

PLAN ENDORSEMENT **DRAFT** REPORT FOR TOWNSHIP OF STAFFORD (OCEAN COUNTY)



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SMART GROWTH

May 4, 2007 (revised from March 14, 2007)

This report is revised as of May 4, 2007 with additions indicated in boldface and underlined **thus**; deletions indicated in brackets [thus]. Any revisions since the March 14, 2007 document are a reflection of committee discussion and public input submitted at the March 28, 2007 meeting of the Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) as well as communications between state agencies and Upper Township regarding unresolved issues noted in OSG's presentation to the PIC.

Comments may be provided orally or in written form at the May 16, 2007 SPC meeting and in written form up to 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Comments may be submitted electronically to osgmail@dca.state.nj.us or mailed directly to Ben Spinelli, Acting Executive Director, Office of Smart Growth, 101 South Broad Street, P.O. Box 204, Trenton, NJ 08625-0204.

Interested parties may register with OSG to receive notifications of SPC meetings, hearings or other matters regarding petitions for plan endorsement by providing contact information, including name, organization, address and email address to osgmail@dca.state.nj.us.

Photograph Sources

Stafford Township Historical Society (cover)
Stafford Business Park concept plan, (p.10)
Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, www.visitusa.com (p.13)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
Staff Recommendation.....	2
Location and Regional Context.....	3
Demographics.....	4
Relevant Planning Activities	8
Consistency with State Plan – Goals, Policies and Indicators.....	12
Goal 2: Conserve the State’s Natural Resources and Systems.....	12
Goal 3: Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of New Jersey.....	14
Goal 5: Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost.....	15
Goal 6: Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost.....	17
Goal 7: Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value.....	18
Consistency with State Plan – Center and Planning Area Criteria.....	19
Conclusion.....	23
Planning & Implementation Agreement.....	23

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with N.J.A.C. 5:85-7 et seq, the Township of Stafford has requested Initial Plan Endorsement from the State Planning Commission (SPC). This report contains findings and conclusions concerning consistency of the Township's plans and Planning & Implementation Agreement (PIA) with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan). The review of the petition is based on information submitted by the petitioner and information otherwise available to the Office of Smart Growth (OSG).

The Township currently has a Regional Center designated by the SPC on September 24, 1997. In Ocean County's Cross-acceptance report of January 2005, the Township indicated its interest in proposing changes to the State Plan Policy Map to reduce the size of the Center. With the Center due to expire on January 7, 2008 per the State Planning Rules (N.J.A.C. 5.85-7.11(b)), the Township chose to go through the Plan Endorsement process to not only modify the Center but to renew it for ten years.

The Township proposes to significantly reduce the size of its Regional Center. In line with the reduction of the center, changes have been made between the Suburban Planning Area (PA2), Rural Planning Area (PA4) and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (PA5), with a net gain in the latter. Map changes have also been made to recognize existing parks. Originally, the Township had also proposed a Hamlet for the Mayetta area but this was retracted (see p.16 for more discussion).

BACKGROUND

Process Timeline

Stafford Township initiated the Plan Endorsement process with a pre-petition meeting on October 25, 2005. The petition submitted by the Township on January 20, 2006 was deemed incomplete by the Office of Smart Growth (OSG) on February 17, 2006. Subsequently, the Township provided additional materials on May 18, 2006. The petition was deemed complete on June 17, 2006. In the completeness letter, OSG provided preliminary comments on consistency issues so that the Township had the opportunity to address them earlier on in the process than normal.

In response to written requests for a public hearing from organizations and residents, OSG held a hearing in Stafford Township on July 31, 2006. The state agency review period ended on August 3, 2006. However, due to concerns about the adequacy of the public notice, OSG held a second hearing on August 22, 2006.

The Township made a presentation to the Plan Implementation Committee (PIC) of the SPC on August 23, 2006. Following this presentation, the Township and OSG recognized that more time was necessary to finalize the mapping changes and to ensure that the public had the opportunity to review and comment at the local level. In October, OSG sent the Township a letter of extension to December 5, 2006, followed by a second extension to March 5, 2007. The Township held a public meeting on February 15, 2007 regarding the petition.

In February, DEP requested that the Township also provide a draft land use plan and a draft wastewater management plan as part of the petition. The Township submitted these materials to OSG on March 7, 2007. [These documents have not been

thoroughly reviewed at the time of this report-writing, but state agencies will be ready to comment on their consistency by the PIC meeting on March 28, 2007.] While the draft land use element was sufficient, the Township had to submit additional WMP-related information in order to be consistent with DEP regulations. On April 12, 2007, the Township had a WMP pre-application meeting with DEP. Subsequent submissions included a septic suitability analysis and related data such as the nitrate dilution model, and maps of soils and critical environmental areas. DEP has deemed the Township's efforts satisfactory for its support of the Township's Plan Endorsement. The submission of a fully revised draft WMP, reflecting recent discussions, will be an early PIA item due June 15, 2007.

Public Participation

In addition to the aforementioned public participation in the Plan Endorsement process, the Township has ensured that the public is informed and has an input into various planning activities. The 2001 Master Plan Reexamination included six workshops and outreach to the local agencies such as the Municipal Utilities Authority and the Board of Education, as well as various environmental stakeholders (e.g. U.S. Fish and Wildlife, NJ Green Acres, Ocean County Natural Lands Trust, Trust for Public Land).

Recent planning activities such as the Housing Element & Fair Share Plan and the Stafford Business Park have also undergone public planning processes and are discussed further in other sections of this report. The current master plan update (see p. 10) [will also] is undergoing a thorough public review with a number of Planning Board workshop meeting dates:

- February 15, 2007
- March 1, 2007
- March 29, 2007
- April 12, 2007
- April 26, 2007

- May 10, 2007
- May 24, 2007

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

OSG recognizes that the Township's plans were previously approved by the SPC in 1997 through the Center Designation process. Subsequent updates of the master plan, zoning ordinance and other documents have been consistent with the reasoning established then for approval. Furthermore, additional planning efforts since, covering issues ranging from open space to housing to stormwater, have served to further the 1997 application. As Stafford is the first of the nearly 100 municipalities with designated centers that will eventually participate in Plan Endorsement to renew their center(s), OSG has tried to streamline the process as much as possible, while recognizing the more comprehensive nature of Plan Endorsement's requirements and review procedures.

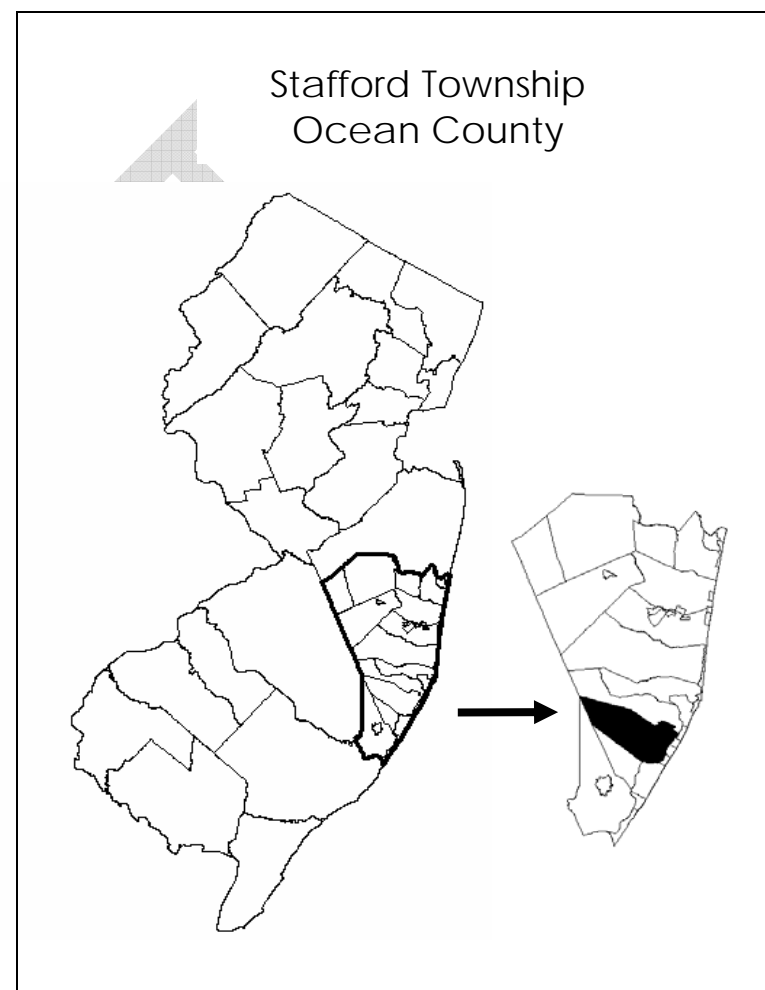
The Township of Stafford's planning vision remains consistent with the State Plan as defined in the State Planning Rules. Therefore, [with certain caveats,] staff recommends Initial Plan Endorsement for the Township, including renewal of the aforementioned Regional Center designation and changes to the Planning Areas. OSG, with support from other agencies, will closely monitor the Township's early PIA items relating to the master plan, land use regulations, and the wastewater management plan. [These caveats include:

- full review and monitoring of the Township's current master planning process, particularly concerning the draft land use element;
- review of the draft wastewater management plan; and
- final negotiation and consensus on the PIA.]

LOCATION AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Township of Stafford is located in the southern section of Ocean County, bordered by Barnegat Township to the north, Little Egg Harbor Township to the west, Eagleswood Township to the south, and Barnegat Bay to the east. The Garden State Parkway and Route 9 run through the town, serving as the major north-south arteries. Route 72 runs east-west and represents the sole access point to Long Beach Island. Approximately 46% of the Township is under Pinelands jurisdiction, and the remaining 54% is governed by the Coastal Area Facility Review Act (CAFRA).

In spite of the jurisdictional boundary between Pinelands and CAFRA, the Pinelands National Reserve extends into the coastal zone, requiring coordination between the SPC, DEP and the Pinelands Commission. Changes to the Regional Center and Planning Areas will have to be recognized consistently between the State Plan, Coastal Zone Management (CZM) rules and the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP). Following SPC endorsement, DEP will amend its CZM rules via the New Jersey Register. As part of the amendment process, the Pinelands Commission will provide comments to DEP regarding the consistency of the Township's land use plans and regulations with the CMP.



DEMOGRAPHICS

(Note: All data is from the 2000 Census unless otherwise noted.)

The data on age distribution and average household size show that Stafford Township lies somewhere between the county and state averages. Compared to the county, the Township has a relatively low population of retirees but is still significant higher than the state. Median household and per capita incomes are also higher than the county, indicative of a higher rate of labor force participation.

The Township's workforce is oriented towards institutional services (e.g. education, health), public administration, construction and retail. The first two sectors are reflective of the Township's role as a Regional Center, including large

	Stafford Twp	Ocean County	New Jersey
Land area (sq mi)	47.8	636	7,417
Population	22,532	510,916	8,414,350
Households	8,535	200,402	3,064,645
Average Household Size	2.61	2.51	2.68
Housing Units	11,522	248,711	3,310,275
Home Ownership Rate	91%	83%	66%
Vacancy Rate	25.9%	19.4%	7.4%
Median Household Income	\$52,269	\$46,443	\$55,146
Per Capita Income	\$25,397	\$23,054	\$27,006
Poverty Rate	4.0%	7.0%	8.5%
Unemployment Rate (NJDOL 2004)	5.2%	4.9%	4.8%

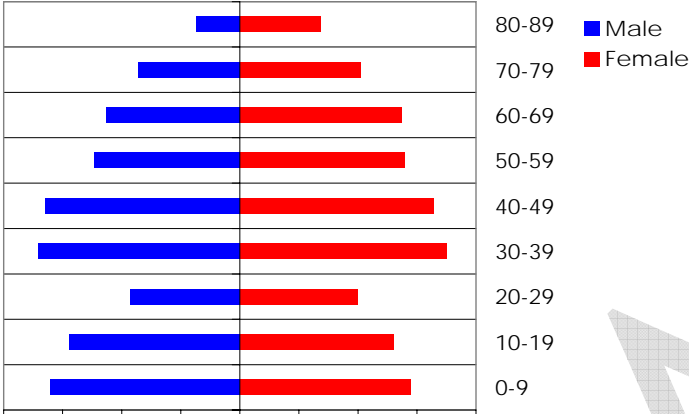
institutions such as Southern Ocean County Hospital. Dramatic retail growth in the last 10-15 years is also reflected in the data.

In light of the social and economic characteristics of the Township, affordable housing is an important concern. The Housing Element & Fair Share Plan has therefore been a key part of the Plan Endorsement process, to ensure that new affordable housing can be provided as much as possible in a center-based context.

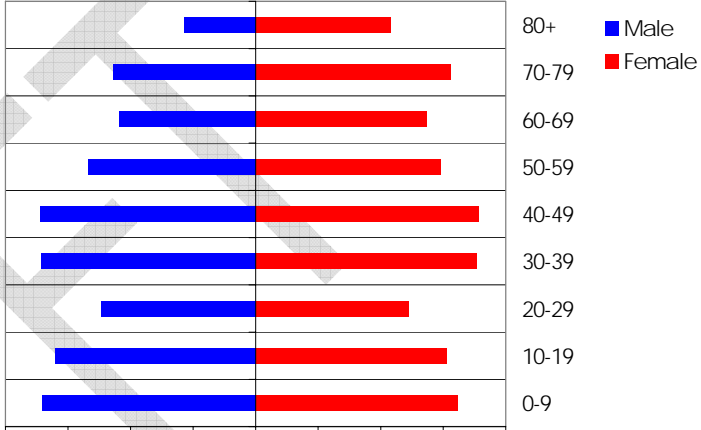
As with much of the coastal region, Stafford Township has grown dramatically since 1950, with the introduction of the Garden State Parkway. From a population of 1,930 in 1960, the Township grew to 10,385 by 1980. Growth leveled off during the 1980s but accelerated in the 1990s with an additional 9,000 residents. With a 2000 population of 22,532, the Township had already nearly approached the 2010 projections from Regional Center Designation Report (Bay Pointe Engineering Associates, Inc., June 1997, p.13). Ocean County estimated the population of the Township to be 25,522 as of 2005.

The Township projects complete build-out by 2014, which is why the Projections table shows petition data only up to this date. Stafford Business Park (see p.10), a redevelopment project, represents a major source of growth, followed by the Southern Ocean County Hospital (SOCH) Medical Village. Between projections from Center Designation, the Plan Endorsement petition and the current draft of the State Plan, the employment data is relatively consistent. The residential growth and projections are much more variable, with the numbers having far surpassed estimates from 1997.

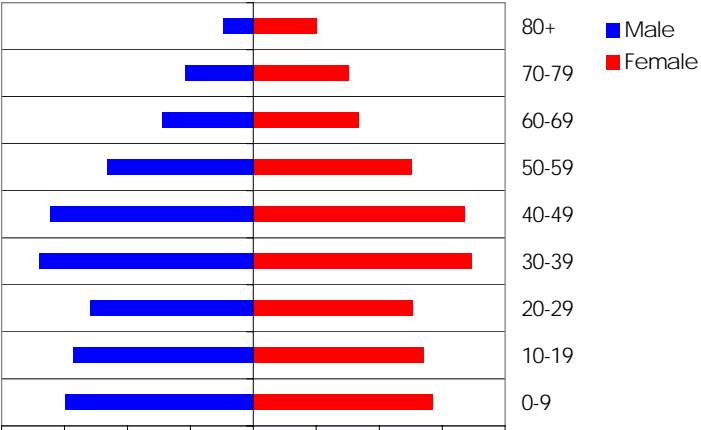
Stafford Township Age Distribution



Ocean County Age Distribution



New Jersey Age Distribution

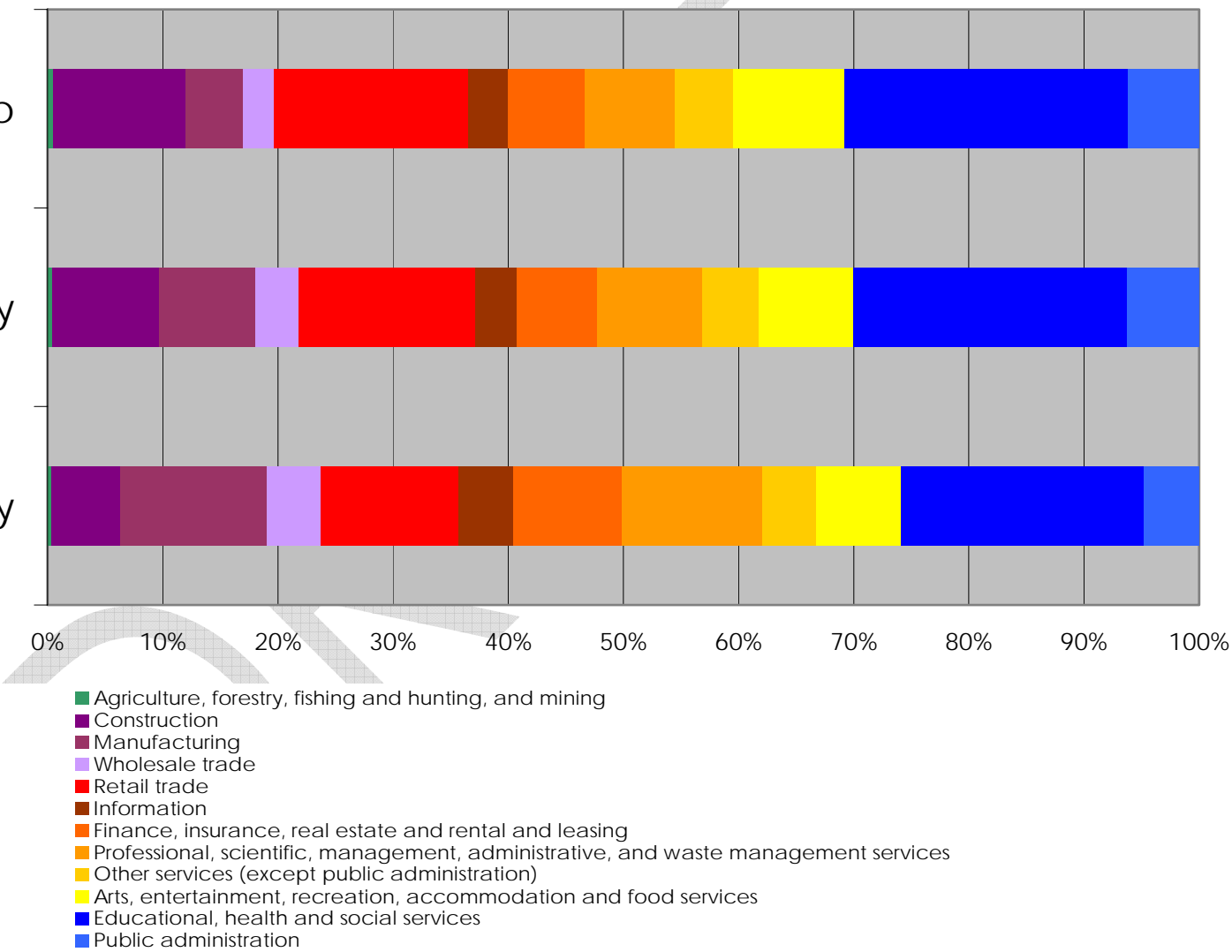


Workers by Industry

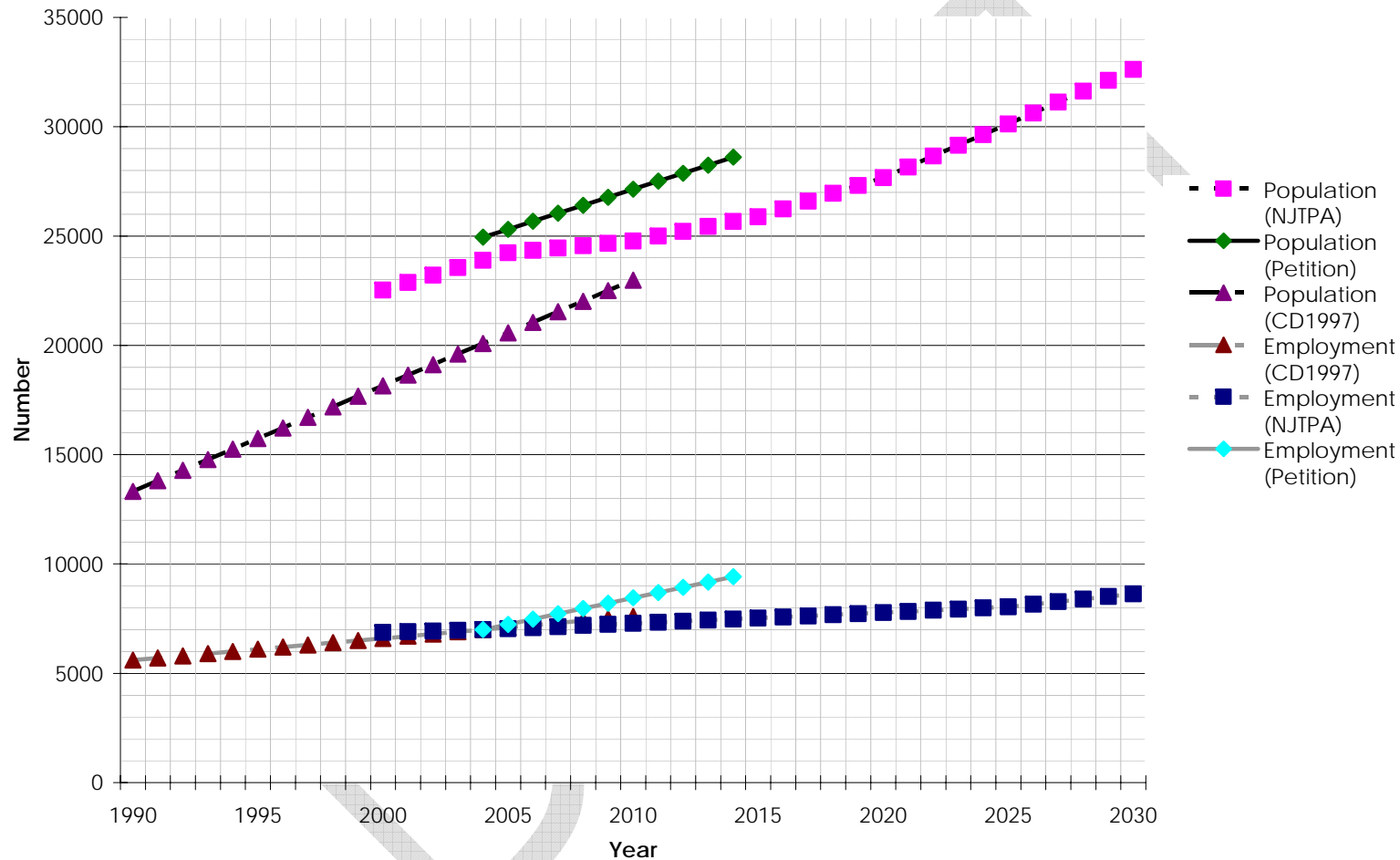
Stafford Township

Ocean County

New Jersey



Center Designation 1997, Petition 2007, State Plan/MPO 2004 Projections Comparison



NOTES: 1) The Center Designation report contains figures for 1990 and 2010, the Plan Endorsement petition for 2004 and 2014, and the NJTPA projections for every 5 years from 2000 to 2030. Data for the years in between these marks have been derived by straight-line interpolations. 2) The petition employment projection was derived adding the projected new jobs (2,419) from the COAH method applied in the Township's housing plan to the interpolated 2004 estimate of the MPO data. This method does not take into account net additionality and may therefore be an over-estimate.

RELEVANT PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Purpose of Plan Endorsement

The purpose of the Plan Endorsement process is to achieve consistency among municipal, county, regional and State agency plans and with the State Plan, and to facilitate the implementation of these plans (N.J.A.C. 5:85-7.1(b)). Plans shall be endorsed only if they are internally consistent and demonstrate consistency with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (N.J.A.C. 5:85-7.2(h)). Consistency means that the State Planning Commission determined that a municipal plan is the same as or has the same effect as the provisions in the State Plan. In evaluating consistency, the Commission should consider all provisions of the State Plan with particular emphasis on:

- 1) Statewide goals and policies;
- 2) Planning Area policies and boundaries;
- 3) Critical Environmental Sites criteria and intent; and
- 4) Delineation criteria and intent for a Center designation. (N.J.A.C. 5:85-1.4)

The analysis that follows is predicated on the recognition that an investment in good planning will produce a desirable outcome.

Stafford Regional Center Designation 1997

On September 24, 1997, the SPC approved Stafford Township's application for a Regional Center. The designation was provided in recognition of:

- the Center's function as a regional focal point for the economic, social, and cultural activities, including Manahawkin and Southern Ocean County Hospital;
- neighborhoods offering a wide variety of housing types;
- available infrastructure such as sewer, public water and highways;
- concentration of future growth in the Center; and

- the need for coordinated state and county assistance for the planned growth.

The designation also included a Planning & Implementation Agenda. In the Ocean County Cross-Acceptance Report, the Township provided a full update of its PIA from the 1997 Center Designation. OSG has made further updates for the fourth column of the table (next page). For the Land Use item, community design with regard to future redevelopment opportunities has been factored into the new PIA as Item Nos. I1.1 and I1.2.

Center Designation 1997 PIA

Action	Local Effort	State/County Assistance	Status Update
Land Use			
Prepare design guidelines to encourage the preservation of the aesthetic character of Manahawkin	Research and prepare guidelines, adopt ordinance	Technical assistance OSP, OCPB	In process of being incorporated into the Land Use Plan Element through a Visioning Process that began on March 1.
Housing			
Establish housing rehab program	Identify rehab units, qualify applicants, secure funding	Technical and financial assistance NJDCA, HMFA	The Township adopted and submitted a Housing Element & Fair Share Plan (2005). The Township participates in Ocean County's CDBG housing rehab program.
Circulation			
Continue partnerships to fund needed road improvements/T.I.D.	Update traffic Master Plan, as necessary	Technical assistance NJDOT	Circulation Element of the Master Plan is under development and expected to be adopted in May of 2007.
Upgrade Route 72-GSP Interchange	Communicate need	NJDOT Permits; Highway Authority Approvals; funding	Full interchange currently. Further enhancements proposed for Stafford Business Park.
Access Management			
Implement access management plan	Adopt ordinance, prepare design plans	Technical and financial assistance	Ordinance was approved in 1997. Partnership between DOT and Township established 24 improvements, of which 1/3 have been completed.
Public Transit			
Improve public transit	Identify destinations; implement service	Technical assistance NJ Transit, Ocean Co.	Bus stop locations are being incorporated into Route 9/Bay Avenue Visioning concept design development as part of 2007 Master Plan process.
Recreation			
Address open space and recreation needs	Acquire additional lands; develop recreation facilities; secure funding	Financial assistance from Green Acres	The Township has adopted an Open Space & Recreation Plan (2001), implemented an open space tax, and has purchased open space (see p. 13). The Plan will be updated as the Open Space and Recreation Plan Element of the 2007 Master Plan to be adopted in May 2007.

Master Plan

The Township produced a full master plan in 1994, which was a key component of the Center Designation. This document was followed by a re-examination report in 2001. Pursuant to the Municipal Land Use Law, the Township is scheduled to examine its master plan again this year. In February 2007, the Township kicked off its master planning process. As with the previous reexamination, the Township has set out a clear process and timetable for public participation.

As part of Plan Endorsement, the Township has submitted a draft of its land use element. The PIA recognizes the current local planning process and the need for the draft plan's refinement, and hence provides the framework for monitoring its consistency.

Cross-Acceptance

Stafford Township has participated in the Cross-Acceptance process, working in coordination with Ocean County. The County's Cross-acceptance report provided an update of Stafford's 1997 PIA and noted the Township's intent to undertake this Plan Endorsement process.

Redevelopment Plan – Stafford Business Park

On October 4, 2005, Stafford Township passed a resolution approving designation of an area in need of redevelopment at Stafford Business Park. Pursuant to the Local Redevelopment & Housing Law, the Township submitted a copy of the resolution and supporting material to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA). Following an OSG review, DCA sent the Township a letter of approval in recognition of the redevelopment area's location in the Pinelands Regional Growth Area.

Throughout 2006, the Township's planning board and governing body, as well as the Pinelands Commission, held a number of public meetings and hearings regarding the redevelopment plan. The plan received approval from the Pinelands Commission in July 2006, allowing for the Township and developer to proceed with the closure of landfills and the remediation of contaminated areas in order to create space for redevelopment. Incorporating New Urbanist design and LEED standards, the project is proposed to include 650,000 sq ft of retail space, 95,000 sq ft of office and other commercial uses and 677 residential units, of which 112 are affordable units.



A key part of the Commission's approval was a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between it and the Township to mitigate various existing and new environmental impacts. The MOA sets out the following conditions for the Township:

- buy and deed-restrict 570 acres of land for conservation to help protect Mill Creek drainage area and provide suitable habitat for Northern pine snakes;

- require redeveloper to reduce by at least 50% the amount of pollution that directly enters Mill Creek from Route 72;
- require redeveloper to incorporate low impact and “green building” design;
- limit the amount of acreage on the capped landfill to be utilized for the relocation of Ocean County’s leaf composting facility to 20 acres;
- deed-restrict the area of the capped landfill and other open space on the redevelopment site; and
- require redeveloper to implement a Species Management Plan.

Affordable Housing

Stafford petitioned for second-round substantive certification from the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) in June 2000. In March 2002, COAH issued a Report Requesting Additional Information (RRAI) that was necessary to complete a review of the Township’s second-round plan. Stafford amended its plan in response to the RRAI and re-petitioned in August 2002. Additional proposed revisions were submitted for COAH’s review and comment in August 2004. However, while the original revised plan was still under review by COAH staff, Stafford sought and received an order granting temporary immunity. This order instructed Stafford to prepare a third-round plan. In July 2005, the Township submitted a petition for third-round substantive certification.

Stafford Township has an adjusted prior round obligation of 555 units, 243 of which are covered by credits without controls and by a Regional Contribution Agreement of 80 units with the City of Long Branch. The Housing Element & Fair Share Plan discusses the various sites that will accommodate the remaining prior round obligation as well as the growth share obligation of 307 units. These sites are within the boundaries of

the Regional Center or the Pinelands Regional Growth Area. The aforementioned Stafford Business Park and SOCH sites represent the bulk of future development.

The PIA details COAH’s review of the housing plan and coordination between COAH, OSG and other agencies on any resulting changes to growth projections or affordable housing sites. PIA Item C1 also recognizes that the plan will depend on the future resolution of the Appellate Court’s recent decision regarding COAH’s third round rules. The timetable for Item C1 now links municipal action on its housing plan to whatever point in time COAH resolves the issues following the court decision.

NJDOT Route 9 Corridor Study (Southern Ocean County)

The corridor study provides additional regional context for the Regional Center along Route 9. The Township is part of the study area that runs from South Toms River to Tuckerton Borough in Ocean County. Route 9 serves as a link among the many coastal townships and boroughs of Ocean County. Rapid suburban growth along the corridor and the continuing popularity of the tourist destinations along the Jersey Shore has created tremendous traffic demand on Route 9. The most recent meeting of the Study Advisory Group was in September 2006, where the NJ Department of Transportation (DOT) conducted a presentation about its Mobility and Community Form element, which is now being rolled out.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLAN - GOALS, POLICIES & INDICATORS

The State Plan is made up of 8 Goals and Strategies and 19 Statewide Policies that are complemented by a State Plan Policy Map. This section discusses consistency with regard to goals relevant to the Township's Petition, along with related policies and indicators.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 2: Conserve the State's Natural Resources and Systems</p> <p>STRATEGY: Conserve the state's natural resources and systems as capital assets of the public by promoting ecologically sound development and redevelopment in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas, accommodating environmentally designed development and redevelopment in Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas, and by restoring the integrity of natural systems in areas where they have been degraded or damaged. Plan, design, invest in and manage the development and redevelopment of Centers and the use of land, water, soil, plant and animal resources to maintain biodiversity and the viability of ecological systems. Maximize the ability of natural systems to control runoff and flooding, and to improve air and water quality and supply.</p>	<p>Policy on Water Resources - Protect and enhance water resources through coordinated planning efforts aimed at reducing sources of pollution and other adverse effects of development, encouraging designs in hazard-free areas that will protect the natural function of stream and wetland systems, and optimizing sustainable resource use.</p> <p>Policy on Open Lands and Natural Systems - Protect biological diversity through preservation and restoration of contiguous open spaces and connecting corridors; manage public land and provide incentives for private land management to protect scenic qualities, forests and water resources; and manage the character and nature of development for the protection of wildlife habitat, critical slope areas, water resources, and for the provision of adequate public access to a variety of recreational opportunities.</p> <p>Policy on Coastal Resources - Acknowledge the statutory treatment of the coastal area under federal and state legislation, coordinate efforts to establish a comprehensive coastal management program with local planning efforts, undertake a regional capacity analysis, protect vital ecological areas and promote recreational opportunities.</p>	<p>Indicator 11. Conversion of wetlands for development - Reduce conversion of wetlands to not exceed 50 acres per year statewide by 2005 and to no net loss of acres by 2020.</p>

Analysis

Stafford Township's planning demonstrates consistency with State Plan Policies on Coastal Resources, Open Lands & Natural Systems, and Water Resources.

Stafford already has more than 15,400 acres of publicly preserved land, including the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, Manahawkin Wildlife Management Area, and Stafford Forge Wildlife Management Area. The Township continues to work with various partners to preserve more land, recent purchases including 250 acres along Four Mile Branch and 93 acres along Route 72 between Marsha Drive and Mill Creek Road. As part of the Stafford Business Park MOA with the Pinelands Commission, the Township will undertake further land purchases totaling 570 acres.



In addition to land purchases, the Township has undertaken various activities to protect natural resources throughout the municipality. Stafford's land use plan and ordinance are certified by the Pinelands Commission as consistent with the

Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. The Township is working with DEP to identify additional Category One (C1) waters. Current C1 waterways include Cedar Creek and its tributaries and Manahawkin Creek.

The Township has earned various recognitions for its regulation of stormwater and water quality. From 1994 to 2006, the Groundwater Foundation has given Stafford a Groundwater Guardian Award for 13 straight years. The local stormwater management ordinance was approved by the NJ Site Improvement Advisory Board. Its quality provided for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to award 10% discounts on flood insurance premiums to Stafford residents. The Township also has wellhead protection overlay zones with a 1000-ft radius around each wellhead that entail additional considerations and limitations on development.

In entering this Plan Endorsement process, the Township proposed to reduce the size of its Regional Center. Negotiations with state agencies have led to the refinement of the center boundary as well as additions of PA5 and Critical Environmental Sites (CES) to provide a clear message of where the state and the Township want to encourage preservation and development.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 3: Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of New Jersey</p> <p>STRATEGY: Promote socially and ecologically beneficial economic growth, development and renewal and improve both the quality of life and the standard of living of New Jersey residents, particularly the poor and minorities, through partnerships and collaborative planning with the private sector. Capitalize on the state's strengths—its entrepreneurship, skilled labor, cultural diversity, diversified economy and environment, strategic location and logistical excellence—and make the state more competitive through infrastructure and public services cost savings and regulatory streamlining resulting from comprehensive and coordinated planning. Retain and expand businesses, and encourage new, environmentally sustainable businesses in Centers and areas with infrastructure. Encourage economic growth in locations and ways that are both fiscally and environmentally sound. Promote the food and agricultural industry throughout New Jersey through coordinated planning, regulations, investments and incentive programs—both in Centers to retain and encourage new businesses and in the Environs to preserve large contiguous areas of farmland.</p>	<p>Policy on Economic Development - Promote beneficial economic growth and improve the quality of life and standard of living for New Jersey residents by building upon strategic economic and geographic positions, targeting areas of critical capital spending to retain and expand existing businesses, fostering modern techniques to enhance the existing economic base, encouraging the development of new enterprises, advancing the growth of green businesses, elevating work force skills, and encouraging sustainable economic growth in locations and ways that are fiscally and ecologically sound.</p>	

Analysis

The bulk of growth in the near future, including economic growth, will occur in the Pinelands Regional Growth Area with projects such as the Business Park and SOCH. Even though these sites are outside the State Plan jurisdiction, they serve the overall economic development objectives of the Township and will have a multifaceted socioeconomic and physical relationship with the Regional Center. It is also important to reiterate these projects from the perspective of enhancing state agency coordination, as DOT and DEP will have a significant role in the development process.

In the nearly built-out Regional Center, the Township will work with OSG through the PIA (Items I1.1 and I1.2) to identify opportunities for revitalization in areas such as Manahawkin and Bay Avenue and ensure that center-based planning,

zoning and design are in place ahead of any future redevelopment, infill development or rehabilitation activity.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 5: Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost</p> <p>STRATEGY: Provide infrastructure and related services more efficiently by supporting investments based on comprehensive planning and by providing financial incentives for jurisdictions that cooperate in supplying public infrastructure and shared services. Encourage the use of infrastructure needs assessments and life-cycle costing. Reduce demands for infrastructure investment by using public and private markets to manage peak demands, applying alternative management and financing approaches, using resource conserving technologies and information systems to provide and manage public facilities and services, and purchasing land and easements to prevent development, protect flood plains and sustain agriculture where appropriate.</p>	<p>Policy on Public Investment Priorities - It is the intent of the State Plan that the full amount of growth projected for the state should be accommodated. Plan Strategies recommend guiding this growth to Centers and other areas identified within Endorsed Plans where infrastructure exists or is planned and where it can be provided efficiently, either with private or public dollars. (Designated Centers are included in the category of communities with Endorsed Plans.) Public investment priorities guide the investment of public dollars to support and carry out these Plan Strategies.</p> <p>Policy on Infrastructure Investments - Provide infrastructure and related services more efficiently by investing in infrastructure to guide growth, managing demand and supply, restoring systems in distressed areas, maintaining existing infrastructure investments, designing multi-use school facilities to serve as centers of community, creating more compact settlement patterns in appropriate locations in suburban and rural areas, and timing and sequencing the maintenance of capital facilities service levels with development throughout the state.</p> <p>Policy on Transportation - Improve transportation systems by coordinating transportation and land-use planning; integrating transportation systems; developing and enhancing alternative modes of transportation; improving management structures and techniques; and utilizing transportation as an economic development tool.</p>	<p>Indicator 14. The percent of all trips to work made by carpool, public transportation, bicycle, walking or working at home - The percent of trips to work made by carpool, public transportation, bicycle, walking or working at home increases by 2005 and 2020.</p> <p>Indicator 16. Number of pedestrian fatalities in vehicular accidents on state roads - Reduce the number of pedestrian fatalities in vehicular accidents on state roads by 2005 and 2020.</p>

Analysis

The 1997 Regional Center Designation recognized that, while certain improvements were needed, the infrastructure was in place to support concentrated growth. As the current Plan Endorsement petition actually proposes to reduce the size of the Center and PA2, the Township has agreed to revise sewer service boundaries accordingly. Therefore, sewer and other

infrastructure will continue to support center-based development. With a Township Water and Sewer Department in place, Stafford does not foresee capacity issues for these systems.

Mayetta – potential need for sewer

In its petition, the Township had originally proposed a Hamlet for the Mayetta area. The Hamlet was not meant to support new growth but to ensure that existing residents had access to public sewer in the case of failed septic systems. DEP advised the Township that even outside a Center or PA2, sewer would be extended if justified by public health or safety concerns. Based on this information, the Township retracted its Hamlet proposal. Item H4 of the PIA outlines the provision of sewer service should an urgent need arise.

Road Improvements

Various improvements are proposed in connection with the Stafford Business Park, including access to the Garden State

Park and to Route 72. Traffic management and signal timing will be crucial in the functionality of the main access point to the Business Park.

DOT is currently investigating the westbound side of Route 72 to determine if the shoulder area is capable of being used for an additional travel lane in the case of an emergency evacuation. As part of Plan Endorsement, the Township provided evidence of NJ State Police approval of its emergency operations plan. Since Route 72 is the only access point for Long Beach Island, Item J1 of the PIA recognizes the need for regional coordination on this issue.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>GOAL 6: Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost</p> <p>STRATEGY: Provide adequate housing at a reasonable cost through public/private partnerships that create and maintain a broad choice of attractive, affordable, ecologically designed housing, particularly for those most in need. Create and maintain housing in the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas and in Centers in the Fringe, Rural and Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas, at densities which support transit and reduce commuting time and costs, and at locations easily accessible, preferably on foot, to employment, retail, services, cultural, civic and recreational opportunities. Support regional and community-based housing initiatives and remove unnecessary regulatory and financial barriers to the delivery of housing at appropriate locations.</p>	<p>Policy on Housing - Preserve and expand the supply of safe, decent and reasonably priced housing by balancing land uses, housing types and housing costs and by improving access between jobs and housing. Promote low- and moderate-income and affordable housing through code enforcement, housing subsidies, community-wide housing approaches and coordinated efforts with the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing.</p> <p>Policy on Design - Mix uses and activities as closely and as thoroughly as possible; develop, adopt and implement design guidelines; create spatially defined, visually appealing and functionally efficient places in ways that establish an identity; design circulation systems to promote connectivity; maintain an appropriate scale in the built environment; and redesign areas of sprawl.</p>	<p>Indicator 20. Percent of New Jersey households paying more than 30% of their pre-tax household income towards housing - The percentage of households statewide paying 30% or more of their income for standard housing is reduced by 2005 and is further reduced by 2020.</p> <p>Indicator 24. Annual production of affordable housing units - Annual production of 4,000 affordable housing units by 2005 and 5,000 by 2020.</p>

Analysis

Stafford Township's involvement in the COAH substantive certification process was noted on page 11 of this report. According to the Housing Element & Fair Share Plan, the Township's proposed affordable housing sites are located in the Regional Center and the Pinelands Regional Growth Area. While the Township has an RCA of 80 units with the City of Long Branch, the bulk of its 555 prior round and 307 growth share obligations will be accommodated within Stafford.

The Appellate Court decision and subsequent actions that will be taken by COAH may have certain ramifications that affect

the above calculations. However, the review standard for affordable housing in Plan Endorsement has not been substantive certification, but usually a draft housing plan that contains appropriately justified growth projections and suitable affordable housing sites that are constrained by natural resources. Stafford's planning for housing achieves both counts. The PIA will ensure continued consistency as any changes occur via broader COAH policy shifts and/or revisions specific to the Township's plan.

GOAL	POLICIES	INDICATORS
<p>Goal 7: Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value</p> <p>STRATEGY: Enhance, preserve and use historic, cultural, scenic, open space and recreational assets by collaborative planning, design, investment and management techniques. Locate and design development and redevelopment and supporting infrastructure to improve access to and protect these sites. Support the important role of the arts in contributing to community life and civic beauty.</p>	<p>Policy on Historic, Cultural and Scenic Resources - Protect, enhance, and where appropriate rehabilitate historic, cultural and scenic resources by identifying, evaluating and registering significant historic, cultural and scenic landscapes, districts, structures, buildings, objects and sites and ensuring that new growth and development is compatible with historic, cultural and scenic values</p>	<p>Key Indicator 2. The amount of land permanently dedicated to open space and farmland preservation – 1) The amount of land permanently dedicated to open space is 1,004,000 acres by 2002 and 1,354,000 acres by 2010 (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection). 2) The amount of land preserved for farmland is 200,993 by 2002 and 550,993 by 2010 (State Agriculture Development Committee).</p> <p>Indicator 12. Conversion of land per person - The number of acres of lands converted per person in the state from 2001 to 2010 is less than one-fifth (0.20) of an acre per person. The number of acres of lands converted per person in the state from 2010 to 2020 is less than one-sixth (0.16) of an acre per person.</p>

Analysis

The petition contains a number of components that support Goal 7 of the State Plan and the related Policy on Historic, Cultural and Scenic Resources. Open space preservation is discussed extensively in the Goal 2 section (pp.12-13) from a natural resources perspective and in relation to the Policy on Open Lands and Natural Systems. In terms of the amount of land, the Township's planning and purchasing of open space support the State Plan's Key Indicator 2 and Indicator 12.

Open space and recreation

Parks and recreation facilities have been an important part of the Township's planning, as an element in the 1994 Master Plan, a Recreation Master Plan in 1997, and an Open Space and Recreation Inventory & Analysis in 2001 as part of the master plan reexamination. A number of these documents

have acknowledged that the provision of neighborhood-level parks has been an issue. Considering the Township's growth during this period, planning and enhancement of these amenities have been vital. They will be assessed again in the current master planning process. Major projects such as Stafford Business Park are proposed to provide significant open space to serve local and potentially regional needs.

Cultural resources

The Manahawkin area includes a historic district with various cultural resources such as historic buildings, a library and a cultural center, mixed amongst parks, retail and other uses. Community development block grants and the Department of Community Affairs' Neighborhood Preservation Program (1997-2002) have been provided significant funds in maintaining and revitalizing the area.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE PLAN - CENTER AND PLANNING AREA CRITERIA

Proposed Regional Center

The Township of Stafford has requested a renewal and reduction of its existing Regional Center, which was designated in 1997 by the State Planning Commission. The Regional Center is centered upon the intersection of Routes 9 and 72. Currently, the Center contains an area of 7.1 square miles, but the proposal is to reduce this to 6.0 square miles. The most significant areas of reduction are in the northern portion of the Center, the southwest section and an area to the east that lies on a bay island. For the first two areas, the reason for the change is that they are presently zoned as Rural Residential and Rural Business and are not intended for intensive growth. The bay island area contains some development, but DEP regulations limit further development.

Application of Center Criteria

The State Plan outlines both the hierarchy of centers and the designation criteria, which establish certain basic thresholds of land area, population, employment and densities for the various center categories. According to the Plan, these thresholds are intended to serve as a flexible guideline for consideration of proposed centers, especially in terms of their projections out 20 years into the future. It was with this flexible approach that the Regional Center was designated in 1997, despite the Center's shortcomings for State Plan criteria on employment and residential densities. Flexibility in this regard also helps to balance the nature of the CAFRA rules, where there is a significant gap in impervious cover limits between Centers and, in this case, the underlying PA2 (80% for a Regional Center versus 30% in PA2).

Consistency of Stafford Regional Center

With much of the necessary supporting infrastructure in place or planned, the Stafford Regional Center already serves a town-wide and regional role with its concentration of commercial, institutional and public uses. Existing development, even prior to the 1997 designation, gave the Center a suburban character that will gradually over time become denser as opportunities for infill and redevelopment arise. The reduction of the Center's physical size helps to define a more compact area of concentrated development, which boosts the density figures up to some degree. However, as noted earlier, the Township is approaching build-out and the main redevelopment opportunities are currently in the Pinelands Regional Growth Area. The Township will work with OSG and other agencies to identify and plan for future revitalization opportunities within the Center.

Although Stafford is not a barrier island, its coastal location does create seasonal variability with regard to housing units and occupancy (see Demographics table on p.4). The impact of this housing occupancy/vacancy pattern is concentrated in the lagoon community of Beach Haven West, which is located in the Center. Due to the size of this community, it significantly impacts the Regional Center data: for 5,821 housing units in the Center, there are just 7,554 residents, or a ratio of just 1.3 residents per unit compared to the local average household size of 2.6 persons. Summertime demographic data would show much higher population densities than the table below.

Stafford Regional Center

Criteria	State Plan Criteria: Regional Center	1997 Regional Center Baseline	Proposed Regional Center Baseline	Proposed Regional Center 2027
<i>Land Use</i>				
Function	Focal point for region's economic, social and cultural activities with a compact mixed-use core.	Manahawkin mixed-use core and regional institutions such as SOCH. Future opportunities for revitalization.		
	Located in market area supporting high-intensity development and redevelopment.	Development supported by highway access, tourism and other economic drivers.		
	Identified as a result of a strategic planning effort conducted on a regional basis.	Stafford's regional role is recognized by the state and county.		
	Located, scaled and designed not to adversely affect economic growth potential of Urban Centers.	Center does not adversely affect nearby Atlantic City.		
Land area	1- 10 sq mi	7.1 sq mi	6.0 sq mi	6.0 sq mi
Housing units	4,000 to 15,000	5,925	5,821	5,830
Housing	> 3 du / ac	1.31	1.46	1.52
<i>Population</i>				
Number of people	>10,000	7,793	7,554	7,577
Density	> 5,000 per sq mi	1,113	1,259	1,263
<i>Economy</i>				
Employment	500 to 10,000	4,684	4,375	4,421
Jobs-housing ratio	2:1 to 5:1	0.79:1	0.75:1	0.76:1
<i>Infrastructure</i>				
Capacity (general)	Access to sufficient existing or planned infrastructure.	Existing or proposed sewer service and public water to support Center.		
Transportation	Near major public transportation terminal, arterial or interstate interchange; hub for two or more transportation modes.	Garden State Parkway interchange 63, Routes 9 and 72.		

Planning Area Changes

As demonstrated by the map and below table, several Planning Area changes have been made, mainly on the basis of aligning Planning Areas with the negotiated Center boundaries and/or administrative issues such as lot lines. Overall, 532 acres of land are proposed to change from PA2 to PA5, 86 acres of land from PA4 to PA5, and 94 acres of land from PA5 to PA2. In recognition of existing parks, 90 acres of PA2 and 12 acres of PA5 have been moved to the Parks layer. The net change is an additional 512 acres of PA5 and 102 acres of Parks, and 528 acres less of PA2 and 86 acres less of PA4. A Critical Environmental Site of 66 acres is within the Center to cover a large wetland area.

Proposed PA Changes Matrix by Land Area (Acres)

		Plan Endorsement Proposal (TO)								TOTAL (FROM)
		PA1	PA2	PA3	PA4	PA4B	PA5	PA5B	Park	
Current State Plan (FROM)	PA1									0
	PA2		4,379		0		532		90	5,001
	PA3									0
	PA4		0		757		86		0	843
	PA4B									0
	PA5		94		0		3,601		12	3,707
	PA5B									0
	Park		0		0		0		6,994	6,994
TOTAL (TO)		0	4,473	0	757	0	4,219	0	7,096	16,545
NET CHG		0	-528	0	-86	0	512	0	102	

Consistency with State Plan Criteria for Planning Areas

The below list summarizes the Township's consistency according to the standard set of 11 Policy Objectives outlined in the State Plan for each Planning Area. Most of these issues are discussed in greater detail throughout other sections of this report.

1. Land Use: The Township has concentrated development in the Center (as well as the Pinelands Regional Growth Area) and infill will continue to occur in this area. Open space acquisitions and various regulations have served as tools for preserving the environs.

2. Housing: The Housing Element & Fair Share Plan proposes to provide the bulk of the Township's new affordable housing in the Centers and the Regional Growth Area, where residents (will) have better access to public and commercial services.

3. Economic Development: The Center is a focal point for economic development, with commercial uses in Manahawkin and other areas. The Township has also expanded municipal facilities with potential positive impacts for the rest of Bay Avenue in mind. The redevelopment of Stafford Business Park will contribute to the economic health of the Township.

4. Transportation: The Township contains the nexus of the Garden State Parkway, Route 9 and Route 72, serving as the main point of access into Long Beach Island. Development has been concentrated along or near these highway intersections.

5. Natural Resource Conservation: Various measures are in place for stormwater management, water quality, wellhead protection and other resources. The Township has expressed interest in working with DEP to designate additional C1 waterways. The Stafford Business Park MOA with the Pinelands Commission outlines additional conservation activities that will yield benefits town-wide.

6. Agriculture and Farmland Preservation: With just one or two smaller active farms, the Township does not have a significant agricultural presence. The Township has made attempts to preserve farmland, but the existing owners are not interested in selling their properties or development rights.

7. Recreation: While the Township has had significant success at the regional level, its plans recognize the need for neighborhood

recreation facilities with enhanced access for residents on foot or bicycle.

8. Redevelopment: Stafford Business Park will close two landfills, remediate existing contamination, and provide for a mix of uses, affordable housing and open space.

9. Historic Preservation: Manahawkin will continue to be a focus for revitalization sensitive to the area's historic context.

10. Public Facilities and Services: The Center contains a range of public facilities, including parks, schools, and County library. A number of these facilities have been expanded since the 1990s to accommodate residential growth. There is sufficient water and sewer to support the Center.

11. Intergovernmental Coordination: The PIA provides a framework for coordination between Stafford Township, Ocean County and the state. The participation of other municipalities will be necessary for items such as transportation and emergency planning.

CONCLUSION

Recognizing the Township of Stafford's planning efforts that have followed its Regional Center designation of 1997, OSG recommends that the State Planning Commission endorse the Township's vision and plans as consistent with the State Plan. The Township population has grown considerably over the past four decades, including a growth spurt in the 1990s. This trend has slowed dramatically as Stafford approaches build-out, and the bulk of estimated growth is now expected in the Pinelands Regional Growth Area.

Plan Endorsement provides a framework for inter-governmental cooperation on current and potential future redevelopment opportunities and supporting infrastructure needs. Through endorsement, the partnership between the Commission and the Township will be renewed and also enhanced by having expanded upon the earlier Center Designation process and PIA. The two-way commitment can

now be embodied in a much more comprehensive PIA and understanding between the Township and state agencies.

PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT

A draft PIA is attached **for review by the SPC.** [and is now under negotiation.] In light of the current review of the overall Plan Endorsement process, this PIA is structured to accommodate the future version of the process, with its additional requirements and benefits. PIA activities will be aligned with new Plan Endorsement requirements, so that at a certain point the Township can automatically be folded into a streamlined endorsement review and garner further benefits from the state. The PIA will be finalized upon adoption by the State Planning Commission.