

Wrightstown Local Public Participation and Waiver Request

Borough residents, officials, and businesses have been participating in community visioning and strategizing for over 15 years, with public and stakeholder participation playing a central role. The Borough is seeking a waiver of one of the visioning requirements. In 1995, Wrightstown Borough adopted a Master Plan with comprehensive goals and objectives being generated by public participation in a number of workshops and public hearings. The primary goals and objectives articulated during the 1995 Master Plan process included: downtown revitalization and economic development,¹ protecting and preserving established residential neighborhoods,² and improving the Borough's community facilities.³ Specific recommendations included: acquiring land from Fort Dix, creating a new business campus on underutilized property, adopting a new zoning district and design guidelines for preserving the historic character of West Main street, and the construction of a new fire house and municipal complex.

These goals were reaffirmed in the July 2001 Master Plan Re-examination Report as well as the 2007 Master Plan Re-examination Report public hearings. Additional public input was solicited when the Borough adopted a new Zoning Ordinance in 1998 and when the Borough's planning staff prepared a redevelopment needs assessment and organized an Economic Steering Committee to formulate and implement a Redevelopment Plan for the various areas in need of redevelopment in the Borough. After public participation in public hearings, the Borough Council adopted the Redevelopment Plan in 1999.

Over time, the Economic Steering Committee has transformed into the 'Wrightstown Strategy Committee,' which has faithfully been meeting on a monthly basis. Stakeholders who attend the committee meetings on a regular basis include: the Mayor, members of Borough Council and the Burlington County Economic Development and Regional Planning office, Ragan Design Group, Triad Associates, a member of the School Board, the Borough and Joint Land Use Board solicitors, Borough Engineer, Borough Clerk, and Jersey Central Power and Light. From time to time, Congressman James Saxton, Richard Dean, Community Planner at the Joint Base, Colonel Ronald Thaxton, former Commander of Fort Dix, Susan Grogan from the Pinelands Commission, the realtor for the Wrightstown Industrial Park, the designated redeveloper, and others participate in the Wrightstown Strategy Committee meetings.⁴

Furthermore, for several years, Wrightstown officials and members of the public have participated in a number of regionally-sponsored planning initiatives and visioning events, including visioning sessions for the Route 130 Corridor Extension/Route 206 Farmbelt Strategic Plan, Burlington County's Growth and Preservation Plan (GAPP) and as well as the recent Joint Land Use Study sponsored by the Department of Defense, Office of Economic Adjustment and Ocean and Burlington Counties, which was

¹ 1995 Master Plan, p.2.

² *Id.* at pp.2, 11, 12.

³ *Id.* at p.2, 44.

⁴ Due to the voluminous nature of the meeting minutes, they are not attached to this document, but are available electronically upon request.

conducted to identify and plan for compatible land uses adjacent to Joint Base NJ and to promote better communication between the Military and surrounding communities. The Borough has participated in numerous workshops and meetings between stakeholders in the region.

Other projects, such as the Downtown Wrightstown Marketing and Façade Improvement Plan, which was conducted in part with funds made available through the Department of Community Affairs Office of Smart Growth involved public participation from elected officials, community members, business owners and other concerned-stakeholders.

Thus, a central element of the Borough's planning efforts over the past fifteen years has been stakeholder and public input, which has given representation to diverse interests in the municipality, as well as the region. As the Borough is embarking on the preparation of a new Master Plan at this time, the visioning workshops and public hearings will provide a forum for public participation in the Borough's community planning direction. Due to the extensive nature of the Borough's continuous visioning and strategizing efforts, and due to the limited size of the Borough, the Borough is seeking a waiver of one of the visioning workshops associated with the Plan Endorsement process.