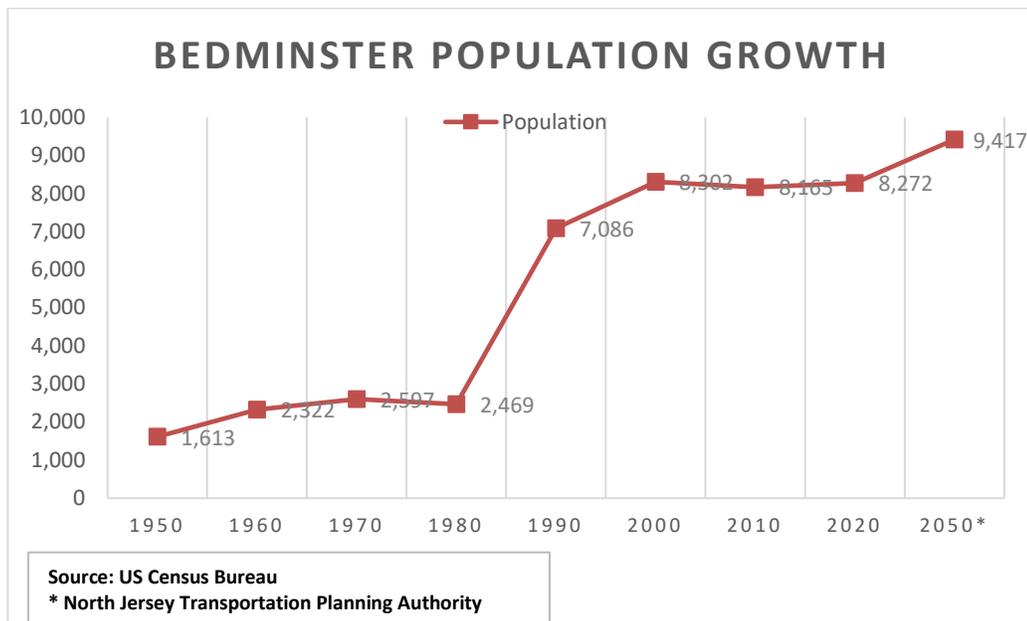
Fiddler’s Elbow Golf Course, Natitar Park



Trump National Golf Course

**LAND USE, DEMOGRAPHICS AND FUTURE**

The age and ethnicity of the citizens of Bedminster are noteworthy from the 2020 US Census. The median age of 47.8 years is higher than the Somerset County 42.2 and State of New Jersey 40.2. The percentage of people older than 65 years is 23.6% in comparison to the 17.3% in Somerset County. The racial population breakdown of 81.8% White, 1.7% Black or African American, and 7.4% Asian in Bedminster in comparison to Somerset County’s 65.6% White, 11.0% Black or African American, and 20.7% Asian. With an older White population it is not surprising that the median household income of Bedminster is \$118,539 in comparison to the United States, \$69,021.



**Bedminster Employment Breakdown**

Occupation Category	Count	Percentage
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	4,740	
Management occupations	917	19.3%
Business and financial operations occupations	776	16.4%
Computer, engineering, and science occupations:	518	10.9%
Education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations:	605	12.8%
Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations:	285	6.0%

Service occupations:	227	4.8%
Sales and office occupations:	1,054	22.2%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations:	202	4.3%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations:	156	3.3%

The 2019 Survey shows that almost 60% of the labor force is employed in Managerial, Business/Finance, Computer/Engineering, Education/Legal sectors. This in addition to 23.6% of the population that is over age 65 and perhaps retired makes Bedminster an affluent township with a median household income of \$118,539.

According to the most recent census and surveys from the Census bureau there estimated to be 4,396 housing units. More than 60% of the those were built in the 1980's which resulted in the population rising from close to 2,500 people in 1980 to more than 7,000 in 1990 or more than 187% growth rate. The number of housing units grew by 15.6% in the 1990's and the population grew to a high of 8,302 in 2000. The last two censuses reported that the population declined slightly to under 8,302 people.

**YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT**

Total housing units	4,396	4,396
Built 2020 or later	0	0.0%
Built 2010 to 2019	21	0.5%
Built 2000 to 2009	101	2.3%
Built 1990 to 1999	687	15.6%
Built 1980 to 1989	2,688	61.1%
Built 1970 to 1979	126	2.9%
Built 1960 to 1969	162	3.7%
Built 1950 to 1959	233	5.3%
Built 1940 to 1949	77	1.8%
Built 1939 or earlier	301	6.8%

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Water –**

The public water service area is served by New Jersey American Water – Passaic Basin which operates 23 active wells and 1 surface water plant.

**Wastewater Treatment -**

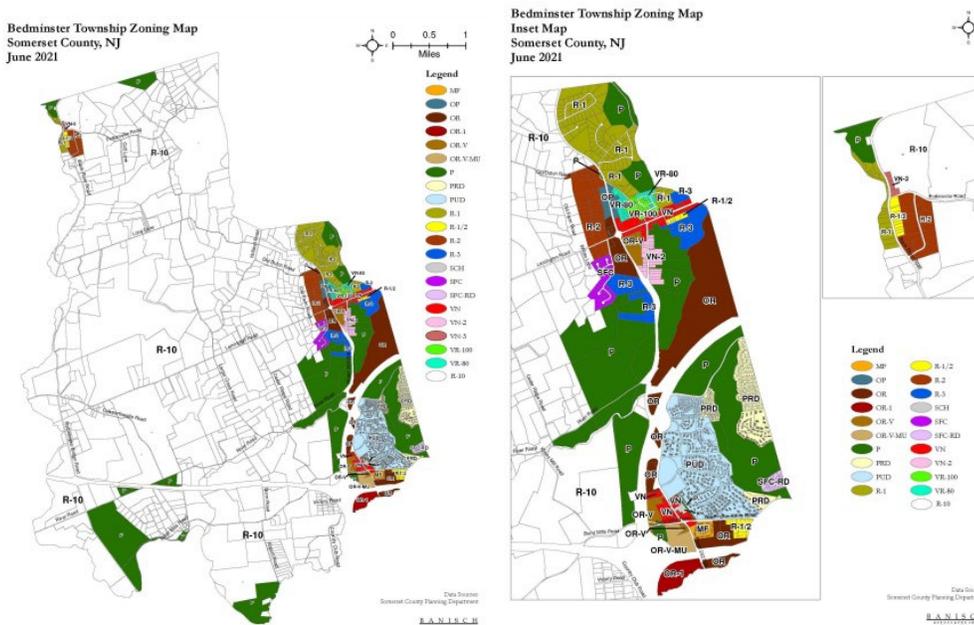
The Township is primarily served by one wastewater treatment plant; Environmental Disposal Corporation (EDC) Wastewater Treatment Plant, which services both the Bedminster Village and Pluckemin Town Centers, the AT&T campus, as well as some surrounding areas. The Township has five wastewater pump stations.

The Township has two smaller package treatment plants at the Purnell School and the Willow School. The Township also has three privately owned package treatment plants that service farms and golf courses.

## Capacity Issues Raised by DEP -

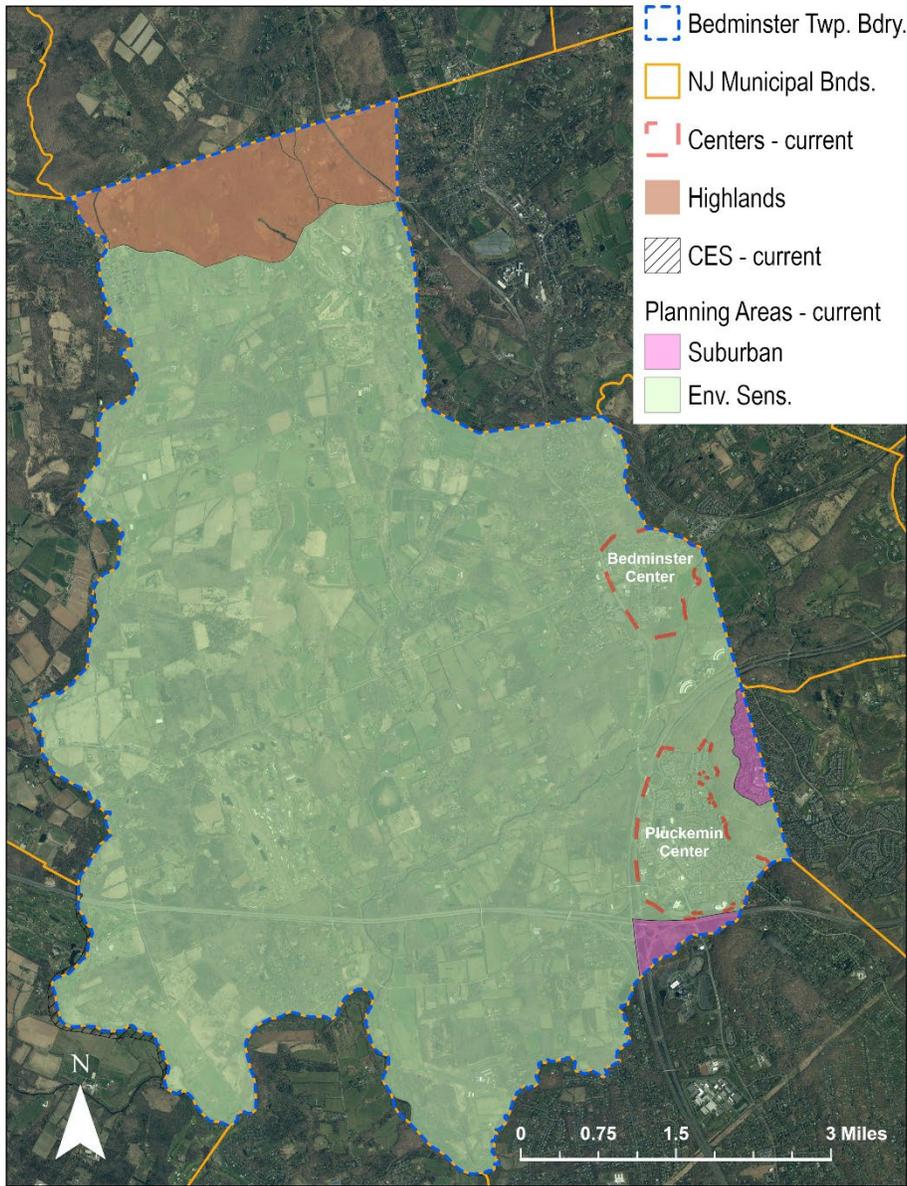
While DEP noted that Somerset County in the draft of their Wastewater Capacity Analysis that Bedminster’s main wastewater treatment plant, EDC Wastewater Treatment Plant which services both the Bedminster Village and Pluckemin Town Centers, the AT&T campus, as well as some surrounding areas is running at 61% of its 2.1 million gallons per day capacity. They expressed potential concerns regarding the need to assess if there are other septic systems in the township that may be vulnerable to flooding. The Utility Services Plan element of the Master Plan should be reviewed and updated based on issues highlighted in DEP’s Opportunity and Constraints Report. The Township is already addressing some water capacity issues. The Plan Implementation Agreement reflects water and wastewater items that need to be addressed.

## ZONING MAP (Below)



**PLANNING AREA MAPS**

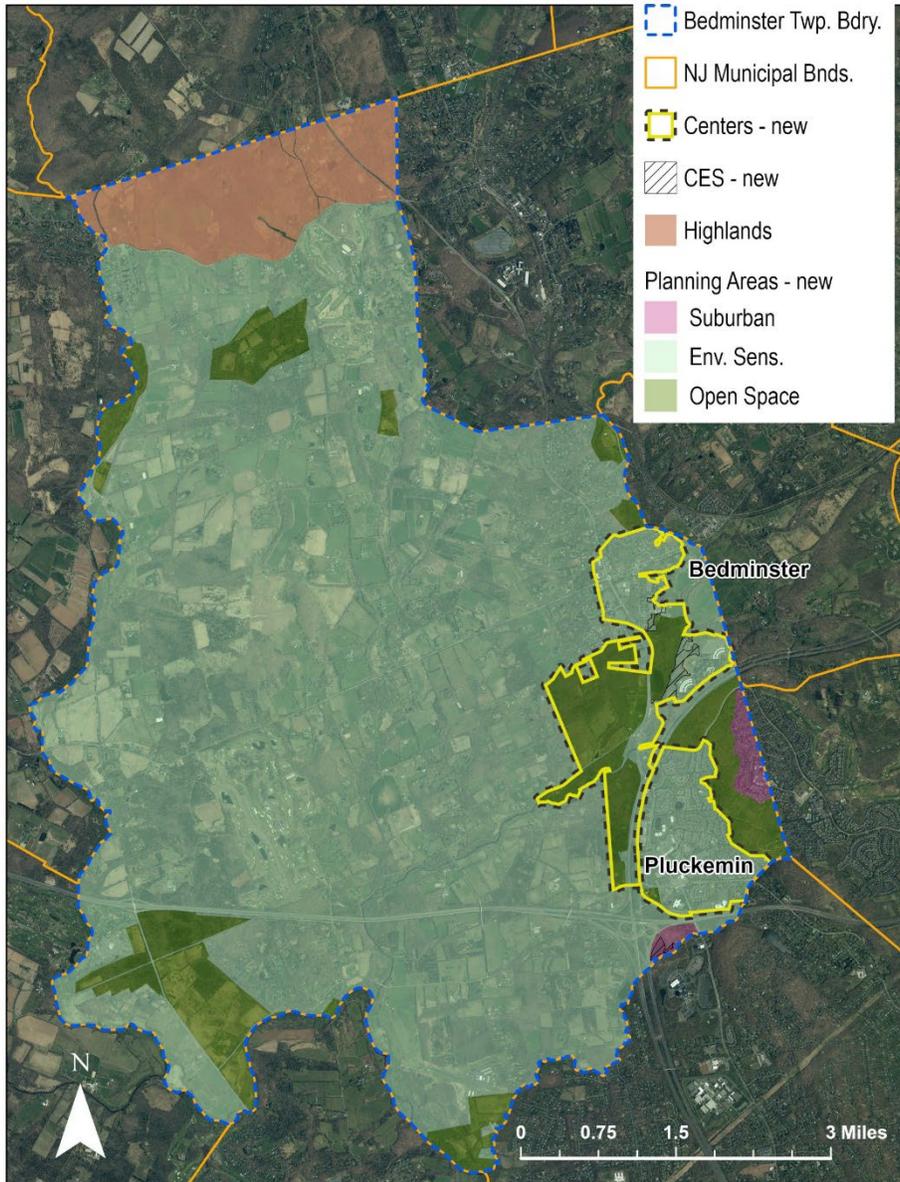
Existing State Plan Map:



Existing PAs	Sum of ACRES
HIGHLANDS	987.25
ENV SENS	15,665.54
RURAL ENV SENS	22.04
SUBURBAN	181.71
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16,856.54</b>

Centers - current	Sum of ACRES
Bedminster	264.95
Pluckemin	493.95
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>758.90</b>

**Proposed Map Amendments:**



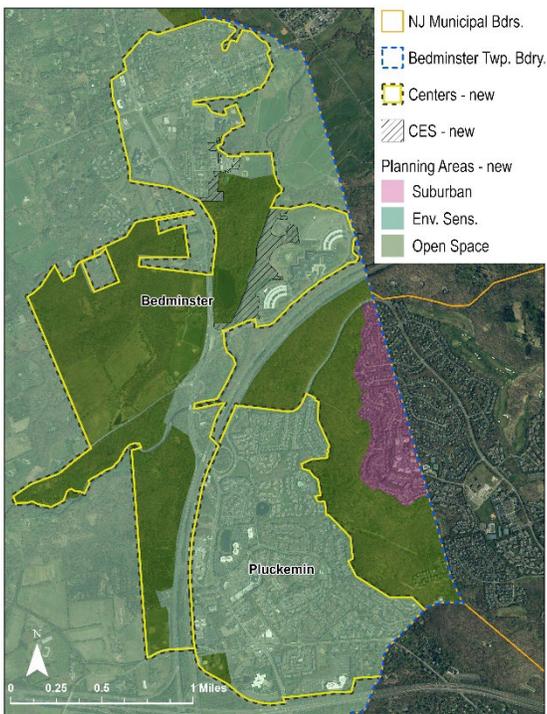
<b>New PAs</b>	<b>Sum of ACRES</b>
HIGHLANDS	987.25
ENV SENS	14,058.63
OPEN SPACE	1,693.58
SUBURBAN	117.08
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>16,856.54</b>

<b>Centers-new</b>	<b>Sum of ACRES</b>
Bedminster	390.91
Pluckemin	484.42
River Rd Park	500.48
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,375.81</b>

### Change in Acreage

PAs	ACRES
HIGHLANDS	-
ENV SENS	-1,606.91
OPEN SPACE	1,693.58
SUBURBAN	-64.63
RURAL ENV SENS	-22.04

Centers	Sum of ACRES
Bedminster	125.96
Pluckemin	-9.52
River Rd Park	500.48



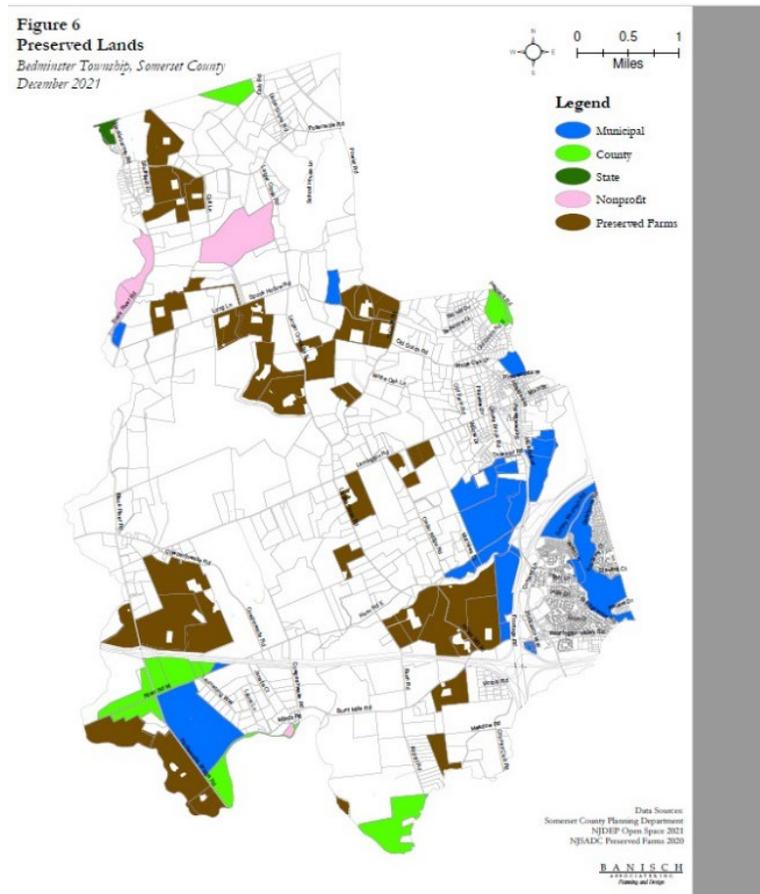
## STATE PLAN GOALS REVIEW

### Goal #1 Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns

The Township's vision in earlier Master Plan's and continues in the most recent 2021 Master Plan Reexamination, seeks to encourage development in the Pluckemin and Bedminster Centers while preserving 2/3 of the Town's farmland assessed land. Including the former AT&T property in the Bedminster Center will encourage redevelopment in the Center.

### Goal #2 Conserve the State's Natural Resources and Systems –

The Township is committed to the preservation of its open space and water quality management. More than 780 acres are dedicated to open space for passive and/or active parks according to their ROSI which include 585 acre, Hacklebarney State Park. The Somerset County Park Commission manages Natirar Park in which 40 acres is located in the Township, most of Natirar is located in neighboring Peapack/Gladstone.



The Township has concentrated land acquisition and facilities development within Greenways along the North Branch of the Raritan River and the Second Watchung Ridge. Passive open space acquisitions within these greenway systems have accounted for the substantial increase in open space in the municipal inventory over the last decade. It also views its planning and regulations for the environs as a way to maintain water quality and promote biodiversity and meet the regulations of the Highlands Master Plan.

### **Goal #3 Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for all Residents of NJ**

While Bedminster views the Centers as the focus of growth within the Township, 2/3 of the Township is Farmland Preserved and Bedminster seeks to support the equestrian farms and farmland ecotourism businesses. Balancing farmland preservation and supporting the redevelopment of the former AT&T property and other properties with redevelopment potential are needed to successfully reach this goal.

### **Goal #4 Protect the Environment, Prevent, and Clean Up Pollution**

The Township is working to achieve this goal by appointing a recycling coordinator, adopting a recycling requirement ordinance and submitting yearly tonnage reports to the County in effort to reduce solid waste and increase recycled materials. The Township has also adopted recycling requirements in its Land Management Ordinance that calls for all new residential subdivisions, commercial and industrial facilities to comply with appropriate recycling efforts.

### **Goal #5 Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost –**

Bedminster can residents attend one of Bedminster's 21 public schools for grades kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. For high school can attend Bernards High School in Bernardsville along with students from Bernardsville, Far Hills, and Peapack-Gladstone. Since 1941 First Aid services have been handled by the Far Hills/Bedminster volunteer service. Similarly, the volunteer fire service is handled in conjunction with neighboring municipalities.

### **Goal #6 Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost**

In 1984 Bedminster received a "Final Judgment of Mount Laurel II Compliance and Six Year Repose" that was based on an agreement to rezone sufficient lands to permit the construction of at least 819 low- and moderate-income units, which the court found to be Bedminster's fair share obligation for the 1980-1990 periods. The Court subsequently modified the 1984 Final Judgment in 1992, reducing the Township's Court-imposed fair share obligation to 698 units and extending the period of repose until December 31, 1995.

Through December 31, 2013, Bedminster's obligation includes a recalculated total plus a new "growth share" obligation, based on actual growth. Preliminary estimates indicate that another 37 affordable units will be required to meet the growth share requirement, resulting in a cumulative obligation for the period 1987 through 2013 of 194 affordable units.

The Township's affordable housing production to date far exceeds the current obligation, which is the latest in a series of diminishing estimates of Bedminster's fair share responsibility. Bedminster's affordable housing supply includes 694 affordable units, and the Township also rehabilitated 4 low- and moderate-income units.

### **Goal #7 Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space, and Recreational Value**

Bedminster's historic resources includes roughly 150 historic sites and four historic districts, three of which are listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. The Township created a Historic Preservation Commission that meets monthly.

**Goal #8 Ensure Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide**

By participating in the Plan Endorsement process, and with two State Plan-designated Centers, and their desire to work with the Highlands Planning Council, Bedminster is demonstrating its commitment to comprehensive planning, and its continuing commitment to working with surrounding municipalities, the County, the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and any others who willing to support the community. Bedminster’s goal is to ensure that its planning is consistent at all levels, and Plan Endorsement will facilitate that.

***RESILIENCY (largely from the MSA)***

Bedminster Township has undertaken several efforts to support a more sustainable and resilient municipality and is preparing to undertake more:

- Participate in Somerset County hazard mitigation efforts, including chapter in the 2019 Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Designated a Hazard Mitigation Coordinator
- Developed Mitigation efforts to be addressed

***STAFF RECOMMENDATION***

Bedminster Township has diligently and regularly planned and implemented measures to ensure that their centers and environs remain sustainable and grow using smart-growth principles. Based on this work, they have demonstrated that their actions and plans, including the items identified in the PIA, are aligned with the State Plan. It is staff’s recommendation that the Plan Implementation Committee forward this proposed Plan Endorsement to the State Plan Commission as presented. Please see the attached PIA for details of Bedminster’s Plan Implementation Agreement.