

Master Plan Reexamination Report

**Prepared for the Borough Planning Board
Wildwood Crest Borough, Cape May County, NJ**

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A. Introduction and Planning Background

1. Introduction

This document, in accordance with NJSA 40:55D-89 represents a reexamination of the Wildwood Crest Borough Master Plan. The Wildwood Crest Borough Land Use Plan was adopted in 2005 and Housing Element and Fair Share Plan in December 2008 and updated in 2010. NJSA 40:55D-89 requires that the governing body shall, at least every *ten* years, provide for a general reexamination of its Master Plan and development regulations by the Planning Board, which shall prepare and adopt, by resolution, a report on the findings of such reexamination. The reexamination report shall state:

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report;
- b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date;
- c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the master Plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives; and
- d. The specific changes recommended for the Master Plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.

2. Previous Problems & Objectives / Current Conditions

Wildwood Crest Borough's 2005 Land Use Plan established goals and objectives that provided guiding principles upon which the proposals for land use and development were based. This report shall be considered a review of problems and objectives that existed at the time of the adoption of the 2005 Land Use Plan and the analysis of the extent to which conditions have changed over the past six years. Based on the results of the required analysis, recommendations for future master plan and zoning ordinance revisions and/or additions will be provided as appropriate. The major concerns regarding land development in Wildwood Crest included maintaining the existing single family residential character,

ensuring the motel industry stabilized and is poised for future growth and increasing opportunities for recreation *and enhancement of the B-1 zoning district incorporating means to entice more businesses into the zone.*

Borough representatives and officials have worked diligently in an effort to meet the goals and objectives provided below. In addition to adopting a new comprehensive land development ordinance in 2005, *the Borough has received grants for the restoration and enhancement of the Fishing Pier at Heather Rd., Centennial Park at Fern Rd., and two grants for the park at Rambler Rd .and upgraded Baker Park and Rosemary Rd. Park. Additional design standards have been adopted to avoid the “cookie cutter” type of development in residential zones, setback requirements have been increased in all zones to encourage additional light and air and open up view corridors to the beach. Parking requirements have been changed for hotel/motel uses, allowing greater flexibility.*

Wildwood Crest Borough continues to balance the goal of maintaining the existing single family residential character with the need to spur economic development. The following issues were originally identified as goals and objectives within the 2005 Land Use Plan as a response to the land development concerns identified at that time. In addition to providing the issues, this part of the report also focuses on the current situation and whether the identified land development objectives have been instituted, are pending official action or require future attention.

a. *Residential Land Uses*

Preserve existing single family neighborhoods and restrict the wholesale conversion of one and two family neighborhoods to multi-family development.

- (1) *Preserve existing single family neighborhoods by reducing over development on residential lots and eliminate the intrusion of condominiums in neighborhoods that are predominantly single family dwelling units.*

The Borough revised standards for patios and decks for detached residential uses and incorporated setback regulations in proportion to the size of the parcel and reduce building coverage limits. In addition, rear yard setbacks were increased to a minimum of 20% of the lot depth to aid in increasing open space on residential lots. The Borough will continue discussions related to corner lot setback issues. The important issue regarding corner lots is to ensure the view corridor is preserved. Further discussion is needed regarding the condominium

conversion issue. There has been significant discussion and research into the condo conversion issue and the Borough will continue to monitor and evaluate the trend as economic changes occur. Additional revision to the zoning ordinance to further this goal may be warranted at a time when economic conditions improve.

- (2) *Provide for context sensitive infill development by reducing the impact of multi-family units.*

The Borough eliminated the R-3 zoning district which permitted multi-family housing and included the land area in the R-2 zoning district. The change allowed for better control of existing multi-family units and prohibited the establishment of new multi-family units in this district.

To further reduce the impact of multi-family and motels which currently exist within the R-1, R-1A and R-2 residential zones, it is recommended that incentives be offered for the demolition of these existing multi-family and motel structures and rebuilding at a lesser density.

The incentives to consider would include a tax abatement program, reduced lot sizes for new single family and duplex construction, and to allow for the reconstruction of multifamily structures at a significantly reduced density from what exist.

The elimination of the R-3 Residential Zoning District has had a significant impact on the condo intrusion into residential neighborhoods, however, conversion continues in the hotel/motel zones.

- (3) *Balance the quality of life and neighborhood character for the year round residents with the seasonal residential investment needs through the establishment of aesthetic guidelines for new structures.*

The Borough adopted new architectural design standards in 2009. The main goal of the design standards dealt with eliminating the “cookie cutter” appearance of new development, requiring a jog of 2’ for every 30’ of wall for 20% of the length of the wall to add architectural interest and visual appeal. There is particular concern regarding corner lots and architectural features facing

streets. Additional design standards should be incorporated for the street-side of structures to enhance architectural interest.

b. Commercial Land Uses

The Borough has been experiencing a steady decline of motels through condominium conversions. The preservation and enhancement of existing motels/hotels is of high priority. The Borough would like to reverse the trend of motel demolition and replacement with residential uses.

- (1) *Create three sub-districts to recognize the distinct characteristics of the motel areas.*

The Borough established three sub-districts. The M-IA zoning district recognizes the land area that contains the largest quantity of motel/hotels. Due to the proximity to the beach and existing bike path this zoning district recognizes that motel/hotel use is most desirable. The M-IB zoning district contains motel/hotels that are struggling economically and pose the highest risk for condo conversion. The Borough is in ongoing discussions regarding the need to provide zoning and financial incentives to preserve the motels and hotels in this zoning district. The M-1C zoning district contains a limited number of motels and hotels and it is unlikely that these uses will continue to prosper over the next several years. Continuing discussion is in order.

- (2) *Use a system of zoning incentives to encourage the preservation and enhancement of motels/hotels.*

Additional flexibility is needed to remove barriers to the successful upgrade of motels and hotels. The Borough is in the process of reviewing the existing height limitations standards, conditional uses and definitions to permit additional flexibility for motel and hotel owners. The Borough recently reduced the parking requirement for

motel use thereby providing additional flexibility for expanded and new motel/hotel uses. The Borough should pursue removal of the state imposed historic requirements (i.e. Doo Wop) from new construction in the M-1A, M-1B and M-1C Zones.

- (3) *Promote resort tourism through the encouragement of new business in appropriate locations.*

The Borough consolidated the business district and permitted residential uses only on upper stories of mixed use buildings. Examination of B-1 Zone in South should be re-examined.

Provide east/west corridors to the beaches to ensure appropriate visual connections to the water are maintained.

The Borough adopted bulk requirements which increased the front yard setback to 30% of the lot depth depending on the distance of the lot from the beach.

c. Recreation Improvements

Increase and bolster recreational opportunities

- (1) *Extension of bike/pedestrian path to southern end of the Borough;*
- (2) *Need for more diverse mix of recreational facilities; Need for improvements to Sunset Lake; i.e. enhanced landscaping and better access;*
- (3) *Re-configure traffic/parking pattern on NJ Ave along Sunset Lake to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment;*
- (4) *Need for more aggressive Borough sponsored tree planting program.*
- (5) *The Borough should pursue a grant for the extension of the Heather Rd Fishing Pier.*
- (6) *The Borough should continue to pursue ongoing use of the buildings adjacent to the Bike Path: the Fishing Club at Heather Rd., the Library and the Nesbitt Center.*

The Borough continues to pursue implementation of the Recreation Plan Element to address the recreation needs.

B. CONCLUSION

This document represents the required reexamination of the Wildwood Crest Borough Master Plan. As a result of preparing the reexamination report, we concluded that the Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinances require updating and revisions as indicated above to address existing concerns and provide a future comprehensive plan for the next ten years.