# Plan Endorsement Recommendation Report
# The Township of Little Egg Harbor, Ocean County




New Jersey Department of State
New Jersey Business Action Center
Office of Planning Advocacy

October 28, 2026
Amended November 16, 2026

This document is a recommendation report prepared by the Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) as staff to the State Planning Commission (SPC) based on input from our partner agencies, the Township of Little Egg Harbor (Township/Little Egg Harbor), Ocean County, and members of the public. OPA will post this report and other materials related to the Little Egg Harbor Plan Endorsement petition on our website. You can contact our office by email regarding this and other petitions for Plan Endorsement by providing contact information, including name, organization, address, and e-mail address to ospmail@sos.nj.gov.

Additional documentation submitted by the Township can be found here:
https://www.nj.gov/state/bac/planning/plan-endorsement/overview

# Contents


Contents ..... 3

INTRODUCTION ..... 5

PLAN ENDORSEMENT PETITION PROCESS ..... 5

PLANNING MILESTONES ..... 6

LOCATION & REGIONAL CONTEXT ..... 7

DEMOGRAPHICS AND LITTLE EGG HARBOR'S FUTURE ..... 8

INFRASTRUCTURE ..... 9

Water and Sewer ..... 9

Transportation and Circulation ..... 9

STATE PLAN POLICY MAP ..... 10

Expired State Plan Policy Map ..... 11

Current State Plan Policy Map ..... 12

Proposed State Plan Policy Map ..... 13

Summary of Proposed Map Amendments ..... 14

STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN GOALS CONSISTENCY REVIEW ..... 15

Economic Development: Promote Economic Growth that Benefits all Residents of New Jersey ..... 15

Housing: Provide an Adequate Supply of Housing for Residents of All Ages and Incomes in Communities of Their Choosing That Meet Their Needs and Offer Ready Access to the Full Range of Supportive Goods and Services ..... 15

Infrastructure: Economic Opportunity Through Nation-Leading Infrastructure ..... 16

Revitalization and Recentering: Revitalize and Recenter the State's Underutilized Developed Areas ..... 16

Climate Change: Effectively Address the Adverse Impacts of Global Climate Change ..... 17

Natural and Water Resources: Protect, Maintain, and Restore the State's Natural and Water Resources and Ecosystems ..... 18

Pollution and Environmental Clean-Up: Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution ..... 18

Historic and Scenic Resources: Protect, Enhance, and Improve Access to Areas with Exceptional Archeological, Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space, and Recreational Value ..... 19

Equity: Implement Equitable Planning Practices to Promote Thriving Communities for all New Jerseyans ..... 19

Comprehensive Planning: Foster Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementation at All Levels Statewide ..... 19

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT ..... 20

STAFF RECOMMENDATION ..... 20

# INTRODUCTION

The Township of Little Egg Harbor (hereafter Township or Little Egg Harbor) in Ocean County received one Town Center Designation and one Village Center Designation on June 28, 2000, which were set to expire ten years later. However, the expirations had been extended through various extension approvals by the legislation, executive orders, and/or State Planning Commission resolutions subsequent to these designations. The Township's Center designations expired on March 31, 2023.

The Township initiated the Plan Endorsement process with a letter from the mayor dated October 2, 2019. According to the Township's Municipal Self-Assessment (MSA) Report, Little Egg Harbor is seeking Plan Endorsement to reestablish their previous Center designations, as well as address resiliency and climate change vulnerabilities. Little Egg Harbor remains committed to investing in and improving the quality of the community for its residents and visitors alike.

This report contains findings and conclusions concerning consistency of the Township's plans 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 OPA.

The majority of the work performed by the Township in pursuit of Plan Endorsement had taken place under the framework of the previous State Plan. A new State Plan, with two additional goals, was adopted by the SPC on December 17, 2025. This report will demonstrate that the Township is generally consistent with all ten goals of the current State Plan, and that the Plan Implementation Agreement (PIA) prescribes actions to be taken by the municipality to address the intent of the new and updated goals.

The SPC, by adopting a resolution in support of Plan Endorsement of the Township's plans, demonstrates that the Township is taking appropriate steps to plan for a more sustainable future by addressing their infrastructure, economic development, housing, open space, environmental, and resiliency concerns.

# PLAN ENDORSEMENT PETITION PROCESS

As stated previously, the Township initiated the Plan Endorsement process on October 2, 2019. A pre-petition meeting was held on February 2, 2020. The Township then appointed its Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee (PEAC) by Resolution #*2022-086* on March 10, 2022. The MSA was authorized by the Township for transmittal to OPA by Resolution #*2022-184* on July 14, 2022, and the Township submitted the MSA to OPA on July 26, 2022. OPA and

respective State agency partners responded with an Opportunity and Constraints Report on February 22, 2023.

As part of the Plan Endorsement process, the Township is required to complete the Community Visioning process. The Township held two visioning workshops on January 24, 2023 and February 8, 2023. The Township also held two Community Visioning public meetings on March 16, 2023 and July 11, 2023. The Township's Governing Body formally approved, via Resolution *2026-292*, the transmittal of its Vision Statement to OPA on November 12, 2026. The Township of Little Egg Harbor's Vision Statement developed during this process is as follows:

> *Little Egg Harbor Township is an inclusive community with a variety of neighborhoods that cater to a diverse population. It provides easy access to jobs, recreational amenities, and cultural facilities, while conserving natural resources and scenic vistas. Additionally, it promotes sustainability and resiliency within all aspects of municipal policy.*
>
> *Little Egg Harbor Township's residents seek a balance between growth and development, conservation, and quality of life. They know that the local quality of life is immeasurably benefitted and enhanced by the abundance of coastal waters, wetlands and forests, and the scenic beauty and recreational opportunities they provide. The Township has and will continue to support efforts to become a more resilient, sustainable community.*

The Township formally approved the Draft PIA and Draft State Plan Policy Map Amendments on September 10, 2026 via Resolution #*2026-246*. The Draft PIA included items that OPA and our State agency partners believe will achieve consistency with the State Plan, as well as the updated Plan Endorsement Guidelines and amendments to the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, which address State priorities for environmental justice and climate resiliency, respectively.

# PLANNING MILESTONES

Items in **Bold** reflect actions related to the SPC and/or current Plan Endorsement petition.

| Event(s) | Date | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| Master Plan | May 6, 1999 | |
| **Center Designation** | **June 28, 2000** | **Expired March 31, 2023** |
| Municipal Stormwater Management Plan | March 2005 | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Master Plan Reexamination Report | May 2007 | |
| **Municipal Self-Assessment** | **July 14, 2022** | |
| **Opportunity and Constraints Report** | **February 22, 2023** | |
| Ocean County, New Jersey Multi-Jurisdictional All Hazard Mitigation Plan | May 16, 2025 | Chapter 16 – Little Egg Harbor |
| Housing Element and Fair Share Plan | June 23, 2025 | Amended March 5, 2026 |

# LOCATION & REGIONAL CONTEXT

As per the Township's MSA:

> Little Egg Harbor Township is primarily located to the north of Great Bay and Little Egg Harbor in the southern part of Ocean County. Its total jurisdiction is about 74.0 square miles, though much of it is encompassed by Great Bay and Little Egg Harbor and only about 48.0 square miles [is] comprised of land area. Little Egg Harbor Township shares land borders with: Eagleswood and Stafford townships in Ocean County to the east; Bass River Township in Burlington County to the west; and Tuckerton Borough in Ocean County to the south.
>
> Little Egg Harbor Township is divided by the Garden State Parkway (GSP), which runs in an easterly–westerly direction through the municipality and effectively divides the municipality into a northern part (incl., areas to the north of the GSP) and a southern part (incl., areas to the south of the GSP).
>
> The overwhelming majority of development in Little Egg Harbor Township is located to the south of the GSP, and frequently concentrated or within close proximity of US Route 9. The extreme southern part of the municipality is comprised of sedge islands, which contain no development except for a few small marinas, the Marine Field Station of Rutgers University, and related facilities. The northern part of the municipality is predominantly located within the Pinelands Preservation Area and is predominantly forested with only a very limited amount of development.

| | **Township of Little Egg Harbor** | **Ocean County** | **New Jersey** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Land Area (Sq. Miles) | 47.37 | 628.29 | 7,354.76 |
| Households | 8,931 | 243,843 | 3,507,701 |
| Average Household Size | 2.35 | 2.65 | 2.62 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Home Ownership Rate | 86.5% | 80.7% | 63.8% |
| Median Household Income | $92,446 | $89,863 | $103,556 |
| Per Capita Income | $50,122 | $44,947 | $54,253 |
| Sources: U.S. Census Bureau Profiles, QuickFacts (2020 Decennial Census, 2024-2025 American Community Survey 1 & 5-Year Estimates) | | | |

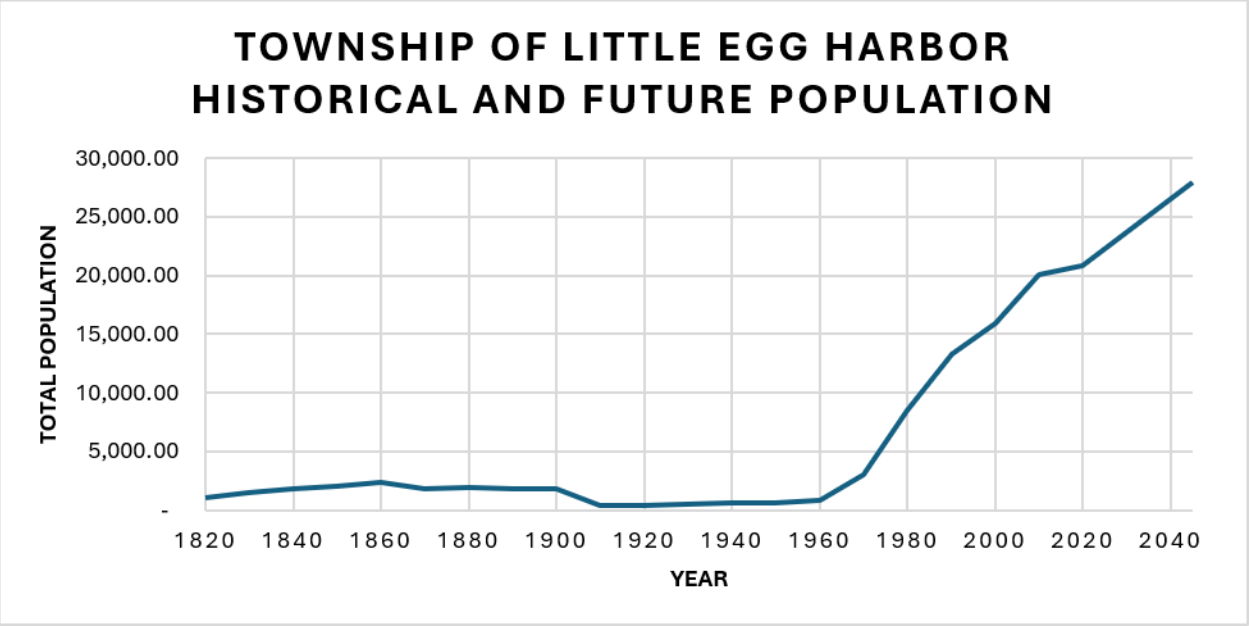
# DEMOGRAPHICS AND LITTLE EGG HARBOR'S FUTURE

According to the MSA:

> The United States Census Bureau estimated that Little Egg Harbor Township's population was 20,784 residents on April 1, 2020, which represents an increase of 719 residents since the time of the 2010 United States Census. This increase equates to an average annual change of approximately 0.4 percent, which was significantly less than the average annual change of 1.5 percent that occurred in Ocean County and 0.6 percent that occurred in New Jersey during the same period. With regard to the period between the 2000 and 2010 United States censuses, it is noted that the average annual change of 2.6 percent that occurred in Little Egg Harbor Township was also higher than the average annual change of 1.3 percent that occurred in Ocean County and 0.4 percent that occurred in New Jersey.

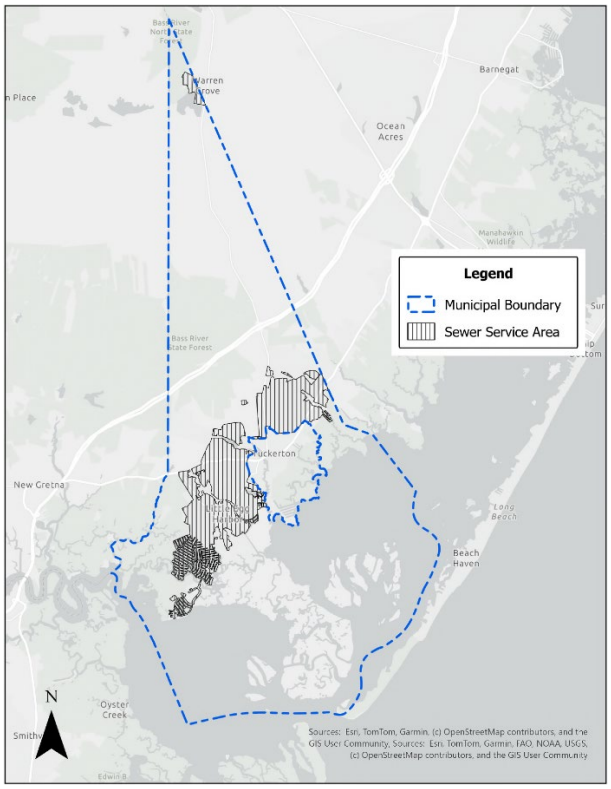
The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) has projected that the Township's population will reach 27,884 residents by 2045.

The following table displays the Township's historic growth as well as future population projections.



# INFRASTRUCTURE

## Water and Sewer




Water service in Little Egg Harbor Township is provided by the Little Egg Harbor Township Municipal Utilities Authority. This Authority was created through the Township by Ordinance in 1972. The Authority's service area is coterminous with the Township and encompasses an area of approximately 8.7 square miles. A potable water supply and distribution system and a wastewater collection system are both owned and operated by the Authority. Water needs outside of the service area of the Little Egg Harbor Township Municipal Utilities Authority are met via private wells.

According to the MSA, "The sewer service area in Little Egg Harbor Township is somewhat larger than the water service area. In total, the sewer service area encompasses 13.3 square miles. Of note is the fact that the sewer service area includes a small area to the north of the GSP."

## Transportation and Circulation

Little Egg Harbor Township has 136.4 miles of roadways, including: 12.8 miles maintained between NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and NJ Turnpike Authority (NJTA) and , 9.4 miles of limited-access roadways, 29.4 miles maintained by the county, and 94.2 miles are maintained by the municipality.

The Garden State Parkway (GSP) passes through the Township and runs in an easterly–westerly direction through the central portion of the municipality. US Route 9 runs in a easterly–westerly direction to the south of the GSP, and County Route 539 runs in an northerly–southerly direction through the central portion of the municipality. Both US Route 9 and County Route 539 are major arteries in the Township.

Little Egg Harbor Township is serviced by the following NJ Transit Bus Routes: Route No. 319, which provides service between New York City and Atlantic City, Wildwood, and Cape May

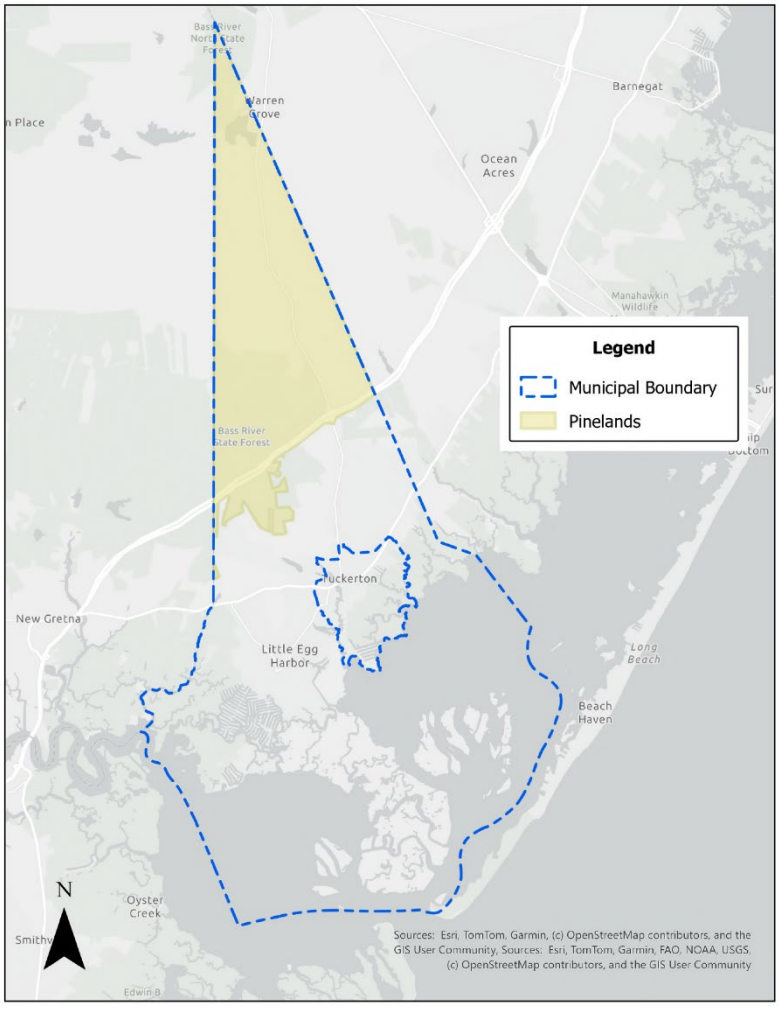
and intermediate points (incl., Little Egg Harbor Township), and Route No. 559, which provides service between Lakewood Township and Atlantic City and intermediate points.

Ocean County also operates Ocean Ride, which is a public transit and community transportation system. It is a bus service that is open and available for people of all ages. Residents have access to the OC 6  Little Egg Harbor to Manahawkin (Stafford Township) route.

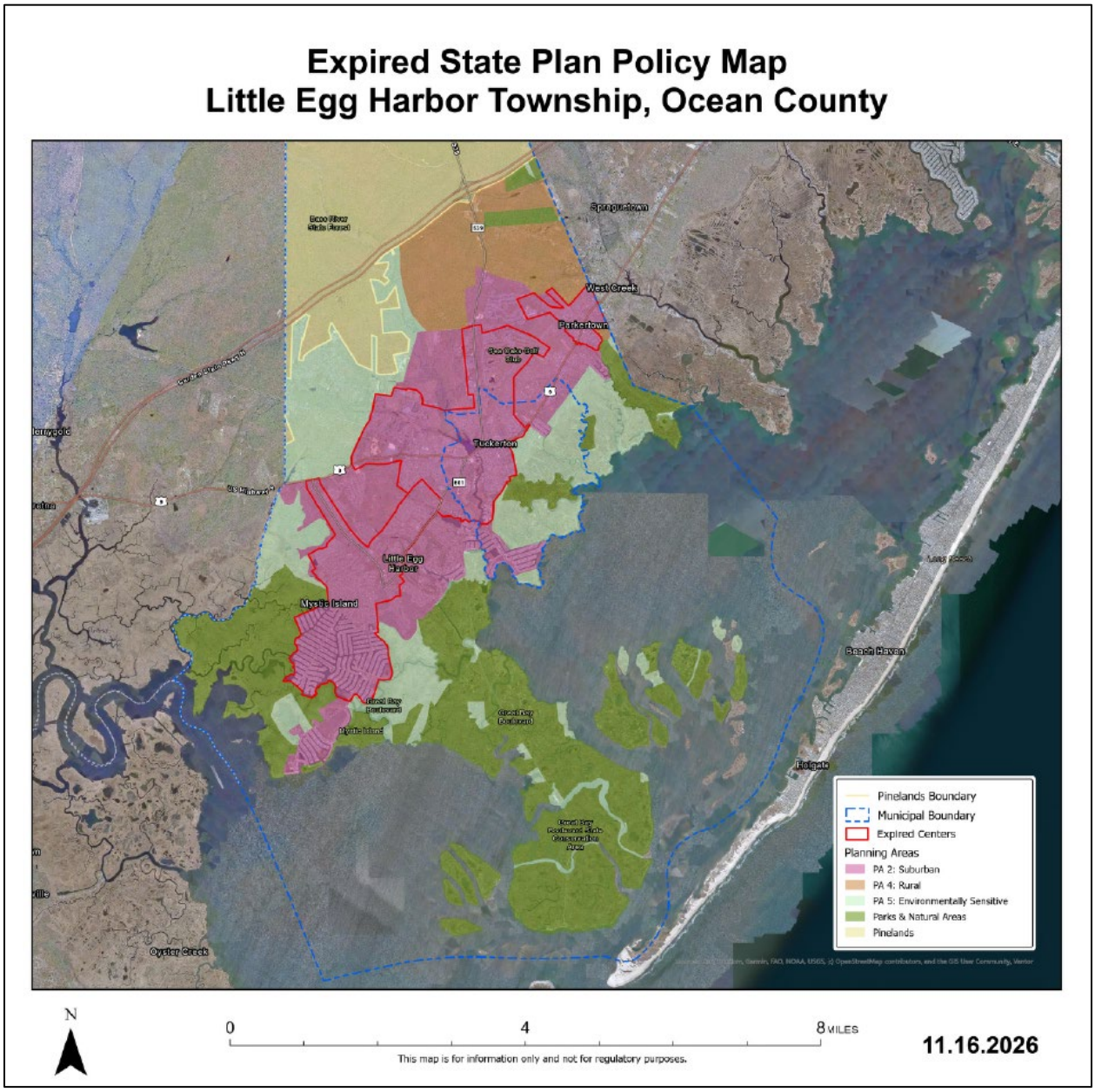
## STATE PLAN POLICY MAP

The State Plan Policy Map (SPPM) is the geographic representation and official map of the NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan. As previously stated, the Township agreed to the Draft SPPM developed during the Plan Endorsement petition and the Township formally approved Draft SPPM Amendments on September 10, 2026 via Resolution #*2026-246*. The proposed mapping was amended following the November 16, 2026 Plan Implementation Committee Meeting.

Please note that the Pinelands Area is subject to the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission, which has both planning and regulatory authority within this area. Accordingly, the SPPM and SPC do not have mapping jurisdiction within the Pinelands Area.



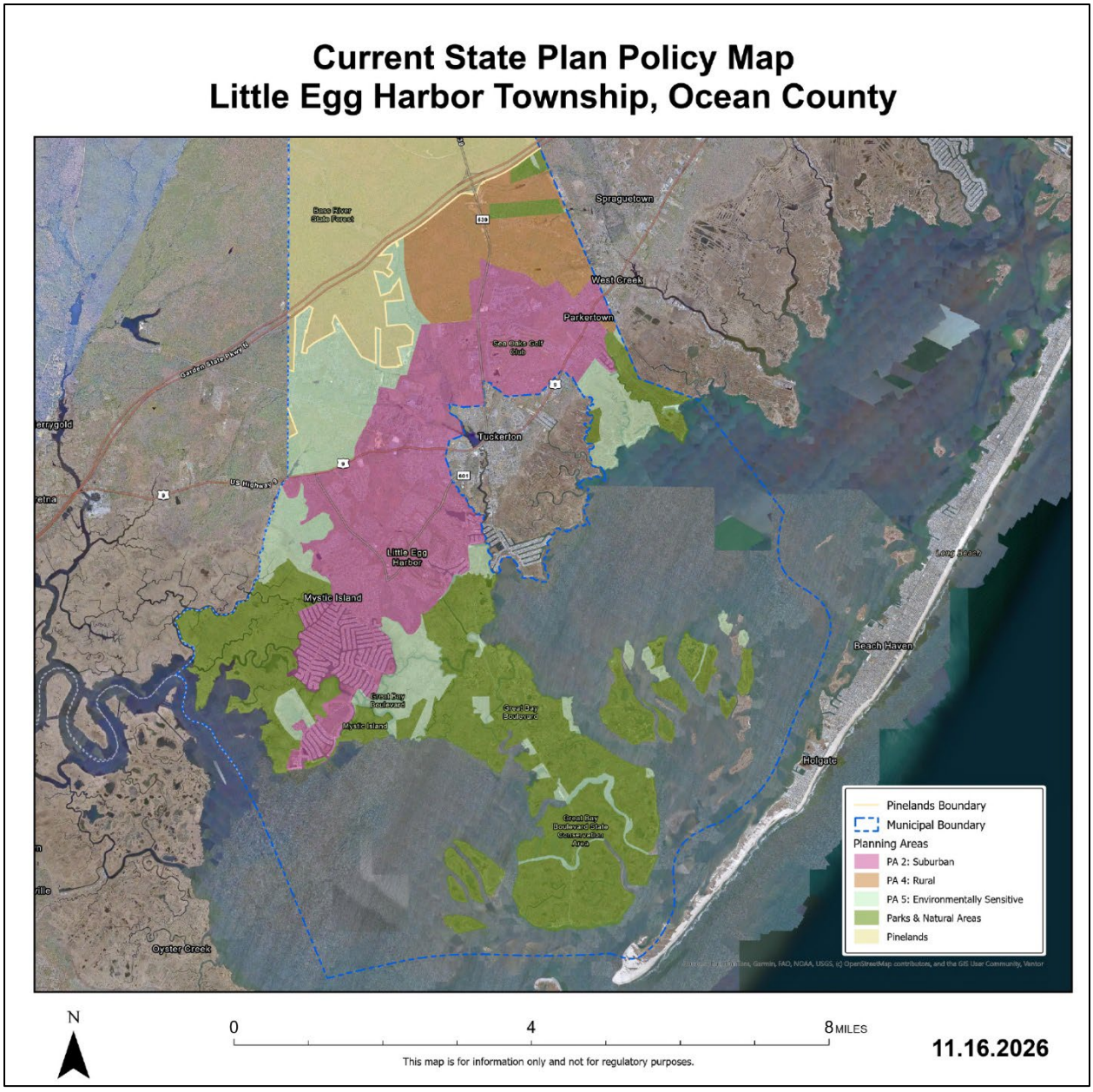
## Expired State Plan Policy Map




Please note the above map includes Centers expired on March 31, 2023. Planning Areas and other SPPM elements, such as Parks/Open Space/Natural Areas, do not expire with the expiration of Plan Endorsement/Center Designation.

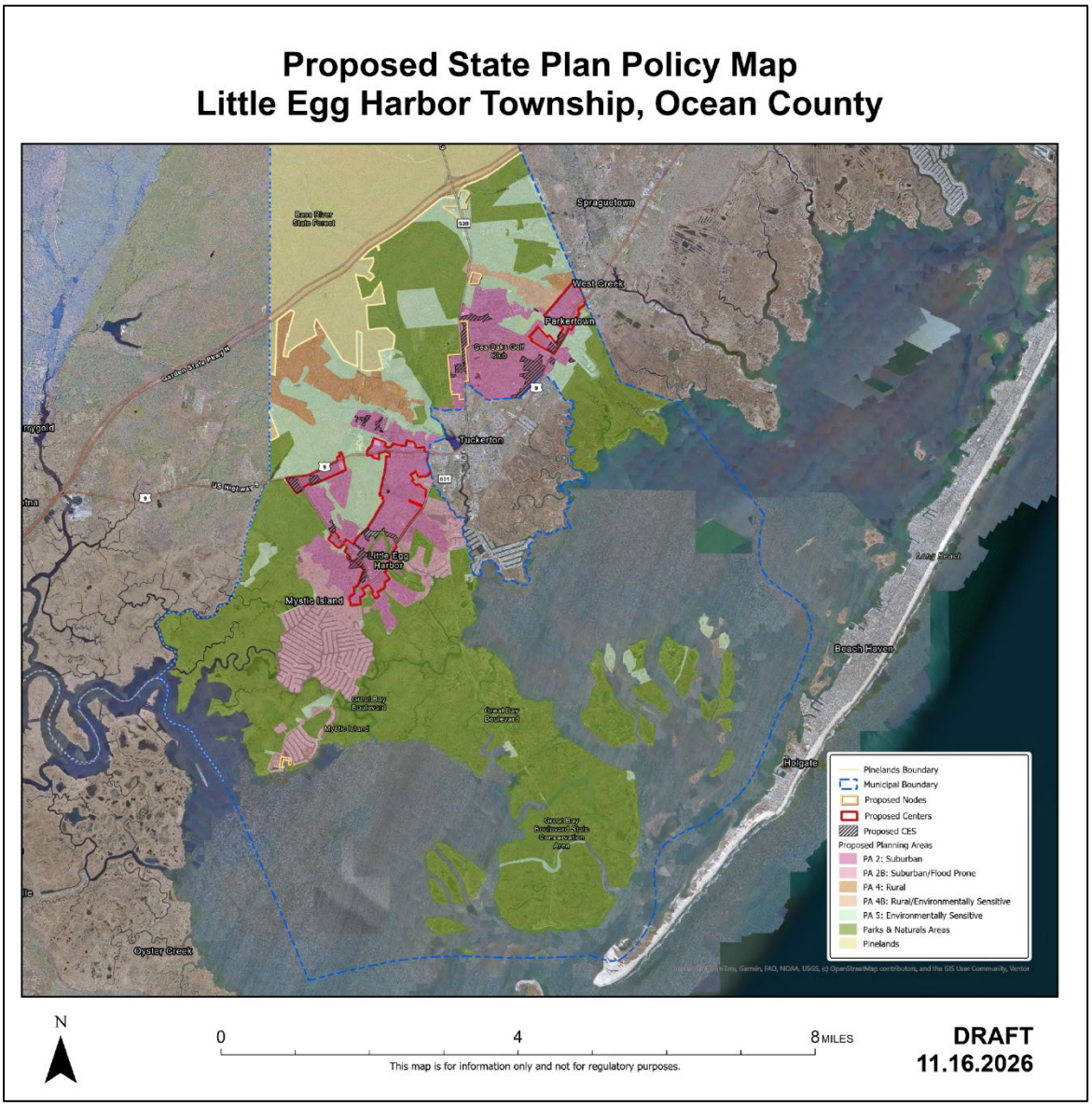
Between June 28, 2000 and its expiration on March 31, 2023, Little Egg Harbor shared the Tuckerton Town Center with Borough of Tuckerton (Tuckerton). Tuckerton is not currently endorsed and is not pursuing Plan Endorsement at this time.

## Current State Plan Policy Map




The above map reflects the current SPPM, effective as of the March 31, 2023 center expirations.

## Proposed State Plan Policy Map




The above map reflects the SPPM amendments as developed as part of the Plan Endorsement petition, which includes coordination with the municipality, respective state agencies, and comments received during the November 16, 2026 Plan Implementation Committee meeting. These amendments will take effect upon the SPC's approval of the Township's Plan Endorsement petition.

## Summary of Proposed Map Amendments

| Planning Area/Map Element | Label | Existing Acreage | Proposed Acreage | Change in Acreage |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suburban | PA2 | 6,598.98 | 2,677.67 | -3,912.31 |
| Suburban/Flood Prone | PA2B | N/A | 1,548.56 | +1,548.56 |
| Rural | PA4 | 1,876.49 | 707.96 | -1,168.53 |
| Rural/Environmentally Sensitive | PA4B | 0 | 182.79 | +182.79 |
| Environmentally Sensitive | PA5 | 3,792.90 | 3,033.64 | -759.26 |
| Open Space | Open Space | 7,505.22 | 13,184.64 | +5,679.42 |
| Critical Environmental Site | CES | 0 | 239.96 | +239.96 |

| Previous Designations | Type | Acreage |
|---|---|---|
| Parkertown | Village Center | 296.02 |
| Mystic Island | Town Center | 1,872.83 |
| Tuckerton | Town Center | 2,178.95 |

| Proposed Designations | Type | Acreage |
|---|---|---|
| Parkertown | Village Center | 173.92 |
| Radio Road | Town Center | 708.53 |
| Route 9 | Village Center | 83.08 |
| Route 539 South | Node | 120.14 |
| Waterfront | Node | 6.56 |
| Public Works | Node | 11.51 |
| Route 539 North | Node | 54.23 |

# STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN GOALS CONSISTENCY REVIEW

When the Township initiated Plan Endorsement with a Mayor's letter dated October 2, 2019, the State Plan that was adopted in March of 2001 was still in effect. The State Planning Commission adopted a new State Development and Redevelopment Plan in December of 2025. The new State Plan introduced two new goals regarding Climate Change and Equity. OPA will be developing new guidance in the coming months and years as to how municipalities can achieve consistency with these two new goals.

## Economic Development: Promote Economic Growth that Benefits all Residents of New Jersey

The Township's Master Plan Reexamination contains the following goals and objectives that are consistent with this goal:

- To adopt land use regulations that will capitalize upon and promote the Tuckerton Seaport project.
- To promote land use policies and regulations that encourage economic development and redevelopment that improve the Township's tax base.

The Reexamination, under the Economic Plan Element, highlighted five specific sectors which would aid in economic growth:

1. Senior Housing and Healthcare,
2. Ecotourism,
3. Seaport Spin-offs,
4. Atlantic City Support, and
5. Infrastructure and Incentives.

According to the MSA, the Township established a Commercial Revitalization Advisory Board, which is a citizen committee that reviews municipal measures to promote revitalization of the existing commercial sector in the Township.

## Housing: Provide an Adequate Supply of Housing for Residents of All Ages and Incomes in Communities of Their Choosing That Meet Their Needs and Offer Ready Access to the Full Range of Supportive Goods and Services

The Township adopted a Housing Element and Fair Share Plan in February of 2026 to address the fourth round affordable housing obligation. According to this Plan, "The Township's fair

share is 1,025, consisting of a Present Need (Rehabilitation Obligation) of 32, a Prior Round Obligation (1987-1999) of 194, a Third Round Obligation (1999-2025) of 634 units, and a Fourth Round Obligation (2025-2035) of 165."

The Township will address the minimum 25% of the Fourth Round unmet need (165 units) via a redevelopment overlay zone. The Township has identified parcels that will most likely be redeveloped during the current round.

## Infrastructure: Economic Opportunity Through Nation-Leading Infrastructure

In 2024 the Township was awarded $2.3 million for infrastructure improvements along Radio Road. These improvements primarily focused on pedestrian safety.

In February of 2026, the Township secured a $3.6 million loan through the New Jersey Water Bank to upgrade aging stormwater infrastructure in the Mystic Island area. The project is expected to provide water quality benefits, including a reduction in sediment and other particulates that typically accumulate on roadways and surrounding properties during storm events.

According to the MSA, the Township is seeking State financial and technical assistance to address all public infrastructure in both vulnerable and non-vulnerable areas of the Township.

## Revitalization and Recentering: Revitalize and Recenter the State's Underutilized Developed Areas

The Township is actively pursuing a center-based development strategy that supports the State Plan's goal of revitalizing and recentering existing communities. The proposed designation of three centers and four nodes will help focus future development and redevelopment within established areas, reinforcing existing communities rather than encouraging dispersed growth. The designation of the Suburban/Floodprone Planning Area (PA2B) further advances this approach by recognizing both the importance of revitalizing existing settlements and the environmental constraints that influence where and how development should occur. PA2B provides a framework for reinvestment and redevelopment within existing communities while incorporating resilience considerations into future land use decisions.

As stated previously, the Township established a Commercial Revitalization Advisory Board, which is a citizen committee that reviews municipal measures to promote revitalization of the existing commercial sector in the Township.

## Climate Change: Effectively Address the Adverse Impacts of Global Climate Change

Superstorm Sandy caused extensive damage throughout Little Egg Harbor Township, affecting approximately 4,000 residential properties, businesses and marinas, roadways, utilities, municipal facilities, and recreational facilities. In response, the Township undertook a range of immediate recovery and resiliency measures, including amendments to zoning regulations to facilitate the elevation of structures in flood hazard areas, repairs to damaged public facilities and infrastructure, flood-proofing generators at critical water and sewer facilities, and pursuing FEMA funding. The Township also partnered with New Jersey Future to develop recovery and resiliency strategies and identify funding opportunities.

The Township prepared a Strategic Recovery Planning Report in 2014 that established a comprehensive framework for reducing vulnerability to future storm events. The report recommended measures addressing floodplain management, emergency response, infrastructure, evacuation, shoreline protection, stormwater and wastewater systems, and climate resilience. Since then, the Township has implemented numerous recommendations, including updating the Master Plan to address hazard mitigation, resiliency, and sea-level rise; adopting a floodplain management element; restoring Radio Road; installing shoreline protection and bayfront energy-dissipation measures; repairing bulkheads and the Parkertown Dock; constructing a living shoreline at Iowa Court; dredging lagoons in Mystic Island and Osborne Island; and developing a debris management plan.

Again, with the designation of the Suburban/Floodprone Planning Area (PA2B), the state and the municipality recognize that the Township has developed areas that face current and future flood risk. The State Plan's intent for the Suburban/Floodprone Planning Area (PA2B) is to:

- minimize the risks to life and property from natural hazards;
- advance redevelopment and climate adaptation strategies that reduce flooding impacts and support existing communities;
- discourage new and unneeded development and growth-inducing infrastructure projects; and
- implement green infrastructure improvements.

## Natural and Water Resources: Protect, Maintain, and Restore the State's Natural and Water Resources and Ecosystems

Little Egg Harbor Township's center-based approach to development serves to channel development into areas with existing development and infrastructure and away from areas with significant natural resources and systems, or areas where development may be unsustainable (e.g., areas with elevated flood risk).

In 2009, the Township prepared a Natural Resource Inventory, and the 2026 Master Pan Reexamination Report calls for an update to this Inventory. The 2015 Floodplain Management Plan established the need to protect the natural resources and qualities of the Township, including wetlands, stream corridors, open space, and areas with scenic, cultural, and recreational values.

The Township has an Environmental Commission comprised of 9 appointed citizens who are committed to the most advisable protection, development, and use of natural resources.

## Pollution and Environmental Clean-Up: Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution

The Township has actively pursued protecting and restoring its ecosystems. According to the Township's Stormwater Management Plan:

> Ongoing projects include the reparation of bulkheads where necessary, remediation of the siltation of inlets that occurred during Hurricane Sandy by removing sand and dredging of all lagoons in the Mystic and Osborne island areas. The hybrid living shoreline that was constructed along Iowa Court incorporates a wooden sill and stone wall against the high energy waves, fill for vegetation, such as native marsh grass, and shell bags to provide for shellfish habitat and improve water quality.
>
> Work was completed to remediate the siltation of inlets caused by storm surge during Hurricane Sandy by dredging all lagoons in Osborne Island. Dredging on Osborn Island began in 2018 and completed in 2019. Additionally, the Township completed phase one of dredging the lagoons on the east side of Radio Road in Mystic Island.

The Township adopted a Recycling Plan in 2007 which was followed by a Recycling Ordinance. The Township operates a Recycling and Compost Center that provides residents with opportunities to recycle. The Township also provides for the separate collection of brush, branches, and other yard materials. The Township also regularly hosts community-wide cleanup events throughout the year.

## Historic and Scenic Resources: Protect, Enhance, and Improve Access to Areas with Exceptional Archeological, Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space, and Recreational Value

The Township adopted an Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2002 as an update to its 1997 Recreation Plan, to serve as a guide for future open space acquisitions and recreational development in the Township.

The Township works with the Ocean County Natural Lands Trust to acquire additional properties in the municipality. In addition, the Township Committee established a Natural Lands Trust Committee composed of citizens to encourage preservation of open space.

Significant portions of the Township are preserved as state and federal open space and parks, county parks and preserved land, and Township open space. These include:

- Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge,
- Bass River State Forest,
- Stafford Forge Wildlife Management Area,
- Freedom Fields County Park (west of Rt. 539),
- Atlantis Golf Course, and
- Osbourne Island (County Trust)

Within the Township's Community Facilities Plan Element, the 1997 Recreation Plan recommended a centrally located community park; the Township successfully acquired a 117.6-acre site west of Route 539 in Tuckerton Manor.

## Equity: Implement Equitable Planning Practices to Promote Thriving Communities for all New Jerseyans

As this is a new State Plan goal, the SPC and OPA will be developing new guidance in the coming months and years. For the time being, the Township has committed to several relevant items in the PIA. Because the Equity Goal is conceptualized as a crosscutting goal, opportunities to integrate the promotion of equity in planning will be pursued in future biennial reviews.

## Comprehensive Planning: Foster Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementation at All Levels Statewide

By pursuing Plan Endorsement, the Township is committed to being and staying consistent with the goals, policies, and strategies of the State Plan.

The Township also regularly coordinates with Ocean County regarding planning initiatives. The local plans and regulations of Little Egg Harbor Township are generally consistent with the recommendations of the Ocean County Master Plan.

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT

The Township formally approved the draft PIA on September 10, 2026 via Resolution #*2026-246*. See attached PIA.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the work the Township of Little Egg Harbor has supplied, the actions it has taken to date, and the tasks it has committed to complete, it is recommended that the State Planning Commission approve the Township's Plan Endorsement petition inclusive of the proposed State Plan Policy Map.