



Plan Endorsement Recommendation Report
Borough of Wildwood Crest



**New Jersey Department of State
Office of Planning Advocacy
Meghan Wren, AICP, CFM, Area Planner
June 15, 2023**



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 the Municipal Self-Assessment report, input of our partner agencies, Borough of Wildwood Crest, Cape May County and members of the public. OPA will post this report and other material related to the Borough of Wildwood Crest 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 osgmail@sos.state.nj.us.

Documents submitted by the Borough of Wildwood Crest for Plan Endorsement can be found here: <https://nj.gov/state/planning/plan-endorsement.shtml> and include the Master Plan, Amendments, Redevelopment Plans, etc.

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INTRODUCTION

The Borough of Wildwood Crest (hereafter Wildwood Crest, WC or Borough) first had its Center Endorsed with Wildwood City, North Wildwood and West Wildwood as a Regional Center through a State Planning Commission Resolution on April 22, 1998. Technically expired March 31, 2023.

The Borough’s interest in pursuing formal Plan Endorsement was discussed on March 24, 2020 at a combined Wildwoods prepetition meeting with representatives from the state agencies and the Cape May County Planning Department. Wildwood Crest’s primary objective in seeking Plan Endorsement is to plan and grow consistent with the State plan and to have their CAFRA Centers reauthorized.

Additionally, (from their MSA) “the Borough of Wildwood Crest is undertaking the process of plan endorsement in order to better understand, define and address issues that face the Borough of Wildwood Crest in years to come and to plan for its future in a proactive and thoughtful way. Given the challenges we face globally including sea-level rise, global warming and the ever-increasing costs of energy and its impacts on our environment, the Borough recognizes its role in making positive, carefully crafted planning initiatives. The Borough seeks the State’s assistance in obtaining funding and technical assistance to address persistent flooding issues that plague this island community. We have been proactive in our approach to flood mitigation and have sought grant opportunities and expended a great deal of the Borough’s capital funds to consistently make improvements to our storm sewer system but need financial assistance to keep the pace with the ever rising tides.”

BACKGROUND/ CHRONOLOGY

The mayor forwarded the Borough of Wildwood Crest’s petition for endorsement in April of 2019.

In March 2020, a Prepetition meeting was held, the Township authorized a Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee in April of 2019; and submitted their Municipal Self-Assessment Report in June, 2021. As the community is essentially built-out and has been working to realize a vision for its future that has not changed dramatically in recent years, and as the municipality has engaged its residents and visitors in significant dialogue about its redevelopment, they sought and received a waiver for visioning.

Wildwood Crest has been steadily building on its planning foundation, with efforts toward sustainability and smart growth as follows:

Event(s)	Date	Notes
Wildwood Regional Center Designated	4/28/1998	
Master Plan - Land Use	2005 (1980)	
Adopted Cape May Co Waste Water Management Plan	2013	
Comprehensive Recycling ordinance	2015	
Emergency Operations Plan	February 2017	
Flood Damage Protection Ordinance	2017 (2015)	
Affordable Housing Settlement Agrmnt	2017	
Affordable Housing Development Fee	2018	Ord 1273 - 2018
Housing Plan Element & Fair Share Plan	2018	
Recreation & Open Space Inventory	2020	

Love Blue Initiative	2019	
Flood Mitigation and Storm Sewer Master Plan	2019	
Cape May County submitted revised WMP	2019 and revised 2021	Under DEP review
Cape May County Comprehensive Plan	2021	
Cape May Co Hazard Mitigation Plan	2021	Approved Municipal Annex
Stormwater Ordinance Amended	March 2021	DEP compliant
Master Plan Reexamination	2022 (2012, 1994, 1988)	Public engagement/visioning
Mayor petitioned for PE	April 7, 2019	
Prepetition Meeting	March 24, 2020	
Appointed PE Advisory Committee	April 22, 2019	
Submitted MSA	June 23, 2021	
Climate Change Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CCRHVA)	2022	Draft version developed by Rutgers Climate Corp students
Redevelopment Investigation Report	2022	
PIC Recommendation (tentative)	June 21, 2023	
SPC ADOPTION (tentative)	July 5, 2023	

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

As an early step of its Plan Endorsement process the Township appointed a PE Advisory Committee (PEAC) in April of 2019. Unlike many communities, WC's PEAC actually compiled their MSA. Though it had a different feel than many of the consultant driven MSA's received by OPA, this one followed the letter of the PE guidelines and had the engagement of the borough's residents throughout the process. Empowered citizen volunteers carved up the sections of the MSA, did the research and wrote up their results. Also, their 2022 Redevelopment Investigation Report had significant visioning aspects which together with the fact that their vision has not changed significantly since their vision statement was last written, served as the basis for a waiver of their visioning requirement.

LOCATION & REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Borough of Wildwood Crest is located on a barrier island along the Atlantic Ocean coastline of Cape May County, New Jersey. It is bounded on the north-northeast by the Township of Lower and City of Wildwood, on the east-southeast by the Atlantic Ocean, on the south-southwest by the Township of Lower and the Atlantic Ocean, and the west by the Township of Lower. It is part of the Ocean City Metropolitan Statistical Area. The Borough of Wildwood Crest and its neighboring communities of the City of Wildwood, City of North Wildwood, and the Borough of West Wildwood make up "The Wildwoods" resort, a popular vacation destination for those living in all parts of New Jersey as well as within the New York City and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania metropolitan areas.

Founded in 1910, the Borough of Wildwood Crest is a coastal community located in Cape May County along the Atlantic Ocean on the 5-mile island along with the City of North Wildwood, the Borough of West Wildwood, City of Wildwood and a small portion of Lower Township known as Diamond Beach. It operates as a Commission Form of government under the Walsh Act. It is a densely populated municipality that attracts beachgoers from all over the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area and New York Metropolitan Area as well as frequently attracting visitors from Quebec, Canada. Most visitors easily commute to the Crest via the Garden State Parkway which was constructed in the 1950s.

LAND USE and DEMOGRAPHICS

The Borough of Wildwood Crest is a “built-out” municipality that mostly consists of high density single family homes, condominium, and apartment developments within the 1.3 square miles of area found in the Borough’s borders.

Wildwood Crest has a high concentration of seasonal residents and visitors and boasts one of New Jersey’s best beaches stretching approximately 2-miles long and as wide as 1300 ft. in most cases. It is estimated that Wildwood Crest’s seasonal population exceeds 54,000 in the summer months. This is nearly 10 times the winter population. Wildwood Crest has abundant parkland, much of which is located along the Atlantic Ocean and Sunset Lake bayfront. The Borough has actively pursued and obtained various grant funds to make numerous improvements and recreational enhancements to these parks for over 10 years. These improvements include the ongoing lengthening of the walkways to accommodate the very wide beaches and make it easier for visitors to get to the water.

The Borough is comprised of commercial and residential properties. This includes 140 commercial properties such as numerous ocean front motel/hotels and 2,500 residential single-family and multi-family residential properties and 5766 condominium units in approximately 200 complexes and is the second home for many seasonal residents. The Borough owns 82 properties, 12 of which are improved while 70 are vacant land. There are 5 churches and 1 school with 1 school playground in the Crest.

According to the 2020 census, WC’s year round population was 3,084 with 1,802 households and with a median age of 62.7 . Its median income was \$58,944 with a median home value of \$398,700 and a poverty level of zero for children and 8% for seniors. There are no census tracts identified as overbu4dened in WC though there are several just over the border in Wildwood City.

Wildwood Crest Borough Population Characteristics 1930-2040 (Projected)			
Year	Population	Population Increase	Percentage Increase
1950	1,772	-	-
1960	3,011	1,239	70%
1970	3,483	472	16%
1980	4,149	666	19%
1990	3,631	-518	- 12%
2000	3,980	349	10%
2010	3,270	-710	- 18%
2040*	3,189	-81	- 2%

* Population Projections from South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization
Sources: Workforce New Jersey Public Information Network, SJTPO.

Cumulative 1987-2025 Affordable Housing Obligation	
Type of Obligation	Units
Rehabilitation Obligation (Present Need)	20
Prior Round Obligation (1987-1999)	42
Third Round Prospective Need (1999-2025)	263
Cumulative 1987-2025 Obligation	325
Realistic Development Potential	0

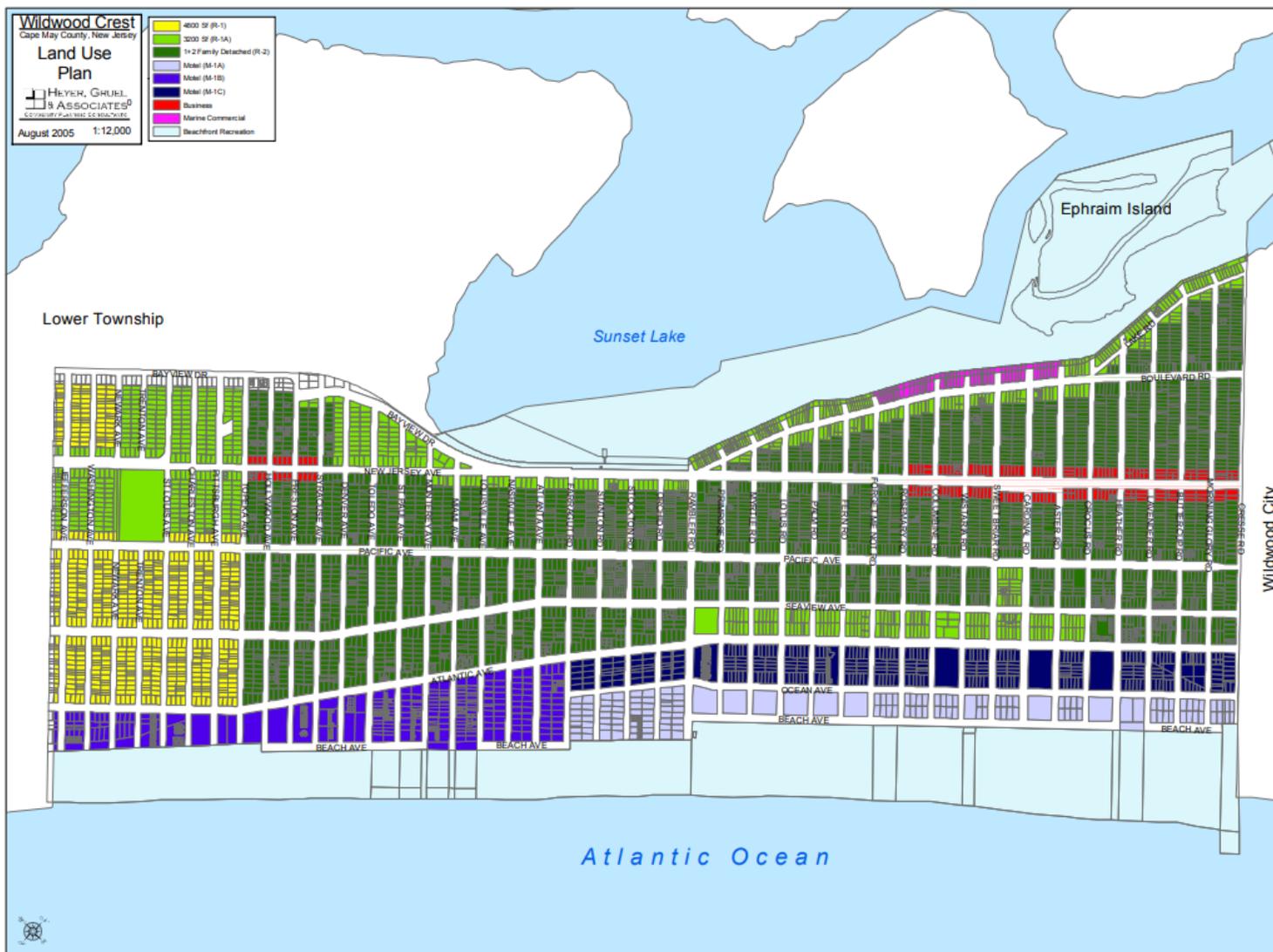
Wildwood Crest has an approved Fair Share Plan that identifies an affordable housing unmet need of 305 but a vacant land adjustment that means their obligation must be met with rehabilitation and inclusionary zoning.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Waste Water Treatment - Wildwood Crest's wastewater is managed by Cape May County Utilities Authority and is treated off-island. The Wildwood/Lower STP has not reached the 80% flow capacity. Currently at approximately 78% capacity, additional development could put this facility into the 80% range which triggers the need to develop strategies to address the capacity deficiencies required to be submitted to WQMP. Cape May County's WMP has been submitted and waits review.

Water - The Wildwoods, located in Cape May County, lie within the public water service area served by Wildwood Water Utility (WU) regulated under Water Allocation Permit Number 5057 (Permit). According to the Well Permitting section of the Bureau of Water Allocation and Well Permitting, no domestic wells have been issued in the Wildwoods in recent years. As in all of Cape May County, the Wildwoods water supply should be conserved as much as possible to forestall saltwater intrusion and/or strains on limited water supply. This needs to be addressed in the CCRHVA as per the PIA.

FUTURE LAND USE /ZONING MAP

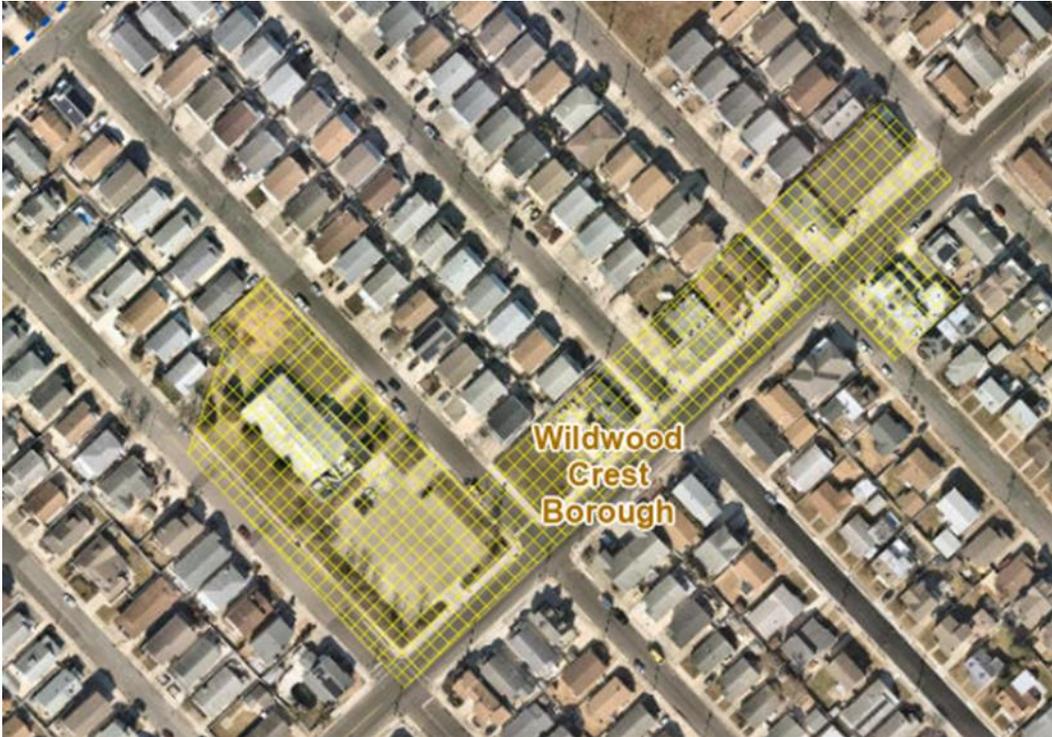


PROPOSED MAP AMENDMENTS

The following are the Borough of Wildwood Crest's proposed maps with Planning Areas and Center/Node boundaries.



Commercial Node



Showing detail of Bike pat and Crest Pier location



STATE PLAN GOALS REVIEW

Goal #1 Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns – Through capital planning, a constant pursuit of grant funding, vision and energy, WC continually works to revitalize its community. They are perpetually adding to their offerings as a 'fit-friendly oceanside oasis' with free recreational opportunities being expanded each year. The leadership is aggressively working on a downtown revitalization project and they are revamping an old library building to serve as a sort of green community center and hub for sustainability.

Goal #2 Conserve the State's Natural Resources and Systems – Wildwood Crest is sandwiched between the Atlantic Ocean and the Intercoastal waterway, as such these assets are protected by state and federal statutes and the borough acts as stewards of the sections in their municipality. They are committed to the stewardship of these assets as evidenced by their commitment to Love Blue, their protective ordinances and their harnessing of local volunteer energy for conservation efforts.

Goal #3 Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for all Residents of New Jersey – The Borough is working with the County, its engineers, and consultants to undergo revitalization of their downtown area. They have hired consultants to study the area and held public meetings to seek input and support. They have been authorized for an Area in Need of Redevelopment and are changing zoning, pursuing redevelopers, and incentivizing investment. They are planning pedestrian and bike friendly streetscapes in the area with parks, events, and other activation projects.

Goal #4 Protect the Environment, Prevent, and Clean Up Pollution - Wildwood Crest has initiated the Love Blue program as well as supporting an active Green Team. They have a fully engaged citizenry helping with multiple environmental, anti-pollution and quality of life efforts within the Borough.

Goal #5 Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost - The Borough is home to a library, Von Savage Pool, Crest Memorial School, several parks and a fabulous walking/bike path along the beachfront. They have a beach patrol, fire department, police department, ambulance corps, a public works team and a recreation department. They also have an active Green Team and several other volunteer groups. The Borough enhances public facilities and services by reducing costs through shared service agreements with municipalities and the county.

Goal #6 Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost - WC has a Fir Share Plan that has been approved by the courts and they have retained a consulting firm to ensure that they meet their obligations. The plan identifies an affordable housing unmet need of 305 but a vacant land adjustment that means their obligation must be met with rehabilitation and inclusionary zoning. The Borough has implemented Affordable Housing Rehabilitation Program and is working toward meeting its needs.

Goal #7 Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space, and Recreational Value - The Crest has expansive parks along the bayfront and oceanfront and offers a well-used, multi-use purpose bike path along the Atlantic Ocean. All the Borough's parks are listed on the ROSI and are preserved open space. The abundance of family-friendly amenities and open spaces offered adds to the sense of community and enhances recreational value.

Goal #8 Ensure Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide -The Borough works closely to ensure consistency with these surrounding municipalities as well as the County and State on planning and zoning regulations and plans such as:

- Island-wide bulkhead ordinances
- Regional Plan Endorsement
- Consistency with the State Development and Redevelopment plan
- County Solid Waste Management plan
- Participation in the county wide Hazard Mitigation Plan and Waste Water Management Plan as well as other county lead initiatives like the Comprehensive Plan, Bike plan, etc.
- Shared Tourism efforts on 5 Mile Island

RESILIENCY

Wildwood Crest's governing body has initiated a resilience team that meets regularly and is making progress on a significant long range strategic plan, the Flood Mitigation and Storm Sewer Master Plan. They are dedicating municipal resources of all kinds to tackle their vulnerabilities and build resilience.

This impressive document can be found here: [WWC FloodMitigationandStormSewerMasterPlan.pdf](#) ([wildwoodcrest.org](#))

The Borough is rated 6 in the CRS program, participated in NJOPA/DEP/FEMA's Mitigating Hazards through Land Use Solutions (MHLUS) technical assistance effort and Rutgers Climate Corp has put together the first draft of their Climate Change Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Borough of Wildwood Crest has planned and implemented measures to ensure that their centers, and environs remain sustainable and resilient 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 the staff's recommendation that the Plan Implementation Committee forward their petition for endorsement to the State Planning Commission for approval. Please see the attached PIA for details of their implementation agreement.