

Municipal Self-Assessment Report

**Prepared for the
Township of Commercial
Cumberland County, New Jersey**

December 2021



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RVE Project No. 06-02-T-215

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INTRODUCTION

The Township of Commercial is seeking Plan Endorsement from the New Jersey State Planning Commission. The Township recognizes the many incentives that go in hand with creating and submitting planning documents in accordance with the guidance from the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan). The State Planning Act requires the State Planning Commission to adopt a State Plan every ten years.

Plan Endorsement guidelines require municipalities to follow a ten-step process as described below. The Township is actively seeking endorsement through this ten-step process, of which this Municipal Self Assessment (MSA), fulfills the requirements of Step 3 and will act as the Township's petition for Plan Endorsement.

Plan Endorsement Process:

- ✓ Step 1: Pre-Petition
- ✓ Step 2: Plan Endorsement Citizens' Advisory Committee
- ✓ Step 3: Municipal Self-Assessment (MSA)
- Step 4: State Opportunities & Constraints Assessment
- Step 5: Community Visioning
- Step 6: Consistency Review
- Step 7: Action Plan Implementation
- Step 8: Recommendation Report and Draft Planning & Implementation Agreement (PIA)
- Step 9: State Planning Commission Endorsement
- Step 10: Monitoring and Benefits

The Township hopes that this Plan Endorsement process will help the Township remain a coastal focused town. In order to do so and address coastal-related issues in a more efficient manner, the Township would like to make several requests from the State. The Township believes that having the ability to file for a blanket permit to authorize any and all future flood mitigation projects in the coastal node along the riverfront would help facilitate future projects. Additionally, a blanket permit to allow for the improvements and/or repairs to all drainage structures located within the coastal node and along the riverfront would be useful for the Township.

If Commercial Township would be allowed to submit for emergency permits to allow for state funding to be used for 100% of the cost of repairs that include advancements and upgrades it would greatly impact the Township. Currently, state funding is only allowed to be used for 80% of the cost when betterments are made. Emergency permits are intended for in-kind repairs, not upgrades.

The above suggestions stem from the need to quickly fix problems associated with flooding along the riverfront. The permitting process always adds time to any project, and it would be very beneficial to the Township if they were able to bypass the permitting process for flood mitigation projects because it will allow for problems to be addressed within much shorter time frames. Once a flooding problem is discovered, it is beneficial to fix it as quick as possible to minimize damage and transportation issues. However, undergoing the permitting process for each and every project that is intended to fix such problems adds a significant amount of time to the entire project timeline, causing the problem to persist for a longer period of time than what is acceptable to the Township and its residents. A current example

of this is that the Berry Avenue tide gate has all but failed and is causing frequent road flooding and disrupting access to various marinas along the river. Construction plans are very close to being completed and ready to be advertised for bidding. Permitting, however, is ongoing and will likely take several more months to complete. If the permitting process could be bypassed by allowing this project to fall under a blanket permit for flood mitigation projects, the problem could be solved in a significantly shorter timeframe.

In addition to requests to ease the Township's ability to complete flood mitigation projects within the coastal node, the Township also has plans to try to secure funding for various future infrastructure projects. One project that the Township would like to pursue is the construction of a living shoreline to stabilize the Peak of the Moon area. A second potential project is to construct a wastewater treatment facility. This will include securing funding and determining a way to get public buy-in to the idea as it will greatly benefit the Township. Non-compliant septic systems are a major problem that stymie development in the Township and prevent the sale of properties, causing many properties to lie vacant and abandoned. Many lots in Laurel Lake are too small to allow for the construction of a compliant septic system and this makes it impossible to develop these areas and/or sell older existing properties. A third and final potential project is to construct a mixed-use pedestrian path from Mauricetown-Haleyville to the Township School and ballfields located along North Avenue. This will provide residents and children with a safe and alternate route to access the school and ballfields.

Lastly, and most importantly, the Township requests to obtain classification of the Maurice River riverfront as a Coastal Node to maintain land use regulations that permit the riverfront to function as an industrialized working riverfront. Due to the revised Center boundaries, the riverfront area has been removed from the Port Norris Center. If the area is not reclassified as a Coastal Node, it will be subjected to strict land use regulations that will not permit continued development of freight and distribution centers along the riverfront. The riverfront area is home to many freight and distribution centers and has gained several new distribution centers within the past five years. The area has gained the attention of sand mining and barging companies and development and interest in the riverfront has been climbing. This development benefits the Township as a whole by creating new jobs and generating increased tax revenue. In order to allow for this development to continue, the riverfront area must receive designation as a Coastal Node. Therefore, the Township is also requesting that the riverfront area receive designation as a Coastal Node.

Local Goals and Objectives

In the 2006 Master Plan Report and 2017 Reexamination, the Township recognized the community vision as glimpsed by this planning effort as the following:

1. Extensive environmental sensitivity of the Township's natural setting within which human settlement has coexisted and prospered for centuries;
2. Protection and enhancement of the unique character of the Township's three villages so that they can evolve and grow and develop a sustainable economic base with the natural bounty provided, and
3. Maintenance of a rural community that wishes to retain and protect both its natural and man-made assets thereby allowing them to flourish harmoniously together.

It recognized the Township's ecological diversity and sensitivity, its historical heritage and the unique character of each of its three villages. In so doing, the Master Plan allowed opportunities for housing, employment, growth, and above all, a balance between nature and future development.

The master plan did not so much create a new vision for the Township, but attempted to maintain and enhance the focus of it. This sharper image offers a clearer understanding of what and where land use planning can improve an already vital community with a rich history and unique rural character. It also shows how to allow future centered growth consistent with the area's special, natural setting, environmental constraints, and the use of its resources. It identifies areas suitable for development and sets the scale for that development. Such development includes the revitalization of the villages through expanded land use activities designed to create jobs, enhancing community life, and protecting the "village's character" that has been present since the early 18th Century.

The plan was developed by the Land Use Board over a three-year period, which included monthly work sessions, a public participation program involving a questionnaire mailed to all Township properties, and six public meetings (two in each of the Township's three villages). In the questionnaire and public meetings, the public extolled the quality of life in Commercial Township, but clearly identified and articulated fundamental issues of concerns. These concerns largely reflected the maintenance of that quality of life related to public safety and health, continuance of its local character and history, concern that open space and natural resources be available to all, and the desire for the aesthetic protection of the valuable community assets, both natural and man-made. In short, the plan sought to maintain a development pattern largely dictated by the natural environment and at the same time providing the ability for the Township to be vital, adaptive and productive.

There is a rhythm and pattern to Bayshore life which is closely understood by the residents of Cumberland County's municipalities. They are active communities that represent how the settlement of America occurred; small settlements dependent upon their environment. This Plan envisions Commercial Township continuing to adapt that historic process while evolving even as it preserves and protects its own special landscape.

Planning Issues

The Township of Commercial would like to address the following relevant planning issues through Plan Endorsement:

The master plan set forth goals and objectives to be achieved, identified the Township's significant environmental resources with specific steps to preserve, protect and utilize these areas. The Plan also evaluated the Township's housing stock and need while recognizing the requirement and a fair share plan to meet that need and offered recommendations for economic development consistent with the community's natural setting. Finally, within the context of the various plan elements noted, the Plan offered a land use pattern for future development.

In essence, the community vision is as it always has been - a rural community subject to its natural settings and benefiting from their natural beauty and bounty. This plan recognized the historical development pattern and the community's rural character as it laid out future land use policies. The natural wealth of the lands and coastal waters of Commercial Township have and still offer opportunities without threatening the natural assets if they are carefully managed. The heightened concern for the environment and the impact on the environment by human activity create new

challenges for the community's planning. It is the increased appreciation for and understanding of the dynamics between man and environment, coupled with the need for controlled growth, which has focused the lens of the Township's planning effort.

Assistance from State Agencies

The Township of Commercial would like to pursue the potential construction of a wastewater treatment facility. This would include securing funding and determining a way to get public buy-in to the idea as it will greatly benefit the Township. Non-compliant septic systems are a major problem that stimulate development in the Township and prevent the sale of properties and cause many to lie vacant and abandoned. Many lots in Laurel Lake are too small to allow for the construction of a compliant septic system and this makes it impossible to develop these areas and/or sell older existing properties.

Additionally, the Township is applying for Local Freight Impact Funding (LFIF) for the Reconstruction of Yock Wock Road and High Street and the Mill and Overlay of Cumberland County Route 553 (Main Street). The Reconstruction of Yock Wock Road and High Street will include roadway reconstruction, new beam guide rail installation as needed, and new traffic control devices. The Mill and Overlay of Cumberland County Route 553 (Main Street) will include roadway resurfacing, construction of ADA compliant curb ramps, and new traffic control devices. The proposed improvements will continue previous efforts in the 2019 and 2020 LFIF Port Norris Riverfront Roadway Improvements Phase I & II and improve access to the Port Norris riverfront, which currently includes manufacturing facilities. Yock Wock Road and High Street is a main trucking route to provide access to the Port Norris Riverfront from North Avenue and Cumberland County Route 553 is also part of the main trucking route and provides access to the multiple freight routes that provide access the riverfront from the town center. This will promote investment and create new employment opportunities. With freight nodes located along the Maurice River, this project promotes intermodal facilities.

Efforts Related to Plan Endorsement

- 2006 Master Plan
- 2017 Master Plan Reexamination
- Pre-petition Meeting Minutes

Planning Area and Center Boundary Changes

The map below is exported from an online GIS mapping system used to show the “Centers” that Commercial Township has and would like to keep. It shows the previous center boundaries and the new ones being proposed. This map was created and hosted by the Office of Planning and Advocacy (OPA). A “Center” is essentially an area of clustered development, like a city or neighborhood. There are five types of centers that can be designated in the endorsement process. Those five centers are urban, regional, town, village, and hamlet. Commercial Township currently has three designated centers within the Township, all of which are classified as “Designated Villages.” Designated centers within the Township are Port Norris, Mauricetown-Haleyville, and Laurel Lake. Village centers are primarily residential places that offer a small Core with limited public facilities, consumer services, and community activities. Centers are the State Plan’s preferred vehicle for accommodating growth.

Although Centers are the preferred growth vehicle, some existing Centers, namely Hamlets, Villages, and some Towns, are currently unsewered. In order to grow, these Centers will need to find cost-effective and appropriately scaled solutions to the provision of wastewater treatment capacity.

The Township has worked with the OPA to develop a GIS map in conjunction with DCA to re-define the centers boundaries and account for 100-year flood potential. These new boundaries recognize the importance of our working riverfront and exclude flood hazard areas from center designations per Executive Order 89. The Laurel Lake center boundaries are not drastically changing, nor or the Mauricetown-Haleyville. What is affected is the Port Norris center which is being redefined to exclude portions along North Avenue, Yock Wock Road and Parsons Lane which previously were the first residential developments entering Port Norris from the North. Ogden Road to the South of the center which is home to a major shucking facility is now being excluded and Bivalve, Maurice River and Shell Pile are being re-defined as a "Coastal Node."

The "Coastal Node" of Berry Avenue, Miller Avenue and High Street are along the riverfront. This node will allow the waterfront area to remain a working waterfront and prevent it from falling under a blanket restriction on impervious coverage set by the NJDEP. This coastal area was previously part of the Port Norris "Center", but since the Center boundary changes were re-drawn, it now excludes the waterfront development. Since the Center now excludes the waterfront, this coastal node was created to exclude the area from impervious coverage limitations.

[Waivers Sought with Justification](#)

The Township is seeking a waiver for one of the two visioning sessions being that the existing Master Plan and Reexamination clearly define the vision set forth by the community. Instead, the Township would like to hold a visioning session to ensure the current defined vision still aligns with Township values and provide possible updates to the existing vision.

EXISTING CONDITIONS/OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

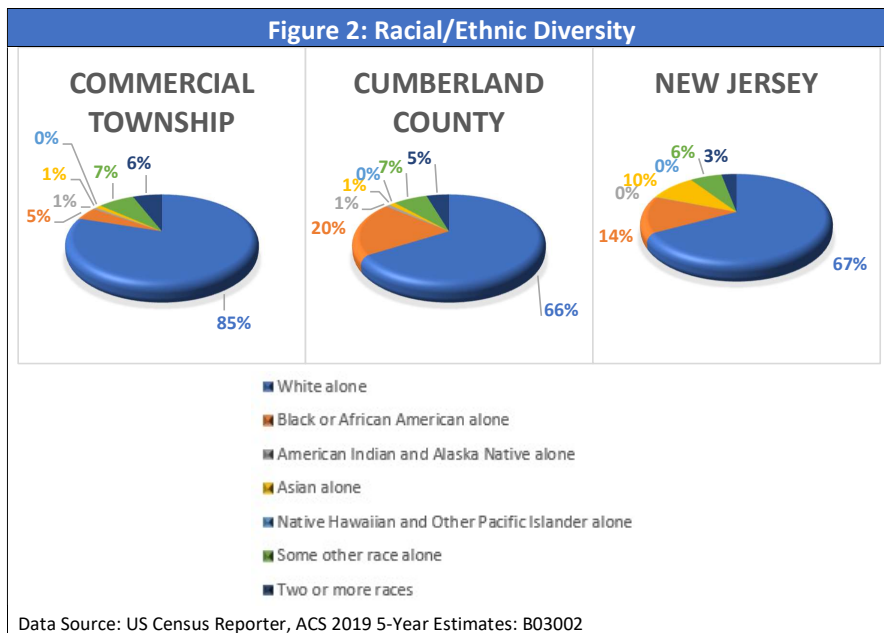
Location & Regional Context

Situated along the banks and marshlands of the Maurice River, Commercial Township, in southeastern Cumberland County, is first and foremost a community evolved from its natural setting. The existing land use patterns of its three villages and the several corridors of residential and commercial activity connecting them are subject to the natural sensitive environment with which they coexist. Significant tidal marshes, woodlands, and freshwater wetlands have and continue to dictate the community's pattern of development. The land use activity has been developed based on these natural conditions, the commercial opportunities they offer, and the historical settlement patterns so intertwined with them. The community's traditional industries are dependent upon the natural environment. Earth extraction, shell fishing (historically oysters), sand barging, and farming have and continue to be sources of employment.

Background

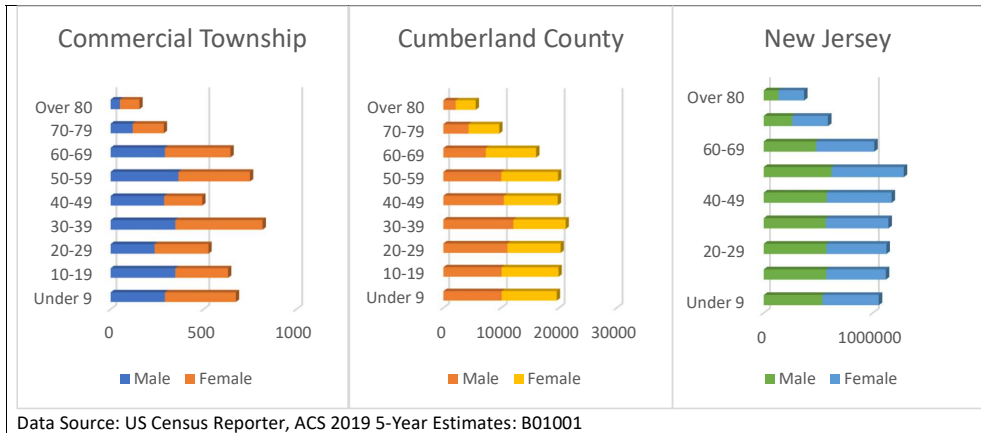
Figure 1: Demographics and Household Characteristics			
	Commercial Township	Cumberland County	New Jersey
Population	4,979	149,527	8,882,190
Land area (sq mi)	31.9	483.4	7,354.8
People per sq mi	156	309	1,208
Households	1,932	51,360	3,286,264
Average Household Size	2.6	2.7	2.7
Housing Units	2,197	56,471	3,641,854
Median Household Income	\$ 44,856.00	\$ 54,587.00	\$ 85,751.00
Per Capita Income	\$ 22,031.00	\$ 29,711.00	\$ 44,888.00
Persons in Poverty	15.6%	13.2%	9.2%
Unemployment Rate	4.7	5.4	3.2
Foreign Born Population	1.9	11.7	23.4
Data Source: US Census Reporter, ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates: DP05, S1101, S1901			

It can be seen in Figure 1 that Commercial Township remains significantly affected by poverty levels, having one of the state's highest percentages of 15.6%. This relates to the high unemployment rate of 4.7 where the states remains at 3.2. It can also be seen that the median and per capita income in the Township is almost half of that of the State.



The Township has a foreign born population of 1.9% which can directly correlate to the very large representation of the category “white alone” being 85% where the County has 66% and State has 67%. The next largest racial classification within the Township is black or African American, alone making up only 5%, where the County is 20% and State is 14%.

Figure 3: Age and Gender Demographics						
	Commercial Township		Cumberland County		New Jersey	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Gender Totals:	2338	2641	77686	74220	4335032	4543471
Under 9	292	382	10083	9544	538141	517747
10-19	348	284	10061	9862	574262	546237
20-29	236	290	11096	9179	574807	550744
30-39	348	470	12116	9032	570118	573981
40-49	288	205	10464	9326	578401	595149
50-59	365	385	10031	9806	623258	661522
60-69	292	353	7340	8713	479864	534555
70-79	119	167	4359	5305	260766	328708
Over 80	50	105	2136	3453	135415	234828



Although the change noted in the 2017 reexamination indicated a loss of school age (under 18 year olds) population from 2000 to 2010, the 2020 census data shows 1306 individuals under the age of 19 in the Township. This accounts for roughly 26% of the population in this age designation. Additionally it can be seen that compared to the County and State, Commercial Township has far fewer 20-29 year olds and 40-49 year olds. The Township does in turn have a majority of individuals between 30-39 which balances out any holes in the age demographic.

Figure 4: Average Labor Force Estimates

Year	Commercial Township				Cumberland County			
	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate	Labor Force	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate
2010	2,400	2,075	325	13.5%	72,664	63,233	9,431	13.0%
2011	2,328	1,936	393	16.9%	71,923	62,610	9,313	12.9%
2012	2,201	1,790	411	18.7%	71,417	62,044	9,373	13.1%
2013	2,095	1,778	317	15.1%	69,744	61,557	8,187	11.7%
2014	2,035	1,754	281	13.8%	67,609	60,908	6,701	9.9%
2015	2,006	1,760	246	12.3%	67,457	61,503	5,954	8.8%
2016	1,975	1,765	210	10.6%	66,335	61,374	4,961	7.5%
2017	1,928	1,747	181	9.4%	65,289	60,747	4,542	7.0%
2018*	1,903	1,729	174	9.1%	64,289	60,128	4,161	6.5%

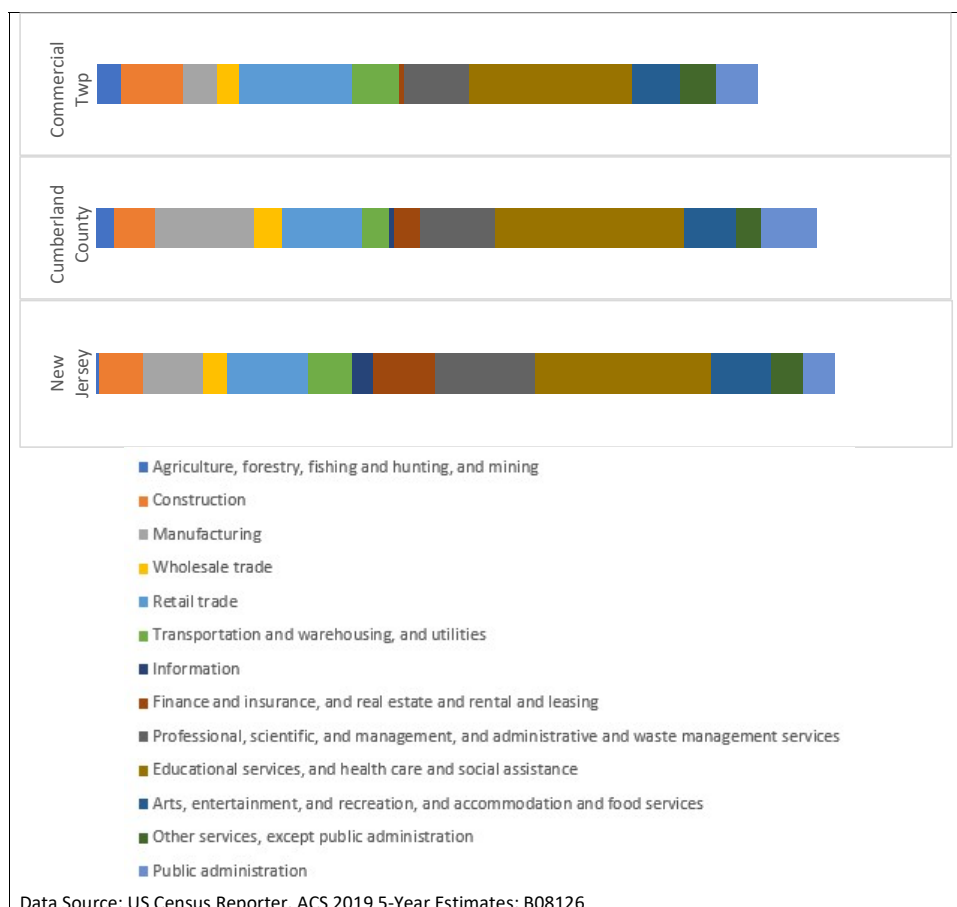
Data Source: Department of State Office of Planning Advocacy, Municipal Self-Assessment Template Materials: Standard Data Analysis
*2018 Benchmark

The unemployment rate in Commercial Township remains significantly higher than the state average to date. It can be seen that Commercial Township has historically tended to have significantly higher unemployment rates than even Cumberland County as a whole, who has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the State. The workforce industry in Commercial Township shows high educational services, health care, and social assistance programs, which lines up with County and State trends. The next largest industry in the Township remains retail trade, where as the County tends to have more manufacturing.

An industry to note is the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining being a predominate industry within the Township. This industry has the lowest impact on the State totals, which in turn reflects the significant industry of agriculture throughout the Township.

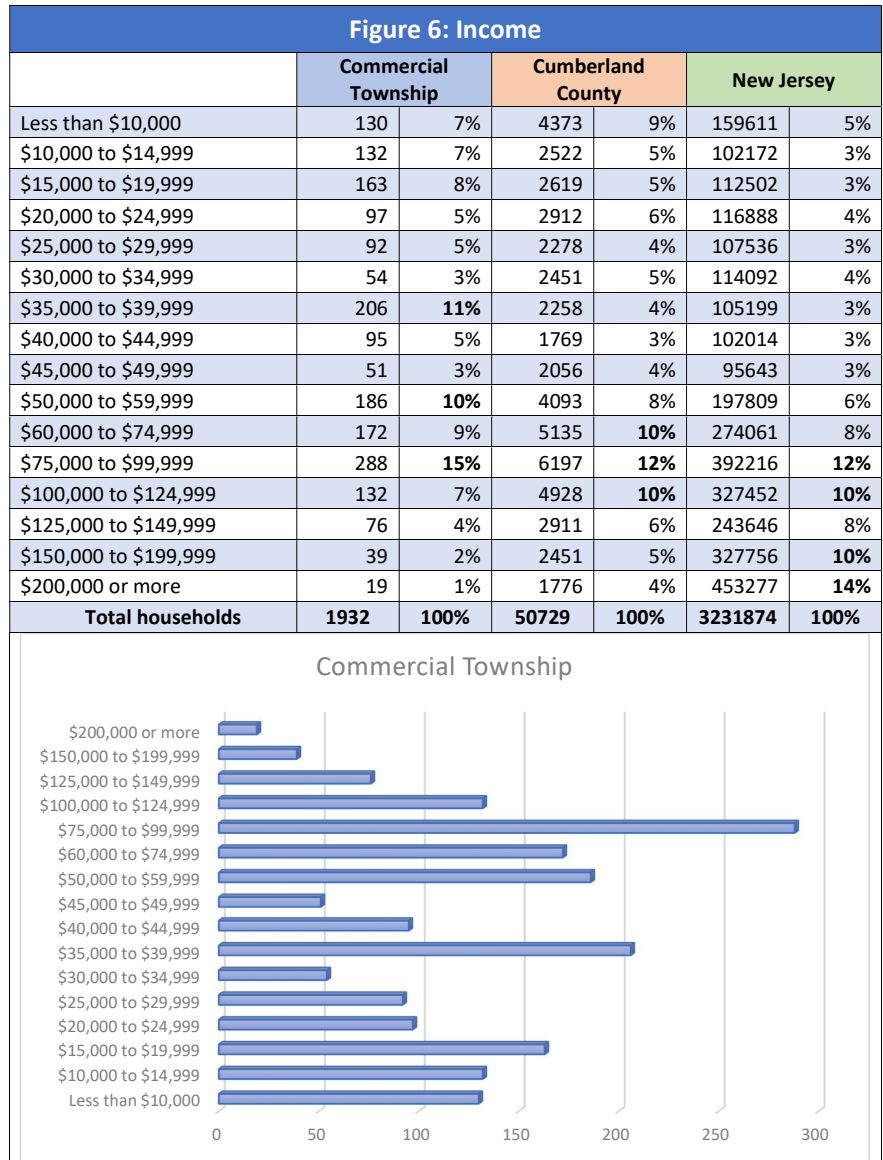
Figure 5: Workforce Industry

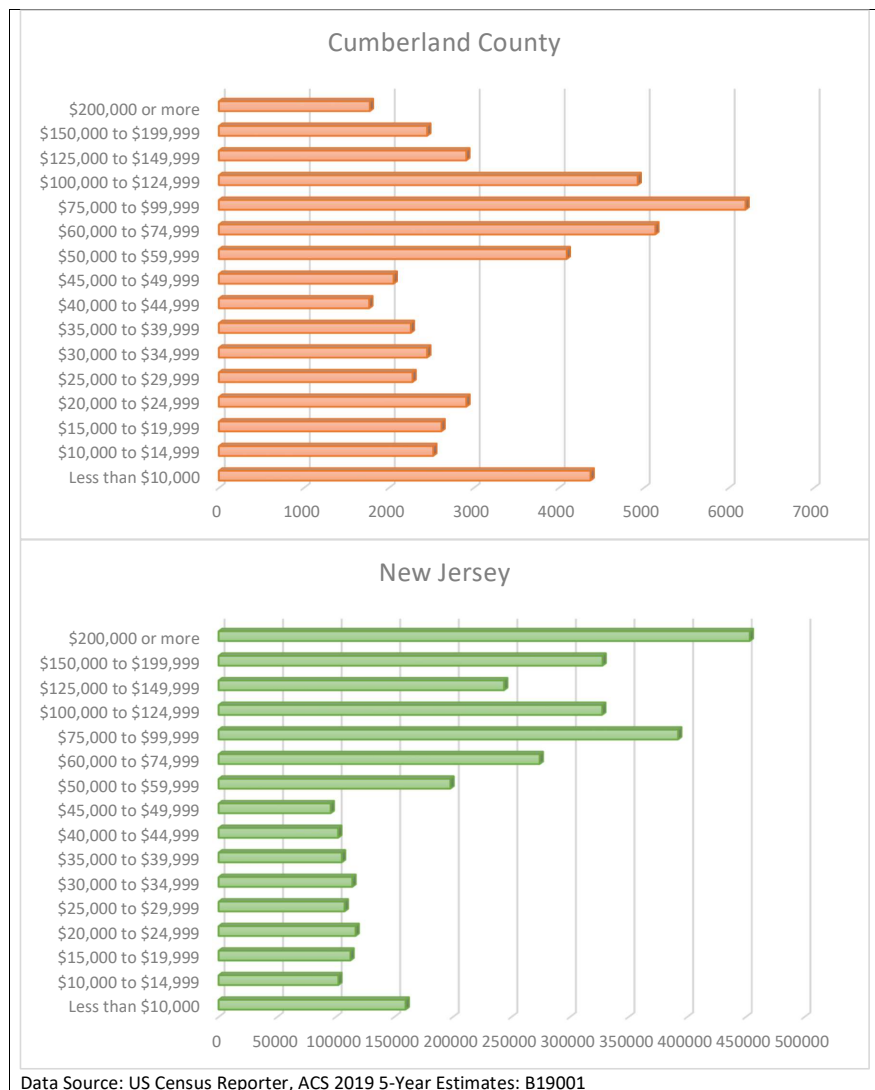
	Commercial Township	Cumberland County	New Jersey
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1988	60564	4422491
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	75	1443	14933
Construction	184	3530	262803
Manufacturing	104	8255	360551
Wholesale trade	66	2419	147261
Retail trade	339	6745	481529
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	140	2202	270949
Information	0	412	119077
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	17	2235	375112
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	194	6356	596872
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	489	15817	1056207
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	146	4389	358882
Other services, except public administration	108	2049	191334
Public administration	126	4712	186981



Another planning concern for the Township with relation to demographics is the low household income in Commercial. The 2010 census lists Commercial as below the County average in all indicators of income and poverty, including household income, family income, per capita income and mean social security income. As seen in Figure 1, Commercial's median household income of \$44,856 was one of the lowest in Cumberland County which, in turn, is the poorest county in New Jersey with a median income of only \$54,587, \$31,164 below the median of \$85,751 statewide.

As seen in Figure 6, 34% of Commercial Township's population makes \$50,000 to \$99,999 where 32% of Cumberland Counties population make \$60,000 to \$124,999 and 42% of the states population make \$100,000 to more than \$200,000. This shows the average of the Township is in a significantly lower income bracket than both the County and State.

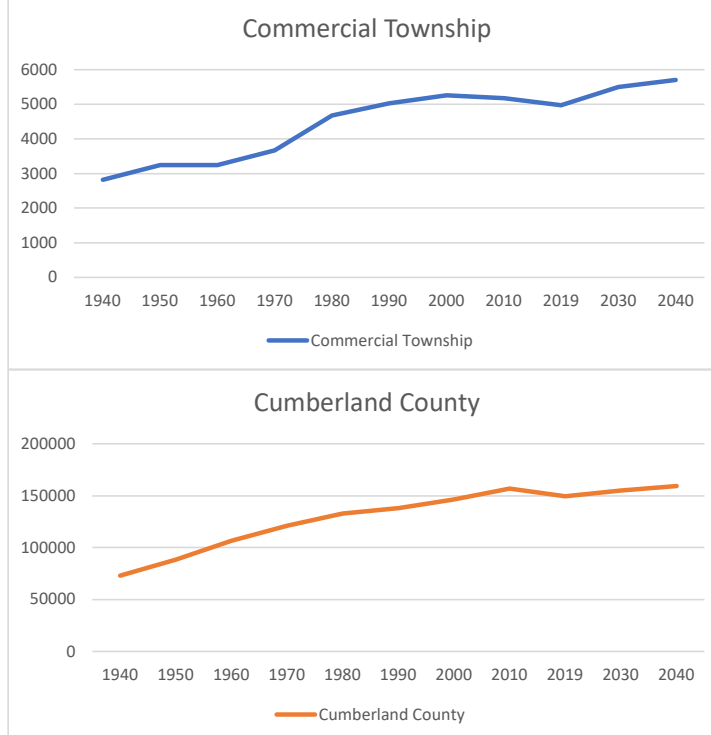




Inventory of Key Characteristics

Figure 7: Population Projections

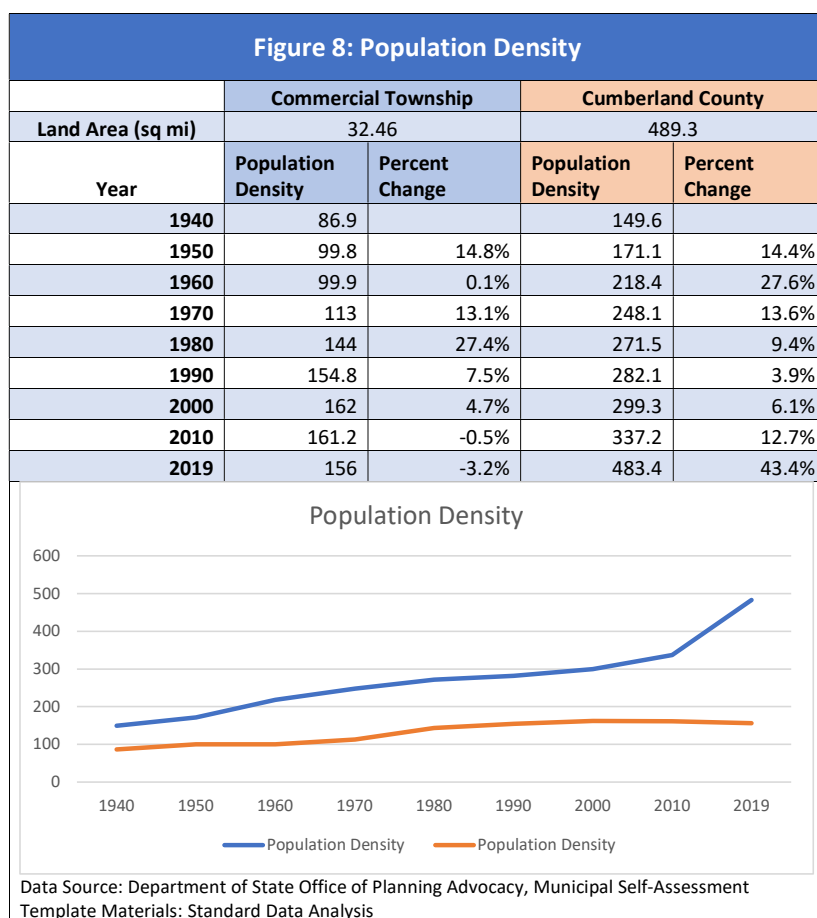
Year	Commercial Township	Percent Change	Cumberland County	Percent Change	New Jersey	Percent Change
1940	2822		73184		4160165	
1950	3238	14.7%	88597	21.1%	4835329	16.2%
1960	3244	0.2%	106850	20.6%	6066782	25.5%
1970	3667	13.0%	121374	13.6%	7171112	18.2%
1980	4674	27.5%	132866	9.5%	7365011	2.7%
1990	5026	7.5%	138053	3.9%	7730188	5.0%
2000	5259	4.6%	146438	6.1%	8414350	8.9%
2010	5178	-1.5%	156,898	7.1%	8791894	4.5%
2019	4979	-3.8%	149527	-4.7%	8929900	1.6%
2030	5500	10.5%	154899	3.6%	9363317	4.9%
2040	5700	3.6%	159523	3.0%	9470012	1.1%



Data Source: US Census, New Jersey State Data Center New Jersey Population Trends, South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization Regional Transportation Plan 2050, NJ Plan Endorsement Standard Analysis Data

The population of Commercial Township showed a steady increase since the 1940s through 2000. Determining an area's population natural increases or decreases is revealed through records of births and deaths coupled with the impact of migration, both in and out, of the community. The patterns of Commercial Township's population appear to mirror both local and national trends.

In analyzing the population changes shown in Figure 7 above, while the overall net result has been an increasing population, the growth was marked by a notable loss in population in the past two decades. Commercial Township, like all but three municipalities in Cumberland County, is losing population. The population loss between 2000 and 2010 is about 1.5% and 2010 to 2019 is 3.8%. These population losses could signify a need for growth and development through centers designation. The median age increased from 34 years to 37.3 years between 2000 and 2010 with the two most popular age demographics noted being 30 to 39 and 50 to 59 in the 2019 Census. An aging in place population has particular importance in terms of the Township planning for the future.



One quarter of Commercial Township's population is considered as living below the federal poverty level. In addition, over one third (34%) of children under 18 years are living in poverty in Commercial. This is double the New Jersey level and almost 1.4 times the County level. The land use and economic development impacts on the Township from sustained and entrenched poverty affect Township housing, education, recreation, and senior care.

Figure 9: Mortgage Status

	Commercial Township	Cumberland County	New Jersey
Housing with a mortgage, contract to purchase, or similar debt:	701	20598	1366281
With either a second mortgage or home equity loan, but not both:	70	1650	187921
Second mortgage only	37	168	22178
Home equity loan only	33	1482	156743
Both second mortgage and home equity loan	0	49	4826
No second mortgage and no home equity loan	631	18899	1182534
Housing units without a mortgage	627	13206	715517
Data Source: US Census Reporter, ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates: B25081			

Figure 10: Mortgage Status by Monthly Housing Costs as a Percentage of Household Income

	Commercial Township		Cumberland County		New Jersey	
	With a mortgage:	Not mortgaged:	With a mortgage:	Not mortgaged:	With a mortgage:	Not mortgaged:
Less than \$20,000:	98	114	916	1858	33419	57871
Less than 20 percent	0	0	0	0	0	2898
20 to 29 percent	0	0	0	65	0	2429
30 percent or more	98	114	916	1793	33419	52544
\$20,000 to \$34,999:	78	66	1506	1947	56447	82028
Less than 20 percent	0	28	0	146	443	8285
20 to 29 percent	0	23	154	445	864	14217
30 percent or more	78	15	1352	1356	55140	59526
\$35,000 to \$49,999:	120	97	1861	1680	73112	68278
Less than 20 percent	0	41	4	637	1130	14739
20 to 29 percent	24	56	178	979	6107	26846
30 percent or more	96	0	1679	64	65875	26693
\$50,000 to \$74,999:	133	125	4872	2755	160005	114588
Less than 20 percent	35	110	312	2323	9333	62429
20 to 29 percent	67	15	1526	382	34458	38580
30 percent or more	31	0	3034	50	116214	13579
\$75,000 or more:	257	204	11420	4872	1039508	387221
Less than 20 percent	215	204	6732	4872	512649	363322
20 to 29 percent	42	0	3686	0	353433	20840
30 percent or more	0	0	1002	0	173426	3059
Zero or negative income	15	21	23	94	3790	5531
Total	701	627	20598	13206	1366281	715517

Data Source: US Census Reporter, ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates: B25101

Puerto Rican Hispanics predominant in Cumberland County, accounting for 15.4% of those claiming Latino heritage. Hispanics identifying as Mexican continue to increase in the County with 9.4% of the total County population having a Mexican background. This differentiation is important for planning because, by and large, the Puerto Rican population in Cumberland County are English speaking and, of course, are US citizens by birth.

Commercial Township has a small, but growing percentage of Hispanics with 316 persons reporting Hispanic heritage in the 2010 census which is 6.1% of the total Township population and 434 in 2020. This is an increase from 2000 when just 3.9% (203 persons) reported as Hispanic. Almost three quarters of Latinos in Commercial Township identify as Puerto Rican with only just over 10% of Hispanics identifying as Mexican.

Educational attainment is important for employment and related to income. Commercial Township has improved from 2000 in terms of the percentage of high school and bachelor's degree among the population. In the 2000 census, just 63.9% of the Township population had a high school degree. The 2010 census reports an increase to 77.2%. In general, Commercial Township's population is better educated than the County as a whole, as seen in Figure 11. A continued increase in educational attainment should make the Township's labor pool more employable.

Figure 11: Population by Minimum Level of Education

	Commercial Township	Percent Change	Cumberland County	Percent Change	New Jersey	Percent Change
No degree	775	22.83%	24703	23.44%	702498	11.61%
High School	1563	46.04%	41327	39.22%	1743267	28.80%
Some College	898	26.45%	24829	23.56%	1406718	23.24%
Bachelor's	119	3.51%	10381	9.85%	1362013	22.50%
Post-grad	40	1.18%	4139	3.93%	838125	13.85%
TOTAL	3395		105379		6052621	

Data Source: American Community Survey 2014-15: B15002

Commercial Township is right on par with the County and State percentages of owner vs renter occupied dwellings. The Township's renter occupied rate is only 2.5% higher than the Counties and 3% higher than the states.

Figure 12: Population in Occupied Housing Units by Tenure

	Commercial Township	Percent Change	Cumberland County	Percent Change	New Jersey	Percent Change
Owner Occupied	3150	63.52%	90858	65.97%	5771159	66.32%
Renter Occupied	1809	36.48%	46878	34.03%	2930544	33.68%
TOTAL	4959		137736		8701703	

Data Source: US Census Reporter: B25008

The Township's renter occupied statistic would be more positive for the Township except that fully one quarter of the Township's housing stock is made up of mobile homes. The value and resale potential of a mobile home is not as advantageous an asset to the homeowner as the value of a conventional home. The median value of housing in Commercial Township is 80% of the County's median value and only 40% of the value of homes across New Jersey. The high percentage of mobile homes in the Township is an indicator of the struggle that Township citizens have in terms of employment and mobility. The low value of residential property impacts the Township's tax base and its ability to develop economic footholds.

Figure 13: Value of Owner-Occupied Housing Units

	Commercial Township	Percent Change	Cumberland County	Percent Change	New Jersey	Percent Change
Under \$100K	444	33.82%	6270	19.03%	104788	5.15%
\$100K - \$200K	664	50.57%	16511	50.11%	312341	15.36%
\$200K - \$300K	154	11.73%	7305	22.17%	461574	22.69%
\$300K - \$400K	14	1.07%	1743	5.29%	430539	21.17%
\$400K - \$500K	31	2.36%	566	1.72%	267880	13.17%
\$500K - \$1M	6	0.46%	441	1.34%	412605	20.28%
Over \$1M	0	0.00%	113	0.34%	44401	2.18%
TOTAL	1313		32949		2034128	

Data Source: US Census Reporter: B25075

While changes in the social and demographic makeup of Commercial Township have not been tremendous, there are several trends which should be considered in terms of achieving the Master Plan's goals and objectives. The Township has historically been poorer and more rural than the County and State and this has not changed. However, the persistence of poverty and poor housing should be taken into consideration in any assumptions the Township may make in terms of economic development and land use. The increase in school age children who must be supported from the property tax base has an enormous impact on the Township's ability to move forward with its goals.

Redevelopment and rehabilitation areas

In 2011 a redevelopment study titled Landfill Solar Redevelopment Plan found Block 171, Lots 11.01 & 12 conform to the Statutory Criteria for Redevelopment Area designation. The analyses and findings contained in this Report of Findings conclude that the conditions in the Study Area exhibit, in the pertinent language of the New Jersey Local Redevelopment & Housing Law:

- A. Land that is owned by the Township, and unimproved vacant land that has remained so for a period of ten years, and that by reason of Location, Lack of Means of Access and Condition of the Soil, is not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital; thereby satisfying Statutory Criterion 'c' for the identified parcels.
- B. A lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, resulting in a stagnant or not fully productive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public welfare; thereby satisfying Statutory Criterion 'e' for the identified parcels.
- C. Lands deemed to be necessary for the effective Redevelopment of the Study Area; thereby satisfying the Statutory Definition of a Redevelopment Area for the identified parcel.

The New Jersey Local Redevelopment & Housing Law provides that an area may be found to be In Need of Redevelopment if it can be demonstrated that the conditions within the targeted area conform with ANY ONE (1) of the eight (8) Criteria specified in N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5.

Pursuant to the analyses and findings set forth herein, it is herewith recommended that the Commercial Township Land Use Board find, and upon such finding recommend to the Commercial Township Committee, that:

The individual parcels within the Landfill Study Area exhibit conditions which conform with, variously, Criterion 'c' and Criterion 'e' of the Local Redevelopment & Housing Law.

To the extent that the portion of the Snow Hill Road right-of-way created and dedicated in 2006 may be found not to conform with the Statutory Criterion required for Redevelopment Area designation, the exclusion of such lands from any resultant Redevelopment Area would significantly limit the Township's ability to (access and therefore) generate a comprehensive and effective Redevelopment Plan for the remaining, qualifying lands. The inclusion of such lands, if any, is therefore recommended as necessary for the effective redevelopment of the Study Area.

Based on the totality of the foregoing, it is herewith recommended that the Commercial Township Land Use Board find, and upon such finding recommend to the Commercial Township Committee, that the Landfill Study Area, in its entirety, be declared to be an Area in Need of Redevelopment in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5 and 6.

Should the Land Use Board make such a recommendation, and should the Township Committee designate the Landfill Study Area, or any part thereof, to be an Area In Need of Redevelopment, it is hereby recommended that the Township Committee authorize the preparation of a Redevelopment Plan for such Redevelopment Area.

In recognition of the environmentally-sensitive nature of Commercial Township signified by its Rural (PA~4) Planning Area classification under the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and consistent with Township Committee Resolution No. 2010-11096, it is recommended that any resultant Redevelopment Plan include specific provisions: 96 Exhibit 6

- A. limiting the end use of the Redevelopment Area, in-perpetuity, to Alternative / Renewable Energy Production, along with such ancillary uses as may be required therefore; and
- B. deed-restricting the Landfill to such use.

Status of Planning

Commercial Township completed its most recent Master Plan in 2006. A Reexamination of the Master Plan was completed in 2017. Commercial Township has made some progress in achieving or working toward its Master Plan objectives in areas such as agriculture, economic development, environmental protection, land use, housing, and recycling.

- Western/Southern Cumberland Region plan
- State Development and Redevelopment plan
- County Solid Waste Management plan
- NJ Delaware Bayshore Council
- County wide Hazard Mitigation Plan and Waste-Water Management Plan
- County lead initiatives
- Maurice River Management Plan (Wild & Scenic)
- Cumberland County Delaware Bayshore Recovery Plan
- Township of Commercial Natural Resources Inventory

COMMUNITY VISION & PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The 2006 Master Plan was developed by the Land Use Board over a three-year period which included monthly work sessions, a public participation program involving a questionnaire mailed to all Township properties, and six public meetings (two in each of the Township's three villages). In the questionnaire and public meetings, the public extolled the quality of life in Commercial Township. These concerns clearly identified and articulated fundamental issues of which largely reflected the maintenance of the quality of life related to public safety and health, continuance of its local character and history, concern that open space and natural resources be available to all, and the desire for the aesthetic protection of the valuable community assets, both natural and man-made. In short, the goal was to maintain a development pattern largely dictated by the natural environment, while at the same time providing the ability for the Township to be vital, adaptive and productive.

The community vision as stated in the master plan and reaffirmed in the 2017 Reexam:

1. Extensive environmental sensitivity of the Township's natural setting within which human settlement has coexisted and prospered for centuries;
2. Protection and enhancement of the unique character of the Township's three villages so that they can evolve and grow and develop a sustainable economic base with the natural bounty provided, and
3. Maintenance of a rural community that wishes to retain and protect both its natural and man-made assets thereby allowing the flourishing to flourish harmoniously together.

As part of the 2017 Reexamination Report of the Master Plan, Commercial Township conducted this review of its planning and development in accordance with the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) which requires each municipality in the State to re-examine its Master Plan and development regulations at least once every ten years. Commercial Township adopted a Master Plan in 2006 and this Re-examination is the first review. After adoption of the Reexamination by the Planning Board, a copy of this Reexamination shall be sent to the County Planning Board as well as to the Municipal Clerks of all adjoining municipalities.

The Township understands that it will need to involve its residents in the Plan Endorsement process. The Township plans to utilize its Green Team as its Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee (PEAC) which consists of its Environmental Commission with additional public members serving as the PEAC. The Green Team will be responsible for developing a community outreach and visioning plan, and the mayor will act as and support the Committee in implementing the plan.

The Township Green Team and additional public members making up this committee are as follows:

- Township Committee: Mike Vizzard (Mayor)
- Township Resident: Barney Hollinger
- Environmental Commission: John J. Nardone (Chairperson), Julie Gandy, Dale Schweitzer, Pat Smith, Lorraine Shourds, James J. D'Ambrosio, and Peter Manzelman

Being that the initial visioning included much public engagement and since land use patterns have not drastically changed since then, the Township plans to hold one additional visioning session with public participation to review the already set forth and defined community vision from the Master Plan and Reexamination. This session will be used to update and further define the current Township vision.

The Township wishes to seek waiver from the second visioning session being that a community vision is already defined and shall only need to be elaborated upon and updated.

RECENT AND UPCOMING DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The following table illustrates recent planning, zoning, and land use development activities within the Township over the past five years:

Resolution	Applicant	Block & Lot	Use
2016-08	US Silica Company	B 196, L 3	Resource Extraction
2016-09	Steven Veltman	B 169, L 6	Fencing
2016-10	Frank Wheaton, III	B 192, L 7 & 7.02	Redivision
2016-11	John Baglio Sr	B 180, L 8.01	Mounted Solar Array
2016-12	Unimin Corporation	B 172, L 1; B 173, L 2; B174, L 1-6; B 269, L 1.02 & 1.02	Resource Extraction
2016-13	US Silica Company	B 199, L 22 & 23; B 215, L 1, 32, 33, 34 & 36; B 215, L 1 & 74	Resource Extraction
2017-08	Unimin Corporation	B 182, L 1; B 200, L 3, 4, 5, 5.01, 6	Mining/extraction of sand
2017-09	Unimin Corporation	B 199, L 10; B 200, L 1, 17, 18	Mining/extraction of sand
2017-10	Vertical Bridge Development LLC	B 206, L 23	Wireless Communication Facility
2018-08	Ricci Bros Sand Company, Inc	B 215, L 75 & 76	Resource Extraction
2018-09	Township of Commercial	B 61, L 1 & 1.01	Minor Subdivision
2018-12	Unimin Corporation	B 179, L 1, 2, 3, 23 & 24	Mining/extraction of sand
2018-13	Vertical Bridge Development LLC	B 206, L 23	Wireless Communication Facility
2018-14	Township of Commercial	B 61, L 1 & 1.01	Revision of Minor Subdivision
2018-15	Township of Commercial	B 244, L 4 & 7	Redivision
2018-16	George & Tammy Beatty	B 112, L 6645 & 6647	Redivision
2018-17	Robert G. Johnson	B 177, L 5	Bed & Breakfast
2018-18	Township of Commercial	B 63, L 1	Rezoning per Whibeo, Inc
2019-09	Port Norris Properties, LLC	B 223, L 17 & 17.01	Sand Barging Operation
2020-08	Kim Nguyen	B 186, L 3	Fencing
2020-09	Silvi Concrete of Chester County, LLC d/b/a Sahara Sand of Port Norris	B 215, L 75 & 76	Resource Extraction
2020-10	Eagles Lake Reserve, Inc d/b/a Port Sahara	B 226, L 6, 6.01, 7 & 7.01	Sand Barging Operation
2020-11	Jack Blizzard	B 240, L 4	Single Family Home
2020-12	US Silica Company	B 196, L 3 & B 197, L 1	Resource Extraction

2020-13	Covia Holdings	B 170, L 10.01, 10.02, 11, 12 7 13; B 171, L 9, 10, 11 & 11.01, B 173, L 4; B 269, L 2 & 3	Resource Extraction
2021-08	Richard Lloyd & Vicki Lynn Lloyd	B 167, L 13.01, 13 & 14	Redivision
2021-09	Mark R. Sheppard	B 170, L 6 & 7	Redivision
2021-10	Shirley Bollinger	B 72, L 6	Single Family Home
2021-11	Silvi Concrete of Chester County, LLC	B 215, L 1; B 325, L 1; B 2++, L 22	Resource Extraction

STATEMENT OF PLANNING COORDINATION

The 2006 Master Plan included a detailed Statement of Plan Relationships, which highlighted the Township's policy of coordinating development with all surrounding municipalities. The Master Plan brings special attention of those surrounding municipalities to Commercial Township and the zoning and land use requirements directly adjacent to the borders of the Township and how they relate to zoning designations within the Township. Those municipalities with borders to the Township or potential regulations affecting the Township are:

- Downe Township - Along the entire western border of Commercial Township
- City of Millville - To the north of Commercial Township
- Township of Maurice River - opposite and across the Maurice River, the entire distance
- Cumberland County
- Western/Southern Cumberland Region plan
- State Development and Redevelopment plan
- County Solid Waste Management plan
- NJ Delaware Bayshore Council
- County wide Hazard Mitigation Plan and Waste-Water Management Plan
- County lead initiatives
- Maurice River Management Plan (Wild & Scenic)
- Cumberland County Delaware Bayshore Recovery Plan

STATE, FEDERAL & OTHER PROGRAMS, GRANTS AND CAPITAL PROJECTS

The following table illustrates state, federal and other capital improvement projects that the Township has applied for and completed within the past five years:

Year	Project	Funding Source	Funding
2022	Mill & Overlay of Cumberland County Route 553 (Main Street)	NJDOT Focal Freight Impact Fund	Pending
2022	Reconstruction of Yock Wock Road and High Street	NJDOT Focal Freight Impact Fund	Pending
2022	Reconstruction of Cobb Street and Brown Street	NJDOT Municipal Aid	\$ 310,000.00
2021	Reconstruction of Keron Drive and Parsons Lane	NJDOT Municipal Aid	\$ 280,000.00
2020	Reconstruction of Red Fern Drive	NJDOT Municipal Aid	\$ 305,070.00
2019 & 2020	Port Norris Riverfront Road Improvements - Phase 1 & 2	NJDOT Focal Freight Impact Fund	\$ 2,100,000.00
2019	Reconstruction of Whittier Drive, Iris Road and Magnolia Drive	NJDOT Municipal Aid	\$ 291,164.00
2018	Port Norris Drainage Improvement - Phase 1	NJDOT Municipal Aid	\$ 425,000.00
2017	Reconstruction of Berry Avenue and Lakeshore Drive	Township Funded	\$ 235,182.61
2017	Laurel Lake Drainage Improvements - Phase 3	NJDOT Municipal Aid	\$ 213,044.00
2016	Haleyville Street Lighting Improvements	Township Funded	\$ 188,550.00
2016	Reconstruction of Raymond Drive - Phase 3	NJDOT Municipal Aid	\$ 181,000.00
2015	Reconstruction of Doris Drive & Maurice Avenue	NJDOT Municipal Aid	\$ 170,000.00

SUSTAINABILITY/RESILIENCY STATEMENT

Sustainability

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, “sustainability is based on a simple principle: Everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. To pursue sustainability is to create and maintain the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony to support present and future generations.”

There is a rhythm and pattern to Bayshore life which is closely understood by the residents of Cumberland County's municipalities. They are active communities that represent how the settlement of America occurred; small settlements dependent upon their environment. The Master Plan specifically envisioned Commercial Township continuing to adapt that historic process while evolving even as it preserves and protects its own special landscape.

The community's traditional industries are dependent upon the natural environment of the Townships location. Earth extraction, shell fishing (historically oysters), sand barging, and farming have and continue to be sources of employment. However, they are being directly impacted by a variety of governmental regulations, public land acquisition and continued public and private advocacy for conservation. State protection of coastal areas and freshwater wetlands, public and private purchase of lands for open space, conservation and land use regulatory measures proscribe where new development can occur and add to the complexity of determining and planning for the community's future.

The Township has an Environmental Commission Committee which meets once a month to review and make recommendations on environmental issues for Commercial Township. The Commission will review some Land Use Board applications that impact the environment and make recommendation to the Land Use Board.

Most recently, the Township recognized that the Commission completed a project to plant 500 Milkweeds throughout the Township in the summer of 2018. This project, funded through the Sustainable Jersey Program, was undertaken to provide food for the Monarch Butterflies on their migration as they pass through the township. We expect to see an increase in monarchs in the coming years.

The Townships Environmental Commission encourages programs like these as well as ensures development within the Township reduces environmental impact. The Commission will continue to promote environmental growth and sustainability to preserve such an environmental sensitive area. The Township relies of the Commission to protect the environment to which it calls home for so many of its industries.

The Commercial Township Green Team was officially established on June 17, 2012 in order to promote Sustainable New Jersey initiatives. We have partnered with the Commercial Township Environmental Commission on several projects, including a paper shredding event during the Township Bay Day festival in June, 2014 and June 2015. The Green Team has worked with the township recycling coordinator to improve the recycling depot including more visible signage. We reached out to a local sand plant to convert clean 55 gallon drums to rain barrels for the community. Long-term goals of the Green Team include working with the Public Works Department on making our fleet of vehicles more energy efficient. Our trash collection service now utilize propane vehicles. We worked with the local chamber of commerce to replace an unsightly mix of different signs at a main intersection with an attractive and easier to read sign directing residents to local churches. Long term goals include continuing our plastic bag recycling project and expanding to eventually eliminate plastic bag use entirely. We encourage the use of reusable bags and will provide cloth bags to residents at the Bay Day celebration in June . Our most important long term goal is to develop programs for the community that will encourage environmental awareness and responsibility. We will partner with the local school district to implement an environmental education program and will also examine the recycling efforts of the schools in our

area. The members of the Green Team are Julie Gandy, Jim D'Ambrosio , Amy Wright, Pat Smith, John Nardone and Richard Smith.

Commercial Township adopted the Sustainable Land Use Pledge on Feb. 21, 2013 to reinforce our commitment to land use decisions that will increase the sustainability of our municipality. This Land Use Pledge was distributed to our Land Use Board, our Administration offices, our buildings and grounds personnel and our code enforcement office. Additionally, Commercial Township works with our engineering firm on expanding our offerings of sustainable transportation choices. We have applied for a Complete Streets grant, and though not successful we will continue this effort. We would like to have sidewalks along the street that leads to the Port Norris Middle School so that students will be encouraged to safely walk to school. Commercial Township is currently partnering with neighboring municipality Maurice River Township on a Rails to Trails project that will construct a bike path on abandoned train tracks. The lead agency on this project is the Cumberland County Planning Department. We are also working with local non-profit Bayshore Discovery Project on this endeavor. Commercial Township also partners with PSEG on an their Estuary Enhancement Project. Situated along the southern New Jersey shoreline of the Delaware Estuary, the Commercial Township Salt Hay Farm Wetland Restoration Site covers approximately 4,171 acres in Cumberland County and is the largest EEP wetland restoration site. The site includes the preservation of 339 acres of upland buffer habitat and the preservation, restoration and/or enhancement of 2,894 acres of previously diked wetlands. Enhancement began in 1996 and was completed in 1997 with the return of daily tidal flow to the site. The EEP also provided the township with two boardwalks, an observation platform , nature trail, car-top boat launch, three parking areas and most importantly a New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route Site.

[Township Resiliency](#) [Wetlands](#)

The majority of the Township is composed of hydric soils and wetlands. The water table in Commercial Township is very high, either continually or seasonally, in much of the municipality's land area. As such, these lands are severely limited in their ability to permit most land use activities ranging from farming to various types of development.

Recognizing the importance of these natural recharge, habitat, and storm protection areas and that ever increasing encroachment upon them was destroying an important natural asset, the Federal government began to impose regulations on wetlands. In 1988, Federal jurisdiction over wetlands and their protection was ceded to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The NJDEP regulates the use of wetlands, requiring identification of any wetlands proposed for development and where found, has required the establishment of transitional buffer standards since the year 1989. In 1994, the Federal government gave its last regulatory control over to the NJDEP, by granting the NJDEP the sole agency in the state responsible for administering permits through the Clean Water Act, Section 404. Today the NJDEP has total regulatory control over wetlands.

[Flood Prone Areas](#)

The three components of a "flood hazard" are identified as: 1) the stream channel, which is the normal bed of the stream containing the normal flows; 2) the floodway, which is the area on either side of the stream which must be kept free of obstruction in order to contain flows from the 100-year flood and 3)

the flood fringe or 500-year level. It is not recommended that any of the flood hazard area be developed; however, the State allows certain exceptions in flood fringe areas.

Like all municipalities, Commercial Township has adopted ordinances that implement and enforce state statutes, including engineering details to minimize flood damage and adhere to net fill requirements. Municipalities may adopt stricter ordinances, for instance, requiring that no net fill be placed in the flood plain, as opposed to the 20% limitation imposed by the NJDEP.

The potential from flooding is significant in areas of Commercial Township. Land use regulations should take into account design standards that will minimize or perhaps avoid serious damage to property and control land use activities to avoid placing inhabitants or visitors in areas prone to flooding and unnecessary danger. Given the potential for saturated soils and poor drainage, and given the soil types and their characteristics as found in the Township, caution must also be exercised in land use planning and flood prevention or mitigation.

The Township has undergone a series of infrastructure improvements in a handful of its most flood prone areas. These efforts included raising the roads and installing significantly updated and increased drainage structures and facilities.

Stream Corridors and River Conservation

Another concern related to water as it affects a community's environment and appearance is stream corridors. Commercial Township has a number of streams including: Buckshutem Creek, Gravelly Run, Steep Run, Hayes Branch, Sheppards Branch, Cranberry Gut, Lands Branch, Bowkers Run, Dickey's Ditch, Clay Branch, Goff's Creek, Hansey Creek, and Little Hansey Creek. Some are tidal and many are freshwater.

The lands located along the Maurice River offer broad vistas of the river, its attendant wetlands, and marshes. In some locations from south of Laurel Lake to Mauricetown the land elevation enhances the view. Protecting and preserving these scenic vistas will maintain the Township's identity and interconnection with the River that has shaped its development. Much of the land along the River has been preserved by State and non-profit organizations. Scenic vistas are still visible from along Buckshutem Road where non-protected lands can still be developed and possibly precluding the scenic vista from the land and the river.

The Maurice River was included in the Nationwide Rivers Inventory and found to be eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. In 1987, that designation was made along 42.5 miles of the Maurice River, Manumuskin River, Menantico Creek and Muskee Creek. This included all of the Maurice River abutting Commercial Township.

The Local Management Plan for the Maurice River and its Tributaries, prepared by the Cumberland County Department of Planning and Development, recommended that a local river conservation zone be established along the entire length of the Maurice River. Adoption of such zoning was identified in the Plan as the "... first step in protecting the nationally significant river-related resources". A river conservation overlay district was enacted across the River in Maurice River Township and it is recommended the same be adopted along the Commercial Township side.

Many of the streams, especially in the northern portion of the Township, are also now under State ownership. There are also several streams in the Township with portions of their paths having anti-degradation and Water Category designation by the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection. These designations indicate a concern with the particular stream ecological importance or for water supply reasons requiring an enhanced level of protection. As such, development is set back about 300 feet from these streams by State regulation.

Within the Township the following waterways have such designations:

- Gravelly Run (ON): Outstanding National Resource, Water Category is FW-1 Non-Trout.
- Steep Run west of Snow Hill Road designated (ON), Water Category is FW-1 Non-Trout
- Steep Run east of Snow Hill Road designated (CI), Water Category is FW-2 Non-Trout
- Buckshutem Creek (CI), Water Category is FW-2 Non-Trout

Of these waterways so designated for their water quality, only the Steep Run east of Snow Hill Road are unprotected from development and in private ownership. The rest are owned by the NJDEP.

Soils – Suitability and Capability

The Soils Survey for Cumberland County identifies soil associations which are aggregated groups of soils. Commercial Township has four major soil associations. The Aura-Downer-Sassafras association is comprised of nearly level to sloping, well-drained, loamy, sandy, and gravelly soils. It is found in the northwest corner of the Township including the Laurel Lake area.

The center of the Township is composed of two associations. The largest in area is the Hammonton-Fallsington-Pocomoke association. These loamy and sandy soils are in areas nearly level to gently sloping and are well-drained. Interspersed within this association is the MuckAtison-Berryland association in three locations: a small area south of Laurel Lake and east of Buckshutem Road, a second larger one south of Mauricetown inland from and along the Maurice River, and a third area northeast of Port Norris. These areas have organic and sandy soils and are located on lowlands. They are nearly level and poorly to very poorly drained.

The fourth association is shown as a narrow band along the entire length of the Maurice River which widens out considerably just south of Port Norris over to the Downe Township line and is referred to as the Tidal Marsh association. This is described as nearly level, poorly drained and very poorly drained, silky and mucky tidal flats that are subject to daily flooding, on lowlands.

The Cumberland County Agricultural Development Board had identified only one area within the Township which appeared to meet the criteria for farmland preservation. It was located in the vicinity of Sockwell Avenue. However, this area has been recently subdivided and development is occurring such that the area is no longer considered a priority for preservation. There are however, approximately 182± acres of farmland that is preserved in the Township, according to County records.

Although the farmland preservation program may not give priority to any particular site or area, the Township's soils have, can, and will continue to be farmed. Assuring this continuity is a concern of planning and of the area's residents, as noted in their survey questionnaire responses. The County Soil Survey notes, with management and advanced farming techniques or best practices, suggest that agriculture is viable and even profitable. Farmland gives a rural character to a community and it provides

foodstuffs and other products, jobs, and open space. Protecting and perpetuating farming within the Township is desirable and beneficial.

Farming should be preserved and protected within the Township and land use regulations should include right to farm language. In addition, other measures aimed at buffering or protecting farming from encroachment by development should be enacted to help ensure that agriculture will remain a viable industry in the Township.

Commented [WM1]: 1984 ordinance in place – review for current accepted language

Conservation Planning and Regulation

In considering the need for conservation and protection of valuable resources, it is obvious that where and how development is permitted will depend on the ability of the land to support that development. Furthermore, and given our collective understanding of the role nature plays in maintaining the quality of life in an area, making land use decisions cannot overlook or neglect significant environmental aspects of an area. In New Jersey, a state that has come to realize the impact of unbridled sprawl, a number of public actions have been taken to assure that a balance between natural and man-made environments is maintained. The legislation that authorizes planning in New Jersey, the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:44D-1 et seq.), stipulates in its enumerated listing of purposes (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2) those which encourage planning to address the protection of the natural environment for public health and to assure the ecological balance necessary for environmental protection. Six of the law's stated purposes address conservation of the natural environment as follows:

- a) To encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in this State, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare;
- b) To secure safety from fire, flood, panic and other natural and manmade disasters;
- c) To provide adequate air, light and open space;
- d) To promote the establishment of appropriate population densities and concentrations that will contribute to the well-being of persons, neighbor-hoods, communities and regions and preservation of the environment;
- e) To provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses and open space, both public and private, according to their respective environmental requirements in order to meet the needs of all New Jersey citizens; and
- f) To promote the conservation of historic sites and districts, open space, energy resources and valuable natural resources in the State and to prevent urban sprawl and degradation of the environment through improper use of lands.

Providing for a continuing supply of safe drinking water is just one area where it is obvious that a municipality must control its development. Land use regulations must take into account the need to assure that adequate safe drinking water is and will be available and that the replenishment of that water will not be impeded or compromised by land use decisions or activities. Conversely, permitting growth to occur to the extent that its water demand will exceed or rapidly deplete existing supplies must also be considered. Both the State Planning Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection have promulgated planning policies and regulations aimed at protecting groundwater supplies and assuring their continued sufficiency.

CAFRA

The Coastal Areas Development Review Act (CAFRA) controls development within a prescribed area adjacent to coastal areas. Approximately 15,429± acres of the Township are within the CAFRA area and subject to its regulation. This equals approximately 70% of the Township. Land use decisions must be cognizant of the impact of development on coastal areas and coastal areas' threat to development.

From the standpoint of planning, all levels of government have become involved in conservation and/or environmental planning. Various Federal and State agencies, departments, and special area planning organizations have been established to protect and preserve areas of environmental importance.

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan calls for capacity-based land use planning. In essence this involves examining the future build-out of proposed land uses at specific intensities and measure same against the potential of natural and man-made systems to accommodate such growth. The goal is to develop a land use plan wherein proposed land uses will be permitted at levels of intensity that will not overwhelm natural or man-made systems and thereby incurring huge capital costs to prevent environmental, health, and safety issues from arising.

In a municipality like Commercial Township, that depends on natural systems, there is a real challenge since those natural systems are in some instances already overwhelmed. A number of responses to the Township survey questionnaire noted problems with on-site septic disposal and contamination of water supplies. The fact that man-made solutions are very difficult from ecological, fiscal, or community development standpoints makes the planning task that much more of a challenge.

Over the last few decades a number of environmental regulations have been promulgated along with preservation programs. These have significantly reduced or stopped development on or from encroaching upon certain types of environmentally sensitive lands. Many have been State imposed, such as stream encroachment (development within the flood plain), freshwater wetlands, coastal areas development, water withdrawals, and effluent disposal. Some municipalities have also taken the initiative and imposed regulations requiring stream setbacks, scenic corridors, prohibitions on development or site disturbance next to streams and bodies of water, prohibiting fill in flood plains, imposing agricultural buffers, and other types of regulations aimed at protecting identifiable environmental assets from degradation or loss.

Today, most of those involved in planning and development regulation recognize the need for and agree with the purpose of protecting environmentally sensitive lands. Once such assets are lost, it is difficult, expensive, and perhaps even impossible to fully restore them. As has been noted, preventing the use of lands that are not suited for development or which serve important ecological purposes like flood protection, provision of open space, water supply recharge, and other natural functions of various natural landscapes is cost effective in innumerable ways.

CONSISTENCY SECTION

Local & Regional Planning

Commercial Township works with the Cumberland County Planning Department and is consistent with County and Regional planning goals. The Township works closely coordinating development with all surrounding municipalities. Those municipalities with borders to the Township or potential regulations affecting the Township are:

- Downe Township - Along the entire western border of Commercial Township
- City of Millville - To the north of Commercial Township
- Township of Maurice River - opposite and across the Maurice River, the entire distance
- Cumberland County

The Township also works closely to ensure consistency with these surrounding municipalities as well as the County and State on planning and zoning regulations and plans such as:

- Western/Southern Cumberland Region plan
- State Development and Redevelopment plan
- County Solid Waste Management plan
- NJ Delaware Bayshore Council which coordinates planning, projects and advocacy with adjoining Bayshore communities, the county and regional NGOS
- Participation in the county wide Hazard Mitigation Plan and Waste Water Management Plan as well as other county lead initiatives like the Bike plan, etc.
- Maurice River Management Plan (Wild & Scenic)
- Cumberland County Delaware Bayshore Recovery Plan

State Plan – Goals, Policies & Indicators

Below are the 8 Goals & Strategies of the State Plan, aligned with relevant Policies and Indicators. This plan will describe and address each of the Goals and Strategies and how the endorsement will be consistent with each one and how it supports the State's efforts to achieve its targets for relevant indicators.

The overall vision of the Master Plan was to preserve and carry on the quality of life which embodies the Township. The Master Plan sums up this perception of community character as:

1. A sensitive natural environment within which a rural community has existed and prospered by coexisting and utilizing that environment.
2. Maintenance of the historical village center development pattern and rural character with emphasis on their ability to evolve and grow and develop a sustainable economic base based on their environment.
3. Harmony between nature and human settlement which has been the basis and foundation of the unique Bayshore life.

In general, the Master Plan comprises two overall goals which are to focus on utilizing the natural wealth of the land and coastal waters while correspondingly managing them carefully and balancing human activity with concern for the environment. These goals are then rendered as specific objectives in six areas:

- Agriculture Preservation
- Economic Development
- Environmental Protection
- Land Use
- Housing
- Recycling

These specific objectives set forth in the Master Plan directly correlate to the State Plan. The consistency the Township has with the State Plan and Objectives are highlighted below in the goals and strategies set forth.

Goal 1: Revitalize the State's Cities and Towns

Analysis & Discussion:

The overall vision of the Master Plan was to preserve and carry on the quality of life which embodies the Township. The Master Plan sums up this perception of community character as:

4. A sensitive natural environment within which a rural community has existed and prospered by coexisting and utilizing that environment.
5. Maintenance of the historical village center development pattern and rural character with emphasis on their ability to evolve and grow and develop a sustainable economic base based on their environment.
6. Harmony between nature and human settlement which has been the basis and foundation of the unique Bayshore life.

As can be seen as a consistent tone set forth throughout this Municipal Self Assessment, the Master Plan and the Reexamination, the revitalization of the Towns within Commercial Township remain a key element of it's vision and goals.

Goal 2: Conserve the State's Natural Resources and System

Analysis & Discussion:

Commercial Township has a prominent wetlands conservation priority. As part of the Maurice, Salem and Cohansey Watershed Management Area, it is committed to the preservation of its waterways that contribute to the Maurice River, which has a federal Scenic Designation. Additionally, the Township has a very prominent shellfish and agricultural industry and therefore values the conservation of natural resources, lands and opens spaces.

Commercial Township is rich in natural beauty, bordered as it is by the Maurice River to the east and the Delaware Bay to the south. These two water bodies have extensive coastal marshes providing natural habitats for a wide variety of wildlife which is of importance both locally and globally. Inland, the Township also has a significant amount of environmentally sensitive lands including stream corridors, ponds and man-made bodies of water, tidal and freshwater wetlands, flood plains, and soils with high water tables.

Natural resources within and adjacent to the Township have historically and continue to be major industries including earth extraction or land mining, and fishing, both commercial and recreational. The land mining results from the extensive amount and quality of its soils for producing marketable sands and gravel. Historically, the shellfish industry, which was active from the mid-19th into the first half of 20th Century, was a huge employer and producer of considerable wealth, as evident in the opulent architectural heritage of the residences of Mauricetown and Port Norris. Although greatly diminished, this industry remains active, productive and potentially more viable today.

The Township has also received Bronze Certification in the Sustainable Jersey Certification Report. Commercial Township was certified on January 26, 2021 with 150 points. Commercial Townships Sustainable Jersey efforts and materials associated with the certified actions are as follows:

- Create a Green Team - During the current year the Green Team has partnered with municipal officials to install energy efficient lighting in municipal buildings and the installation of solar panels in three municipal buildings in the township.
- Community Education and Outreach - In 2019 we hosted a workshop, in partnership with ANJEC and the Bayshore Discovery Project on global warming.
- Municipal On-Site Solar System - Since 2017 solar panels have been placed at three public facilities: The township hall, both senior centers. A fourth site is being considered.
- Green Building Policy/Resolution - The Township of Commercial is committed to sustaining the natural resources of our area and has adopted a green building policy to encourage developers and residents to explore all the available options. The township has conducted an energy audit of all of its buildings and installed more efficient heaters, HVAC systems and lights.
- Innovative Community Project 2 - The Township has installed 83 energy efficient LED street lighting to replace the old high intensity discharge lighting along township owned roadways. This has substantially reduced our energy consumption which in turn has reduced the burden on tax payers. The lights were replaced within the past several months which doesn't allow enough time to make an adequate evaluation of savings.
- Innovative Community Project 3 - The Township installed 26 tree identification signs and various other signs indicating boat ramp, parking, and walking trail at Lake Audrey a 120 acre state park located in the township.
- Sustainable Land Use Pledge - Commercial Township adopted the Sustainable Land Use Pledge on Feb. 21, 2013 to reinforce our commitment to land use decisions that will increase the sustainability of our municipality. This Land Use Pledge was distributed to our Land Use Board, our Administration offices, our buildings and grounds personnel and our code enforcement office. Additionally, Commercial Township works with our engineering firm on expanding our offerings of sustainable transportation choices. We have applied for a Complete Streets grant, and though not successful we will continue this effort. We would like to have sidewalks along the street that leads to the Port Norris Middle School so that students will be encouraged to safely walk to school. Commercial Township is currently partnering with neighboring municipality Maurice River Township on a Rails to Trails project that will construct a bike path on abandoned train tracks. The lead agency on this project is the Cumberland County Planning Department. We are also working with local non-profit Bayshore Discovery Project on this endeavor. Commercial Township also partners with PSEG on an their Estuary Enhancement Project. Situated along the southern New Jersey shoreline of the Delaware Estuary, the Commercial Township Salt Hay Farm Wetland Restoration Site covers approximately 4,171 acres in Cumberland County and is the largest EEP wetland restoration site. The site includes the preservation of 339 acres of upland buffer habitat and the preservation, restoration and/or enhancement of 2,894 acres of previously diked wetlands. Enhancement began in 1996 and was completed in 1997 with the return of daily tidal flow to the site. The EEP also provided the township with two boardwalks, an observation platform, nature trail, car-top boat launch, three parking areas and most importantly a New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route Site.
- Environmental Commission - In 1988 Commercial Township established an Environmental Commission with the purpose of researching and compiling direct studies, including environmental resource inventories, water studies, energy audits and conservation easement inventories; reviewing development proposals and promoting long-range environmental

planning based on the capacity of the land and natural resources; conducting an inventory and preservation plan for open space; informing residents through educational programs, displays, publications and meetings; and work with neighboring commissions and other organizations to address regional and state-wide environmental problems. The Commercial Township Environmental Commission is an active member of ANJEC, the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions.

- Environmental Commission Site Plan Review - The Environmental Commission makes use of the Natural Resource Inventory in reviewing all applications for development in the township. This information allows for an informed evaluation of potential environmental impacts of private and subdivision development.
- Tree Protection Ordinance - In 2014 the Environmental Commission drafted a Tree protection ordinance for Commercial Township.
- Prescription Drug Safety and Disposal - The population of Commercial Township is made up of many senior citizens who use a variety of prescription drugs. To encourage proper disposal of these drugs, we posted notices in post offices, churches, restaurants, stores and the local senior center directing people to the local police barracks. The Port Norris Police barracks has a system in place for the collection and safe disposal of all pharmaceuticals.
- Non-Mandated Materials Recycling - In 2014 our green team initiated a pilot program in our township to encourage residents not to put used plastic bags in their trash.
- Recycling Depot - Commercial Township has always been dedicated to the recycling efforts of Cumberland County. We work with the director of the Cumberland Improvement Authority on maintaining our Recycling Depot and expanding the items that can be recycled as the county expands their efforts.

Goal 3: Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for All Residents of NJ

Analysis & Discussion:

Although Commercial Township does not have substantial farming activity or areas of high-quality agricultural soils, farming was and remains an integral part of this rural coastal community. From its settlement to the present, woodlands and farms have been important land use activities with notable salt hay farming of continuing importance. Preserving these woodlands and farms and assuring their economic well-being is important for maintaining the community's rural character.

The Township Master Plan encourages economic development that least intrudes on environmentally sensitive areas and the traditional pattern of village development. Three objectives were formulated for economic development:

1. Encourage natural resource industries while requiring appropriate controls to preserve natural setting.
2. Commercial activities in villages should fit the historic nature of the village in size, scale, and design.
3. Use development regulations to encourage ecotourism and associated economic activities.

Agriculture Preservation

- The Master Plan notes that Commercial has limited farming due to its extensive wetlands but agriculture, in particular salt hay farming, are embedded in the Township's

rural character. In order to preserve Commercial Township's woodlands and farms, the Master Plan recommended three objectives:

1. Encourage farming by reducing intrusion of non-agricultural uses into good quality soil areas.
 2. Cluster residential development where proposed for farmland.
 3. Sustain the farm economy by permitting farm related businesses.
- The 2006 Master Plan recommendations for Agricultural Preservation were a variety of conservation techniques including cluster development and farm activity protection regulations.

Economic Development

- The Township Master Plan encourages economic development that least intrudes on environmentally sensitive areas and the traditional pattern of village development. Three objectives were formulated for economic development:
 1. Encourage natural resource industries while requiring appropriate controls to preserve natural setting.
 2. Commercial activities in villages should fit the historic nature of the village in size, scale, and design.
 3. Use development regulations to encourage ecotourism and associated economic activities.

Goal 4: Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean Up Pollution

Analysis & Discussion:

Commercial Township's coastal areas are highly environmentally sensitive lands requiring protection from the encroachment of development and careful land use management practices to preserve their ecology and maintain their natural beauty as viewed from land or river.

Environmental Protection

- The Township Master Plan resolved that the "highly environmentally sensitive" coastal area must be protected from development for both ecological and aesthetic reasons.
 1. The Township must protect and preserve its extensive wetlands whether publicly or privately owned.
 2. Use innovative zoning to minimize adverse impacts of development on environmentally sensitive areas
 3. Use development regulations, such as buffer and setback requirements and conservation easements, to offset the direct and indirect impacts of development.

Recycling

- Commercial Township included specific recycling objectives as part of its 2006 Master Plan:
 1. Adopt the recycling goals of the County and State.
 2. Undertake the necessary municipal actions to accomplish County and State goals.

The Township Master Plan resolved that the "highly environmentally sensitive" coastal area must be protected from development for both ecological and aesthetic reasons:

1. The Township must protect and preserve its extensive wetlands whether publicly or privately owned.
2. Use innovative zoning to minimize adverse impacts of development on environmentally sensitive areas.
3. Use development regulations, such as buffer and setback requirements and conservation easements, to offset the direct and indirect impacts of development.

Goal 5: Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost

Analysis & Discussion:

The Township has established the goal of maintaining the historic development pattern centered around the three villages of Mauricetown-Haleyville, Port Norris, and Laurel Lake, while allowing reasonable growth elsewhere if it respects the natural environment. The objectives to establish this are:

1. Support and encourage development within existing villages, providing infrastructure can be constructed which prevents environmental harm.
2. Preserve historic village character in new development.
3. Cluster new development if outside villages and only allow development where the environment can accommodate it.
4. Balance reclamation of mining sites to create commercial/public uses as well as conservation lands.
5. Direct commercial activities, other than farming, mining, and fishing, into the three villages.
6. Create development standards that recognize a site's natural features in terms of intensity of permitted use and establish controls which respect natural, historical and cultural features of the Township.

Goal 6: Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost

Analysis & Discussion:

Commercial Township received certification from the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) for its fair share affordable housing plan under the Second Round rules in 2001. The certification expired in 2005. The Township formulated a new 2005 Housing Plan but a petition for certification under the third round rules was never submitted to COAH. The 2006 Master Plan listed three objectives related to affordable housing.

1. Provide sufficient housing to meet the Township's fair share requirement.
2. Petition the Council on Affordable Housing for certification of the housing element.
3. Monitor housing and undertake programs to assure renovation, rehabilitation and, where necessary, removal of dilapidated units.

Goal 7: Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value

Analysis & Discussion:

There are a number of historically significant structures within the Township's three villages. Such structures consist of restored homes, old commercial structures, churches, restored oyster shucking

wharves, and a restored maritime schooner. The Township recognizes the importance of preserving these historically significant structures and explains the benefits in the “Historic Preservation” subsection of the Land Use chapter of the Township Master Plan. The Master Plan explains that care should be taken to assure that new development is not detrimental to such sites or structures and does not create nuisances or problems for them. The Township also recognizes the economic benefit of maintaining these historic sites because they offer education about the Township’s history and serve as focal points to attract visitors. The historic sites, as listed on the state and national register, that exist within the Township include the following:

- Berry-Gibson Salt Hay Farm
- Bird Island Site
- Bivalve Oyster Packing Houses and Docks
- ‘Cashier’
- Edward Compton House
- Historic Marine and Architectural Resources of Maurice River Cove
- Caesar Hoskins Log Cabin
- Mauricetown Historic District
- “A.J. Meerwald” Schooner

In addition to historic places, the Township has a large portion of its municipality dedicated to open space and farmland preservation. The Township contains approximately 11,000 acres of open space land within its municipal boundary. The Township itself is about 22,000 acres in total area. Therefore, approximately half of the entire Township is dedicated to open space and farmland preservation.

Land Use

- The Township has established the goal of maintaining the historic development pattern centered around the three villages of Mauricetown-Haleyville, Port Norris and Laurel Lake while allowing reasonable growth elsewhere if it respects the natural environment. The objectives to establish this are:
 1. Support and encourage development within existing villages, providing infrastructure can be constructed which prevents environmental harm.
 2. Preserve historic village character in new development.
 3. Cluster new development in outside villages and only allow development where the environment can accommodate it.
 4. Balance reclamation of mining sites to create commercial/public uses as well as conservation lands.
 5. Direct commercial activities, other than farming, mining and fishing, into the three villages.
 6. Create development standards that recognize a site's natural features in terms of intensity of permitted use and establish controls which respect natural, historical, and cultural features of the Township.

Goal 8: Ensure Sound, Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide

Analysis & Discussion:

The Township of Commercial has always promoted development that is consistent with the State Plan. The Township follows the precepts of the planning policies for Rural Planning Area and the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas and concentrate development in an around the Township's existing villages and existing developed nodes. The Township is now seeking Plan Endorsement to further align its planning goals, objectives and policies by demonstrating its commitment to comprehensive planning, and its continuing commitment to working with surrounding municipalities, the County, and State Commissions.

State Plan – Center Criteria & Policies

Centers

There are five types of centers that can be designated in the endorsement process. Those five centers are urban, regional, town, village, and hamlet. Commercial Township currently has three designated centers within the Township, all of which are classified as "Designated Villages." Designated centers within the Township are Port Norris, Mauricetown-Haleyville, and Laurel Lake. Village centers are primarily residential places that offer a small Core with limited public facilities, consumer services, and community activities. Centers are the State Plan's preferred vehicle for accommodating growth.

Although Centers are the preferred growth vehicle, some existing Centers, namely Hamlets, Villages, and some Towns, are currently unsewered. In order to grow, these Centers will need to find cost-effective and appropriately scaled solutions to the provision of wastewater treatment capacity.

CRITERIA FOR CENTER DESIGNATION/PLANNING FOR THE YEAR 2020					
	URBAN	REGIONAL CENTER PA1, 2	REGIONAL CENTER PA3, 4, 5	TOWN	VILLAGE HAMLET
Area (in square miles)		1 to 10	1 to 10	<2	<1 10 to 50 acres without community wastewater; <100 acres with community wastewater
Population	>40,000	>10,000	>5,000	1,000 to 10,000	<4,500 25 to 250
Gross Population Density (people/square mile)	>7,500	>5,000	>5,000	>5,000	>5,000 3,000
Housing		4,000 to 15,000	2,000 to 15,000	500 to 4,000	100 to 2,000 10 to 100
Gross Housing Density (dwelling units/acre)	>4	>3	>3	>3	>3 >2
Employment	>40,000	>10,000	>5,000	>500 to 10,000	50 to 1,000
Jobs: Housing Ratio	>1:1	2:1 to 5:1	2:1 to 5:1	1:1 to 4:1	5:1 to 2:1

Note: Criteria are intended to be applied flexibly. Density criteria are relevant primarily to new Centers and to the growth areas of existing Centers, and are less relevant to the built-up portions of existing Centers. Designation criteria refer to the Center's planning horizon year (for example, 2020 population rather than current population).

The designation of Centers is part of the Plan Endorsement process. The purpose of Plan Endorsement is to increase the degree of consistency among municipal, county, regional, and state agency plans and the State Plan and to facilitate the implementation of these plans. The State Plan outlines six objectives that derive from this purpose:

1. To encourage municipal, county, regional, and state agency plans to be coordinated and support each other to achieve the Goals of the State Plan;
2. To encourage counties and municipalities to plan on a regional basis while recognizing the fundamental role of the municipal master plan and development regulations;
3. To consider the entire municipality, including Centers, Cores, Nodes, and Environs, within the context of regional systems;
4. To provide an opportunity for all government entities and the public to discuss and resolve common planning issues;
5. To provide a framework to guide and support state investment programs and permitting assistance in the implementation of municipal, county, and regional plans that meet statewide objectives; and
6. To learn new planning approaches and techniques from municipal, county, and regional governments for dissemination throughout the state and possible incorporation into the State Plan.

Over half of the Township's population lives in the three villages. The rest live along the roads connecting these villages. It is anticipated that the villages can accommodate much of the anticipated new growth that will occur in the next twenty years. This fact could be even more certain if public sanitary sewer and/or potable water supply was provided to these villages. Therefore, the Township's development pattern can be seen as "centered."

Within the environs there is land available for future growth and as was noted, existing development has been along roadways that connect the villages. There have also been isolated clusters of development occurring where the natural environment has permitted. In making land use decisions for the areas outside the villages the emphasis again should be to center new development rather than allow it to occur indiscriminately. Clustering should be mandatory in much of the Township on tracts of 30 acres or more. This would assure open space and protect existing agriculture and environmentally sensitive lands.

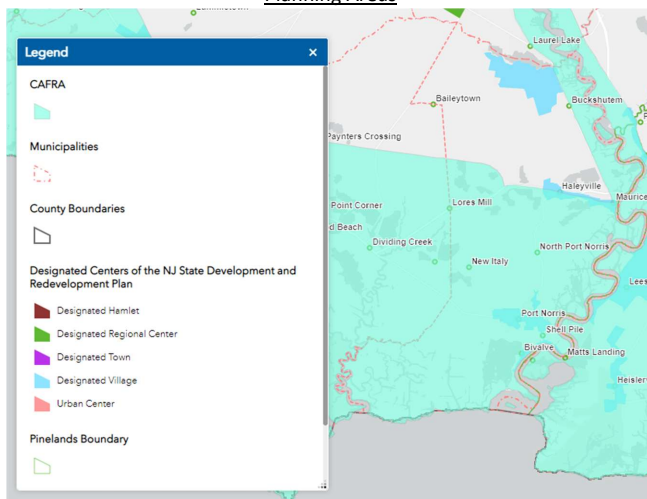
The high density permitted within the Township's three villages should allow for the absorption of much of the anticipated future growth. But in doing so, the development must be of a character and size so that the individual character of each village will be maintained. The historic heritage of the older villages, the lakeside residential atmosphere of Laurel Lake, and the scale or size of structures and land use activities within the Township's settled centers need to be preserved as new growth occurs.

Additional parks, playgrounds, walking and biking trails, community focal points, and other public amenities, such as the recent Main Street project in Port Norris, can help to sustain the community's identity and sense of place. This will become even more important as these communities grow. To accommodate that growth even higher densities will be necessary and can be accomplished if they are properly located, designed to blend in with existing development, and will not diminish or impair the residents' vision of their locality.

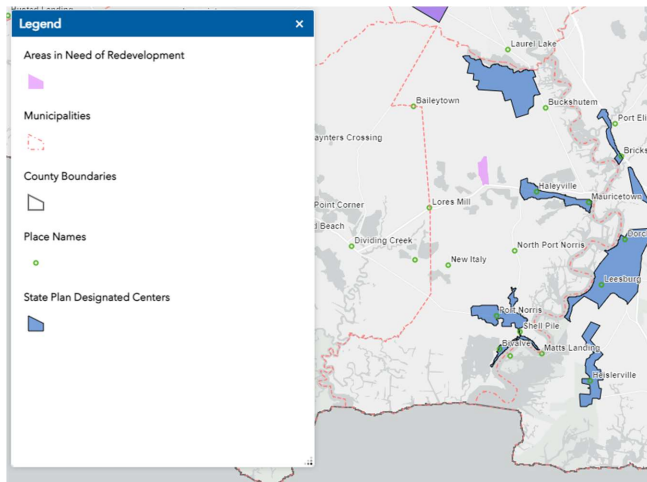
Provision of public sanitary sewer and/or potable water supply would offer economic development potential, greater flexibility in accommodating new growth in the village centers, and most importantly address serious problems with on-site disposal of septic effluent. Every effort should be made to provide the installation of such system(s) designed to support the limited population concentrations these villages can reasonably support without loss of their character. The U.S. Census Bureau identifies 55.7% of Commercial's population as living inside "urban clusters," meaning the three villages. The goal of this plan is that these villages retain their character while allowing for future growth.

It is recommended that both Mauricetown - Haleyville and Port Norris may need expanded designated village boundaries in order to accommodate additional growth in the future. The Haleyville portion of Mauricetown-Haleyville appears able to expand north, south, and west. The western end of Port Norris could be expanded along both Strawberry Avenue and the Port Norris - Dividing Creek Road. This recommendation is made to support the idea of keeping the Township's future growth centered. Future land use decisions in these possible expansion areas should be carefully made to assure that any permitted development does not alter future inclusion into the village.

Planning Areas



State Plan Designated Center Areas



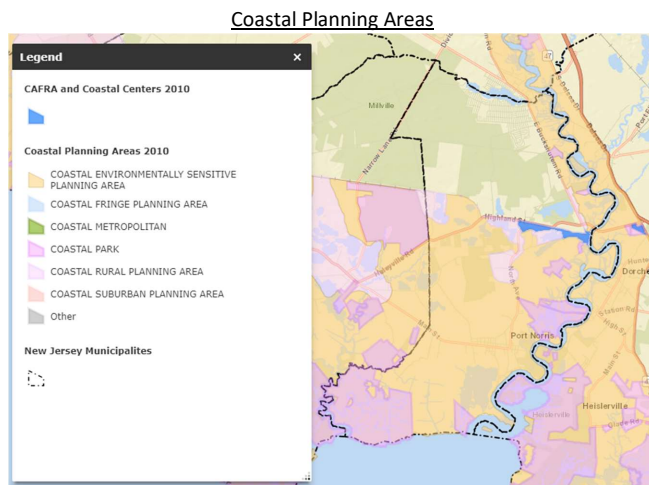
Source: NJ-GeoWeb, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

It can be seen above that there is one area within the Township designated at an area in need of redevelopment. The area is Block 171, Lots 11 & 12 and is a Landfill Redevelopment Area which was passed by resolution in 2011 as Resolution #2011-24. This area has since been redeveloped along with neighboring blocks and lots along Highland Street and Snow Hill Road. The site was bought by Whibco Inc., which produces industrial sands and aggregates on the site. The company purchased over 800 acres in this exact area, with half of the redevelopment area as part of the sale. The northern lot 12 in the redevelopment is owned by the Township and is used as an open space storage area for Township equipment and products.

State Plan – Planning Area Policy Objectives

Commercial Township is comprised of the PA4 – Rural Planning Area, PA5 – Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area, and PA8 – State Park Planning Areas. Below are excerpts from the State Plan Planning Area Policy Objectives. Below each objective lists the way Commercial Township observes and acknowledges it and how the Township sets forth a plan to deal with it.

State Planning Areas



PA 4 - Rural Planning Area

The following Policy Objectives should be used to guide the application of the State Plan's Statewide Policies in the Rural Planning Area (PA 4) and the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (PA 5), the criteria for designation of existing or new Centers, the policies for delineating Center Boundaries, and local and state agency planning.

1. Land Use:
 - a. PA 4 - Enhance economic and agricultural viability and rural character by guiding development and redevelopment into Centers. In the Environs, maintain and enhance agricultural uses, and preserve agricultural and other lands to form large contiguous areas and greenbelts around Centers. Development and redevelopment should use creative land use and design techniques to ensure that it does not conflict with agricultural operations, does not exceed the capacity of natural and built systems, and protects areas where public investments in farmland preservation have been made. Development and redevelopment in the Environs should maintain or enhance the character of the area.
 - b. PA 5 - Protect natural systems and environmentally sensitive features by guiding development and redevelopment into Centers and establishing Center Boundaries and buffers and greenbelts around these boundaries. Maintain open space networks, critical habitat, and large contiguous tracts of land in the Environs by a variety of land use techniques. Development and redevelopment should use creative land use and design techniques to ensure that it does not exceed the capacity of natural and infrastructure systems, and protects areas where public investment in open space preservation have been made. Development and redevelopment in the Environs should maintain and enhance the natural resources and character of the area.
2. Housing:

- a. PA 4 - Provide for a full range of housing choices primarily in Centers at appropriate densities to accommodate projected growth, recognizing the special locational needs of agricultural employees, and minimizing conflicts with agricultural operations. Ensure that housing in general—and in particular affordable, senior citizen, special needs, and family housing—is developed with maximum access to a full range of commercial, educational, recreational, health, and transportation services and facilities in Centers. Focus multi-family and higher-density, single-family housing in Centers. Any housing in the Environs should be planned and located to maintain or enhance the cultural and scenic qualities and with minimum impacts on agricultural resources.
 - b. PA 5 - Provide for a full range of housing choices primarily in Centers at appropriate densities to accommodate projected growth. Ensure that housing in general—and in particular affordable, senior citizen, special needs, and family housing—is developed with access to a range of commercial, cultural, educational, recreational, health, and transportation services and facilities. Focus multi-family and higher-density, single-family housing in Centers. Any housing in the Environs should be planned and located to maintain or enhance the cultural and scenic qualities and with minimum impacts on environmental resources.
- 3. Economic Development:
 - a. PA 4 - Promote economic activities within Centers that complement and support the rural and agricultural communities and that provide diversity in the rural economy and opportunities for off-farm income and employment. Encourage tourism related to agriculture and the environment, as well as the historic and rural character of the area. Support appropriate recreational and natural resource-based activities in the Environs. Any economic development in the Environs should be planned and located to maintain or enhance the cultural and scenic qualities and with minimum impacts on agricultural resources.
 - b. PA 5 - Support appropriate recreational and natural resource-based activities in the Environs and locate economic development opportunities that are responsive to the needs of the surrounding region and the travel and tourism industry in Centers. Any economic development in the Environs should be planned and located to maintain or enhance the cultural and scenic qualities and with minimum impacts on environmental resources.
- 4. Transportation:
 - a. PA 4 - Maintain and enhance a rural transportation system that links Centers to each other and to the Metropolitan and Suburban Planning Areas. Provide appropriate access of agricultural products to markets, accommodating the size and weight of modern agricultural equipment. In Centers, emphasize the use of public transportation systems and alternatives to private cars where appropriate and feasible, and maximize circulation and mobility options throughout. Support the preservation of general aviation airports as integral parts of the state's transportation system.
 - b. PA 5 - Maintain and enhance a transportation system that protects the Environs from scattered and piecemeal development and links Centers to each other within and between Planning Areas. Encourage alternatives to the single-occupancy vehicle whenever feasible. Accommodate the seasonal demands of travel and tourism that

support recreational and natural resource-based activities. In Centers, emphasize the use of public transportation systems and alternatives to private cars where appropriate and feasible and maximize circulation and mobility options throughout.

5. Natural Resource Conservation:

- a. PA 4 - Minimize potential conflicts between development, agricultural practices and sensitive environmental resources. Promote agricultural management practices and other agricultural conservation techniques to protect soil and water resources. Protect and preserve large, contiguous tracts and corridors of recreation, forest, or other open space land that protect natural systems and natural resources.
- b. PA 5 - Protect and preserve large, contiguous tracts and corridors of recreation, forest or other open space land that protects natural systems and sensitive natural resources, including endangered species, ground and surface water resources, wetland systems, natural landscapes of exceptional value, critical slope areas, scenic vistas and other significant environmentally sensitive features.

6. Agriculture and Farmland Preservation:

- a. PA 4 - Guide development to ensure the viability of agriculture and the retention of farmland in agricultural areas. Encourage farmland retention and minimize conflicts between agricultural practices and the location of Centers. Ensure the availability of adequate water resources and large, contiguous tracts of land with minimal land-use conflicts. Actively promote more intensive, new-crop agricultural enterprises and meet the needs of the agricultural industry for intensive packaging, processing, value-added operations, marketing, exporting and other shipping through development and redevelopment.
- b. PA 5 - Promote agricultural practices that prevent or minimize conflicts with sensitive environmental resources. Guide development to ensure the viability of agriculture and the retention of farmland in agricultural areas. Encourage farmland retention and minimize conflicts between agricultural practices and the location of Centers. Ensure the availability of adequate water resources and large, contiguous tracts of land with minimal land use conflicts. Actively promote more intensive, new-crop agricultural enterprises and meet the needs of the agricultural industry for intensive packaging, processing, value-added operations, marketing, exporting and other shipping through development and redevelopment.

7. Recreation:

- a. PA 4 - Provide maximum active and passive recreational and tourism opportunities at the neighborhood and local levels by targeting the acquisition and development of neighborhood and municipal parkland within Centers. Provide regional recreation and tourism opportunities by targeting parkland acquisitions and improvements that enhance large contiguous open space systems and by facilitating alternative recreational and tourism uses of farmland.
- b. PA 5 - Provide maximum active and passive recreational and tourism opportunities at the neighborhood and local levels by targeting the acquisitions and development of neighborhood and municipal parkland within Centers. Provide regional recreation and tourism opportunities by targeting parkland acquisitions and improvements that

enhance large contiguous open space systems. Ensure meaningful access to public lands.

8. Redevelopment:

- a. PA 4 - Encourage appropriate redevelopment in existing Centers and existing developed areas that have the potential to become Centers, or in ways that support Center-based development to accommodate growth that would otherwise occur in the Environs. Redevelop with intensities sufficient to support transit, a broad range of uses, efficient use of infrastructure, and design that enhance public safety, encourage pedestrian activity, reduce dependency on the automobile and maintain the rural character of Centers.
- b. PA 5 - Encourage environmentally appropriate redevelopment in existing Centers and existing developed areas that have the potential to become Centers or in ways that support Center-based development to accommodate growth that would otherwise occur in the Environs. Redevelop with intensities sufficient to support transit, a range of uses broad enough to encourage activity beyond the traditional workday, efficient use of infrastructure, and physical design features that enhance public safety, encourage pedestrian activity and reduce dependency on the automobile to attract growth otherwise planned for the Environs.

9. Historic Preservation:

- a. PA 4 - Encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic or significant buildings, Historic and Cultural Sites, neighborhoods and districts in ways that will not compromise either the historic resource or the ability for a Center to develop or redevelop. Outside Centers, coordinate historic preservation needs with farmland preservation efforts. Coordinate historic preservation with tourism efforts.
- b. PA 5 - Encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic or significant buildings, Historic and Cultural Sites, neighborhoods and districts in ways that will not compromise either the historic resource or the ability for a Center to develop or redevelop. Outside Centers, coordinate historic preservation needs with open space preservation efforts. Coordinate historic preservation with tourism efforts.

10. Public Facilities and Services:

- a. PA 4 - Phase and program for construction as part of a dedicated capital improvement budget or as part of a public/private development agreement the extension or establishment of public facilities and services, particularly wastewater systems, to establish adequate levels of capital facilities and services to support Centers; to protect large contiguous areas of productive farmlands and other open spaces; to protect public investments in farmland preservation programs; and to minimize conflicts between Centers and surrounding farms. Encourage private investments and facilitate public/private partnerships to provide adequate facilities and services, particularly wastewater systems, in Centers. Make community wastewater treatment a feasible and cost-effective alternative.
- b. PA 5 - Phase and program for construction as part of a dedicated capital improvement budget or as part of a public/private development agreement the extension or establishment of public facilities and services, particularly wastewater systems, to establish adequate levels of capital facilities and services to support Centers; to protect

large contiguous areas of environmentally sensitive features and other open spaces; to protect public investments in open space preservation programs; and to minimize conflicts between Centers and the Environs. Encourage private investments and facilitate public/private partnerships to provide adequate facilities and services, particularly wastewater systems, in Centers. Make community wastewater treatment a feasible and cost-effective alternative.

11. Intergovernmental Coordination:

- a. PA 4 - Coordinate efforts of various state agencies, county and municipal governments to ensure that state and local policies and programs support rural economic development, agriculture, and the rural character of the area by examining the effects of financial institution lending, government regulation, taxation and other governmental policies and programs.
- b. PA 5 - Coordinate efforts of state agencies, county and municipal governments to ensure that state and local policies and programs support environmental protection by examining the effects of financial institution lending practices, government regulation, taxation and other governmental policies and programs.

PA8 – State Park Planning Areas

With the delineation of Parks and Natural Areas, the State Plan's intention is to:

- provide for the protection of critical natural resources;
- provide public recreational and educational opportunities;
- ensure the maintenance of associated facilities; and
- ensure the connection of these areas into a system of open lands.

Plan for Environmental Protection

Preservation and protection can be by various approaches ranging from outright public purchase of particularly significant lands to regulations restricting the use of specific lands or on adjacent lands that might be detrimental to the continued viability of the natural asset identified.

It should be understood that this is an ongoing process in that each development that is proposed must be evaluated for its impact on the natural and man-made environment to protect each from negative or adverse impacts. Development review must also be able to offer a variety of approaches appropriate to the situation and the given resource impacted so as to best preserve and protect the resource. This plan element begins that process by identifying the community's natural resources, their capabilities, and their limitations.

The actual plan for environmental protection of the Township's natural assets and special areas of ecological concern shows currently known or identified environmentally sensitive and significant land within the Township recommended for conservation and protection to some degree. In some cases, the Plan map offers an understanding of the natural resources that should be protected. It also serves as a guide for planning by showing areas where limitation to development exist or where development can be allowed if limitations to such development can be overcome. Protection of these lands identified does not always mean that they are to become recreational, open space, or permanently protected

lands cut off from the community. In many instances, their use is possible if such use is commensurate with their sensitivity and ability to accommodate the specific proposed uses or activities.

Some land may well require full protection and limited use to preserve significant environmental characteristics associated with them such as habitats of threatened or endangered species. In other cases, the lands may provide open space but need to be restricted to some or all activities in order to assure the success of their conservation. However, neither of these land use regulatory approaches to conservation should preclude access to the lands in public or non-profit organization ownership. Too often such lands are removed from the residents who have lived with them for centuries. There needs to be a recognition that controlled and fair regulation of such lands can permit the public's access within reasonable limitations. Conservation is possible through a variety of methods based on the reasons for preservation.

The Environmental Protection Plan shows areas of Commercial Township that are or have been deemed to be worthy of protection due to their special environmental characteristics. In many instances, the Plan serves as a guide of where to avoid the degree of development and/or permitting development only after a finding that: (1) the land can accommodate it and (2) the type and degree of development can be permitted without undue detriment to the continued preservation and viability of areas of environmental sensitivity on or within close proximity to said proposed land use activity.

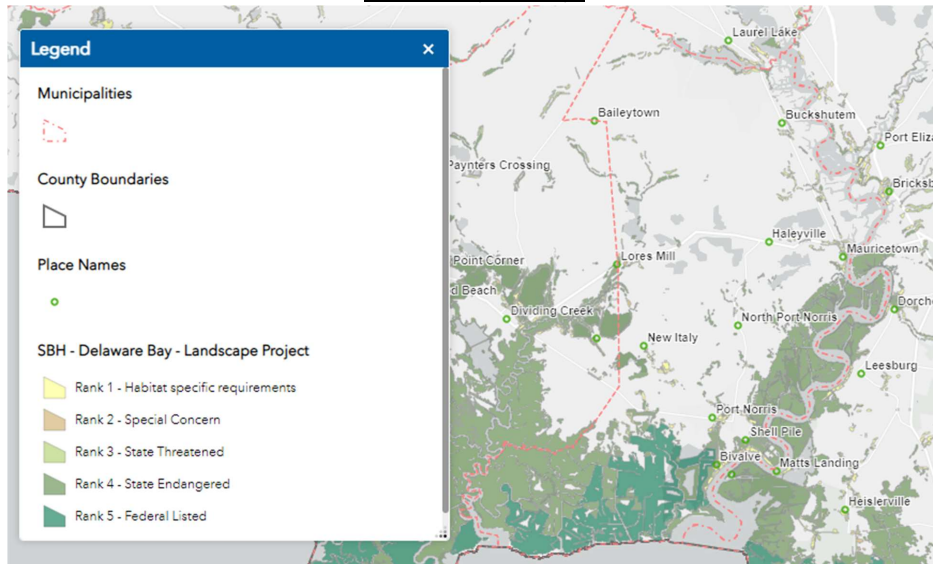
The Plan Map identifies areas of the community either already delineated for special land use regulations or which must be evaluated prior to them or adjoining lands being allowed to develop. It is broken into four categories of data shown. They are identified through various methods including aerial photography and are described as follows:

- Wetland Category including:
 - Atlantic White Cedar Swamp
 - Agricultural Wetlands
 - Disturbed Wetlands
 - Saline Marsh
 - Wetland
 - Water
- Conservation Area Concerns including:
 - Agricultural Lands
 - Barren Land
 - NJDEP
 - Forest
 - Streams and Regulatory Boundaries

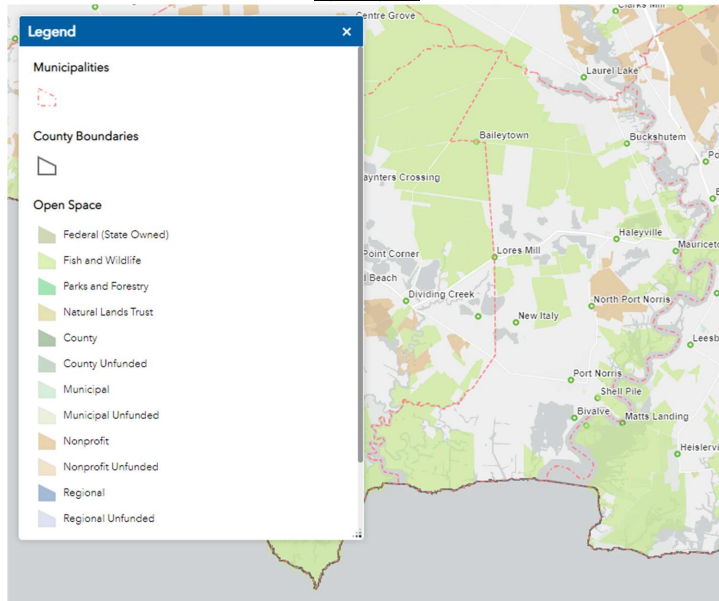
MAPPING

In addition to GIS map attachments, various classifications of areas within the Township are shown below.

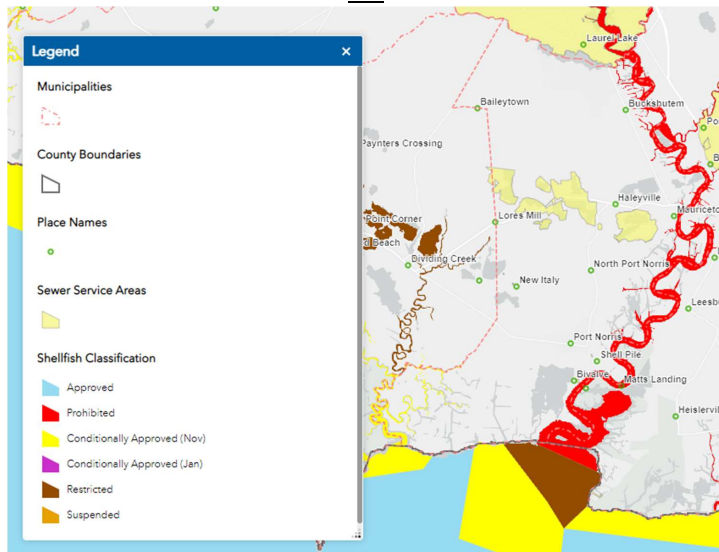
Delaware Bay Landscape



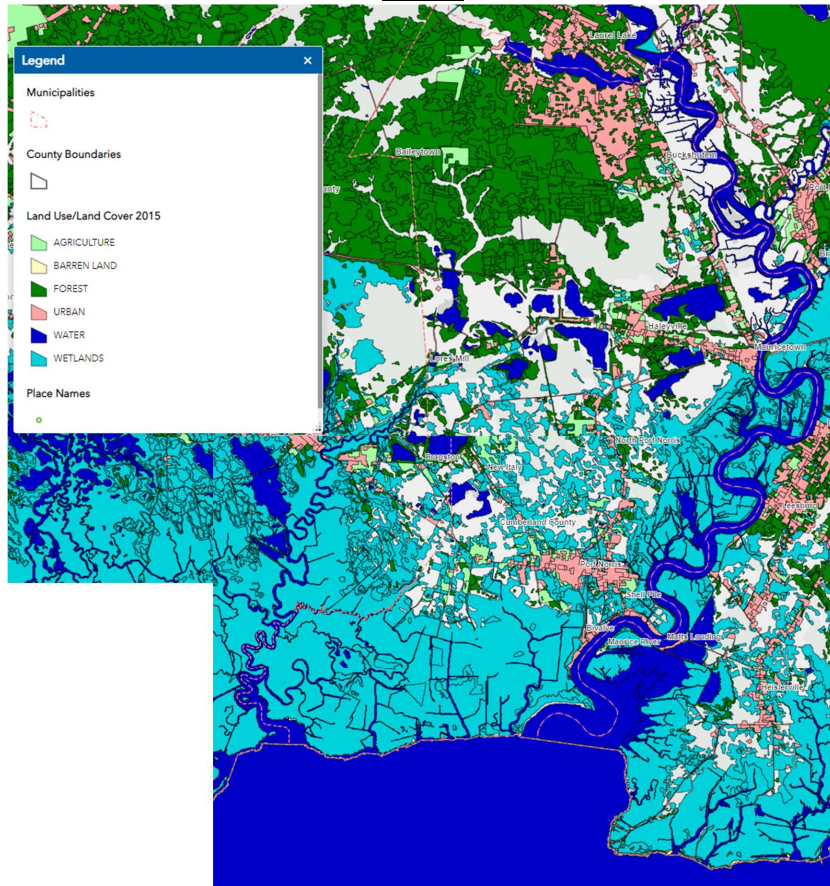
Open Space



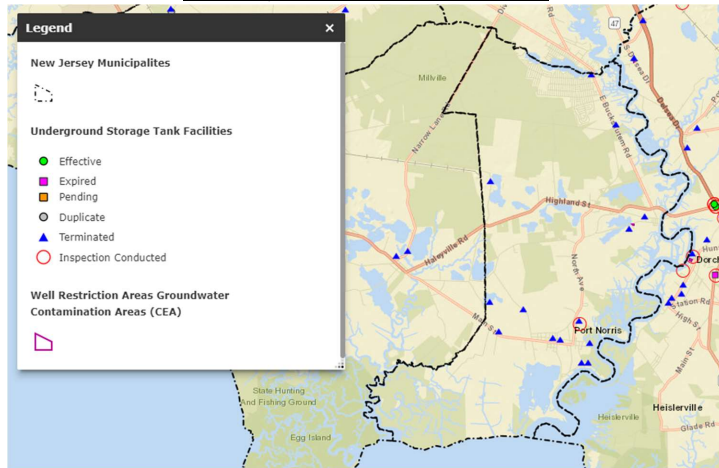
Fish



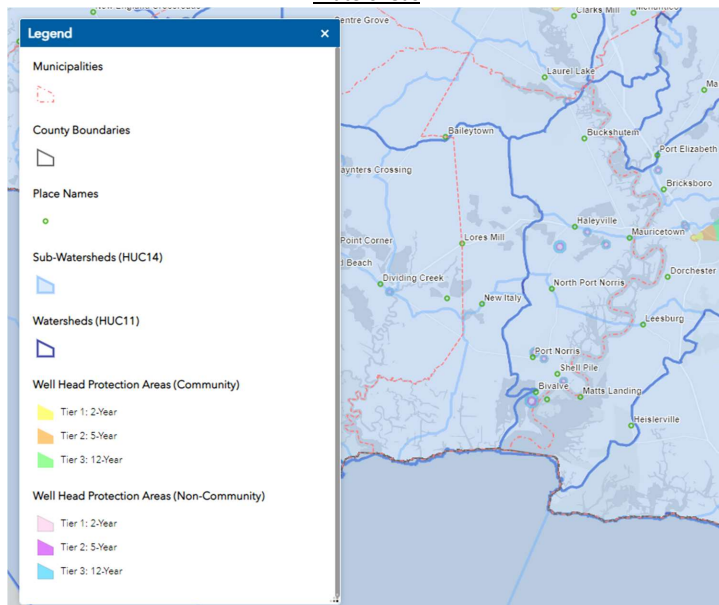
Land Use



Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Areas



Watersheds



STATE AGENCY ACTIONS

STATE AGENCY ASSISTANCE/EXPECTED BENEFITS

The Township of Commercial is trying to construct a wastewater treatment facility. This will include securing funding and figuring out a way to get public buy-in to the idea as it will greatly benefit the Township. Non-compliant septic systems are a major problem that stimulate development in the Township and prevent the sale of properties and cause many to lie vacant and abandoned. Many lots in Laurel Lake are too small to allow for the construction of a compliant septic system and this makes it impossible to develop these areas and/or sell older existing properties.

Additionally, the Township is applying for Local Freight Impact Funding (LFIF) for the Reconstruction of Yock Wock Road and High Street. The work will include reconstruction and elevation of the roads, new beam guide rail installation as needed, and new traffic control devices. The proposed improvements will continue previous efforts in the 2019 and 2020 LFIF Port Norris Riverfront Roadway Improvements Phase I & II and improve access to the Port Norris riverfront, which currently includes manufacturing facilities. This will promote investment and create new employment opportunities. With freight nodes located along the Maurice River, this project promotes intermodal facilities.

CONCLUSION

Commercial Township consists mostly of Environmentally Sensitive Planning Areas (PA 5). The Township does have multiple large areas of State Parks (PA 8), followed by a few small areas of Rural Planning (PA 4). On the other side of the Maurice River, just opposite Commercial Township lies the New Jersey Pinelands (PA 10). The Township is the first waterfront area outside of the Pinelands designation and therefore allows for and promotes waterfront development and activities. The Township has a rich history in waterfront development, with some of its largest industries being agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining. The Township makes up a significant portion of the States total for this industry.

The community's traditional industries are dependent upon the natural environment of the Township's location. Earth extraction, shell fishing (historically oysters), sand barging, and farming have and continue to be sources of employment. These employment sources, however, are being directly impacted by a variety of governmental regulations, public land acquisition and continued public and private advocacy for conservation. State protection of coastal areas and freshwater wetlands, public and private purchase of lands for open space, conservation and land use regulatory measures proscribe where new development can occur and add to the complexity of determining and planning for the community's future.

Port Norris may need expanded designated village boundaries in order to accommodate additional growth in the future. The western end of Port Norris could be expanded along both Strawberry Avenue and the Port Norris - Dividing Creek Road. This recommendation is made to support the idea of keeping the Township's future growth centered. Future land use decisions in these possible expansion areas should be carefully made to assure that any permitted development does not alter future inclusion into the village nor limit the coastal impact the Township has.

The Township is seeking a waiver for one of the two visioning sessions being that the existing Master Plan and Reexamination clearly define the vision set forth by the community. Instead, the Township would like to hold a visioning session to ensure the current defined vision still aligns with Township values and provide possible updates to the existing vision.

The Township hopes that this Plan Endorsement process will help the Township remain a coastal focused town. In order to do so and address coastal-related issues in a more efficient manner, the Township would like to make several requests from the State, as stated prior. The following list represents a summary of all requests that the Township would like to present to the State:

- Obtain classification of the Maurice River riverfront as a Coastal Node to maintain land use regulations that permit the riverfront to function as an industrialized working riverfront.
- Have the ability to file for a blanket permit to authorize any and all future flood mitigation projects in the coastal node along the riverfront.
- Have the ability to file for a blanket permit to authorize improvements and/or repairs to all drainage structures located within the coastal node and along the riverfront.
- Have the ability to submit for emergency permits that would allow for state funding to be used for 100% of the cost of repairs that include betterments.
- Consider the Township for future grants to fund the construction of a living shoreline to stabilize the Peak of the Moon area.
- Consider the Township for future grants to fund the construction of a wastewater treatment facility.
- Consider the Township for future grants to fund the construction of a mixed-use pedestrian path from Mauricetown-Haleyville to the Township School and ballfields located along North Avenue.

In conclusion, Commercial Township is pursuing Plan Endorsement in order to maintain its three Center designations, obtain the classification of the Maurice River riverfront as a Coastal Node, and demonstrate its consistency with the State Plan so that the Township can continue to receive proper consideration for all State and Federal funding opportunities. It is important for the Township to maintain its Center designations so that its communities can remain intact. The Township relies heavily on State and Federal funding opportunities to maintain its infrastructure, so it is very important for the Township to remain current on its plan endorsement so that it can continue to be considered in a competitive manner for all funding opportunities. Lastly, the reshaping of all Centers has removed the Maurice River riverfront area from the Port Norris Center. Since this is an industrialized, working waterfront area, it is of utmost importance that land use regulations are kept unchanged so that development along the riverfront is not restricted. It is very important to the Township that the State allow this riverfront area be designated as a Coastal Node so that the current land use regulations are kept the same and development can continue consistent with the various freight and distribution nodes that are currently present and thriving.