



NEWS

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Contact: Hope Gruzlovic (609) 984-2504

Agriculture Secretary, Smart Growth Executive Director Praise Woolwich Twp. TDR Efforts
First Municipality in State to Adopt TDR Ordinance Under State TDR Act

WOOLWICH TWP. – Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus and Office of Smart Growth Executive Director Ben Spinelli today recognized Woolwich Township for its outstanding leadership in developing and adopting an innovative transfer of development rights (TDR) program that will result in the permanent preservation of up to 4,100 acres of farmland and enable it to manage some of the highest development pressure in the state.

“Woolwich Township’s leaders are to be applauded for using TDR as part of a comprehensive approach to preserve critical farmland while providing for housing and jobs,” said Secretary Kuperus, who chairs the State TDR Bank Board. “With the recent adoption of its TDR ordinance and its aggressive participation in the Farmland Preservation Program, Woolwich Township is not only protecting some of the best agricultural land in the state but taking full responsibility for how the town builds out over time. It is a great model for other municipalities seeking to conserve resources, manage growth and help meet landowner expectations regarding property values.”

“Woolwich Township was facing all of the challenges posed by rapid sprawling growth,” said Smart Growth Executive Director Spinelli. “They made the difficult, but correct, decision to commit to altering the future of their community by undertaking a comprehensive and innovative approach to land use planning. Woolwich made a tremendous investment of time, effort and resources to implement the first transfer of development rights program crafted under the statewide TDR law to provide for a sustainable future that will include livable center-based development and the permanent preservation of over 4,000 acres of prime agricultural land.”

Woolwich Township adopted its TDR ordinance on October 27, making it the first municipality to approve a TDR program since the 2004 State TDR Act made TDR available to municipalities statewide. Prior to that, municipal TDR was available only to towns in Burlington County under a pilot program.

“Woolwich Township is to be commended for its tremendous leadership in using smart growth principles to shape the future of its community,” said Senator/Freeholder Director Stephen M. Sweeney. “Instead of being overwhelmed by its population growth, the township clearly and wisely implemented ways to manage this growth, allow room for businesses to thrive, and effectively preserve its agricultural identity.”

Woolwich Township’s population nearly tripled between 2000 and 2007, making it the fastest-growing municipality in New Jersey. Recognizing that farmland preservation alone would be inadequate to preserve all the land that needed protection, the Township in early 2005 began a comprehensive planning process to use TDR to complement local and county farmland preservation efforts and plan for infrastructure needs, such as wastewater treatment and highways as well as a wide range of affordable housing options.

Woolwich TDR/Add One

“Woolwich Township's planning efforts represent smart growth at its best,” said Assemblyman Doug Fisher. “This is exactly the kind of forward thinking we need to protect New Jersey's productive farmland and other important resources, and provide for growth in ways that ensure our communities will remain livable, now and in the future.”

TDR programs are designed to encourage a shift in growth away from agricultural, environmentally sensitive or open space regions of a municipality to more appropriate areas. Landowners in areas where land use is restricted are allowed to sell their development rights – or development credits. Purchasers of these credits then may use them to build elsewhere in a designated growth area at a higher density than is normally allowed in a town’s zoning ordinance.

“Woolwich Township was faced with the reality that if we did not change our land use strategy we would be faced with suburban sprawl across our 21 square-mile community,” said Mayor Joe Chila. “Now, using TDR as one of our planning tools, we can effectively preserve nearly 4,000 acres while developing in an appropriate designed smart-growth center and preserving the land equity of our farmers.”

The State TDR Bank provides planning assistance grants and technical assistance to municipalities interested in TDR. At least nine other municipalities are actively exploring TDR programs.

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