

LAKE-00030

September 22, 2006

Eileen Swan, Executive Director
NJDC - Office of Smart Growth
101 South Broad Street, 7th Floor
P.O. Box 204
Trenton, NJ 08625-0204

**Re: Lakewood Township Plan Endorsement Action Plan
Status Report on Action Plan Items**
C1 Open Space & Recreation
C2 Center Concepts
C3 Road Network
F1 Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat

Dear Ms. Swan:

Pursuant to the requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Township of Lakewood and the New Jersey State Planning Commission, the Township is pleased to submit this status report on Plan Endorsement Action Plan Items C1: Open Space & Recreation, C2: Center Concepts, C3: Road Network and F1: Threatened and Endangered Species Habitat.

Action Plan Items

Action Plan Timetable: September 22, 2006

C1 Open Space & Recreation
C2 Center Concepts
C3 Road Network

As the above mentioned issues are interrelated, Lakewood will address these issues in a comprehensive narrative statement. This narrative statement corresponds and refers to the accompanying Center Concept Map. Please note that the Center Concept Map represents a preliminary conceptual framework for the proposed development and infill of the Lakewood Regional Center based on preliminary discussions with the Office of Smart Growth and State agencies at the plan endorsement workshop meeting held on August 9, 2006. Additional changes and refinements to this map and the overall conceptual plan for the Center will take place as further discussions and dialogue occurs at the local level and between the Township, OSG, State agencies, and the State Planning Commission.

Status. As noted above, the Township met with the Office of Smart Growth and other State agencies on August 9th to discuss the Township's plan endorsement petition. Issues discussed included planning area and regional center boundaries, as well as transportation and affordable housing issues in the Township. Based on that meeting, the Township developed the corresponding Draft Center Concept Plan. The Center Concept Plan also includes elements of the Township's open space and recreation plan for the center and

Le: Eileen Swan, Executive Director
NJDCA - Office of Smart Growth
Re: Plan Endorsement Action Plan Status Report

proposed road network. The draft conceptual plan was presented to the Township's Master Plan Advisory Committee on September 6th.

Representatives from Lakewood met with the Ocean County Engineering Department and Dover Township to discuss Route 9 on October 6, 2006. Discussions included alternative design to mitigate traffic on Route 9 and financing concepts, such as transportation development districts, as well as the need for a master plan for Route 9. Information presented to the Township was based on a meeting the County had with NJDOT.

The Township's Master Plan Advisory Committee convened task forces to investigate open space and recreation needs in the community and transportation issues. The recommendations of the task forces and the Master Plan Advisory Committee will be included as part of the Master Plan Reexamination Report. The Master Plan Reexamination Report and the recommendations of the Master Plan Committee will be discussed at the September 26th Planning Board meeting. A public hearing has been scheduled for October 24, 2006, to consider the Reexamination Report.

Narrative Statement.

Center Concept.

The 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) envisions communities and land use strategies that will exemplify compact form of development, protect the character of existing stable communities, protect natural resources, redesign areas to prevent sprawl, and revitalize cities and towns. Given its general land use characteristics, intensity of development, population density, mix of land uses, transportation options, open space amenities, range of housing types, employment opportunities, and its role within the region, Lakewood is proposing that the entire Township be designated a regional center pursuant to the SDRP. Lakewood proposes a center-based comprehensive plan with identified cores and generally compact and mixed-use development forms that will be designed to preserve environmentally sensitive areas and natural resources (Regional Center Concept Plan Map). The State Plan describes cores as pedestrian-oriented areas of commercial and civic uses serving the surrounding municipality or a center, generally including housing and access to public transportation. The purpose is to designate areas within the Regional Center that are suitable for development and to link these areas to environmentally sensitive areas with a transportation and bicycle and pedestrian network that permits safe access from the Township's major thoroughfares to surrounding developments and community facilities. The proposed development pattern will be dependent on the physical form of the area and will be characterized by their intensity and complexity to promote mixed-use, multi-story buildings, encourage internal trips are on foot or by transit; shared parking, public open spaces and multi-family housing.

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NJDC - Office of Smart Growth
Re: Plan Endorsement Action Plan Status Report

1. Employment Cores.

- a. *Downtown Core.* Lakewood's downtown area, located to the north of Lake Shenandoah and Lake Carasajlo, is the historic heart of the Township and contains an identifiable downtown commercial district surrounded by high to moderate density residential neighborhoods. In addition, the Township maintains several institutions of higher education, a performing arts theater, a hospital and other community focal points located in or in close physical proximity to the downtown.

Lakewood will utilize its existing urban and suburban footprint more efficiently through the redevelopment and rehabilitation of the Township's downtown, by reclaiming brownfields for beneficial economic development, through the adaptive reuse of existing developed sites, and by promoting infill development where appropriate and smart growth. The downtown area's character is its biggest asset, but its built-out nature also results in challenges to ensure compatibility and the need for sensitivity in design. The downtown area also is among the densest parts of the Township and the location of the central business district. The primary issues for the downtown area are parking and circulation. Lakewood also supports the promotion of community facilities that serve the Township's population and provide for new job creation and housing.

- b. *Corporate Office Core.* The Cedar Bridge Redevelopment Area is bounded by Cedar Bridge Avenue to the North, New Hampshire Avenue to the East, Pine Street to the South and Vine Street Avenue to the West. A corporate office campus development has been approved for this area as part of the Township's redevelopment plan. This area has the potential for mixed-use infill development in the future in association with the New Hampshire mixed-use multi-modal core. The Cedar Bridge Corporate Office Core will serve as a bridge and linkage between the New Hampshire Mixed Use Multi-Modal Core and residential development areas to the South.
- c. *Industrial Cores.* Formed in the 1960s to retain local employees in the Township, the Lakewood Industrial Park complex includes a series of industrial parks comprising 2,200 acres, totals approximately 8.5 million square feet of developed buildings and about 350 businesses. The complex is divided into three sections: the Lakewood Industrial Park on Route 70 and the Lakewood Industrial Campus, which are both in the southeast portion of the municipality, and the James/Prospect Streets Industrial Park, which has rail service. The Lakewood Industrial Parks are part of a Foreign Trade Zone as well as the Township's Urban Enterprise Zone. The Parks serve as a major employer for Ocean County, employing about 10,000 individuals. The Lakewood Industrial Park also includes the Lakewood Airport, a commercial airport which provides air transportation to many businesses, as well as recreation opportunities for local aviators.

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Given its existing employment base, geographical location, and access to a variety of transportation options, Lakewood will continue to be a vital employment center for the region, attracting new businesses and commerce as well as providing opportunities for the expansion of existing businesses. Combined with a range of housing types, including affordable housing, a variety and a variety of recreation opportunities and public amenities, the Township will continue to develop as a vibrant mixed-use regional center in the future.

2. Multi-Modal Cores.

- a. *New Hampshire Mixed-Use Multi-Modal Core.* The Township is proposing a multi-modal transportation hub in the area of the FirstEnergy Park and the recently rezoned Stadium Support Zone District. Lakewood is considering the integration of this area, as well as the Cedar Bridge Redevelopment Area and portions of the Lakewood Industrial Park into a comprehensive mixed-use core plan centered at the New Hampshire Avenue and Cedar Bridge Avenue intersection. It is anticipated that this area could develop into a higher density mixed-use core in the future through adaptive re-use, redevelopment, and infill development strategies.
- b. *Franklin Street Transit-Oriented Multi-Modal Core.* The Franklin Street site has been considered as one of the potential sites for a rail station in Lakewood in conjunction with the Monmouth-Ocean-Middlesex (MOM) study. The Township recognizes the possibility that the Franklin Street tract could be the site of a rail station and transit-orientated development. The Township will work with OSG, NJ Transit, and other relevant State agencies to develop appropriate TOD plans for this site.
- c. *James Way Redevelopment Multi-Modal Core.* Located at Lakewood's northern border with Howell Township, Monmouth County, the Northern Gateway Study is in the Highway Business Zone (B-3) and the Lakewood Urban Enterprise Zone. The "James Way" area is a prime commercial area that is in need of rehabilitation and revitalization. The site is a city-block-size and includes the former Jamesway Department Store, the former Shop Rite Supermarket and other occupied and unoccupied businesses. In addition to the poor condition and physical appearance of this area, it is further impacted by the existence of three high tension power transmission line towers and a bordering wetlands area.

The Lakewood Development Corporation (LDC) had commissioned a *Beautification and Urban Design Study* to review, analyze and provide options for improvement of this area. The study's final report outlined the conditions of this tract and determined that the North Gateway Study Area meets the criteria as an area in need of redevelopment pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law. This recommendation remains under active discussion at this time.

Le: Eileen Swan, Executive Director
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3. Other Cores

- a. *Affordable Housing/School/Public Recreation Core.* The need to provide for affordable housing in the Township is great. Lakewood has set aside 63 acres for the construction of approximately 400 new affordable two, three and four bedroom units by three non-profit housing developers, including STEPS, NJ Hand, and the Lakewood Affordable Housing Corporation. Several private schools have been proposed or approved proximate to these affordable housing sites. The Township's Kettle Creek Recreation Areas is located in the southern part of this core. The intent is to link this core to employment cores and other recreation and public amenities and services through pedestrian and bicycle network and a multi-modal transportation network. A satellite retail shopping and service area may be developed as part of or proximate to this core. Additional affordable housing sites may be proposed as part of the Township's housing element and fair share plan.
 - b. *Campus Core.* The intent of a campus core would be to accommodate the housing and other relative needs of the student population attending Beth Medrash Govoha (BMG), Georgian Court College, and the multiple Yeshiva Schools located in and proximate to the downtown. Redevelopment opportunities providing student housing and parking will be explored. The intent of the establishment of the Campus Core is to address parking issues and examine strategies to transform this area into an attractive university and college-campus environment providing a wide-range of housing and services for the community. The Campus Core would not permit additional multi-family housing or retail/commercial development. In furtherance of cultivating a campus like setting, it is recommended traffic calming techniques including establishing one-way traffic patterns be examined
 - c. *Prospect and Cross Streets Mixed-Use Core.* A new mixed-use core is proposed for the triangular tract in the western portion of the Township formed by Prospect Street on the North, Cross Street on the South, and Massachusetts Avenue on the East. The eastern portion of this core is currently zoned for residential cluster and townhouse development. The Master Plan Committee has recommended that the western portion of the tract be rezoned to permit a mixed-use development option with retail and service components to serve existing and planned residential uses within the core and in the surrounding area, including multi-family senior developments to the south.
4. *Hagaman Redevelopment Site.* The Township of Lakewood was awarded \$200,000 in grant monies from the USEPA to perform a *Brownfields Pilot Preliminary Site Investigation* to identify lands most needed for remediation in 2004. The final site selected is called "Hagaman site," located on US Route 9. A study investigating its redevelopment potential will be conducted upon completion of the USEPA study. While not a Core, its potential as an anchor for future revitalization will be reviewed.

Le: Eileen Swan, Executive Director
NJDC - Office of Smart Growth
Re: Plan Endorsement Action Plan Status Report

Road Network.

The proposed employment, multi-modal, redevelopment and residential cores will be connected by existing and proposed vehicle and pedestrian and bicycle networks within the Township. The population growth in Ocean County in general and in Lakewood in particular during the last decade has resulted in traffic congestion and delays. While there are several major East-West roads (County Line Road, State Route 88, Central Avenue/Cedar Bridge Avenue, James Street/Pine Street, Cross Street, and State Route 70), there are only two major arterial roads that run the length of the Township from North to South: U.S. Route 9 and the Garden State Parkway. The Garden State Parkway is located in the eastern portion of the Township, is controlled by an independent state authority, and provides limited access to Lakewood. U.S. Route 9 is located nearer to the center of Lakewood, but it provides only one lane in each direction in the southern half of its 4.6-mile run through Lakewood.

The intent would be to extend and further develop a grid road network throughout the Regional Center to facilitate and disperse vehicular movements within the Township and reduce the need to access to Route 9 or the other State Highways in the Township. This will include extending and connecting the existing road network in the Center. This strategy will also include the development of mixed-use cores and satellite retail and service areas as part of a smart growth development strategy that provides shopping and services opportunities proximate to existing and planned residential neighborhoods, including the Township's proposed affordable housing sites. The Township will further emphasize multi-modal transportation alternatives, such as park and ride facilities, mass-transit, and pedestrian linkages and bikeways. Mass-transit opportunities to be explored include expansion of existing bus services and routes within the Township, local jitneys or van and shuttle services, and the location of a new train station in the Township in association the proposed MOM rail line. Transit-oriented development opportunities, including residential and mixed-use development and redevelopment proximate to the train station and at other proposed multi-modal transportation hubs will be explored.

There are several proposals to address traffic congestion and delays on Route 9. The Township continues to work with NJDOT and the County to evaluate design standards for the entire length of the roadway and establish appropriate setbacks so that in the future the State can widen the road as necessary and can plan for appropriate transportation development district policies. The Township also is considering widening roadways to reduce pressures on Route 9 and extending roadways, such as New Hampshire Avenue to Kennedy Boulevard, for alternative North-South roadways through the Township.

In the downtown core, the Township is considering equipping 4-way intersections with left-turn signals in order to facilitate left turns from Madison Avenue into the downtown business district. In addition, Lakewood would like to investigate the feasibility of making streets one-way only, where appropriate, in the area bounded on the north and

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NJDC - Office of Smart Growth
Re: Plan Endorsement Action Plan Status Report

south by Ninth and First Streets and bounded on the east and west by Princeton Avenue and Lakewood Avenue.

For the Campus Core, the Township would like to investigate traffic safety issues that would include installing traffic lights and provide for a dedicated drop-off area as well as create additional parking areas and maximize existing parking areas.

Open Space & Recreation.

The Township has an established open space system of passive and active recreation areas. Lakewood has several county and local parks and has proposed new recreation areas as part of the affordable housing core and its comprehensive Regional Center Plan. The intent is to explore potential physical linkages to and between active and passive recreation areas and open space. This also support opportunities for contiguous habitats that may be identified in the Township as discussed in the next section of this report. Lakewood intends to devise a comprehensive system of pedestrian and bicycle trails and linkages that will link residential neighborhoods and cores of development to existing and proposed recreation and open space areas.

The Master Plan Advisory Committee recommended that the Township continue its efforts for the protection and preservation of open space and identify and prioritize open space and recreation opportunities in the downtown area and throughout the Township, including recreation and open space opportunities in new development. As part of the PIA, Lakewood will adopt a comprehensive open space and recreation plan that will include a strategy to ensure that adequate recreation and open space is available to meet the needs of the Township's population and to ensure that the character, location and magnitude of development is compatible with the recreational and open space value of existing and needed recreational and open space facilities. With assistance from NJDEP and the County, the Township will prepare an open space and recreation plan element of the master plan.

Action Plan Item **F1 Threatened & Endangered Species** **Habitat**

Action Plan Timetable: September 22, 2006

Status. Lakewood's Environmental Commission will review and adopt the Draft Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) at its October 4th meeting and will recommend approval of the NRI by the Township Planning Board. It is anticipated that Planning Board review will take place at its October 17th meeting.

The purpose of the NRI is to identify the natural resources within Lakewood, including potential habitats of threatened and endangered species (see Narrative Statement below), and to describe their importance to the public health, safety and welfare of the

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community. The NRI will provide essential background data necessary for the Township and its Planning Board to review the environmental characteristics of the Township and then apply this information when considering future master plan amendments and reviewing development applications. The Township understands that NJDEP GIS data provided in the NRI provides a starting point in identifying potential habitat areas. Specific studies may further define the actual extent of habitat areas and confirm the presence or absence of species within a specific site or study area.

Proposed as part of the PIA, Lakewood will prepare and adopt a Habitat Conservation Plan, which will be included as part of the Conservation Plan Element of the Master Plan. It is anticipated that NJDEP provide the Township with technical assistance and support in preparing the Habitat Conservation Plan, which will be completed within two (2) years of receiving initial plan endorsement in accordance with the proposed PIA timetable.

Narrative Statement. Lakewood will utilize its Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) to identify potential rare, threatened and endangered vegetative and wildlife species habitats. A Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) will be adopted that considers the appropriate land use mechanisms that will "minimize and mitigate" the impacts on the listed NRI vegetative and wildlife species.

As highlighted in the NRI, Lakewood ecology is characteristic of the Pinelands Landscape as defined by NJDEP, Landscape Project, Version 2.0. Suitable habitats include Bald eagle foraging areas, forested, forested wetlands, grassland, beach and emergent wetlands. The NRI currently lists species by their status and habitat type and provides a general overview of the location of these areas within the Township. The threat to these species is habitat fragmentation and dispersed and disconnected "edge habitats." There are large tracts of forest cover in the Township that are contiguous and may serve as suitable habitat for these species. The HCP will consider the species degree of area sensitivity (minimum core breeding habitat) and vulnerabilities (fragmentation, disease, invasive species) as they vary from species to species. The NRI also lists known vegetative species that are located within the municipality. The HCP will consider the most appropriate means of protecting these species thorough conservation easements and other strategies.

The HCP will establish a policy to conserve threatened, endangered or priority species habitat as part of a comprehensive environmental and natural resources conservation plan designed to protect water quality and quantity, promote ground water recharge, protect forest resources, provide for resource based recreation opportunities, protect the local and regional water supply, protect scenic resources and the community's desirable visual environment, control flooding, and promote balanced land use and a compact, efficient, and sustainable pattern of development within Lakewood. The HCP will identify and evaluate linkages of suitable habitat areas with existing and proposed open spaces, stream corridors, conservation easements, wetland areas and buffers, and wellhead protection areas in the Township.


Le: Eileen Swan, Executive Director
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Re: Plan Endorsement Action Plan Status Report

The HCP will consider the adoption of development regulations and design standards that protect environmentally critical lands and resources, including habitat areas. These include best practice approaches to habitat conservation in development design and site layout, including residential cluster development and lot size averaging. More comprehensive public policy options could include transfer of development rights (TDR) and a Township-wide greenways plan. The HCP also will consider the promotion of energy efficient buildings and the planting, maintenance, and protection of trees and forested areas.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to call.

Very truly yours,

T&M ASSOCIATES

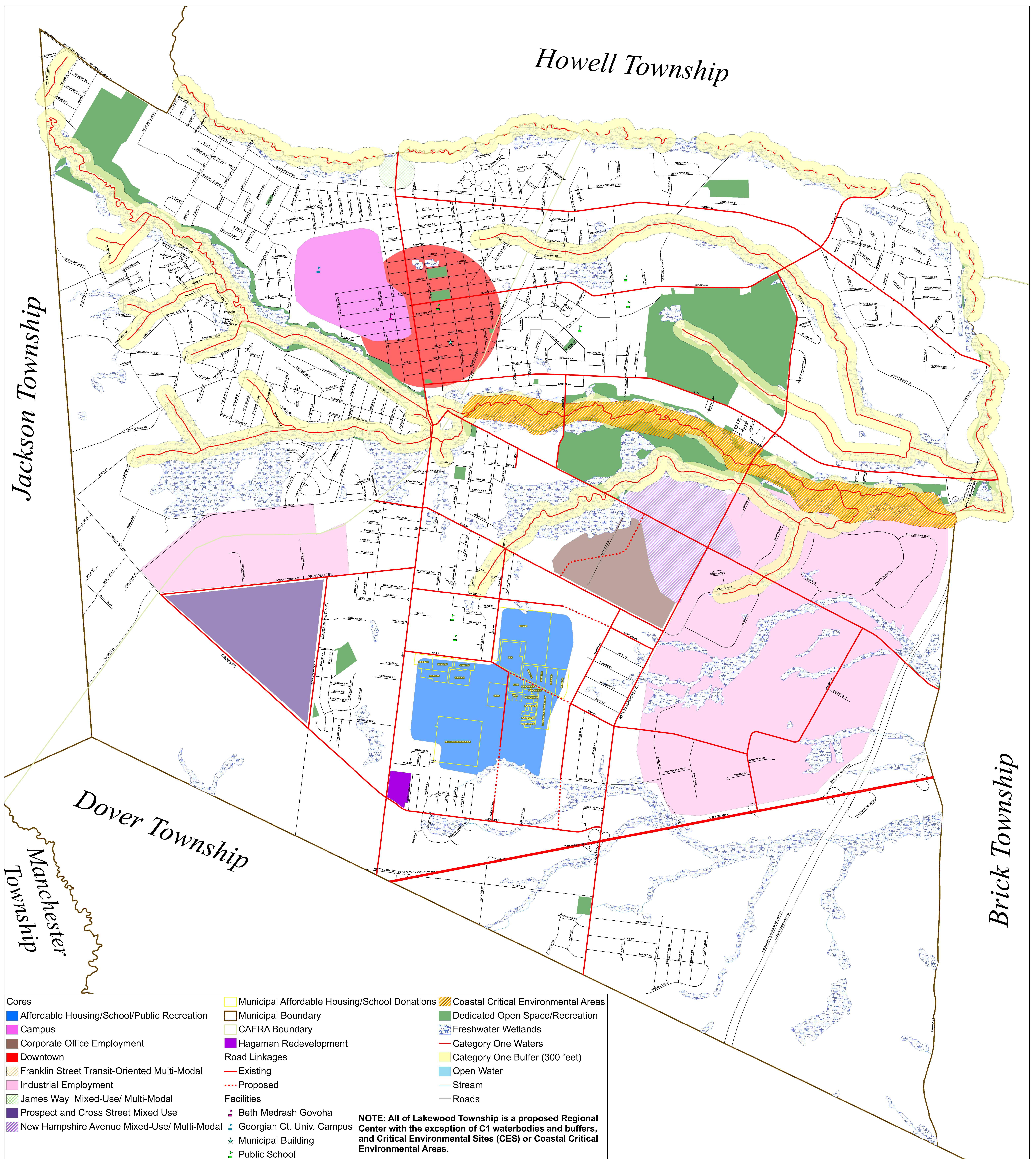


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PLANNING CONSULTANT

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cc: Meir Lichtenstein, Township Mayor
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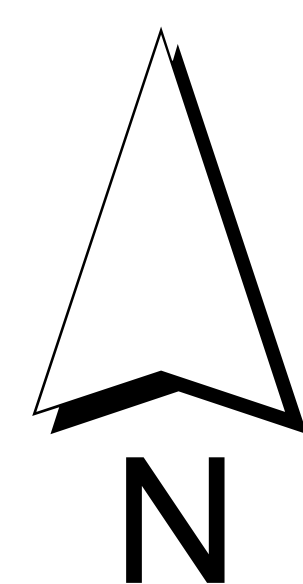
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Prepared by: JMP, September 22, 2006
 Source: NJDEP
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DRAFT Regional Center Concept Plan Map Lakewood Township Ocean County, New Jersey

NOTE: This map was developed using New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Geographic Information System digital data, but this secondary product has not been verified by NJDEP and is not State-authorized.