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# **MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES, GOALS, POLICIES ASSUMPTIONS AND STANDARDS**

(Adopted with Recodification 1994; Reorganized February 25, 2008)

This Master Plan is based upon objectives, goals, policies, principles, assumptions, and standards that have been developed over a long period of time by the Planning Board, Township Committee, Board of Adjustment, Environmental Commission, Board of Health, and other boards and agencies within the township.

## **Objectives**

The Master Plan proposals for the physical, economic, and social development of Harding Township are based upon the following planning and development objectives.

- 1. To encourage township decisions and actions which will result in the long-range appropriate use and development within Harding Township in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of present and future residents.**
- 2. To ensure safety from fire, flood, panic, and other natural and man-made disasters.**
- 3. To provide adequate light, air, and open space for all residents.**
- 4. To ensure that development within the township does not conflict with the development and general welfare of neighboring municipalities, Morris County, the immediate region, and the state as a whole.**
- 5. To promote the maintenance of appropriate population densities in locations that will contribute to the well being of persons, neighborhoods, and preservation of environmental and historical features.**
- 6. To encourage the appropriate and efficient expenditures of public funds by coordinating public and private development within a framework of land use and development principles and policies which are consistent with the rural, historical, and environmental features of Harding Township.**
- 7. To provide sufficient space in appropriate locations within the township for agricultural, residential, commercial, business, service, office, and public and quasi-public uses in a manner compatible with the unique rural historical character and sensitive environmental features of the township.**
- 8. To encourage the location and design of roadways which will permit the free flow of traffic in appropriate locations while discouraging roadways in areas which are environmentally sensitive, historically significant, or rural in nature and/or would result in blight, depreciated property values, undue congestion, or safety problems.**
- 9. To promote the maintenance and protection of the high quality visual environment of Harding Township through creative development techniques and protection and enhancement of the unique physiographic and rural historical features.**
- 10. To promote the conservation and protection of open space and valuable and sensitive natural resources and to prevent degradation of the environment through improper use of land.**
- 11. To encourage the preservation and restoration of historic buildings and sites, especially within the New Vernon Historic District, the Green Village area, and in areas adjacent to, or within the viewsheds of the Morristown National Historical Park.**

**12. To encourage energy efficient site designs and provisions for passive and active energy resources including solar, wind, and recycled heat.**

## **Goals and Policies**

The Master Plan has been developed on the basis of goals and policies which were enunciated in part in the Master Plan adopted in 1972 and amended in 1978, and on policies reflected in land use and development regulations adopted by the Township Committee and other boards and agencies and on current, environmental, historical and planning data.

### **GOAL 1 - PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE MORRISTOWN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK AND THE GREAT SWAMP NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE.**

**POLICY** - Harding Township recognizes that it has a unique responsibility of adopting and implementing land use and development regulations which will ensure the protection and enhancement of these two treasured regional and national historical and environmental resources in conjunction with other planning and development regulatory agencies at the county, regional, state, and federal levels. Harding Township has the direct responsibility of planning and implementing land use and development regulations that are compatible with the nature and concept of both areas. The township has established and will continue a policy of permitting only low density rural development to be constructed within the watershed of the Great Swamp, in order to protect surface and subsurface water quality which is critical to the viability of the Great Swamp ecosystem. The township will continue to work with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to develop land use policies and regulations to protect the environment of the watershed surrounding the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, particularly surface and subsurface water quality. The township supports the US Fish and Wildlife Service decision to include the entire watershed of the Great Swamp in the Refuge Master Plan.

### **GOAL 2 - PROTECTION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF SURFACE AND SUBSURFACE WATERS, INCLUDING STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND WETLANDS PRESERVATION.**

**POLICY** - Harding Township recognizes that due to its geographic location and topographic features, it has a unique responsibility in protecting the quality and quantity of surface and subsurface waters. At the immediate headwaters of the Great Swamp and as a major contributing area of the Passaic River System and the Buried Valley Aquifer, Harding Township bears a significant regional responsibility to regulate land uses: 1) to prevent point and nonpoint surface runoff into the Great Swamp; 2 ) to protect the aquifer recharge capabilities of the township land area through careful regulation of onsite septic disposal systems and wells to prevent ground and surface water pollution and/or depletion of groundwater supplies; and 3) to preserve wetland areas to maintain the wetlands ability to aid flood and stormwater control and ground water recharge and to enhance water quality and provide fish and wildlife habitat.

### **GOAL 3 - PROTECTION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERN AND DENSITY.**

**POLICY** - Harding Township has retained many of the characteristics of a pre-Revolutionary rural, agricultural community and has been cited by contemporary historians as a primary example of a preserved 18th or early 19th century country-scape, a unique spatial relationship within the New York and northern New Jersey metropolitan area. Harding is noted for its historical and spatial continuity of agricultural uses, small village centers, roadways, low density residential structures,

early American architectural style, open spaces and developmental scale. Since the early 1920's, Harding Township and New Jersey residents have recognized that the township has a unique rural historic quality which has become a regional and state-wide resource which should be protected and preserved. The Master Plan continues the historical rural development pattern to protect and enhance the early American historical setting and pattern of development, while also accomplishing the preservation and protection of sensitive environmental features which are integral to the protection of the Great Swamp and the Morristown National Historical Park.

**GOAL 4 - MAINTENANCE OF HIGHEST STANDARDS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING.**

**POLICY** - Because of the constant threat to the township's natural environment through the continuation of development, the township shall insist on the highest standards of environmental planning to protect its residents and the ecological features which comprise the township's physical setting. The Planning Board and Board of Adjustment shall, in review of any proposal for development, encourage and require minimal disturbance of the natural landscape. In certain circumstances, these Boards may suggest the elimination of otherwise required facilities, e.g. curbs, or request the provision of separate vehicular and pedestrian ways, the incorporation of open space and preservation of special features or other elements to create greater compatibility between the man-made and natural environment. Adherence to the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance shall be maintained in the review of all applicable developments.

**GOAL 5 - REVIEW AND COORDINATION OF HARDING TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS WITH FEDERAL, STATE, REGIONAL, COUNTY, AND ADJACENT MUNICIPAL PLANS AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS.**

**POLICY** - Consistent with a policy adopted in 1972 and with the statutory mandate of the Municipal Land Use Law, Harding Township will continue to: 1) evaluate federal, state, regional, county, and adjacent municipal planning and land development regulatory programs to ensure suitability of permitted land uses and development densities; 2) review municipal and area utilities, services and development programs and impacts; and, 3) establish, maintain and enforce land development and environmental regulations to protect ground and surface waters, soils, historical features, agricultural areas, open space, air quality, aesthetic views and flora and fauna ecosystems which are integral to the preservation of the Morristown National Historical Park, the Great Swamp, and the rural historic character of Harding Township.

**GOAL 6 - MINIMIZATION OF COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT.**

**POLICY** - Previous strip business development along Route 202 has, in part, been responsible for congestion of the highway because of a lack of past development controls. The continuing importance of Route 202 as the dominant local traffic artery within the township will be greatly impaired unless greater development control is exercised and business activities are limited to specified areas. Needless traffic congestion, plus the recognition that the majority of all resident shopping has taken place, and will continue to take place outside of the township, indicates the lack of need for additional commercial space to serve township residents. As a result of this traffic congestion, a 1980 Abbington-Ney Traffic Engineering Investigation concluded that, based upon actual traffic counts, there is no excess vehicle capacity along Route 202 in Harding Township. This conclusion is consistent with NJDOT's 1977 Annual Report of Traffic Data

which stated that the traffic volume for Route 202 north of Glen Alpin Road then exceeded design capacity. Accordingly, while it may not be feasible to prevent all new development along Route 202, any additional facilities on the limited available land, should be permitted only within a framework of strict site design controls. Moreover, any new facilities should be carefully controlled from the standpoint of purpose, function, and appearance to blend compatible with the surrounding area and needs of the community.

The unnecessary removal and/or mishandling of the natural landscape cover is abhorrent to the residents of Harding Township because of the physical and visual deterioration it causes. Proposed treatment of all land proposed for development including landscaping, final grading and paving, will be major points in determining each petition for commercial development, in order to assure enhancement of the natural environment and minimal visual intrusion upon the landscape.

**GOAL 7 - MAINTENANCE OF MINIMAL OFFICE BUILDING DEVELOPMENT AREAS.**

**POLICY** - Consistent with a goal and supporting policies contained in the 1972 Master Plan as amended in 1978, the Master Plan recognizes that Harding Township has only one small area which is geographically and environmentally suitable for development of office building use. These lands, east of Route 202 were developed in the late 1970's and early 1980's. The OB Office Building Zone District is fully developed with office buildings. The Master Plan recognizes existing and approved uses, but does not provide for any expansion of such uses. Location of such uses in other areas of Harding uses with the historical, environmental, aesthetic and rural spatial development pattern and the lack of municipal utilities and services and roadway capabilities.

**GOAL 8 - MAINTENANCE OF ON-SITE SANITARY WASTE DISPOSAL.**

**POLICY** - Harding Township recognized and stated in the 1972 Master Plan that it would not be economically or logically feasible to install a sanitary sewer system to serve the low density and rural residential areas of the township. Subsequently, federal, state, and regional environmental, planning and health agencies have established policies discouraging the extension of sanitary sewer lines in low density areas designated within Planning Area 5 by the State Planning Commission. Harding Township continues to recognize that reliance will be placed upon onsite waste disposal and that due to geologic, topographic, and soil conditions and current state and federal water quality and health standards, low-density, large-lot development will be continued. This policy is also intended to reinforce the rural development pattern of the township and preservation of surface and subsurface water quality to prevent pollution of the Great Swamp and protect the Buried Valley Aquifer. This policy is consistent with Harding Township's designation within Planning Area 5, the *Environmentally Sensitive* planning area by the State Planning Commission.

**GOAL 9 - PROTECTION AND MAINTENANCE OF POTABLE WATER SUPPLIES.**

**POLICY** - Harding Township is largely dependent upon individual wells. Due to the fact that most of the township, outside the Jockey Hollow area, is located within Triassic basalt and shale and sandstone geologic formations which have very low waterbearing capabilities, Harding Township should continue a low density pattern of development to maintain groundwater

quantity and quality. Areas of the township serviced by independent water companies are limited and future water line extensions would be inconsistent with state planning policies that seek to limit the expansion of infrastructure in areas designated within Planning Area 5.

**GOAL 10 - PROTECTION OF RURAL ROADWAYS.**

**POLICY** - While Interstate 287 bisects the township, it is a limited access highway without access within the township boundaries. The fact that access to I-287 exists in other communities near Harding, permits easy north-south traversal of the township, independent of its rural roadway system which is very limited in terms of traffic capacity and linear miles. Township roads are predominantly characterized by narrow widths, two lanes, the lack of improved shoulders, and limited lateral clearance. The township plans the retention of this local roadway system, which is consistent with its rural, historic character and the planned continuation of low density residential development. Route 202 bisects Harding in the northwestern portion of the township, and is not planned to be developed for use as a major commercial thoroughfare. The careful review of site plans for any new proposed development along this road will be useful in achieving maximum safety and appropriate roadway conditions. Coordination with state and county transportation officials may help achieve these results.

**GOAL 11 - PROTECTION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSETS THROUGH LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS.**

**POLICY** - The township residents are the benefactors of an unusually well-preserved natural environment, which can quickly be ruined by improper or too intensive land use and development management, and/or neglect. It is the intent of all township officials to prevent such influences through proper land use management and development controls. It is recognized by the residents of Harding Township that the township has a unique physical environment which cannot be preserved without extraordinary effort and even sacrifice. The township intends to prohibit intensive urbanization in order to preserve this unique heritage. It is not the intent of the township to inhibit all development, but rather to mold it, to modify it, to insist that it fit compatibly with its surroundings. The importance of municipal participation in land development processes cannot be overstated if today's environmental character is to survive. This concept is a key policy to be continually implemented with the review of each new proposal. All township boards and agencies will adhere to high standards for development review in accordance with the township zoning and land subdivision regulations, environmental impact statement requirements, site plan review requirements, flood hazard areas and wetlands protection requirements, soil erosion and sedimentation control requirements, Board of Health requirements, and other land use and development regulations and controls which may be applicable to a particular development.

## **Assumptions and Principles underlying the Master Plan**

This Master Plan is based upon the following assumptions and principles, which have been taken into account in each of its constituent elements and, most particularly, in the Land Use Plan. They are examined in more detail in the Land Use Plan because of their importance to the township's future land use planning.

- The township contains abundant high quality environmentally sensitive lands, particularly those related to water resources that should be protected.
- The township is located within the area designated by the State as environmentally sensitive (Planning Area 5 – PA5) and important to water resources (Highlands Planning Area).
- The township encompasses the majority of land comprising the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and Morristown National Historical Park, both of which should be protected from the negative effects of development.
- The township has a limited base of public infrastructure that should not be substantially expanded, consistent with State Plan policies for PA-5 designated areas.