



**THE CHATHAM TOWNSHIP
MASTER PLAN**

Prepared by

The Chatham Township Planning Board

and

**Robert Catlin & Associates
City Planning Consultants**

September, 1999

Adopted October 18, 1999

Amended through
April 3, 2000

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4-3-00

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chatham Township Planning Board wishes to express its appreciation to the many local citizens and municipal and school officials whose contributions of time and effort made the development of this Master Plan possible. The Board is especially grateful to the members of the Master Plan Committee listed below who actively assisted or participated in the drafting of this report or who provided information which was essential to its completion:

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The Planning Board also wishes to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the members of the Chatham Township Open Space Committee.

INTRODUCTION

This document is the culmination of almost three years of study by the Chatham Township Planning Board. Its purpose is to present a new Master Plan for Chatham Township incorporating long range goals and objectives for the future development and character of the community. It is based on current local desires and projections and on the most reliable data available.

Municipal planning has a long and active history in Chatham Township and the importance of this function of local government has been recognized for several decades. The Township's first Master Plan was drafted in 1942, predating the post-World War II development boom, placing the community among the earliest in Morris County to adopt a plan. In part, this early planning effort is responsible for the residential character that prevails today throughout the entire Township.

The Township has also recognized that planning must be a continuous function of municipal government if it is to continue representing realistic, immediate and long-range development objectives. As local needs and desires change, plans must be updated in order to achieve practical and effective goals. Toward these ends, a new Master Plan was prepared in 1957. This Plan was later revised and updated in 1964, 1967 and 1972. These revisions are indicative of the Township's on-going efforts to maintain and promote the fine character of the community.

In December, 1978, the Chatham Township Planning Board completed another revision of the Master Plan for the Township. Following this action, the Township Committee, in 1979 adopted a Land Use Ordinance incorporating land development and zoning regulations. The latter were intended to implement the Land Use Element of the Master Plan.

The purpose of these actions was first and foremost to promote the most desirable direction for the future development of the Township of Chatham, recognizing its established character and protecting the natural environment to the greatest practical degree. Secondly, the actions of the Planning Board were intended to meet the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law (Chapter 291, Laws of New Jersey, 1975). This statute established the legal framework for municipal planning,

land development and zoning functions throughout the State and provides that local zoning regulations be consistent with an adopted land use plan element.

In 1982, following the mandate of the Municipal Land Use Law, the Planning Board performed a reexamination of the 1978 Master Plan. The 1982 Reexamination concluded that there had been relatively little change in the Township's development and development pattern since preparation and adoption of the Master Plan and that the basic assumptions and objectives of the Plan, particularly those related to density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation and regional considerations, continued to be valid. It was further concluded that no need existed for development of a new plan or amendments to the Plan at that time.

Subsequent to 1982, significant development activity throughout the State and the region and major judicial, legislative and administrative actions which greatly impacted all municipalities took place. In struggling with these actions, Chatham Township, in 1987, undertook an up-dating of its Master Plan. A public hearing on the revised plan was conducted; however, adoption of the plan was postponed due to uncertainties relating to wastewater treatment capacity and a wastewater management plan. The wastewater management plan was approved by the DEP in 1993 with potential expansion of the plant from 750,000 gpd to one million gpd conditioned on passage of a no net increase stormwater ordinance and compilation of a stormwater management plan mandated by statute.

The drafting of this new Master Plan is yet another effort in the on-going planning process of keeping a watchful eye over development activity and community needs and to help guarantee achievement and protection of the Township's long-range objectives. There have been a number of significant developments and activities which have altered and will alter the emphasis given to various local planning efforts. The major occurrences since 1978 in terms of local planning problems and objectives are as follows:

1. Enactment by the legislature of the State Planning Act along with establishment of an Office of State Planning and a State Planning Commission. The State Planning Commission has been assigned the responsibility of preparing and adopting a State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). In 1992, following a lengthy

cross acceptance process in which the Township participated, a State plan was adopted. Upon mandatory review, a revised SDRP was drafted and was recently subjected to a cross acceptance process.

2. Development of Chatham Glen, an extensive townhouse and owner-occupied apartment complex in the Mt. Vernon Avenue area. This project is now complete and contains more than 900 housing units.
3. Receipt of a judgment of compliance from the Courts in connection with the Township's affordable housing program. The latter included construction of 75 units in Chatham Glen and 125 units to be provided as part of the Township's portion of the Giralda Farms development. Revised housing obligations and affordable housing regulations were adopted in 1994 by the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) and resulted in a reduction of Chatham Township's obligation to 89 units. As a result, a revised Housing Element and Fair Share Plan was adopted and has received substantive certification from COAH. The revised plan is discussed later in this report.
4. Acquisition by the Township of the Mountainview School and conversion of that facility into a municipal office facility.
5. Adoption of zoning amendments providing for the establishment of assisted living facilities in the B and PI Zone on the Southern Boulevard in the Hickory Tree area.
6. Major traffic improvements at the Southern Boulevard - River Road intersection.
7. Widening and improvement of Southern Boulevard.
8. Consolidation of the school districts of Chatham Borough and Chatham Township into a single district which became operable in the 1988-89 school year.

9. Preparation of a Wastewater Management Plan proposing facilities to meet treatment needs of the Township consistent with the Northeast New Jersey Water Quality Management (208) Plan.
10. Enactment by the State Legislature of The Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act establishing strict regulation of development and development related activities in and around wetlands and providing for enforcement of the regulations by the Department of Environmental Protection. The new law became effective July 1, 1988.
11. Establishment of the Great Swamp Watershed Advisory Committee (GSWAC) by DEP by Administrative Order #5 in 1989 with representation from municipalities, counties and state and federal agencies in the Great Swamp drainage basin. DEP created GSWAC for the purpose of reviewing existing studies and making recommendations to DEP regarding recommended amendments to State water quality standards, the Northeast 208 Plan and other regulations for the purpose of protecting and improving water quality in the Great Swamp Watershed.
12. Development of model environmental ordinances by the Ten Towns Great Swamp Committee.
13. Adoption of an open space property tax by the Township Committee in 1996 and implemented in 1997.

As with previous plans, this Master Plan does not represent the final picture of the Township's ultimate development. Rather, it is just a step toward achieving desirable and carefully managed future growth. The Plan can be amended and periodic revisions will be necessary if Chatham Township is to take the fullest advantage of planning techniques and opportunities that will produce the greatest benefit for the entire community.

The format of this report is specifically designed and intended to facilitate future amendments as may be needed. Its loose leaf form will accommodate convenient additions and deletions so as to help extend its useful life and maintain it as a continuing expression of current planning goals and objectives.

Finally, and as required by the Municipal Land Use Law, the revised Master Plan was

developed with due consideration to the Master Plans of contiguous municipalities, to current plans and policies of Morris County, to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and the district solid waste management plan required pursuant to the Solid Waste Management Act. These planning activities and plans are addressed at length in the Regional Evaluation section and in the Recycling Plan Element.

A Master Plan is a composite of several elements which must function in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. The Municipal Land Use Law lists no less than twelve (12) separate elements which may comprise a Master Plan. As a minimum, the plan shall include (1), a statement of objectives, principals, assumptions, policies and standards, and (2), a land use plan element. Up to ten (10) additional elements may, where appropriate be included. The Revised Master Plan of Chatham Township includes the following additional elements:

1. A Housing Plan
2. A Circulation Plan
3. A Walkway/Bikeway Plan
4. A Community Facilities Plan
5. An Open Space Plan
6. Utility Plan Elements including water distribution, wastewater management and stormwater management
7. Hickory Tree Center Plan
8. Historic Preservation Plan
9. Recycling Plan

Three of the elements referenced above were adopted prior to the publication of this complete Revised Master Plan report. They are the Land Use Plan Element, adopted October 19, 1998, and the Circulation and Open Space Plan Elements, adopted July 6, 1998. These three elements are included herein in much the same form as previously adopted.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND STANDARDS

The planning proposals for Chatham Township are intended to preserve the environmental integrity of the municipality and to maintain the feeling of openness which now exists. The plan provides for protection of the natural, physical and environmental attributes and recognizes limitations of the land with the purposes of preserving open space and avoiding adverse environmental impact. The proposals are intended to preserve the basic residential character which exists throughout most of the community. At the same time the plan should provide opportunities for growth. The plan is also intended to promote a logical development pattern which considers the availability of municipal facilities and services, including utilities and education facilities, and the ability of the municipality to support new development in the most economical manner.

More specific objectives are:

1. To monitor and participate in regional planning activities, especially those at the State and County levels, in terms of their potential impact on local planning and development.
2. To coordinate local planning efforts with those of neighboring municipalities in order to achieve a maximum degree of compatibility especially along common municipal boundaries.
3. To recognize and plan for the needs of local residents through study of demographic conditions.
4. To maintain a reasonable balance of housing types for all segments of the population.
5. To offer flexibility in development techniques.
6. To limit non-residential development to appropriate areas of the Township which will be in keeping with the existing character of the community.

7. To promote pedestrian and bicycle circulation, not only to reduce traffic, but also to facilitate the safety and enjoyment of the walking and cycling public.
8. To maintain a basic system of existing roads and plan for integration of future transportation needs.
9. To designate and provide an opportunity to preserve land in appropriate locations to meet land requirements for future community facility, recreational, and open space needs by:
 - a. promoting greater sensitivity to environmental concerns by recognizing wetland, steep slope and floodplain constraints.
 - b. offering greater protection to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and other public lands, not only through careful control of development in the watershed, but also through acquisition of additional lands adjoining the public lands.
 - c. preserving other vacant lands, recognizing that they are limited and, once developed, are lost forever.
10. To protect the water resources which dominate the Township's physical character. These resources include the Passaic River, two major feeder streams of the Great Swamp and the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge itself.
11. To preserve the local heritage by protecting historic buildings and other landmarks for the cultural benefit of present and future generations.
12. To encourage the continuation of remaining agricultural activity.
13. To create a planning and development environment that will promote fiscally sound municipal government affordable to all residents.

STANDARDS OF POPULATION DENSITY AND DEVELOPMENT INTENSITY

The revised Master Plan for Chatham Township presented herein is based on a saturation population of approximately 11,000 persons or roughly 1,170 persons per square mile (1,575 persons per square mile excluding federal land). The Plan is intended to foster accomplishment of the objectives described above and to promote a growth-management approach to development wherein the location, intensity and timing of development is coordinated with the availability of essential infrastructure and the ability of the Township to meet demands for municipal facilities and services.