

What is the Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a long-range plan to guide the physical development of a geographic area. It may take into consideration land use, transportation, environmental and water resources, housing, utilities, community facilities, open space, agriculture, parks and recreation, economic development, historic resources and other factors. Preparation of a County Master Plan falls under the power granted by the New Jersey County and Regional Planning Act.

What is the focus of the Master Plan?

The Bergen County Master Plan will consider all the topical areas mentioned in the paragraph above and more. It seeks align the goals of the various units of County government so they work together to achieve better outcomes for our residents and visitors. More efficient government is not the only outcome of the Master Plan. It also seeks to conserve resources across the broad spectrum of topical areas and achieve sustainability – meeting the needs of the present while ensuring that future generations have access to the same or better quality of life we have here in Bergen County.

Why now?

Bergen County's last comprehensive Master Plan effort took place forty years ago. For too long, our seventy municipalities have been acting independently, without looking at what effects one community's actions can have across boundaries and for the region as a whole. We need to look

regionally in order to address many of today's most critical challenges and issues.

What are the major issues?

Bergen County's issues are many, and are characteristic of a mature suburban landscape such as ours. They include: the scarcity of land for development; the challenges of redevelopment and shifting economies; population growth; traffic congestion; vanishing open space; recreation needs; water quality and environmental quality, just to name a few.

How will the Master Plan address these issues?

The Master Plan will provide a blueprint to guide future actions and policies of the County, helping us prioritize our work efforts and direct funding, and serve as a resource to guide municipal decision-making in their own planning and zoning efforts.

How does a County Master Plan differ from a Municipal Master Plan?

Counties have much more limited oversight in planning and zoning decisions than municipalities, who exercise "home rule". County Master Plans primarily focus on developments that have impact on County roads and drainage facilities, as well as developments of regional significance. They have no specifically required elements, save a charge to guide "the physical development of the County", nor do they have any required update cycle.

Where does the County Master Plan fit within the planning, development, and conservation picture?

As municipalities continue to confront limited resources, especially with regard to addressing the regional planning issues listed above, the County Master Plan can play a pro-active role in guiding

future development, conservation, and infrastructure investment in a sound and efficient fashion by keeping an eye toward regional issues.

What is "Visioning"?

Between November 2009 and January 2010, the Department of Planning hosted three Visioning sessions throughout Bergen County. Visioning is a process that attempts to bring together members of a community to identify problems and issues, evaluate changing conditions, and build collective approaches to improve the quality of life in a community. Due to the success of these visioning workshops, and the active participation and wealth of ideas provided by residents, business owners, and community leaders, a one-day symposium was held on May 18th, 2010, to tie together all of our efforts. We found that all of our Visioning outreach has driven home the notion that our key quality of life issues are intrinsically tied together – land use decisions affect transportation which affects business, trade, and economic viability which impacts revenue generation and taxes which in turn affect future land use decisions, and so on, into the future. These issues all co-mingle and interplay to create and affect our quality of life.

What's next?

As we move forward with the Master Plan, the products of Visioning will help us to develop draft policies – in the form of goals and objectives - we wish to pursue further. Whether they are matters that fall under the jurisdiction of the County, or whether they take the form of advice and recommendations to help guide our constituent municipalities, these goals and objectives will form the blueprint for the future we want to achieve.