

IX. STRATEGIC PLAN ELEMENT

The Strategic Plan Element provides the action and implementation plan for the New Brunswick Master Plan. New Brunswick is a fully developed, older urban area in central New Jersey. Land use patterns have long been established. The Master Plan acknowledges the existing conditions and has established new goals and objectives to meet the changing needs of the City for the first decade of the 21st Century. Change will be gradual and must be taken in steps to accomplish many of the stated goals. These goals will not be accomplished unless a specific schedule of activities is established and funding mechanisms identified for the implementation of each of the activities.

PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION

Following is a description of specific action-oriented recommendations contained in the Master Plan, organized by plan element. Following the summary of each such recommendation is a discussion of how each such recommendation could be implemented including, as appropriate, agencies responsible for implementation and implementation funding. Where disparate recommendations would be implemented in a similar or combined manner (e.g. the zoning-related recommendations) such recommendations are discussed together.

Land Use Plan Element

- o Development of a Land Development and Zoning Ordinance to implement the changes proposed in the Master Plan. The Master Plan recommends a number of changes to the Zoning Ordinance to implement proposals in the Master Plan. Specifically, zoning-related recommendations in the Land Use Plan Element include, but are not limited to: changes to the bulk requirements of the R-5A and R-5B Districts that would allow infill development consistent with existing neighborhood conditions; amendments to zoning districts boundaries separating R-5, R-5A and R-5B districts in order to place areas in zoning districts more representative of their characteristics; more specifically identification of permitted uses in the R-5A and R-5B Districts; creation of design guidelines for Livingston Avenue commercial area in order that new development will conform to and preserve the residential boulevard character of the Livingston Avenue corridor; modification of the commercial zoning requirement along Easton Avenue; revision of permitted uses in the C-1, C-2A, C-2B, C-2C and C-3B districts so as to prohibit stand-alone residential uses within these zones; revision of the front setback requirements of the C-1, C-2A, C-2B, C-2C and C-3B Districts to better reflect the nature of existing development and to require new development to be consistent with the nature of existing development; revision of the

Zoning Ordinance to reflect latest revisions to the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) and to reflect Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS); creation of standards for home professional offices to ensure that such uses remain incidental and subordinate to the principal residential use and to reduce potential impacts of such commercial uses to the surrounding residential neighborhood; and, creation of detailed design standards intended to encourage future development in the City that contributes in a positive manner to the character of the City's built environment.

- *Implementation:* The Municipal Land Use Law strongly encourages consistency of a community's development regulations with its adopted Master Plan. The Master Plan, most specifically in the Land Use Plan Element, either recommends specific changes to the Zoning Ordinance or recommends that the City consider one or more courses of action in order to address an issue raised in the Plan. The recommendations in other elements of the Master Plan, most notably the Housing Plan Element, should be appropriately incorporated into the City's development regulations.

After adoption of the Master Plan, the City should direct City planning staff (perhaps with the aid of a planning consultant) to prepare a draft zoning revisions that would be consistent with and/or effectuate the proposals contained in the

Master Plan. The draft zoning would be reviewed by the Planning Board (who would review it primarily for consistency with the Master Plan) prior to action by the City Council to adopt the zoning revisions. Adoption of such zoning regulations would represent a crucial step and should be initiated soon after adoption of the Master Plan.

It assumed that this step could be accomplished in 2004 or early 2005. Funding of this effort may be from the municipal budget and/or the City may wish to pursue whether funding through other sources (e.g., State of New Jersey Smart Growth Grant funding) could be obtained.

- Conduct Studies to Determine if Areas meet the State Statute for Redevelopment Area - The Land Use Plan Element recommends that the City continue to utilize redevelopment planning and other revitalization techniques available to it.
 - *Implementation:* If the City were to decide to pursue redevelopment planning it would follow the required procedure in the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law. Once an area is determined as an "Area in Need of Redevelopment", a Redevelopment Plan would be developed to provide rezoning of the area and a listing of

properties “to be acquired”. After the plans are developed and adopted, the City should aggressively market the redevelopment sites. Funding of this effort may be from the municipal budget. Federal and state planning grants may be available as well.

Housing Plan Element

- o The City should continue to provide a balance of housing options that are affordable and attractive to households of varying types and incomes. In order to provide a variety of residential developments that would be attractive to a wide variety of household types and income levels in order to address housing needs, to build dynamic and diverse neighborhoods and to achieve other planning objectives the Plan recommends that the City pursue the following: construction of residential and/or mixed-use developments that horizontally and/or vertically integrate affordable and market-rate housing within individual projects and/or within developments or neighborhoods; and construction of residential and/or mixed-use developments that introduce middle-income and up-scale housing into new areas of the City and areas with a preponderance of lower- and moderate-income households.
 - *Implementation:* Implementation of this recommendation would occur through a combination of efforts, including

ensuring that the City’s zoning regulations are consistent with this recommendation, encouraging the development of affordable units (implementation discussed below) and facilitating redevelopment that is consistent with the recommendation. As discussed in the Master Plan, this is an ongoing policy and active effort on behalf of the City and its partners. Implementation of this recommendation would continue on an on-going basis. Implementation funding will occur through a combination of sources including the municipal budget, state and federal funding sources, as well as significant private capital in the form of development and redevelopment in the City.

- o The City should continue to encourage homeownership opportunities in the City for households at various income levels. The Plan recommends that the City continue to encourage and support increased opportunities for home ownership and recommends that the City seek to increase home ownership opportunities for households at both the low and high ends of the income scale, and as well as for those households in between.
 - *Implementation:* As discussed in the Housing Plan Element, there are a number of avenues to further this recommendation including the administration of rehabilitation assistance to low and moderate-income households and

encouraging the provision of owner-occupied housing in future redevelopment projects and infill developments in the City. The City already participates in several owner-occupied housing rehabilitation assistance programs geared towards low- or moderate- income households and intended to encourage the retention of such owner-occupied housing in the City. This is an ongoing effort on behalf of the City and its partners. Implementation of this recommendation should continue on an on-going basis and will occur through a combination of sources including the municipal budget, state and federal funding sources. The encouragement of owner-occupied housing in future redevelopment projects and infill developments in the City is also an ongoing City effort. This effort will involve working closely with the City's redevelopment partners, as well as encouraging infill housing geared towards the homeowner market.

- o Preserve the character and stability of established residential neighborhoods through appropriate zoning, design guidelines and enforcement. In order to ensure the stability and character of the City's neighborhoods, this recommendation recommends that the City discourage the intrusion of inappropriate commercial and industrial development as well as inappropriately dense residential development in the City's neighborhoods.

➤ *Implementation:* For the most part, the existing Zoning Ordinance already prohibits inappropriate commercial and industrial development as well as inappropriately dense residential development in the City's neighborhoods (certain relatively minor zoning revisions related to this issue are raised in the Land Use Plan Element). Implementation of this recommendation will, therefore, primarily involve appropriate enforcement of the City's Zoning Ordinance. For example, the City's enforcement officials must continue to enforce the City's Zoning Ordinance (e.g., ensuring that dwellings are not converted to multi-family units in areas not zoned and therefore not appropriate for such use). In addition, the Zoning Board of Adjustment must continue to consider the purpose of the City's different planning areas in its deliberations.

- o Continue to address the City's affordable housing needs through a combination of rehabilitation and new construction. As described in the Housing Plan Element, the City has rehabilitated approximately 1,000 units that were in substandard condition or vacant and has constructed 400 units of affordable housing. However, there is still a continuing need to provide safe, code compliant, affordable housing. Therefore, the Plan recommends that the City continue to pursue the continued improvement of the City's existing housing stock through

pursuit of ongoing rehabilitation and renovation programs as well as the provision of new housing geared towards low- and moderate-income households.

- *Implementation:* The City has significant experience in providing affordable housing and recognizes the need to “package” multiple funding sources to provide and/or rehabilitate affordable housing. The City will continue in its efforts to seek state, federal and other sources for the provision of the affordable housing in the City. Additional funding programs will be pursued as well as they become available for the development of affordable housing. This is an ongoing policy and active effort on behalf of the City and its partners. Implementation of this recommendation would continue on an on-going basis. Implementation will occur through a combination of sources including state and federal funding sources, as well as significant private capital in the form of rehabilitation, development and redevelopment in the City.

Circulation Plan Element

New Brunswick is well served by interstate, state and county roads as well by local and regional public transportation. Therefore, several of the initiatives of the Strategic Plan require the cooperation of county, state

and federal agencies, as well as autonomous agencies involved in transportation and circulation.

- Continue to make selected improvements to the local roadway network that address points of particular congestion and that otherwise improve traffic circulation within the City. The Circulation Plan Element recommends various types of selected improvements to the roadway network including: improvements to the function of signalized intersections; improvements to roadway function; and establishment of computer-controlled signal systems.
 - *Implementation:* This is an ongoing effort by the City. It will be accomplished through a combination of approaches, participants, and funding sources. Improvements to County roadways would be funded by County and improvements to State roadways would be funded through the State. Improvements to roadways under the City’s jurisdiction would likely occur through a combination of sources including the municipal budget and potentially from state and federal funding sources. Implementation of this recommendation will continue on an on-going basis.
- Encourage and/or implement improvements to public transportation in order that public transportation will more effectively meet the

transportation needs of City residents, workers, students or visitors who currently rely on it and in order to make public transportation a more attractive and feasible alternative to those who currently drive.

The Plan recommends that the City continue in its efforts to make public transportation as available and attractive an option for as many of its City residents, workers, students or visitors as is feasible. Efforts the City should pursue in this regard include: improved linkages between modes of transportation in order to make non-automobile modes of transportation more attractive and convenient to City residents, workers, students and visitors; and pushing for better transit service to and from New Brunswick.

- *Implementation:* In order to implement this recommendation, the Circulation Plan element recommends that the City continue to pursue improved pedestrian and bicycle connections to public transportation facilities such as the New Brunswick and Jersey Avenue Train Stations and the Suburban Transit facility on Route 27 and that the City should pursue enhancements to local shuttle systems (The Wheels and the Hub City Local programs) intended to increase use of these services and possibly the extension of such services to areas of the City not currently served.

This is an ongoing effort on behalf of the City and its transportation partners. Implementation of this

recommendation should continue on an on-going basis and will occur through a combination of sources including the municipal budget, as well as state and federal funding sources and grant programs.

- o Facilitate pedestrian and bicycling circulation in the City. The Plan recommends that the City should pursue a number of approaches to facilitate pedestrian and cycling safety, including: ensure that all crosswalks are adequately painted; improved pedestrian signage throughout the City; prohibiting right turn on red in areas of the City with high pedestrian and bicycle activity; addressing the discontinuity and absence of sidewalks and shoulders where they exist; providing adequate lighting of sidewalks and other bicycle and pedestrian routes; and considering a dedicated pedestrian phase at the City's busiest pedestrian intersections.
 - *Implementation:* This is an ongoing effort on behalf of the City and its transportation partners. Implementation of this recommendation should continue on an on-going basis and will occur through a combination of sources including the municipal budget, as well as state and federal funding sources and grant programs. There are numerous grant programs available for the pedestrian-related improvements.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan Element

- o Although the City has added a significant amount of park and open space lands over the last few years the Park, Recreation and Open Space Element recommends that the City continue to improve and expand upon the park, recreation and open space provided within the City including, but not limited to: creation of a downtown park, additional parks in the City's densest areas and neighborhoods; expansion of the Raritan River Conservation Area; establishment of a linear open space area along Lawrence Brook and the Raritan River; and improvements and/or expansion of existing recreation facilities.
 - *Implementation:* These recommendations, like many others in the Master Plan, will likely be accomplished through a combination of approaches, participants, and funding sources. For example, the downtown park recommendation is consistent with a proposal contained in the CORE Vision plan. A downtown park might be created as a result of redevelopment that may occur in association with the CORE Vision plan and/or as part of some other redevelopment activity that occurs in the future. Funding could come from a variety of sources including municipal sources, private capital and/or from a variety of state and federal grant programs intended to encourage the development of parklands in urban areas. The recommendation that the City

add additional parks in the City's densest areas and neighborhoods would likely be accomplished in a similar manner.

In addition to acquiring new lands, the Plan also recommends a number of improvements to existing City parks in order to meet the needs of the City residents and in order to extend usage of City facilities due to heavy usage. This, as well, is an ongoing policy and active effort on behalf of the City. Implementation of this recommendation would continue on an on-going basis. Implementation will occur through a combination of sources including municipal resources as well as state and federal funding sources.

The City has successfully participated in New Jersey's Green Acres Program. Most of the recent expansion and improvement to the City's park and open space inventory has been aided by funding provided by the Green Acres Program and should continue to do so. Eligible activities include: acquisition of lands for recreation and conservation purposes; development of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes; and, maintenance of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes.

Other funding programs the City should investigate include:

- *Aid for Urban Environmental Concerns* - Grants designed to provide funding for the State's urban communities to enhance the environment in the urban settings. Administered by NJDEP-Office of Business & External Affairs. Eligible entities include municipalities and counties classified as urban
- *National Recreation Trails Program* - Provides financial assistance for developing and maintaining trails and trail facilities. Administered by NJDEP- Natural Lands Management. Eligible entities consist government and nonprofit landowners.
- *Recreation and Park Departments Assistance* - Assists community recreation and park departments with the initiation, development, administration and management of recreational sites, resources and programming. Administered by NJDCA-Housing and Community Development. Eligible entities include local government and recreation agencies.
- *Sustainable Development Challenge Grants* - The USEPA solicits proposals for these grants that challenges communities to link environmental protection, economic prosperity, and community well-being. Administered by

USEPA- SDCG Program. Eligible entities include municipalities and non-profit organizations.

The proposed establishment of a linear open space area along Lawrence Brook and the Raritan River and the expansion of the Raritan River Conservation Area as proposed in Middlesex County's open space plan are endorsed by the City's Master Plan. It is anticipated that these efforts would be accomplished by the county.

Community Facilities and Services

School construction will have a major impact on the neighborhoods of New Brunswick over the next decade. As part of the development of these schools, community recreation facilities should be considered and included in the overall plan. In addition, improvements are likely to be needed to libraries and public safety facilities. Many of these organizations conduct their own studies to determine their needs and their capital improvement plans. These facility plans should be incorporated into the City's Strategic Plan after they are reviewed and accepted by the various boards and government agencies involved in their use.