



**WARREN COUNTY
PLANNING BOARD**

September 9, 2004

David Dech, P.P., AICP
Planning Director
County of Warren
Wayne Dumont, Jr. Administration Building
165 Country Route 519 South
Belvidere, NJ 07823



Re: Town of Hackettstown
Cross-Acceptance III Questionnaire
MC Project No. HKL-018

Dear Mr. Dech:

Enclosed please find the Town of Hackettstown's responses to the Cross-Acceptance III Questionnaire distributed by your office.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,

MASER CONSULTING P.A.

Joseph J. Layton, P.P., AICP

JJL:tjm
Enclosure

Cc: Mayor Roger Hines

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7. *Please provide comments and recommendations on how well you believe State agencies have implemented the SDRP?*

The Town of Hackettstown does not have sufficient knowledge to comment on State agencies implementation of the SDRP.

8. *What legislation, regulations, or other policy or programmatic changes are needed at the state, county, or municipal level to improve growth management, land preservation, economic development, transportation, and infrastructure delivery?*

More State funding for planning, economic development, transportation, infrastructure and land preservation.

9. *Do you have a plan or planning activity funded with a Smart Growth Grant, submitted, approved, underway, or complete?*

No

10. *If a planning activity has been completed, how consistent is the final product with the SDRP? How should SDRP be changed to be consistent with your plan?*

Not Applicable

11. *For municipalities with designated centers – Washington Borough, Washington Township, Hope, Oxford – please explain how you have carried out the required tasks listed in you planning and implementation agenda?*

Not Applicable

12. *What areas in your municipality are being or are proposed for redevelopment?*

Stiger Street has been approved as a redevelopment area and enabling legislation was adopted. Some redevelopment has occurred. The Bergen Tool site on Main Street is also proposed for redevelopment and an implementing ordinance is being considered.

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2. *Maintenance and revitalization of existing communities – especially Urban Centers and urban, suburban and rural municipalities experiencing distress – should be our first priority after mitigating life threatening and emergent threats to public health and safety.*

The Town of Hackettstown wholeheartedly endorses this concept. Revitalization of the downtown area, areas on the fringe of the downtown and vacant commercial properties on Mountain Avenue are of the highest planning priority in Hackettstown.

3. *Development and redevelopment – be it residential, commercial, industrial or institutional – should be planned, designed and constructed to contribute to the restoration and creation of healthy, diverse, environmentally integrated, compact, mixed-use, human-scale communities – livable communities.*

Hackettstown agrees with this concept and has applied its principles in guiding the planned development of Centenary College, the Stiger Street redevelopment area and other redevelopment properties in the Town. The Town is currently studying the redevelopment options for the Bergen Tool site. It is hoped that redevelopment of this property will become a showcase for diverse mixed use development on a human scale.

4. *The preferred approaches for managing growth to achieve the Goals of the State Plan are through the mapping of Center Boundaries to identify areas for development and redevelopment and Environs protection in suburban and rural New Jersey and the identification of Cores and Nodes as places for more intensive redevelopment in metropolitan New Jersey.*

The Town of Hackettstown in general supports this concept. An extensive effort was expended by the Town and other municipalities to identify Hackettstown Regional Center and its boundaries. However, the Office of State Planning made the process so cumbersome that several municipalities withdrew and the effort was put aside. At this time the Town needs a clearer understanding of the benefits and disbenefits of center designation before making a commitment to proceed or abandon the process altogether.

5. *Citizen choice through access to information, services, jobs, education, housing and community life should be supported by physical design, public investment and government policy.*

The Town of Hackettstown agrees with the principles of this key concept.

6. *The protection, restoration and integration of nature and natural systems enriches our lives, conserves our resources and protects the health of our citizens and biological resources.*

The Town of Hackettstown agrees with this concept.

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and the roadway system. Hackettstown believes that protection of the Musconetcong River for the benefit of all in the watershed is of utmost importance. As a consequence, extensive buffers are required in the zoning ordinance for new development adjacent to the Musconetcong River. The regional roadway system focuses on Hackettstown and as a result there is much regional through traffic within the Town borders. Hackettstown must rely on the cooperation of adjacent municipalities to help resolve traffic issues – a case in point being the Hackettstown Bypass. Unfortunately, not all municipalities adhere to the key concept that Planning must be without regard to political jurisdictions when it comes to physical or functional features. They take a parochial attitude to planning to the detriment of their neighboring municipalities.

3. *Planning should be closely coordinated with, and supported by, investments, programs and regulatory actions.*

Hackettstown supports the concept that planning should be coordinated with investments and regulatory actions. However, investments by the State and NJDEP regulatory actions frequently are not supportive of local initiatives. Additional investment by the State in local communities such as Hackettstown would be welcome.

4. *Planning should create, harness and build on the power of market forces and pricing mechanisms, while accounting for full costs of public and private actions.*

Planning in Hackettstown has recognized the power of market forces and pricing mechanisms both with respect to residential and commercial development. Developers however are expected to plan and execute their projects with minimum cost to the public and Hackettstown has required roadway, sidewalk, recreation and other infrastructure enhancements in conjunction with residential subdivision approvals as well as with industrial, retail and institutional approvals.

Planning Outcomes

1. *Prevention – of pollution of excessive traffic congestion, of excess land consumption – should be a basis of our planning, investment and regulatory policies.*

Prevention of pollution and traffic congestion are considerations always taken into account in the Planning process in Hackettstown. Traffic impact studies with commensurate mitigation planning are required for all major development proposals. In a developed community such as Hackettstown, excessive land consumption is not a significant issue overall. However, on individual parcel development plans care is taken to insure that adequate open area is provided so as to insure adequate light, air and open space.

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5. *What changes in the Planning Area Map, including proposed centers, do you recommend for your municipality?*

As noted previously, there must be consistency in how similar municipalities are mapped. Hackettstown has entertained the concept of designation as a Regional Center and at one point had prepared the necessary documentation for submittal to the State Planning Commission along with the adjacent Townships of Mansfield, Independence, Mt. Olive and Washington. However, Hackettstown is not confident that being designated as a center will on balance be a positive for the Town. The Town is reluctant to commit itself to being a designated center without a clearer understanding of the benefits, as well as detriments to being a center. The Town is not interested in the increased residential density that appears to be a consequence of center designation. Additional information/discussion is required before Hackettstown can make a recommendation regarding changes to the planning area map, including proposed centers.

6. *What types of public infrastructure needs to be provided and/or expanded in your municipality? (examples include, water, sewer, roadways, public transportation, energy, communications, stormwater facilities, solid waste facilities, recycling facilities, etc.).*

Public water availability in terms of quantity needs to be enhanced. A bypass roadway for Mountain Avenue and Route 46 needs to be provided as recommended in the Hackettstown Bypass Corridor Study prepared for the Warren County Department of Planning in October 2000.

7. *Please describe how your municipality has included the Key Concepts, found on Pages 4 through 7 of the 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan, in your planning process and Master Plan?*

Key Concepts

Planning Process

1. *Planning that is comprehensive, citizen based, collaborative, coordinated and based on capacity analysis is an essential prerequisite to achieving the goals of the State Plan.*

Hackettstown has an active citizen based planning program that is based on capacity analysis. Planning and Zoning Board meetings are well attended by members of the public and citizens are involved in the Master Plan process. The current Master Plan was adopted in 1988 with reexamination reports adopted in July 1994 and July 2001. Analysis of new development and redevelopment applications includes their impact on the capacity of infrastructure such as roadways and utilities.

2. *Planning should be undertaken at a variety of scales and should focus on physical or functional features that do not always correspond to political jurisdictions.*

Hackettstown understands that it cannot plan in a vacuum. Physical and functional features that are shared with other political jurisdictions include the Musconetcong River

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1. ***Please describe how consistent or inconsistent your municipality's Master Plan and Development regulations are with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.***

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan places Hackettstown in the sewerred PA4b or rural/environmentally Sensitive Planning Area. The description of this Planning Area in the State Plan indicates that it contains large contiguous land areas with valuable ecosystems or wildlife habitats. The Town of Hackettstown has been a developed community for many years and as such does not contain large land areas with valuable ecosystems or wildlife habitat. The Hackettstown Master Plan and development regulations recognize existing conditions in the Town and accordingly reflect single-family housing on relatively small lot sizes of 30,000 sq. ft. and smaller. Likewise, existing commercial and industrial areas are reflected in the Master Plan and Development Regulations. It is noted that other rural centers in Warren County are mapped as PA-4 Rural Planning Area including Belvidere, Oxford and Washington Borough. Despite the mapping inconsistency on the part of the State Plan, Hackettstown Planning documents are consistent with the Policy Objectives of Planning Area PA4b with the exception that Hackettstown does not wish to encourage more multi-family and higher density single-family housing in centers (Housing Policy Objective).

2. ***Please identify and describe where changes should or will be made in your plan, and/or the State Plan to attain consistency.***

No changes are proposed to Hackettstown Planning documents to attain consistency. The State Plan should be changed to the extent that areas with similar development patterns are designated in a consistent manner.

3. ***Do you agree with the proposed changes identified in the Preliminary Plan? Please identify where you believe the proposed changes are inconsistent with your plan.***

The proposed changes identified in the Preliminary Plan do not deal with substantive issues. The changes deal with peripheral issues such as changes to indicators related to goal measurement and changes to the glossary section. There is nothing of substance to agree or disagree with.

4. ***What other changes should be made to the State Plan?***

It should be a "bottoms up document" with input from municipalities forming the basis for the State Plan. The overview section of the Role of the State Plan notes that the State Plan is far from a "top down document". Our experience is that this is not the case and that the State Plan is in fact a "top down document".