

1999 Master Plan
Little Egg Harbor Township
Ocean County, New Jersey

**ADOPTED BY RESOLUTION OF THE LITTLE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD ON MAY 6, 1999**

PREPARED FOR: LITTLE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD

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Introduction

Little Egg Harbor Township is a 49.5 square mile municipality located in southeast Ocean County. Little Egg Harbor Township is bordered on the north and east by Stafford and Eagleswood Townships, on the south by the Little Egg Harbor and Great Bay and on the west by Bass River Township in Burlington County. The Borough of Tuckerton is located wholly within Little Egg Harbor Township in the southeastern sector of the Township.

The Township's most recent Master Plan was prepared and adopted by the Planning Board in December 1993. In 1982 and 1988, the Planning Board reexamined its Master Plan and Ordinances as part of a continuing planning process. The 1988 Reexamination Report was the foundation for various revisions to the Township Zoning Ordinance and the Zoning Map. The 1982 Master Plan revision consisted of the necessary amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Map for consistency with the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. Prior to the Pinelands revisions, Little Egg Harbor Township adopted a comprehensive Master Plan on June 20, 1978, with an amendment on December 20, 1978.

This document does not change or otherwise modify the Master Plan of the Township for the Pinelands portion of the Township as adopted in 1982. This Master Plan pertains only to the non-Pinelands area of the Township.

The Recreation Plan Element of the Master Plan adopted by the Planning Board on October 22, 1997 is not modified by this document and remains in full force and effect.

With the exception of the Housing Element, which is to be prepared and adopted as a separate document and the Recreation Plan, this Master Plan represents the complete guide to the use of lands within the Township in a manner which protects public health and promotes the general welfare.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Background Studies

Chapter 1: Historic Development	1-1
Chapter 2: Existing Land Use	2-1
Chapter 3: Demographics	3-1
Chapter 4: Environmental Resources	4-1
Chapter 5: Current Zoning	5-1
Chapter 6: Community Facilities/Open Space	6-1
Chapter 7: Economic Analysis	7-1
Chapter 8: Circulation	8-1

Master Plan

Chapter 9: Goals and Objectives	9-1
Chapter 10: Land Use Plan	10-1
Chapter 11: Community Facilities Plan	11-1
Chapter 12: Economic Plan	12-1
Chapter 13: Circulation Plan	13-1
Chapter 14: Relation of Master Plan to Other Plans	14-1

Exhibits

Exhibit 1	Existing Land Use, 1998
Exhibit 2	Land Use Trends, 1977 to 1998
Exhibit 3	Percent Population Growth, 1970 – 1997
Exhibit 4	Population Trends, 1930 - 1997
Exhibit 5	Age Characteristics, 1990
Exhibit 6	Age Group Distribution, 1980 and 1990
Exhibit 7.....	Per Capita, Median and Income Characteristics, 1990
Exhibit 8.....	Total and Occupied Housing Units, 1980 and 1990
Exhibit 9	Total Housing Units by Ownership and Units in Structure, 1990
Exhibit 10	Housing Units by Ownership and Units in Structure, 1990
Exhibit 11	Residential Units Authorized by Building Permits, 1980 to 1997
Exhibit 12	Current and Projected Population
Exhibit 13	Zoning District Acreage, 1998
Exhibit 14	Inventory of Township Schools
Exhibit 15	Fire District Personnel and Equipment
Exhibit 16	Labor Force Estimate
Exhibit 17	Covered Employment, September 1996
Exhibit 18	Real Property Valuation
Exhibit 19	County Road Inventory
Exhibit 20	Roadway Classification
Exhibit 21	Land Use Plan Acreage Distribution

Figures

Figure Number	Title
1.	Existing Land Use
2.	Wetlands Area
3.	Flood Prone Areas
4.	Privately Owned Vacant Developable Lands
5.	Sewer Service Areas
6.	Existing Roadway Classification
7.	Land Use Plan
8.	Community Facilities Plan
9.	Circulation Plan

Chapter 1: Historic Development

Little Egg Harbor Township was created by the New Jersey Legislature in 1841. The original municipal boundaries included a part of Long Beach Township and the area of Tuckerton Borough. During most of the latter half of the 1800's, Little Egg Harbor Township was part of Burlington County. Largely for political reasons, the boundary of Burlington and Ocean Counties was realigned by the State Legislature in 1891 to move Little Egg Harbor Township into Ocean County. Tuckers Beach, an area of Long Beach Township, was separated by the New Jersey Legislature from Little Egg Harbor in 1899. The area now known as Tuckerton Borough was incorporated as a separate municipality in 1901.

The Township's earliest settlers were Quakers who built a Meeting House in Tuckerton in 1702. In the late 18th century, Tuckerton was a major seaport for the eastern seaboard and became the nation's second port of entry to have a US Customs House. However, starting about 1825, with the opening of the Erie Canal and the construction of larger ships requiring deeper water, the port-related business of Tuckerton began to decline.

The Township began to develop a reputation as a resort community in the late 1880's. In that time, the railroad played a role in transporting summer visitors to the seasonal accommodations of their day. In the 1950's, the opening of the Garden State Parkway opened the area to development of summer homes in the Mystic Island area. While the Parkway continues to bring in many summer visitors, the toll road has also become a major commuter route transforming the character of the municipality into a year-round community. The development of Atlantic City as a casino gambling resort of national renown has brought major employment opportunities for many residents.

Chapter 2: Existing Land Use

The Existing Land Use Map, Figure One, portrays the current land use in Little Egg Harbor Township as of December 31, 1997. The map and Exhibit 1 were based on the Little Egg Harbor Township tax duplicates, which were finalized in December 31, 1997, and field checked. The most obvious characteristic of the existing land use in Little Egg Harbor Township is the amount of Federal and State lands, which are maintained for conservation purposes. The lands in Little Egg Harbor owned by the Federal government are a component of the Forsythe National Wildlife Management Refuge, which consists of 19,384 acres in Ocean County. The State lands consist of Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife parcels and Division of Parks and Forestry properties. The Parks and Forestry lands are part of the Bass River State Forest. Exhibit 1 depicts the existing land use acreage of Little Egg Harbor Township for 1998. Exhibit 2 provides a comparison of land use categories for 1977 and 1998. The latter exhibit shows how the land use in the municipality has changed during the last 20 years as population has increased. The information in the two exhibits is discussed below in further detail.

Land Use Analysis

Single Family Residential

Single family residential land use accounted for 2,216 acres in 1998, or 7% of the town's land area and 48% of all developed areas. The major areas of single family uses are the older and densely developed areas of Mystic Island and Parkertown and the newer larger-lot developments along Stage and Nugentown Roads. Little Egg Harbor also contains a major senior citizen development named Mystic Shores, which is north of the Mystic Island area and has a main access roadway on Mathistown Road. Land devoted to single family residential land use more than doubled since the date of the last land use survey, increasing from 1,079 acres to the 2,216 acres.

Exhibit 1

Existing Land Use

Little Egg Harbor Township

1998

LAND USE	ACREAGE	PERCENT OF * DEVELOPED LAND	PERCENT OF TOTAL LAND
RESIDENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY	2,216	47.9	7.0
RESIDENTIAL MULTI-FAMILY	223	4.8	0.7

COMMERCIAL	292	6.3	0.9
INDUSTRIAL	247	5.3	0.8
SCHOOLS	162	3.5	0.5
RECREATION	171	3.7	0.5
SEMI-PUBLIC	37	0.8	0.1
STREETS AND ROADS	1,282	27.7	4.0
PUBLIC PROPERTY (FED., STATE, CTY, MUNICIPAL)	18,931	-----	59.9
FARM QUALIFIED	391	-----	1.2
VACANT	7,728	-----	24.4
TOTAL	31,680	100.0	100.0

*Total Developed Area = 4,630 acres or 14.6% of the total area.

Multifamily Residential

Multifamily residences totaled 223 acres in 1998, which is less than 1% of the land area and about 5% of the developed lands. Multifamily development, defined as three or more units in a building, is located almost exclusively along Radio Road and Center Street. Many of these developments were constructed in the 1980's. They include Tavistock (not fully completed), Walnut Estates, Harbor House, Park Plaza (the senior apartments on Mathistown Road), and Holly Lake. Since 1977, multifamily land use increased from 14 acres to the current figure of 223 acres. The newest multifamily development, Royal Timbers on Center Street, is not included in the above figure since construction commenced after the tax assessment data was tabulated.

Commercial

Commercial land use accounted for less than 1% of total land area and 6% of developed lands in 1998 in Little Egg Harbor Township. Commercial uses are generally located along Route 9, Radio Road and North Green Street (County Route 539). This sector has grown by 90 acres, a 45% increase, since 1977. However, growth in commercial acreage had not kept pace with growth in residential acreage, which doubled over the same time period.

Industrial

Industrial land use, which comprised 247 acres in 1998, was devoted to mostly gravel operations. There are very few industrial uses in Little Egg Harbor, most of which are categorized as light industrial. Similar to the commercial-business sector there has been very little growth in the industrial land component over the past 20 years.

Exhibit 2

LAND USE ANALYSIS
LITTLE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP
1977 TO 1998

LAND USE	1977 ACRES	1998 ACRES
RESIDENTIAL SINGLE FAMILY	1,079	2,216
RESIDENTIAL MULTI-FAMILY	14	223
COMMERCIAL	202	292
INDUSTRIAL	186	247
SCHOOLS	---	162
RECREATION	179	171
SEMI-PUBLIC	16	37
STREETS AND ROADS	1,145	1,282
PUBLIC PROPERTY (FED., STATE, CTY, MUNICIPAL)	8,091	18,931
FARM QUALIFIED	---	391
VACANT	20,768	7,728
TOTAL	31,680	31,680

Schools

The four schools in the Township are: Mitchell Elementary; Frog Pond Intermediate; Pinelands Regional Middle; and Pinelands Regional High School. Schools comprised 162 acres in 1998, or 3.5% of the total developed area of the Township.

Recreation

Recreational uses such as the Atlantis Golf Course (Ocean County), Mystic Ballfield, Parkertown Docks and Parkertown Park (Ocean County) comprised 171 acres in 1998, or 3.7% of the total developed area of the Township.

Semi public

Churches and other charitable land use accounted for 37 acres in 1998 or less than 1% of the developed land area.

Streets and Roads

Land devoted to public streets and roads throughout the Township comprised 1,282 acres in 1998, or 4% of all land area and 28% of all developed lands. The 1998 acreage is up only slightly from the 1977 figure.

Public Lands

Public lands, properties owned by Federal, State and municipal government for wildlife conservation and government facilities totaled 18,931 acres in 1998, or 60% of the Township. The State of New Jersey and the US Government own the bulk of these properties for wildlife conservation purposes. The public property in the northern part of the Township is primarily in the hands of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection, while the tidal marsh areas along the bay are owned by both the State and Federal agencies. Based on the last comprehensive land use survey, it appears that there have been significant land acquisitions during the past 20 years by the State and Federal governments.

Farmland Qualified Lands

Farmland qualified parcels are lots which have been determined by the Tax Assessor to meet all of the criteria for a farmland assessment and qualify for a lower property tax assessment. There were 10 farmland qualified parcels in Little Egg Harbor in 1998, which totaled 391 acres. There were no farmland qualified lands noted in the 1977 land use survey.

Vacant

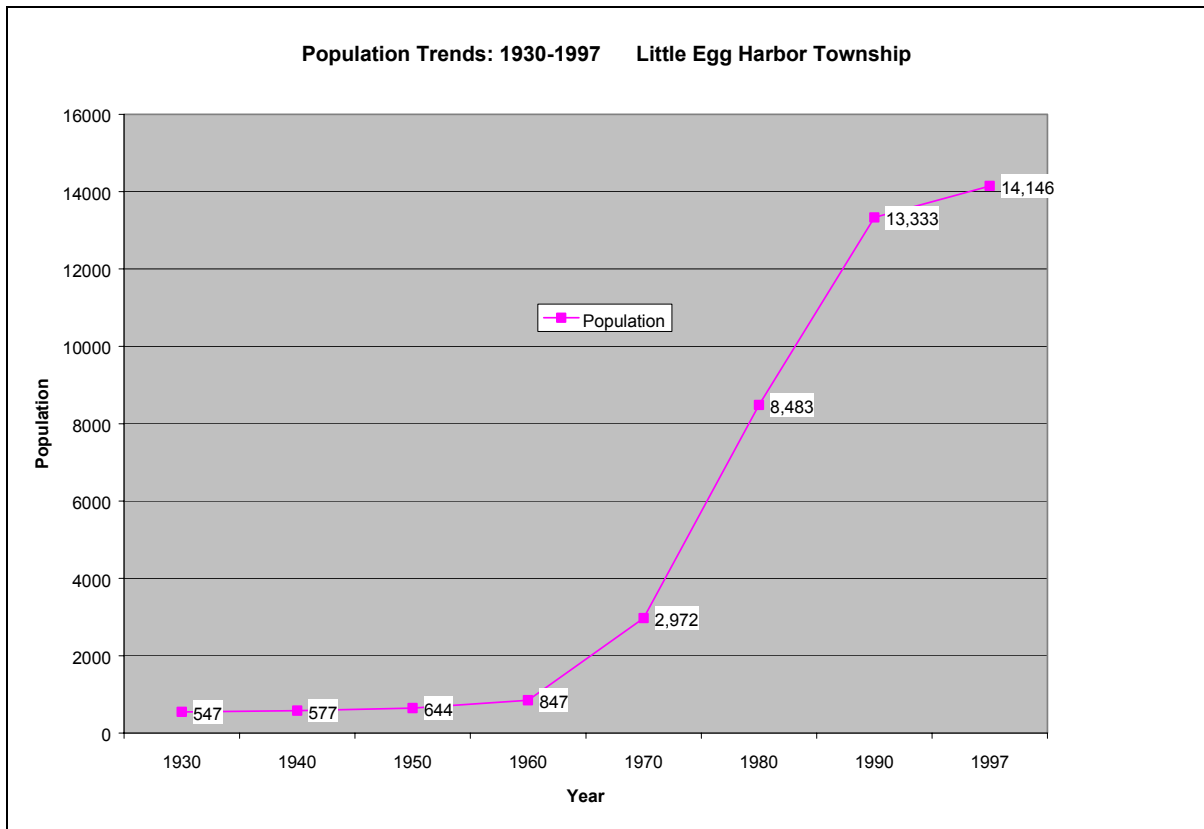
Vacant lands are privately owned parcels lacking building structures or developments. In 1998 there were 7,728 acres of vacant land, comprising 24% of the total land area of the municipality, compared to 20,768 acres in 1977. Much of this previously vacant land was acquired by the Federal and State governments over the past two decades. Some vacant land also was taken up by new development activity in the Township.

Chapter 3: Demographics

Population

The population of Little Egg Harbor Township increased by 57%, from 8,483 persons to 13,333, between 1980 and 1990. During this same time period, the population of Ocean County grew by 25%, while the State grew by 5%. In the 1990's, the population growth within the Township has slowed considerably. From 1990 to 1997, the Little Egg Harbor population grew 6%, slightly below the County rate of 8%, and slightly above the State rate of 4%. The latest population estimate of Little Egg Harbor Township, prepared by the Ocean County Planning Board in July 1997, indicated there are 14,146 persons living in the Township. The population growth trends for Little Egg Harbor Township, Ocean County, and the State of New Jersey for the years 1970 through 1997 are shown in Exhibit 3. Exhibit 4 provides a historical perspective of population trends in the Township, from 1930 to 1997.

Exhibit 4



Source: Ocean County Planning Board and the US Census.

Age

The age distribution of the population of Little Egg Harbor Township and Ocean County in 1990 is depicted in Exhibit 5. The residents of Little Egg Harbor are slightly younger than the County average, based on a comparison of median age. The distribution of age groups changed little from 1980 to 1990, as shown in Exhibit 6. The local proportion of the working population, which supports the youth and elderly, is slightly higher than the County population. At the time of the 1990 Census, the working age population in Little Egg Harbor made up 58% of the local residents compared to 54% in the County.

Exhibit 5

AGE CHARACTERISTICS LITTLE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP AND OCEAN COUNTY 1990

<u>AGE GROUP</u>	<u>LITTLE EGG NUMBER</u>	<u>HARBOR TWP PERCENT</u>	<u>OCEAN NUMBER</u>	<u>COUNTY PERCENT</u>
<5 YEARS	1,044	7.8	28,816	6.7
5-17 YEARS	2,255	16.9	69,349	16.0
18-24 YEARS	1,022	7.7	34,378	7.9
25-44 YEARS	4,063	30.4	121,929	28.2
45-54 YEARS	1,305	9.8	39,066	9.0
55-59 YEARS	615	4.6	17,105	3.9
60-64 YEARS	761	5.7	22,152	5.1
65-74 YEARS	1,462	11.0	55,703	12.9
75-84 YEARS	651	4.9	35,892	8.3
85+ YEARS	155	1.2	8,853	2.0
TOTAL	13,333	100.0	43,3203	100.0
MEDIAN AGE	35.3		38.5	

Source: 1990 Census

Exhibit 6
AGE GROUP DISTRIBUTION
LITTLE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP
1980 AND 1990

	PRESCHOOL		SCHOOL AGE SR CITIZEN		WORKING AGE			
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1980	584	7	1,571	18	4,845	57	1,483	18
1990	1,044	8	2,255	17	7,766	58	2,268	17

Source: 1980 and 1990 U.S. Census.

Households

In 1990, there were 4,962 households in Little Egg Harbor Township. The average household size was 2.66 persons per household, slightly higher than the County average of 2.54 persons per household.

Income

The median income level of Little Egg Harbor Township families and households was very comparable to that of Ocean County in 1990. According to the Census, the 1990 Little Egg Harbor Township median household income was \$33,961, the median family income was \$38,256 and the per capita income was \$14,242. Exhibit 7 compares the three measures of income for the Township and Ocean County.

Housing

Characteristics of the Housing Stock

From 1980 to 1990, total housing units in Little Egg Harbor Township increased by 45%, from 4,958 units to 7,194 units according to the Census. Year-round occupied housing units grew by an even-greater percentage, 59%, during the same time period. The percentage of vacant units, which includes seasonal units and homes for sale or rent, increased by 22%. However, the overall proportion of vacant housing stock decreased from 36% in 1980 to 31% in 1990, as shown in Exhibit #8.

Approximately 21% percent of the housing units were considered to be seasonal units by the US Census Bureau in 1990. Such housing, a total of 1,488 residences in 1990, represents potential for conversion to year-round housing. While some of the units may have been already converted to full-time use over the last eight years, the remaining units also could be converted to help accommodate future population growth. This conversion of seasonal units to year-round units represents an opportunity for the Township, since the Township would not have to build new housing units, new roads, or new utilities to accommodate new residents.

Exhibit 8

TOTAL AND OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS **LITTLE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP** **1980 AND 1990**

	1980 UNITS	1990 UNITS	PERCENT CHANGE, 1980-90
TOTAL HOUSING	4,958	7,194	45.1
OCCUPIED	3,131	4,962	58.5
VACANT	1,827	2,232	22.2

Source: 1980 and 1990 Census

Housing Type

In 1990, approximately 90% of the occupied housing units in Little Egg Harbor Township were single family detached units. The remaining 10% consisted of one unit attached, multiple dwellings (2+ units) and mobile homes. The two family or more housing type grew from 51 units in 1980 to 891 units in 1990, a 1600% increase, as shown in Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 9

TOTAL HOUSING UNITS BY HOUSING TYPE LITTLE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP 1980 AND 1990

YEAR TOTAL	SINGLE FAMILY		TWO FAMILY OR MORE	
	#	%	#	%
1980 4,958	4,907	99	51	1
1990 7,194	6,303	88	891	12

Source: 1980 and 1990 Census

Ownership Status

Exhibit 10 identifies occupied housing units in Little Egg Harbor Township. The data indicates that in 1990, 82% of all occupied housing units were owner occupied. Renters occupied most of the multifamily housing types at the time of the Census.

Exhibit 10

OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS BY OWNERSHIP STATUS AND UNITS IN STRUCTURE

LITTLE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP

1990

UNIT TYPE	OWNER OCCUPIED	RENTER OCCUPIED	TOTAL
DETACHED UNITS	3,852	595	4,447
ONE UNIT (ATTACHED)	149	138	287
2 UNITS	13	31	44
3-4 UNITS	11	18	29
5+ UNITS	26	123	149
MOBILE HOME/TRAILER	5	1	6
TOTAL	4,056	904	4,962

SOURCE: 1990 Census

Building Permits

Exhibit 11 shows the trend in the issuance of building permits for new dwelling units in Little Egg Harbor. An average of 175 dwelling units have been authorized each year by building permit between the years 1980 and 1997. As shown in the chart, 1986 was the peak year for new dwelling units, with 633 new residential units authorized by building permits. In 1997, 227 dwelling units were authorized by building permits, which is higher

than the annual average. Since 1990, almost all of the new housing units have been single family type units, according to data from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Community Affairs.

Based on the number of building permits issued for new housing for the years 1990 through 1997, the estimated number of housing units for Little Egg Harbor Township was 7,924 as of January 1, 1998.

Future Population

Population projections prepared by the Ocean County Planning Board, but not officially adopted, indicate that Little Egg Harbor Township is expected to have a population of 15,000 persons in the year 2000 and 17,500 by the year 2010. Since the population in 1997 was estimated to be over 14,000 persons, the year 2000 projection will likely be exceeded and the projected population of 17,500 in 2010 seems very conservative.

The Office of State Planning has also published population projections for Ocean County municipalities for the year 2010. The state figures, which were used in the Recreation and Open Space Element, forecast a population of 22,919 persons in 2010.

For purposes of this plan a year 2004 population projection was calculated. The population projection for the year 2004 is based upon the average number of residential units authorized by building permits for the years 1980 through 1997 and an average household size of 2.66 persons per household from the 1990 Census. The building permits issued during the years 1986, 1987 and 1988 were removed from the computation of the average for 1980 – 1997 time period since

an unusually large number of building permits were issued during these years. Building trends reveal that the Township housing stock has grown 2% per year over the past 18 years, excluding the years 1986 – 1988. The population projection assumes the Township will issue 115 permits per year over the next 6 years, for a total of 690 new dwellings. Based on a household multiplier of 2.66 persons per unit, an additional 1,835 persons should occupy these new units.

The population projection is shown in Exhibit12.

Exhibit 12

CURRENT AND PROJECTED POPULATION
LITTLE EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP

<u>YEAR</u>	<u># PERSONS</u>
1990	13,333
1998*	14,365
2004**	16,200

* Population Estimate from the Ocean County Planning Board.

** Population Projections prepared by Bay Pointe Engineering Associates, Inc., Feb.1999.