

NJ Office of Planning Advocacy

**State Plan Endorsement
Opportunities & Constraints Assessment Report:
TRENDS Analysis**

For:

**The Borough of Woodstown, Salem County
April 5, 2023**



Contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
Relation to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan)	5
2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report	5
Other planning considerations	9
Build-out and Infrastructure considerations	12
Other opportunities to consider	15
Conclusion	17
Next Steps	19

Introduction

On July 28, 2021 the Borough of Woodstown (hereafter Woodstown or Borough) in Salem County, initiated the Plan Endorsement process by attending a pre-petition meeting with OPA and our partner State agencies. On February 16, 2023 the Borough submitted their Municipal Self-Assessment (MSA) report to the New Jersey Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA). At a regularly scheduled and properly noticed public meeting held on February 14, the Mayor and Council, upon the recommendation of the Municipal Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee (PEAC), adopted Resolution 2023-34, accepting the MSA report and stating the Borough's intention to pursue Plan Endorsement by the State Planning Commission (Commission). Following receipt of the MSA report, said resolution, and copies of various public notice and meeting minutes, OPA staff accepted these materials as complete and emailed the relevant State Agencies, advising them of the Borough's petition, requesting they proceed to Step 6 of the Plan Endorsement process, and prepare their component Opportunities & Constraints reports.

Pursuant to the State Planning Rules, N.J.A.C. 5:85-7.10, the State Agency Opportunities and Constraints Analysis (OCA) ("Step 4") component reports were conducted to preliminarily assess local opportunities and constraints as it relates to existing development, current zoning regulations, infrastructure, and natural resources. This report also responds to the information provided in the Municipal Self-Assessment Report to identify opportunities and constraints and determine whether current planning and zoning are consistent with the State Plan and new State planning priorities. In addition, the O&C provides specific comments that will need to be addressed through Plan Endorsement. As part of the OCA report, OPA typically prepares a build-out analysis to determine whether trend growth as permitted under current zoning on developable land is sustainable and viable based on mapping data and zoning regulations. As Woodstown is essentially a "built-out" Town Center where future development opportunities will comprise infill, reuse, and redevelopment, this report does not include a trends analysis (build-out).

The information provided in this report is intended to guide and direct the Community Visioning process and to develop a vision with a twenty-year planning horizon. As part of the Plan Endorsement process, the Borough will develop an updated community Vision Statement and planning goals for the next twenty years. Two local public visioning sessions will be held March 8 and April 12 for this purpose, which have been noticed in local newspapers. The Borough will be utilizing their Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee to oversee and participate in the visioning sessions and preparation of the updated visioning statement. Community visioning shall take into consideration the findings and conclusions of the MSA and the State Agencies' Opportunities and Constraints Analysis (O&C). The MSA was approved by the Borough on February 14, 2023 in accordance with Resolution 2023-34.

Background

Woodstown had its Town Center (Center) designated by the State Planning Commission (the Commission) on October 29, 1993. The Center was due to expire on January 11, 2022, that was extended through Executive Order 103 (Murphy) declaring the Public Health Emergency and the State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 9, 2020. On June 1, 2022, the Commission adopted Resolution No. 2022-05, which, among other things, declared a center termination date of March 31, 2023, for those municipalities, such as Woodstown that are further along in the process of extending their Centers through attaining Plan Endorsement. Since its initial designation, the Borough has worked to maintain this

designation status. While it is acknowledged that the Borough's Center expired on March 31st, its recent submission of a fully compliant and well-devised MSA report, demonstrates good faith efforts that are expected to translate into an endorsed petition and renewed Center in the very near future, and without any negative consequence to Woodstown.

At less than two square miles, Woodstown is a classic "doughnut-hole" community, completely surrounded by the much larger and rural Pilesgrove Township. The two towns are closely knit, sharing many community resources, services, and civic organizations. The Borough and Pilesgrove Township are unique in the degree to which the two communities continually endeavor to work cooperatively to produce plans that are mutually supportive with harmonized visions and complimentary objectives. The longstanding, Joint Environmental Commission of Woodstown Borough, and Pilesgrove Township, as established by both communities in 2003, is but one example of their commitment to regional planning and overall good neighbor policy.

According to the MSA Report, Woodstown is seeking Plan Endorsement to maintain their existing Town Center designation and associated boundaries, which have served as the region's rural center for many years. Through endorsement, Woodstown also seeks to receive State Agency benefits, technical and funding assistance in support of overall smart growth and sustainable planning efforts and improvement projects that strengthen the economic viability and vibrancy of the historic district, downtown, commercial and transportation corridors. The continuation of its Center with boundaries adjusted to remove Flood Hazard Areas and other constrained features, will focus future redevelopment and infill into appropriate areas, while protecting the sensitive environmental features within the environs. Priorities for State Agency assistance include the enhancement of public spaces, parks, recreational facilities, historic resources, and water capital projects, with an emphasis on future improvements to that portion of the US Route 40 (Rt. 40) corridor that traverses the municipality.

More specifically, Woodstown is seeking the direct assistance of NJDOT to conduct a corridor study of Rt. 40 to enhance public safety and implement complete streets, particularly at intersections and bridge crossings. As part of the requested study, the Borough requests NJDOT's reconsideration of the so-called "Woodstown Bypass" concept that was completed in 1985 in preliminary phases that was designed to bypass the downtown, which the existing route bisects. With the rapid growth of e-commerce, truck traffic along Rt. 40 and through downtown has visibly worsened in recent years. This raises traffic safety concerns, as well as concerns for public health associated with exposure to harmful diesel exhaust. In addition to traffic congestion and air pollution, this overstressed thoroughfare also creates excessive noise pollution; so much so, that in 2002, the Borough passed an ordinance prohibiting the use of "Jake Brakes." It is important to note that the Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional High School is located immediately adjacent to Rt. 40, within the downtown area. In addition to serving as a major shipping route for trucks traveling to Salem and Cumberland county communities, and beyond, Rt. 40 is the only major arterial highway directly connecting metropolitan DC to the Jersey Shore.

Additionally, the Borough seeks to have the anticipated replacement of the deteriorated bridge across Chestnut Run (between Kresswold Lane and Chestnut Avenue), moved up in NJDOT priority. According to the Borough, local officials have been pressing NJDOT to address the need for bridge replacement,

shoulder widening and sidewalks at this location for over a decade. The replacement project is a Borough priority as the bridge is heavily traversed by pedestrians, including children, and senior citizens who live at the Friends Village retirement community. Southbound vehicles making a right from Rt. 40 onto Kingsberry Lane to access the Town & Country Golf Course, Heritages, Cream Village, and the sprawling Candlelight Village subdivision, routinely queue within the narrow bridge shoulder to avoid passing semis speeding down the hill on their way through downtown. This creates serious traffic safety issues for motorists and pedestrians alike. Traffic is expected to only worsen on Rt. 40, from increasing growth of the logistics and freight movement industries within the region. Exacerbating these concerns is the nearly completed expansion of the Candlelight Village development by 57 additional residential homes along Kingsberry Lane, which will only add to the local traffic accessing Rt. 40 from this location.

Relation to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan)

The adopted State Policy Plan Map shows the entirety of Woodstown located within Planning Area 4 (PA-4), the Rural Planning Area. With its location amid a larger rural landscape comprising thousands of acres of preserved farmland and environmentally sensitive habitat, the PA-4 designation remains highly consistent with the State Plan. Likewise, the Borough's municipal-wide pedestrian scale, centrally located mixed use core, compact residential neighborhoods, pocket parks, appropriately located light industrial and commercial areas, and preserved system of riverine greenways, provide strong justification for extending the Town Center designation. With more than 2,270 people per square mile living within a 1.62 square mile walkable community of 3,678 people (2020 U.S. Census Bureau data), Woodstown, with its historic Main Street business district, is an excellent example of how the State Plan defines a Town Center, and a quintessentially American "downtown."

Woodstown is seeking Plan Endorsement to continue its Center and solidify the close alignment of its local planning goals and objectives with the State Plan, consistent with resiliency and sustainable development practices and New Jersey State Planning Commission policies. As stated in the MSA Report and expressed throughout its planning documents and land use regulations, the Borough is focused on "Preserving historic character, accommodating appropriate growth, encouraging redevelopment, and prioritizing and facilitating the preservation and conservation of environmentally valuable and recreationally desirable open spaces, and promoting good design." One example of these principles at work, was the establishment of a Conservation District, which was implemented to ensure that any new development or redevelopment within the zone would not adversely impact valuable and sensitive natural resources, which the Borough has endeavored to identify and protect.

2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report

A review of the 2019 Master Plan Reexamination Report (2019 Report) and Redevelopment Plans, offers valuable insight into various opportunities and constraints as identified by the Borough, as well as overall consistency with the State Plan. According to the 2019 Report, the Borough's 1982 Master Plan has been amended incrementally over time, following subsequent reexaminations occurring in 1988, 1994, 2000, 2006, 2008, and 2019. Rather than create a new comprehensive master plan, the 2019 Report recommends continuing this cumulative approach to updating information so long as the goals and objectives remain fundamentally the same. The 2006 Reexamination and amendments changed and augmented some of the goals and objectives. A complete list is provided in the MSA Report, which reveals

continued alignment with the Goals of the State Plan. The Borough recognizes that the realization of these goals requires inter-municipal and regional coordination and cooperation in addition to Borough policy making.

The 2019 Report also includes a copy of the Vision Statement to the Master Plan that was added as part of the 2008 Reexamination. It is likewise consistent with the Goals of the State Plan and is currently being revisited as part of a community visioning process to be undertaken by the Borough as a condition of Plan Endorsement. The need for an updated vision statement is timely. As the 2019 Report concludes, “Changing circumstances and pressures have changed since the goals and objectives were last updated, necessitating some fine-tuning” of the Borough Code. The challenges include the long-term maintenance of reliable public water supplies and sewer service, the increasing need for stormwater infrastructure improvements, traffic congestion mitigation and street-calming, and managing the increasingly high costs municipal services, and continued enhancement of overall downtown vibrancy and viability.

Other recommended actions of note in the 2019 Reexamination with relevancy to consistency with the State Plan include, the continued maintenance and enhancement of the Historic District, vibrancy and physical upkeep of the Business District, and attraction of new industrial and commercial activities. To accomplish this, the Borough will continue to encourage redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and infill development within the existing developed areas of town, through use of the Redevelopment Statute, with clear expectations and standards. The Borough aims to retain the “Town Center” character and to promote good design in the business district and throughout the community. Completion of the below 2019 Reexamination-recommended updates to the Borough Code will further demonstrate consistency with the State Plan:

#3. Adoption of an official map in accordance with NJSA 40:55D-32. In addition to identifying public rights of-way, the official map will identify with precision the areas that the Borough intends to reserve for public use. **OPA Recommends adoption.**

#9. Adopt a Small Energy System Ordinance for small scale solar systems on residential properties. Restrict properties within the Historic District from rooftop solar systems facing road frontage. **2023 Update:** Solar ordinance passed in 2020. Ground mounts and roof mounts are not permitted in the historic preservation areas.

#11. Evaluate the Light Industrial District: Determine zoning map boundaries and standards. **OPA Response:** Recommends timely reexamination of the LI District. Consider providing greater specificity for permitted and conditional industrial uses, particularly for warehouses types and definitions. Provide appropriate design, bulk, density, landscaping, and performance standards, particularly for larger warehouse distribution centers above 50,000 sq. ft. The governing body may also want to consider adopting a resolution authorizing the planning board to conduct a preliminary investigation to determine if any parcels within the LI District represent an area is in need of redevelopment, as the Redevelopment Statute unlocks numerous tools that could help the Borough address necessary infrastructure improvements and performance standards to ensure potential for warehouse distribution, addresses community concerns for proper aesthetics, buffering, adequate traffic safety, roadway capacity, and nuisance avoidance.

#14. Repeal Section 67-57.2 growth share ordinance. Consider replacing it with an updated Affordable Housing Ordinance. Update: This has been completed. Chapter 67-57.2 was repealed on 10-26-2021 via

ordinance 2021-12. **OPA Response:** The Affordable Housing Ordinance has not been updated, nor its Housing Element and Fair Share Plan since 2009, although the Borough's zoning does appear to provide a realistic opportunity for the provision of affordable housing within the IR-Zone.

#17. Update the zoning map to accurately reflect current zoning, overlay zones and new zoning. In addition, the zoning map should encompass full lots and not cut lots into more than one zoning district.

2023 Update: The Zoning map was updated with new standards in 2019. It was decided by the PB that removing split lots was not warranted for the properties in the historic district. Some of these properties are large and putting the entire parcel in the historic district would put a burden on the owner for things they may do in the back of their property that is not visible from the street.

#19. In response to the addition of **planning for resiliency, smart growth, sustainability** to the MLUL, the Borough should consider the following:

a. Evaluate and encourage potential locations for electric vehicle charging stations in parking lots, possibly in the municipal parking lot located behind the Borough Hall. Public EV charging infrastructure feasibility and supporting ordinances. Update: The Borough currently has rain gardens, is looking into electric vehicle charging stations, and is aware of various green building options. They are also discussing a community garden and adding more pocket parks when able. I'm not sure we have had too many real opportunities to move forward with the items listed in this section. The Borough is highly interested in granting opportunities for charging stations.

OPA response: To comply with P.L. 2021, c. 171, which Governor Phil Murphy signed into law on July 9, 2021, the Borough is required to adopt DCA's Model Statewide Municipal EV Ordinance. The law requires that Electric Vehicle Supply/Service Equipment (EVSE) and Make-Ready parking spaces be designated as a permitted accessory use in all zoning or use districts and establishes associated installation and parking requirements related to EVSE in New Jersey's 565 municipalities. Adoption will be required within the first year of Plan Endorsement as part of the Plan Implementation Agreement (PIA). The ordinance will require pre-wiring for EV chargers as part of a redevelopment plan or for a specific zone, regulations, and design standards for EVSE, EV parking spaces and design guidelines for installation of EVSE. The PIA will likely also require training for local first responders on EVSE within 2 years, and local incentivisation of EV ready by reducing or waiving permit fees and providing recognition for businesses/entities that do it (2-3 yrs.), including a commitment from 3 or more partners for workplace or multi-family chargers (2-5 yrs.).

#20. Evaluate the extension of the Historic District (Map 4). Ten (10) properties have been identified by the planning Board as "Priority Historical Properties." In addition, the Board recommends that the Borough evaluate expanding the Historic District to encompass a larger area within the Borough. **2023 Update:** According to the Borough, priority properties have since been added to the Historic District.

E. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommend changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

OPA response: The Borough is encouraged to continue to pursue projects under Redevelopment Law, which gives municipalities' access to powerful tools that are proven agents in realizing community goals and

objectives for transformative physical improvements and economic impact at the community scale. The built-out nature of the Woodstown should not imply that no development potential remains. On the contrary, as articulated in the Borough's redevelopment plans and 2019 Reexamination, there are several areas and sites that may be appropriate for beneficial redevelopment. Of the five existing Redevelopment Areas noted in the MSA report, it appears that at least two projects (i.e., Bailey Street and First National Bank) have been completed. Redevelopment projects that have not moved forward and are subject to dated redevelopment plans of ten or more years, should be reevaluated and/or updated accordingly.

Also of note, is that there are five Known Contaminated Sites (as designated by NJDEP) within Woodstown; some of which could be addressed through the use of the Redevelopment Statute, among other tools and programs available. For example, the Brownfields Tax Credit Program (aka Brownfields Redevelopment Incentive Program) at the NJEDA, are always looking for potential brownfield sites that are in need of remediation and redevelopment, and projects and developers who might be interested in applying to the program.

The Brownfields Redevelopment Incentive is a \$50 million per year competitive, project-based tax credit. The program provides a one-time transferrable tax credit to incentivize environmental remediation, abatement, and demolition activities that will allow for the redevelopment of brownfields sites for commercial, retail, or mixed-use development or expansion. The Brownfields Redevelopment Incentive covers specific costs associated with brownfield remediation and redevelopment. Eligible costs include those associated with investigation and remediation of environmental contamination and building and structural remedial activities.

Tax credits will be awarded through a competitive application process to ensure the best projects receive State support. The NJEDA will partner with the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to create evaluation criteria for competitive application process. To receive tax credits through the program, the developer must demonstrate that a financing gap exists. Parties that caused or contributed to site contamination are not eligible for the program. The application window will be announced later this spring. More details on the program can be found at [Brownfields Redevelopment Incentive \(Tax Credit\)](#)

2. Central Business District

The Borough Council and Planning Board have given some consideration to the need for redevelopment and/or rehabilitation in the central business district. It is anticipated that the Borough will seek grant funding to support such a study within the next year. The purpose will be to ensure a sound foundation for redevelopment and rehabilitation with design and performance standards that will enhance the aesthetics and the economic vitality of the area. Therefore, in the interest of maintaining the viability and character of the Borough's historic and present core, the Planning Board and Borough council should consider the area's eligibility for redevelopment and/or rehabilitation area status to support and encourage its continued success as a "Town Center." **Update:** This has not been completed since the 2008 Master Plan and remains a recommendation. **OPA encourages** the Borough to pursue funding to complete this study. It should further consider using the study to identify opportunities to redevelop non-historic, underperforming, and/or underdeveloped properties for mixed use and/or multi—family housing in order to introduce greater pedestrian activity and vibrancy downtown.

3. The Manor

Consistent with the proposals set forth in the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan it is recommended that the manor be reviewed for its eligibility to become a rehabilitation area. The neighborhood consists of approximately 66 properties, many containing two units. It is estimated that 30% of the units are owner occupied. The high percentage of renter occupied units, many of which are owned by an “absentee landlord” has led to the perception of decline that has drained the neighborhood of investment. The Fair Share Plan proposes a “buy down” program for the area that will infuse investment in rehabilitation and encourage owner occupancy. A Rehabilitation Area designation may facilitate the implementation of such a program. This recommendation remains.

OPA supports this recommendation. It is also noted that according to the Borough’s Environmental Resource Inventory (2005), over 60 percent of single-family homes within the Borough were built prior to 1950, probably between 1945 and 1950 during the post-World War II suburban boom, and would likely qualify as an area in need of rehabilitation under the criteria listed in the LRHL. Specifically, the study area satisfies criteria 2 in that “more than half of the housing stock in the delineated area is at least 50 years old.” Moreover, the Borough may also satisfy criteria 6 if in fact, “a majority of the water and sewer infrastructure in the delineated area is at least 50 years old and is in need of repair or substantial maintenance”.

It may be expected that the Borough could benefit from a program of rehabilitation, as defined in the LRHL, due to the age of housing stock and age and condition of its water and sewer infrastructure, if in need of significant upgrade and/or expansion. As noted earlier in this study, the LRHL allows an area to be designated as an area in need of rehabilitation on the basis of a single criteria, not all six criteria listed in the LRHL need be met. This report concludes that the study area satisfies two criteria and therefore meets the statutory requirements for designation as an area in need of rehabilitation. In addition, the LRHL in Section 14 recognizes that, “where warranted by consideration of the overall conditions and requirements of the community, a finding of need for rehabilitation may extend to the entire area of a municipality.” A determination to designate a rehabilitation area is the first step in the redevelopment process for an area in need of rehabilitation. It is at its core, a delineation of an area in which a municipality intends to pursue an active role in furthering rehabilitation. As an alternative to adopting a redevelopment plan for the area or subarea, the Borough may also utilize the powers contained within the Five-Year Tax Exemption and Abatement Law in areas in need of rehabilitation without the adoption of a redevelopment plan. It is important to note that the exemptions and abatements permitted under the Five-Year Tax Exemption and Abatement Law may encourage private property owners to rehabilitate and reinvest in their properties.

Other planning considerations

Housing-A Housing and Fair Share plan was adopted in 2009, alongside a development fee ordinance. According to a 2015 report from the FSHC, the Borough’s prospective need obligation is zero (0) units. In 2011, as a model for inter-municipal cooperation, Woodstown and Pilesgrove partnered on 91 unit affordable rental development project. Straddling the border between the two communities, the Bailey Corner project satisfied Pilesgrove Township’s outstanding obligation of 75 units, and Woodstown’s remaining third round obligation of 16 units. As part of the site plan, parking was moved off the street and into a long, wide alley behind the buildings to avoid vehicular congestion and enhance pedestrian safety on the main roads. A Colonial-style community building, a community garden and a small pocket park with a

tot lot were placed in the middle of the neighborhood, forming a town square-like nexus for community congregation. Compatible streetscaping, lighting, signage, and additional sidewalks within the community, indigenous drought-resistant landscaping and related environmental design components complete the integrated neighborhood feel.

In 2009, the Borough established the Inclusionary Residential (IR) Zoning District to implement a settlement agreement stemming from a builder's remedy lawsuit in 2007. The IR Zone allows for the development of a mix of market and low- and moderate-income housing within the Borough, which provides housing opportunities consistent with smart growth principles. The adoption of the IR Zone was conceived in the context of an overall strategy for growth and conservation, with the provision of a higher density development in the IR Zone related to the preservation of lands in the Conservation Overlay Zone. In the 2021, Woodstown Associates submitted a preliminary plan that called for 116 Townhomes, 16 of which were to be affordable. However, a formal application to the planning board was never made and the property is now bank-owned. According to the Borough, once that final parcel is developed, Woodstown will be effectively built-out.

In addition, in 2011, Freedom Village, the first independent-living facility for those with special needs in Salem County, opened. Located at the intersection of Bailey Street and Woodstown-Alloway Road, this dense, well-planned 60- unit senior housing complex, provides assisted living, including 10 units which are reserved for those with developmental disabilities. The complex is part of Project Freedom, a housing initiative that provides barrier-free living for those with disabilities.

OPA Comment: Woodstown is to be commended for its proactive efforts towards accommodating a variety of housing options for its residents, including affordable housing, and senior housing for assisted living and persons with developmental disabilities.

Should the Woodstown Associates project not materialize, or future water and sewer capacity become available to support other potential residential and inclusionary projects, OPA encourages the Borough consider opportunities within the C-1 and C-3 districts, in close proximity to Main Street, and ideally, as part of a denser mixed-used, multi-family format (assuming provision of parking), perhaps as part of a redevelopment project as infill, etc. Justification for targeting new residential development within and/or immediately adjacent to the business district, is that the introduction of a critical mass of new units within a short walk of downtown cores has proven to be an effective means to creating more vibrant downtowns and business districts, particularly where energized by new mixed-use, multi-family and townhouse development. Consider the following national trends:

- Economic development growth is increasingly driven by housing production. Especially since the COVID-19 pandemic and its work from home revolution, job growth has increasingly been decoupled from office space.
- Prevailing demographics favor multifamily housing in walkable places. Most of today's (and tomorrow's) net new household growth is among singles and couples, be they empty nest boomers or pre-child Millennials and younger adults. These cohorts are overwhelmingly attracted to compact housing options in walkable, amenity rich environments such as downtowns in cities, towns and suburbs.
- Increasingly, young knowledge sector workers make locational decisions based on quality of life rather than access to jobs. In other words, they move to where they want to live (or bring their

remote job with them). In response, and given the emerging shortage of knowledge workers nationwide – employers are increasingly following their workforce, bringing jobs to the communities where workers choose to live.

Given Woodstown’s historic and downtown charm, immediate access to nature (East Lake and State Wildlife Management Area), Marlton Park, Town & Country Golf Course, and such amenities as local restaurants, businesses, local activities and events, and bountiful cultural and recreational opportunities within the surrounding countryside, there are many reasons why the Borough has, and remains attractive to developers. From OPA’s standpoint, locating some additional residential density within the downtown, could, if done with sensitivity to the preservation of historic resources, create a critical mass of patrons to local businesses and restaurants, benefiting overall economic sustainability.

Open Space preservation-According to the 2019 Report, “One of most important principles identified by the Master Plan and subsequent reexaminations, has been to ensure that new development will not adversely impact valuable and sensitive natural resources. To implement this principle, it has been necessary for the Borough to identify areas where development should occur and other areas where it should be restricted or precluded, particularly in the areas identified as environmentally significant.” A prime example of this overriding principle in action occurred in 2008, with Borough Council adoption of cluster development provisions for all residential zones, as well as adoption of a new CR-Conservation/Residential Land Use Zoning District (Conservation Zone). Enacted to protect lands comprising and abutting the Salem River and its tributaries, the CR Zone permits low impact clustered development in tandem with mechanisms to preserve environmentally sensitive areas targeted for permanent preservation, while addressing public water and wastewater treatment capacity limitations.

The area comprising the CR Zone has been noted as having significant resources including wetlands, open waters, forested areas, and critical habitats as documented by the Borough’s Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI). For a time, an 83 acre property within the CR Zone and abutting the south side of East Lake, was threatened with a large housing proposal as part of Mount Laurel litigation. However, as a result of a settlement agreement involving a site in the IR Inclusionary Zone, the property was preserved by the Green Acres program to expand a large Wildlife Management Area. In addition, in 2019, the Borough purchased 5.5 wooded acres along the Salem River to add to its growing inventory of parks and greenways. The preserved property expands the Borough’s Salem River Greenway and is adjacent to and near other preserved properties. The project was led by the Borough’s Open Space Advisory Committee, which has been active since 2005. Such efforts are guided by the Borough’s Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP), with funding support from a dedicated local open space tax. At the heart of the Borough’s OSRP is a vision for a system of interconnected parks, trails and natural areas to provide a host of recreational, educational and scenic benefits. The vision includes a now fully completed greenway along the Salem River.

Conservation Overlay-In the Conservation District or the Conservation-Residential District any major subdivision and/or site plan application must submit an EIS. The purpose of the conservation area overlay district is to provide special controls over land use and development located in ecologically significant landscapes. Designed to preserve and protect ecosystems in their entirety. Accomplished through minimizing fragmentation and establish standards and procedures which are designed to protect, 8 conserve, enhance, restore, and maintain significant natural features. If EIS identifies any environmentally sensitive habitat or natural resource, additional setbacks and development techniques shall be applied. The following shall constitute as environmentally sensitive habitat: A minimum buffer of 50 feet, in addition to any required setbacks, shall be provided from any feature. In circumstances where an eagle habitat is

discovered, a buffer of 300 feet shall be provided. Areas that are subject to the buffer shall be placed in a conservation easement and deed restricted from development. And include performance standards, including a cluster of development and preservation of open spaces. The Conservation District has been delineated to include all floodplain areas in the borough and are restricted from development.

Climate Resilience-The MSA Report lists several Master Plan and Reexamination Report goals and objectives that for the most part, indirectly address climate resilience. These should be expanded upon, with resiliency specifically addressed as part of the next master plan reexamination report. In order to achieve consistency with the State Plan and Plan Endorsement Guidelines, **Woodstown will need to complete a Climate Change Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CCHVA) as part of creating a local Resilience Strategy** component of the Master Plan Land Use Element, in compliance with recent amendments to the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), P.L. 2021, (c)6. These requirements will be further outlined in the Plan Implementation Agreement.

Online tools such as the [NJ Flood Mapper](#) and the [NJ Adapt/Municipal Snapshot](#) developed by Rutgers University, provide data and an interactive GIS system to visualize a community's exposure to flooding, increasing heat, and impacts to the landscape, to identified assets, areas of future development, and the location of socially vulnerable populations. The Municipal Snapshots provide baseline summary reports and associated interactive maps of the community exposure to natural hazards that will help guide the Borough when it conducts a Vulnerability Assessment. For example, according to the Built Infrastructure and Critical Assets Reports, there are two bridges located within a regulatory floodway, 1 bridge located in a 2% Annual Flood Chance, and two evacuation shelters located within a 1% and 2% percent Annual Flood Chance according to FEMA. The reports and maps for the following parameters, specific to Woodstown are provided below:

- [Built Infrastructure](#)
- [Critical Assets](#)
- [Natural and Working Lands](#)
- [Public Health Exposure](#)
- [Vulnerable Populations Exposure](#)
- [Disability Profile](#)
- [Forestry Data](#)
- [Forestry Climate Risk](#)

In order to achieve consistency with the State Plan, Woodstown will need to holistically address environmental justice and social vulnerabilities in the community through the creation and of an Environmental Justice Action Plan for completion under a Plan Implementation Agreement as part of Plan Endorsement. While the Plan Endorsement Guidelines document outlines some of the requirements, further guidance will be provided by NJDEP. It is recommended that Woodstown also familiarize itself with the [New Jersey Water Risk and Equity Map](#) developed by Rutgers University, which contains information to help communities, residents, advocates, and policymakers understand water risks in their communities. Created to assist the public in identifying potential risks, prioritizing solutions, the mapping tool can be used to address inequities in water risk exposure.

Build-out and Infrastructure considerations

Realistic Development Potential and Buildout-As part of the OCA report, OPA typically prepares a build-

out analysis to determine whether trend growth as permitted under current zoning on developable land is sustainable and viable based on mapping data and zoning regulations. As Woodstown is essentially a “built-out” Town Center where development opportunities comprise infill, reuse, and redevelopment, this report does not include a trends analysis (build-out). The Borough is extensively developed, with little land area available for future development, beyond redevelopment and infill of underdeveloped properties, as evidenced by having one of the highest population densities in Salem County (2,244.3 people/sq. mi), according to U.S. Census data. As such, the projections from the Borough’s chapter in the County Wastewater Management Plan (WMP), as adopted in 2014, will be referenced. It should be noted however, that, between the sewer capacity reserved for a conceptually proposed 116 Townhouse development associated with a settlement agreement (Block 50, Lot 6) within the IR Zone, and imminent final construction of the remaining homes associated with the Woodstown Greens development to complete the Candlelight Village off Eldridges Hill Road, that was approved in 2011 for 57 homes, the Borough reports little remaining available water and sewer capacity.

Existing Sewer Service Area Build-Out Analysis-As part of the WMP update, an analysis of wastewater and water supply demands was performed. The build-out consisted of evaluating residential, commercial and industrial flow projections to the extent of future development that could occur according to existing permitted treatment capacity, applicable zoning and the removal of any environmentally constrained areas from the sewer service area delineation. The projections were based on the potential for development of existing infill lots within areas zoned for each use and the most current land use regulations for the municipality. Generally, infill development of the existing sewer service area was prepared utilizing a “parcel based” build out approach. The total number of potential units within each residential, commercial and industrial district was then multiplied by the maximum percent building coverage specified in the zoning ordinances to reach a maximum building area at build-out. Residential flows were projected assuming 300gpd / dwelling unit. Commercial and industrial flows were projected assuming 0.1 GPD/ sq. of building area. Based on this analysis, the WMP determined that at that time, the total treatment capacity for the sanitary sewer system that serves the municipality (0.53 MGD permitted to operate) is greater than the projected flows necessary to support existing demands and remaining development potential (0.498 MGD) for 120 future residential and 136 units of non-residential units. Based on the analysis, the WMP determined that there exists sufficient wastewater treatment capacity to accommodate the adopted wastewater service area.

Current Sewer Services-A majority of the Borough of Woodstown is served by potable water and sanitary sewer service. Areas served by the Woodstown WWTP include the Borough of Woodstown, and small portions of the Township of Pilesgrove and the Township of Mannington located in Salem County. The Woodstown WWTP is located on West Avenue, and is owned and maintained by the Authority. The plant is designed to withstand an instantaneous peak flow rate of 1.4 MGD, according to the flow study prepared by RV&W, dated April 2005. The monthly flow generated by these contributors for the 2010 calendar year was 0.346 MGD. The sewer service area (SSA) includes all of the Borough of Woodstown excluding Memorial Lake, East Lake, Preserved Lands and the Salem River. These areas were not included within the Sewer Service Area as they are environmental constraints pertaining to wetlands, the habitats of Threatened and Endangered Species, Riparian Corridors, and C-1 Waters.

The Woodstown Sewerage Authority (WSA) WMP has been incorporated within the overall Salem County Wastewater Management Plan. The WSA treats domestic waste as well as industrial waste. Treated wastewater is discharged to the Salem River under NJPDES Permit No. NJ0022250. The WSA owns and

operates one wastewater treatment facility, a series of pump stations, and force mains used to convey wastewater flow to the WSA WWTP. The Borough of Woodstown sanitary sewer system and water supply systems serves approximately 3,505 persons within their municipal boundary according to current municipal data and DEP online sources. Generally the remaining areas of the Municipality, not otherwise designated as service areas for treatment facilities requiring a NJPDES permit, are included within a general wastewater management area for septic systems and other small treatment works that treat less than 2,000 gallons per day of wastewater and discharge to ground water.

Current Water Services-The water service area includes the Borough of Woodstown and designated areas within Pilesgrove and Mannington located in Salem County, New Jersey. The Borough owns and operates its own potable water supply system. The public is presently serviced from five (5) groundwater wells located throughout the Borough. Three (3) wells are located within the Potomac-Raritan-Magothy (PRM) Aquifer, which have exhibited elevated sodium levels. The secondary drinking water standard for sodium is 50 ppm and levels exceeding 100ppm have been recorded for these wells. The other two (2) wells withdraw from the Mount Laurel-Wenonah (MLW) Aquifer (MLW). The 2014 WMA, indicates that the NJDEP had concerns regarding the productivity/sustainability of wells in this aquifer, and while the Borough has sufficient monthly allocation to accommodate the FWSA water build out, the annual diversion may be exceeded if the complete FWSA build-out is realized. According to the WMA, as population increases and development expands, the Borough will need to obtain additional water supply to support the FWSA in its entirety. Water conservation measures could be enforced during peak water use periods in an effort to reduce the projected annual water demand. However, it should be noted that conservation measures alone would likely not be sufficient as the Borough's probably already realized much of the available reduction as evidenced by low peak per capita use and low unaccounted for water. Currently the Borough does not have plans to construct an additional water tower.

In addition to water conservation measures, the Borough may also elect to obtain an additional/alternative water supply source. The Borough will need to review available options and determine the feasibility of each option. Water supply additions/alternatives that could be evaluated consist of interconnection to NJAW, construction of new wells, and desalination. Given the options indicated above and considering the small size and location of the municipality, in order for the Borough to obtain adequate annual allocation to support the water supply demands of the existing and future sewer service area, a significant investment could be required on the part of Woodstown.

Sewer and Water Capacity (Update 4.5.2023): Provided by Erik K. Biermann, P.E., C.M.E., Senior Engineer, Sickels & Associates, Inc.

SEWER

WWTP Capacity	530,000 GPD
95% of WWTP Capacity	503,500 GPD (capacity assurance trigger)
WWTP Flows (last 12 months)	345,000 GPD
Reserved and Pending Flows	
Salem County Reservation	15,000 GPD
Bailey Street Townhomes	32,400 GPD (aka Woodstown Associates)
Former Acme Site	200 GPD
Woodstown Greens	17,100 GPD
Brewery	1,500 GPD

Friends Village Expansion 1,500 GPD
 Total Reserved & Pending Flows: 67,700 GPD

Remaining WWTP capacity to 95% = 503,500 – (345,000 + 67,700) = 90,800 GPD

WATER

Annual Allocation Limit 174.1 million gallons
 Peak Annual Usage 131.1 million gallons (maximum over last 5 years)
 Remaining Annual Capacity 43 million gallons
 Remaining Daily Capacity 43,000,000 gallons / 365 days = 117,800 GPD
 Remaining Water Capacity less Reserved and Pending Flows – 117,800 – 67,700 = 50,100 GPD

These calculations include development projects that are currently under construction, such as Woodstown Greens, projects that are recently completed, such as the Brewery, and projects in planning, such as the Friends Village Expansion and the Bailey Street Townhomes. Once a project has been built and is in place for a year, those flows/projects will come off our list of reserved and pending flows.

Finally, should the Borough wish to explore water infrastructure funding opportunities, it can reach out to Janice Brogal, Director of NJDEP Water Quality. Email: [\[dwg@dep.nj.gov\]](mailto:dwg@dep.nj.gov) Phone: (609) 292-9977: https://www.nj.gov/dep/dwg/dwg_contacts.htm

Another contact is Megan Brunatti, Acting Director, Office of Permitting and Project Navigation. [\[megan.brunatti@dep.nj.gov\]](mailto:megan.brunatti@dep.nj.gov) Phone: (609) 292-3600: IBank www.information@njib.gov

Acreage	1,036
Square miles	1.62
Urbanized lands	693
Developable acres (2014 WMP)	88.82
Vacant land acres	33
Constrained acres (Rutgers Climate Snapshot 2022)	76
Open Space	125
Agricultural Land	152
Forest	72
current residents (ACS 2021)	3,638
Population per sq. mi.	2,310
Median age	43.3
Number of housing units (Woodstown 2020)	1,606
Average household size	2.44
Housing units per sq. mi.	991.36
Using projections from Salem County’s 2015 Growth Management Element prepared by the (SJPTO), Woodstown can expect a 24% increase in population from 2010 to 2040.	
SJPTO Grand Total Population in 2050	2,955

Other Opportunities to Consider

Sustainable Jersey-The Borough is strongly encouraged to pursue certification through the Sustainable Jersey (SJ) program. By design, many actions that will be required for completion under the Plan Implementation Agreement to be developed and negotiated between OPA and the Borough following this report, are eligible for points towards certification under the SJ program. In addition, several subjects/initiatives of interest (e.g., stormwater/green infrastructure projects) that are discussed in the MSA report, represent actions, which could be eligible for grant funding. SJ offers multiple competitive grant and technical assistance opportunities each year to participating municipalities. Some of the actions in the PIA can likely be wholly or partially funded (up to \$20,000) through such grants. In addition, SJ maintains a funding database that includes other opportunities offered by a wide range of government agencies, foundations, corporations, and non-profit organizations. For more information on SJ's grant program, [click here](#). SJ is a network of municipalities, schools and school districts working collectively to bring about a sustainable New Jersey. Acting with state agencies, non-profit organizations, foundations, academia and industry, SJ researches best practices for what communities could and should do to contribute to a sustainable future. The program culminates in a prestigious certification award to municipalities and schools that have documented meeting a set of rigorous standards.

NJDOT-At the Pre-petition meeting, Susan Weber, Supervising Transportation Analyst with NJDOT, noted that Woodstown adopted a Complete Streets policy in May 2016 and that a Complete Streets policy (ordinance) with an implementation plan is a Plan Endorsement requirement that will need to be included in the Plan Implementation Agreement – PIA. To complete this task, OPA recommends utilizing the steps and technical assistance provided by Sustainable Jersey [<https://www.sustainablejersey.com/actions/#open/action/553>], which closely follows NJDOT's current standards for updating a model policy and implementation plan that focuses on incorporating green stormwater infrastructure into complete streets projects as well as a renewed focus on health, equity and fairness in prioritizing and creating safer streets. It is based on the [Complete and Green Streets for All, Model Complete Streets Policy & Guide](#) released by NJDOT in July 2019 and updated January 2020. As addressing both complete streets and stormwater concerns was identified in the Borough's Municipal Self-Assessment report, this action seems like a natural for the Borough to pursue, and should it apply for any funding or technical assistance grants to advance this action, either from Sustainable Jersey or NJDOT, OPA will be happy to draft a letter of support from the Director.

As a required action under the PIA, the Borough will be asked to adopt an updated Complete and Green Streets policy that includes more of the basic components found in the new NJDOT model policy as outlined in Sustainable Jersey's, Tier 2 action for a better Complete and Green Streets policy. This action, includes all the requirements of Tier 1 as well as policy provisions that ensure policy implementation. For example, this policy is better as it provides for adoption of project checklists a municipality can use to assist in review of proposed road changes and the policy supports the formation of an advisory committee and public participation process. Should the Borough also decide to pursue certification from Sustainable Jersey, this action is worth 20 points.

In addition, all municipalities that are currently working on adopting or updating a Complete and Green Streets policy or ordinance are strongly urged to reach out to the [New Jersey Safe Routes Resource Center](#) at the Voorhees Transportation Center, Rutgers **University**. The Safe Routes Resource Center helped lead the development of this action and can provide guidance to municipalities interested in

implementing it. Another resource is Bill Riviere (William.Riviere@dot.nj.gov) – **Safe Routes Coordinator, NJDOT Bureau of Safety, Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs**. This program offers a very straight forward application process for technical assistance grants, whereby such tasks as the development of a Bike/Ped Plan component of the master plan, could be created at no cost to the Borough, as was recently done for the Borough of Pitman in Gloucester County. The above actions and resources aside, the Borough is to be commended on the substantial progress already made to date in advancing its Complete Streets Policy and associated projects, such as the Safe Routes to School Funding that was awarded to Woodstown on July 26, 2018 to complete its sidewalk network; especially in the vicinity of its two schools.

Accessory dwelling units-Another tool, which is increasingly being used elsewhere in New Jersey, is permitting accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in certain residential zones. According to the American Planning Association, an ADU is a smaller, independent residential dwelling unit located on the same lot as a stand-alone (i.e., detached) single-family home. ADUs go by many different names throughout the U.S., including accessory apartments, secondary suites, and granny flats. ADUs can be converted portions of existing homes (i.e., internal ADUs), additions to new or existing homes (i.e., attached ADUs), or new stand-alone accessory structures or converted portions of existing stand-alone accessory structures (i.e., detached ADUs). Internal, attached, and detached ADUs all have the potential to increase housing affordability (both for homeowners and tenants), create a wider range of housing options within the community, enable seniors to stay near family as they age, and facilitate better use of the existing housing fabric in established neighborhoods, particularly those with larger, underutilized properties. Consequently, many cities, towns and counties have signaled support for ADUs in their plans and adopted zoning regulations that permit ADUs in low-density residential areas.

Downtown Business District-As a historic rural town center with a charming downtown core of mixed uses, organized in a medium density grid-pattern, with overall walkability, Woodstown embodies many key aspects of smart growth and center-based development. At the same time, it can be said that the downtown, like many main street commercial areas nationwide, is underperforming and would benefit from a closer examination of regional market opportunities to identify those uses, improvements, activities, mechanisms that could be utilized to enhance the area and foster greater visitation and patronage of its businesses, stores and restaurants, by residents and visitors. It is worth noting that, in the current severe housing shortage, many communities are embracing the introduction of residential density within their downtowns, as a means to bring their main street vibrancy back to life. As an important economic asset to the community's well-being and overall livability, the need to proactively cultivate a critical mass of pedestrian activity within the downtown business district cannot be overstated. Many towns have also revitalized their downtowns through well-planned and designed redevelopment/infill projects that tastefully fit within their historic context. The planning efforts that resulted in the opening of the Farmers and Bankers Brewing at the major thoroughfare of Rt.45/40, occupying the historic First National Bank of Woodstown, is a perfect example of strategic redevelopment efforts that will draw people downtown, foster social interaction, and have a synergistic economic effect on the downtown. However, the long-term success of such venues, will ultimately depend on the success of continued efforts to draw people downtown, particularly revisitation and during weekdays.

In addition, the Borough may want to consider establishing either a Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Association, or Economic Development Advisory Committee. While the existing beautification committee handles a lot of the downtown events and decorations that is managed by most of the small business owners in town, it might be advantageous to explore expanding the scope of work to include greater focus on efforts to improve and enhance the downtown and other commercial areas. An advantage of

establishing one or more groups under the umbrella of a Chamber or Main Street Association, is that they would also be eligible to apply for various grants (e.g. [Main Street America](#) and [Main Street NJ](#)) to support efforts at making the downtown an inviting destination. The Borough is also encouraged to continue to pursue planning efforts and projects designed to enhance the streetscape, implement complete streets and explore opportunities for establishing additional public spaces within the downtown for events, outdoor eating and other purposes. The importance of attractive and unifying signage, including wayfinding and storefront signage cannot be overstated, and should likewise be pursued through signage grants, and tight zoning controls, including change of use requirements. The installation of attractive street lighting can also be used to enhance ambiance and draw visitors in. Wayfinding signage is also encouraged, as it will help market the downtown, local activities and area destinations (e.g., wineries, breweries, botanical gardens, nature areas, Woodstown Central Railroad, etc.), while increasing tourism, benefiting both businesses, restaurants and community quality of life.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the Borough's Master Plan, various reexamination reports and other materials, it is clear that the Borough has made a longstanding commitment to undertaking, and methodically implementing, sound land use planning that embraces the established tenants of smart growth as espoused in the State Plan. As such, it is no surprise that OPA finds the Borough's planning policies and zoning regulations to be substantially consistent with the State Plan. As stated in the Borough's MSA Report, "The Borough of Woodstown is working to balance its interests in preserving historic character, accommodating appropriate growth, encouraging redevelopment, prioritizing and facilitating preservation and conservation of environmentally valuable and recreationally desirable open spaces, and promoting good design. One of most important principles to Woodstown Borough has been to ensure that new development will not adversely impact valuable and sensitive natural resources." Through subsequent planning and zoning updates, Woodstown has been largely successful in averting suburban sprawl, and protecting and preserving areas identified for natural and historic resource protection, parks and open space.

Today, the Borough is on the cusp of attaining full built out through a mixture of well-planned development, balanced by meaningful preservation. Its focus has understandably shifted to maintaining quality municipal services, and enhancing the upkeep of its historic downtown as a vibrant and economically viable destination for the community and surrounding area. In addition to having a very minimal land area available for development, the severely limited capacity of public water and sewer treatment capacity, represents a significant constraint for future growth and development, except where new projects are able to utilize existing capacity allocated to other or underlying host sites. With demographic shifts and workforce lifestyle trends favoring more walkable, amenity-rich downtown and neighborhood environments, the downtown area and associated businesses could be well-placed to benefit from some added residential density and the resultant customers they bring, should redevelopment and infill opportunities coincide with the available water and sewer capacity. It is understood that expanding the current treatment capacity from the current 530,000 gallons per day to 700,000 gallons per day (gpd) is an expensive prospect. It is one that could be passed along to developers with use of the Redevelopment Statute, but is a decision that should rest with the Borough alone.

As mentioned previously, should the conceptually proposed, Woolwich Associates affordable housing project not materialize, the Borough is encouraged to consider refocusing its remaining capacity that it has set aside to support this project, to identifying other potential sites within the immediate proximity

of the downtown as part of future inclusionary development projects. From the standpoint of providing a more equitable location, having more immediate access to potential jobs, amenities, and bus transit, would seem to make the downtown area a more suitable location for inclusionary development and synergistic benefits, should future opportunities present themselves.

Following the theme of focusing on the continued economic success and enhancement of the downtown, OPA supports the Borough in efforts to reengage NJDOT in its request to have a corridor study of Rt. 40 undertaken to address longstanding public safety concerns, particularly at intersections, bridge crossings, and the area fronting the Woodstown High School. OPA likewise supports the Borough's interest in revisiting the so-called, Rt. 40 "Woodstown Bypass" concept that was completed by NJDOT in 1985. With the rapid growth of e-commerce, truck traffic along Rt. 40 and bisecting the downtown, has visibly worsened in recent years, which among other negative impacts, severs the critical pedestrian connectivity between the north and side of the Main Street business district. This presents serious pedestrian safety concerns; not to mention noise and public health impacts, associated with diesel emissions. As such, and pending a more formal request from the Mayor, the Executive Director is willing to assist the Borough in requesting/scheduling a face-to-face meeting with appropriate persons from NJDOT to discuss the concept for a corridor study, specific improvements, and reconsideration of the Woodstown Bypass.

Next Steps-Other component Opportunities & Constraints Reports from NJDOT, NJDOT, and perhaps other State agencies will follow this report. In addition, both a draft Plan Implementation Agreement (PIA), and an interactive map of the proposed Town Center and underlying designations will be presented to the Borough for discussion and negotiation as necessary. The PIA will outline short and longer term planning actions and measures for completion Woodstown to achieve and maintain full consistency with the State Plan during the 10-year endorsement period. Woodstown should now commence its Community Visioning process (Step 5), as outlined in the Plan Endorsement Guidelines. As OPA finds the Borough's petition to be substantially consistent with the State Plan, the Office will not be drafting a Consistency Review Report (Step 6). Instead, it will move directly to the development of the PIA in an effort to streamline the process toward endorsing the Borough on a more advanced timeframe.

