



Master Plan 2018

Borough of Essex Fells New Jersey

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Residential dwelling on Beechtree Lane



Residential dwelling on Gordon Road

INTRODUCTION

As of spring 2018 in Essex Fells, NJ, the New York Region as well as the rest of the nation is almost free from the greatest recession since the Depression of the 1930s. About 9 years after the end of the Great Recession, the United States, the New York Region, and New Jersey are currently experiencing 4 – 5% percent unemployment rates with housing prices at only 85 percent of their value in the spring of 2007.

Essex Fells has been relatively protected from the Great Recession due to the affluence of its citizenry, but signs indicate that the recession is also present in this small community. Some families have made early decisions to retire to warmer, less expensive places or to downsize locally or near their grandchildren. There are six houses in foreclosure in the Borough and houses from \$1.5 to \$2.5 million (the easiest houses to move in Essex Fells) are on the market and not selling.

Two new factors also affect local property values: (1) Millennials dislike suburban living; (2) if they move to the suburbs they want transit; preferring rail and a downtown environment. Essex Fells is a suburban, rail-free location.

Just as American families have seen their home values and incomes fall, local governments across the nation are struggling to make due with reduced budgets and limited resources. Municipal revenues in the United States are supported by their own sources (74%), particularly user charges (27%) and property taxes (25%). However, in 2010, states and localities suffered their first year of real property tax declines

(3.0%) and third year of sales tax declines (6.6%) (Census of Governments, 2012). Municipalities and counties reacted to these declining receipts by cutting personnel, cutting key infrastructure projects, cutting all but basic services, and reducing cash balances. State and local governments, nationwide, eliminated 724,000 jobs from August 2008 to August 2010 (-3.9%). New Jersey, at the state and local level eliminated 20,000 jobs (3.7%) over the same period. Over the period 2010-2015, about 50% of those jobs have come back.

Economic recovery remains slow as real estate markets regain inertia; consumer spending and wages are slowly coming back; unemployment is elevated but not high; and government budget shortfalls continue to be present but are not dominant. Looking forward, municipalities must continue to be mindful of nonessential public services and to meet the growing cost demands of public safety, planning, education, and interest on debt. Compensating measures have been taken by cities and towns across the country.

New Jersey towns are being pushed to share services, and legislation has been enacted to encourage towns to consolidate. Public employee benefits are in a state of overhaul with medical costs likely to be shifted onto workers. In the years to come, New Jersey localities will continue to look at personnel and services to strive to balance budgets in times of uncertain revenues.

Over the past several years the New York Region, New Jersey, and the community of Essex Fells have been through severe winters, wherein local (Essex

Fells) snowfall has exceeded 144 inches and the Essex Fells' Pond has been frozen over for at least 60 days—one of the longest uses of the Pond in years (2011-2012). The winter of 2016-2017 is the exception at the Pond with zero days of skating. During the winter months, Essex Fells devotes considerable resources to snow removal and salting/sanding its roads. In addition, potholes spring up throughout the Borough like dandelions on spring lawns.

There is often no significant spring, and summer is haltingly here; with fewer days of heat/drought. When summer arrives, however, there is increasing activity in local pools; the flowers return to their summer home on the Pond; the Glen matures for next year's schoolchildren and visitors; the greens harden on the golf course, and the pebbles appear on the clay courts for those who engage in these sporting activities.

Fall/winter in Essex Fells causes yellow oak and red maple leaves to fall from the 100 year old trees that line the streets, and the green on the Forsythia to turn causing the deeper green on the Rhododendron to be viewed, and the evergreens and box shrub that form the edging of local properties to stand out. Fall/winter heightens the rebirth of the grasses on the manicured front and rear lawns of the Borough and enhances the endurance of walkers, joggers, and bicyclists that dot Essex Fells streets.

Fall/winter also brings us closer to the eighth year of a decade that continues the retiring of the baby-boomers and the quest for shelter of their children, Generations X and Y. Generation Z (from 2000 – 2020) is just around the corner. Fall/winter brings us

to a new year of the Essex Fells School and another round of overcommitted activities by the Essex Fells Public Works Department.

Essex Fells is experiencing changes on its borders. New townhouses have grown up on land that was a treed buffer between Bloomfield Avenue and Fells Road. The North Caldwell jail is gone and in its place are additional condominiums and town homes. A large cell tower exists on the border with Roseland, and apartments, automobile repair shops and a strip mall line the border with Caldwell. There is still a desire to cut through Essex Fells when going elsewhere in West Essex, and this remains a significant issue with the emergence of GPS.

Let us also not forget that change brings new, oversized private building additions/alterations—most the result of tear downs; ever-increasing fences; new lighting schemes to threaten dark skies; and requests for pools and playing courts within the view of neighbors. One must be ready to welcome the new seasons with joy reflecting that a past season is over but also with the realization that the next season brings heightened challenges to be answered by the first new master plan in nearly 40 years and its derivative land use regulations.

**CONCEPTS:
WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?**

A Physical Document

A master plan is an official public document adopted by a local government that is a policy guide to future physical development of the community in relation to its social and economic well-being. It is based on studies and research of present conditions and prospects of future growth embodying both empirical research and a qualitative assessment of community experience (Cox and Koenig 2017). It is a guidance document from which regulations draw their direction and strength.

- what population growth or decline consists of—change in household demographics leading to population decline, or actual household decline;
- whether there is change in the employment base of the community and its various sectors;
- the existing composition and components of change of the community by age, race, income, and occupation;
- local congestion and traffic patterns; and
- whether lands are to be preserved rather than developed in the future.

A Process

The master plan is part of a process of:

1. Studying what issues a community has faced and what it will face in the future;
2. Determining what its goals are and reacting to these goals as part of more precise master plan elements; (Weber, 2012)
3. Formulating strategies and recommendations for implementation of the plan within the various elements.

These studies enable the locality to determine what land, public facilities, and services are necessary to support future growth (Mandelbaum et al. 1996).

Recommendations for Action

Elements of the master plan provide specific recommendations about how particular goals may be achieved. Elements are subject-based, and community goals either cut across numerous elements or involve less than a single element. A master plan of a city may have either a few or many elements. Which elements are minimally required is usually determined by state enabling legislation. Other elements are *recommended, inferred, or mentioned* in enabling legislation or its commentary. (Harris, 2008)

A Collection of Studies

Background studies use data from the U.S. Census, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Employment Security Administration, and other sources (Soil Conservation Service, etc.) to determine the following:

- whether the community is growing in population or is in decline;

In New Jersey, *required* elements are: (1) a statement of objectives, principles, assumptions, policies, and standards; and (2)

a land-use element. Those *recommended* are a housing element and a storm water management element; those *inferred* are a circulation element, a public facilities element, and an environmental element (Cox and Koenig, 2017); those *mentioned* (outside of specific enabling legislation) are a design element (Congress of the New Urbanism) and a carbon footprint element (Regional Plan Association of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut). The Essex Fells Master Plan has all of the above contained within the elements.

Comprehensive, Long-Range, and General

A broad array of elements allows a master plan to be *comprehensive*. This means that the master plan deals with a significant number of substantive issues that bear on the physical development of the entire community. Elements also allow the plan to be *long-range*—10 to 25 years (Schultz and Kasen 1984).

Specific, Concrete, and Illustrative

Various recommendations of elements provide the substance of the long-range actions. These are the types of shorter-range activities (buy a fire pumper; refurbish a public building) to be accomplished to initiate and follow through on long-range objectives. The plan is *general*: it does not contain specific regulations but rather suggests directions for future action or amendments of existing regulations. The plan is illustrative of future actions to be taken across the community as a whole.

**PRELUDE TO A PLAN:
WHAT PURPOSE DOES
A MASTER PLAN SERVE?**

Coordinating the Actions of Government

A master plan serves to coordinate the activities of local government. Local government can and does influence the way in which a community develops. The local government is directly or indirectly involved in all aspects of the physical development of a community. It requires technical guidance in making physical development decisions. This guidance cannot be ad hoc or subjective; there must be a document that institutionalizes the basis of this guidance. The local government needs an instrument that provides long-range, general, and comprehensive policies, including specific recommendations that can be referenced in a continuing manner (Miles et al. 2000).

This instrument is the master plan. Through the master plan, the community legislators (Borough Council) agree on both a coherent, unified set of general long-range policies and specific courses of action for the future development of the community. Thus, policies/actions include everything from the determination that action is necessary to the final decisions regarding what specific components of those actions should be (Goodman and Freund 1968).

Basis of Forthcoming Regulations

A master plan is also the basis for both existing and forthcoming regulations. Existing and forthcoming regulations are of two types (Hagman 1971):

1. Measures that are specifically designed to implement the master plan (zoning ordinance, subdivision/site plan regulations, official map, capital improvements program, and so on); and
2. Other matters that routinely require legislative approval and should be viewed in light of the master plan (zoning cases, permit and variance applications, street closings, and the like).

reader to important components of the plan. (Dunham, 1988)

In the first case, the master plan is guidance for the substantive understanding and adoption of regulations; in the second case, the master plan provides the context for other related community actions (Hoch et al. 2000).

Communication and Education

The master plan communicates to the general public the legislators' desired goals and directions for the community. It also communicates to surrounding communities and to higher levels of government the goals to which the community aspires. Further, the plan provides a wealth of background material that is relevant and unified.

The form of the plan should be a comprehensive, stand-alone document. It should contain photographs, maps, and illustrations and be easy to access and use. It should be attractive so that it will be read, and not forbidding or ponderous to navigate. The master plan should have a summary that accurately synthesizes what the reader is about to engage in and further directs the



Top: The Green at Oak Lane and Wootton Road.

Below: Residential dwelling on corner of Gordon Road and Stewart Road.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following comprises the Master Plan for the Borough of Essex Fells, adopted by the Planning Board pursuant to the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.40:55D).

The objective of the Master Plan is to provide guidance for the future development of the community toward the best and most appropriate arrangement and use of land, in order to maintain and enhance the Borough as a desirable place for its present and future residents to live, learn, work, worship, and enjoy recreation.

The Borough of Essex Fells is one of the smallest communities in Essex County, having an area of approximately 900 acres, or 1.4 square miles. It is located in western Essex County and is surrounded by the Boroughs of Caldwell, North Caldwell, and Roseland; and the Townships of Verona, West Caldwell, and West Orange. Essex Fells had a population of 2,153 in 2015. It has no office or industrial zones, and no shopping districts. Its period of significant development to a residential community began prior to its date of incorporation in 1902 and continued until the 1950s. At that time, the road network as it presently exists within the Borough was substantially completed. Now, 60 years following the completion of the Borough road system (1958), buildings are constructed upon substantially all of the building lots within the Borough, and its growth and development with respect to roads and structures appears to have been completed. Population within the Borough has been

relatively consistent over the past three decades, yet the count of public school children has risen sharply during the period. These factors have led the Planning Board to the conclusion and assumption that the town may experience population growth but little if any household or employment growth. School growth will stabilize, but will be significant during the next 10 to 25 years.

Issues Affecting the Community

Essex Fells, as a developed community, is faced with challenges. These include:

1. The increasing scale of houses relative to the lots;
2. Incompatible uses on the edges of the community in other towns;
3. The proliferation of fences dividing properties within the Borough;
4. Increasing cut-through traffic and disregard of posted speed limits;
5. Dying and old trees being lost on public and private lands;
6. Loss of night sky from tree canopy lights;
7. Insufficient pedestrian and bicycle paths within the community;
8. Houses being positioned behind other houses when developed;
9. Unique/historic properties being lost;
10. Use of discordant building materials or structure finishes not in accord with materials/finishes used on other neighborhood structures;

11. Increasing property illumination for purposes of recreation, security, and decoration;
12. Growing private recreational uses on-site;
13. Severe grading practices on individual lots;
14. Disappearance of accessory uses on larger lots;
15. Decreasing attention to environmentally sensitive areas that could be impacted by either inattention or proximate development;
16. Lack of significant reduction of the municipal carbon footprint as the community moves forward into the twenty-first century;
17. Increase in home occupations; and
18. Properties abandoned or in need of rehabilitation.

The above issues are significant, recurring, and must be addressed as the community progresses over the next 25 years.

Goals to Address Issues

Issues require necessary responses by the community. These are expressed in the form of goals and objectives (details of the goals). These include the following:

1. Enforcing the floor-area ratio (FAR) to keep houses in scale;
2. Joining in advisory extraterritorial zoning to participate in zoning decisions at the community's edge;
3. Encouraging landscaping and discouraging fencing that divides properties;
4. Keeping roads narrow and traffic speeds low to discourage cut-through traffic;
5. Actively replacing sugar maple and dogwood trees on public lands; Encourage new plantings on private lands;
6. Stopping and "sunseting" tree canopy lights;
7. Creating a pedestrian/bicycle path within the Borough;
8. Discontinuing flag lots;
9. Instituting some agreeable form of historic preservation;
10. Having a voluntary design advisory committee;
11. Coordinating and minimizing outdoor lighting;
12. Curtailing private recreational uses;
13. Stopping excessive grading practices on-site;
14. Re-creating limited accessory uses;
15. Establishing procedures to regularly address environmental issues;
16. Reducing the community's overall carbon footprint;
17. Enforcing restrictions on home occupations; and
18. Enforcing property maintenance requirements and encouraging rehabilitation of certain properties.

Events Impacting the Community

Significant events impacting the community have either challenged the Borough in its direction going forward or have reinforced the Borough's commitment to its direction. These include the following:

1. Dismissal of the condemnation action on the Northeastern Bible School tract (1995);
2. Renovation and refurbishing of the Essex Fells School property (1999);
3. Initiation and settlement of affordable housing litigation (2000);
4. Active enforcement and continued revision of the FAR provisions (2002);
5. Renovation of the Borough Hall property and the associated sharing of police dispatch duties (2003);
6. Loss of historic properties due to lack of broad-based agreement on how to protect them (2007-2017);
7. Extended hours for additional operations on weekends of the recreational facilities (2008-2018);
8. Zoning for and rescinding a cell phone tower on Borough land (2008-11);
9. Recreation structure built (2009);
10. Growing presence of home occupations (2009);
11. Storage/parking of excess vehicles;
12. Full time healthcare workers locally (2005-2011);
13. Superstorm Sandy (2012) and other significant weather events (2010-

2018), which caused extensive tree damage and power outages and led to a substantial increase in the use of generators; and

14. Death of resident while walking on Devon Road (2017).

The above events become part of the mix of an environment wherein subsequent planning must take place. These events make planning in a community more challenging to achieve and certainly impact the predictability of contemplated actions.

Elements of the Master Plan

Planning occurs locally when individual elements of the Master Plan are created. These elements contain descriptions of what must be done in specific sectors of the plan to accomplish the community's goals. The goals are given specific actions within the various elements of the Plan. Essex Fells has the following elements within its 2018 Master Plan:

1. *Goals/Objectives Element*, which assembles the goals of the community as well as codifies assumptions about what the community will be like going forward.
2. *Land-Use Element*, which describes the nature of land use in the community and whether this will change over time. It also describes relationships between local, county, and state land-use objectives.
3. *Housing Element*, which projects growth in local market housing and

- employment, as well as below-market housing, for a decade.
4. *Circulation Element*, which describe traffic issues locally and how congestion, cut-through traffic, and speeding can be mitigated.
 5. *Public Facilities Element*, which provides a plan for the upkeep and maintenance of public buildings, public structures (water towers, pumping stations, aeration plants), public roadways, and public properties that do not contain structures (recreation facilities, parks, open space).
 6. *Recreation Element*, which prescribes activities necessary to maintain, expand, and better program public/private recreation facilities.
 7. *Recycling Element*, which sets forth required actions for the Borough and its residents to comply with the State of New Jersey's recycling requirements.
 8. *Design Element*, which establishes procedures that allow local citizens to participate in design recommendations for new housing.
 9. *Historic Preservation Element*, which could be the basis for historic housing protection within the Borough.
 10. *Stormwater Management Element*, which recognizes the procedures of the local Stormwater Management Plan and Stormwater Control Ordinance.
 11. *Environmental Element*, which protects the interstices behind and alongside properties, as well as

significant environmental lands locally (Pond, Glen, Trotter Tract).

12. *Carbon Footprint Element*, to limit the Borough's private and public energy consumption over the long term.

Characteristics of the Community and Its Population That Serve as the Foundation for Master Planning

Essex Fells is defined by certain demographic, housing, and socioeconomic characteristics. These three main divisions serve as factoring agents to group descriptive data about the community.

Demographics

Essex Fells, in 2015, is a community of 2,153 people and 753 households, with an average household size of 2.89. Population is slowly increasing, reflecting smaller household size; households are slowly increasing reflecting decreased vacancies due to some seasonal residence and limited new construction. This pattern is likely to undergo change in the future.

Housing

In 2015, Essex Fells has 806 housing units, 97 percent of which are single-family detached units, and 98.8 percent of which are owner-occupied. Four percent of the units are vacant awaiting sale or seasonally occupied, and 0% of the occupied units are overcrowded. No housing units in Essex Fells have incomplete kitchens (e.g. a refrigerator in an alcove rather than in the kitchen) and only 3 housing units have incomplete plumbing facilities (e.g. shower not in bathroom).

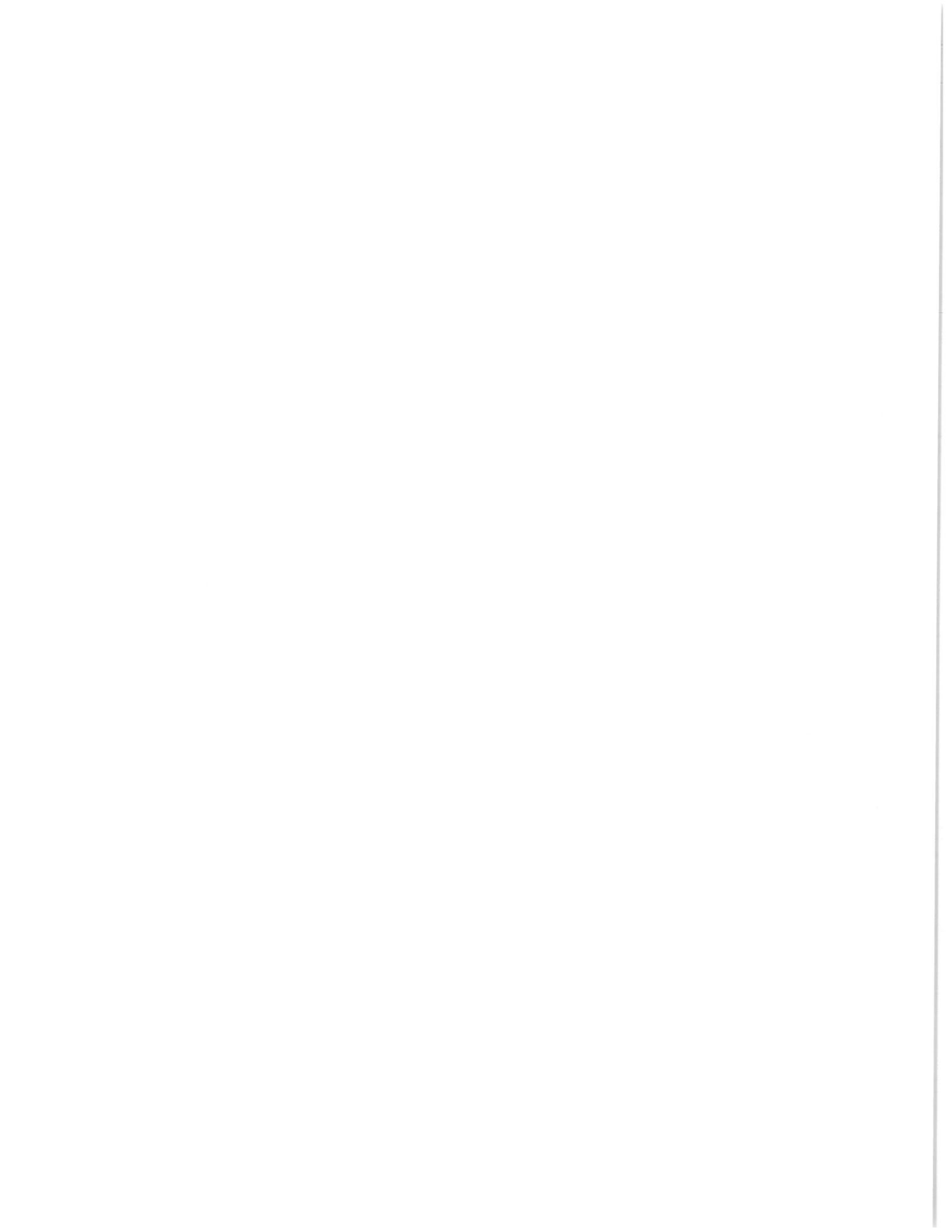
Housing is expensive in Essex Fells, with a median home price of close to \$1,180,000 in 2017, and median rents in excess of \$4,000 monthly.

Socioeconomic

Essex Fells' population is 92.5 percent white, 5.0 percent Asian, 1.6 percent "other" and 0.9 percent black. In 2015, 36.7% of Essex Fells' residents age 25 and over had a graduate degree; 69.4% worked as managers or professionals. 78.7% of those living in Essex Fells drove alone in an automobile to work. Essex Fells' population earned close to \$172,386 in median annual household income in 2015; virtually no households (only 12 out of 753) were below the poverty level. There appear to be 3 federal government (U.S. Postal Service) and 70 local government jobs within Essex Fells. Private sector jobs not associated with residence amount to 15 or less.

Conclusion

The Master Plan for Essex Fells completed during the spring of 2018 projects needs and resources of a strong residential community going forward for a period of at least 10 to 25 years. Both directions and courses of action are clear.



I. BACKGROUND

The report that follows is the Master Plan of the Borough of Essex Fells, New Jersey, as of April 2018. The Master Plan and its Land-Use Element form the basis of land-use regulations (in the Land Development Code) as well as specific land-use decisions, in particular decisions concerning variances.

The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, or MLUL (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89), requires that at least every ten years, the governing body must provide for a reexamination of its Master Plan and development regulations by the planning board, which shall prepare and adopt by resolution a report on the findings of such reexamination. The Essex Fells Planning Board has decided to prepare a new Master Plan due to the 40-year period since the last Master Plan (1978) was prepared. Reexamination of the Master Plans has occurred in 1984, 1992, 1999, and 2008. The 2018 Master Plan for the Borough of Essex Fells will follow both the basic requirements of MLUL for preparing a master plan as well as its requirements for periodic review. Accordingly, the report will contain:

- A. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
- B. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
- C. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assump-

tions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to: the density and distribution of population and land uses; housing conditions; circulation; conservation of natural resources; energy conservation; collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials; and changes in state, county and municipal policies and objectives.

- D. The specific changes recommended for the Master Plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.
- E. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal Master Plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

The Master Plan that follows attempts to discuss: (1) the nature of why people live in Essex Fells; land use and other problems facing the Borough; goals necessary to thwart these problems; events of the past that have altered the community; specific actions that must be taken in the form of the Elements of the Master Plan; and the socio-economic construct of the community.





Residential dwelling on Gordon Road

II. THE SITE OF EXAMINATION: WHAT DRAWS PEOPLE TO ESSEX FELLS, NEW JERSEY?

Essex Fells is a residential community of 806 homes that were largely constructed during three periods: the 1890s, the 1930s, and the 1950s. Prior to the twentieth century, 8 percent of the Borough was developed. During the Great Depression and immediately before, 42 percent of the Borough was built, and during one of the most expansive growth periods—post-World War II to the 1960s—the remaining half was built. The northern and western sides of the community were built during the earlier two periods, and the southern and eastern sides of the community were built during the latter period.

What characterizes the Borough of Essex Fells? First, its tree-lined, curvilinear streets connect to other streets. It's the best of both the meandering and the grid: its gently curved streets have a destination. For the most part, there are few cul-de-sacs within the community. Most larger trees in

Essex Fells are between 50 and 150 years old; they are tall and provide a unique canopy to the housing stock.

Another aspect of uniqueness of the community is the scale of its houses: they relate well to the size of the lots. This was achieved through good original design and planning; it is maintained today by one of the few residential floor-area-ratio (FAR) ordinances that exist in New Jersey.



Walking path on the Trotter Tract

Yet another feature of the community is its public and private recreation areas. Essex Fells has a pond, municipal fields, a nature trail, walking paths, a private swim/tennis club, and a private country club. All of these activities are fully subscribed. Some begin at 7 A.M.; others do not terminate until 11 P.M. The scale of recreation areas has increased over time, and so has participation.

Another prime feature of the community is the Essex Fells School. The school offers Pre-K-6 educational services that are almost unparalleled in the state. The school is the focal point of a host of activities that include both parents and children. This is the site of



Fells Brook Club near swimming pool

visiting lecturers or entertainment groups; until recently, it was also where the community voted. The Essex Fells School and its efforts have full tax and supplemental support from members of the community.

Essex Fells is a safe community. There is a sense of community that imbues its citizens with a desire to become involved

and be concerned about others. The community is small but efficient. You know your local police, and they know you and your family. You feel well-protected. You also feel a sense of relief and security from the teeming metropolis of which Essex Fells is a part.

A final feature of the community is its population. The population of Essex Fells is both detached and involved. It is detached if Essex Fells remains as it is; it is involved if the community's ambience is individually or collectively threatened.

The qualities described above attract people who choose to live in Essex Fells. They choose to move to the community for its residential character, tree-lined streets, fine education system, the safety and intimacy of knowing almost everyone, and the constancy of the community over time. The Essex Fells Master Plan is a document intended to preserve these values described above.

III. PROBLEMS: WHAT CHALLENGES DOES ESSEX FELLS FACE?

Essex Fells' ambience faces challenges on a number of fronts. These are in no particular order and appear as follows.

1. The scale of housing on lots significantly larger than the minimum permitted in a zone, and in some cases architectural choices on building façades, fences, and driveways, are changing the look of the community. The residential FAR is barely able to control the scale of development on the largest of lots in a zone, and there is growing sophistication about how to circumvent FAR procedures related to half-stories and cellars.
2. The Borough of Essex Fells is unable to control what is happening at its periphery. Multifamily development, cell tower structures, municipal building relocations, industrial parks, and educational facilities are expanding and creating intensity of use at the community's edge. There should be advisory oversight of other communities' actions on Essex Fells' borders.



Bottom left (Roseland) and above (Verona):
Cell towers at the Borough's periphery.

3. Fences are an issue in Essex Fells. There is a partitioning of properties with significant fences that is taking away from the openness of adjacent properties. Gated properties with signalized openings are presenting their own public-safety issues. The once obscure nature of lot lines and the ability to access properties for fire and health reasons are being lost by the construction of these types of fences.
4. There is increasing cut-through traffic which makes Roseland Avenue, Oldchester Road, Runnymede Road, Fells Road, Devon Road, and Forest Way heavily traveled in the A.M. and P.M. peak hours. Vehicular travel speeds through the community are also an issue with drivers increasingly disregarding posted speed limits on multiple road segments. These factors combined with the absence of sidewalks (except for Roseland Avenue) raise public concerns and compromise the high quality of residential neighborhoods. This situation is of concern for young children navigating their way on local roads to school or to recreation

activities. In addition, it is a problem for runners and walkers.

5. The trees in Essex Fells along northern and western public rights-of-way are 80 to 130 years old. Many are sugar maple trees, whose average life span is 100 years. Dogwood trees have been struck by pestilence. Both species are dying or dead and are in need of replacement. This is particularly true on Oak Lane, Wootton Road, Fells Road, Oldchester Road, and Beechtree Lane. Two of these streets carry tree names.
6. Night sky is being lost due to lights highly positioned in tall trees to illuminate particular properties and houses. On a dark night in certain locations, properties are lighted in such a way that these lights become part of the sky for others. One is not able to distinguish natural from artificial light. The sky is increasingly becoming lost from some residents' views.
7. There is growing desire to walk, jog, and ride bikes within the community. This is not currently possible or safe because there are no sidewalks, nor are there paths designated in the roadway for pedestrians and/or bicycle use. Residents, including children, walk and ride bicycles on both sides of the street, each unprotected from local traffic. In the community currently, adults must ride in their automobiles to walk at the Trotter Tract, and small children must ride in their parents' vehicles to bike on the paved parking lots near the recreation fields.

8. Because property values are so high there is desire to create developable lots from property that should not be developed. Flag lots were essentially eliminated in Essex Fells twenty years ago because the reality of people living behind their neighbor's property was not desirable. This continues to be an issue, as do undersized lots becoming developable properties due to the demand for housing within the community. Variances for this purpose have been virtually nonexistent, but the demand is still there, making this a recurring issue.
9. Related also to high property values is the loss of historic or unique properties because they are undervalued relative to the lot. This economic reality is causing the loss of both unique properties and perfectly sound properties to increase the scale of replacement structures on these lots. This situation contributes to a loss of history and to energy wastage through the destruction of sound housing.



Replacement of historic structure on Oldchester Road

10. In order to recoup the value of the demolished structure within the existing lot, very large houses replace

those that were originally on the lot, causing immediate neighborhood scale differences. In addition, these are also the sites of the use of discordant building materials, again to recoup the value of the demolished structure.

11. The illumination of properties is not coordinated. Decorative, security, and recreational lighting sections of the Land Development Code are not coordinated. Recreational lighting is a conditional use; security lighting regulations have little or no limitation on the number of lights an individual house may have; and decorative lighting has virtually no control. The above ought to be linked such that their individual and cumulative impacts are kept to a minimum.



Entrance to Essex Fells Fields

12. Recreational activities on individual properties are also not coordinated. No differentiating standards exist for swimming pools versus tennis courts versus basketball courts versus skating surfaces. These activities are a growing accompaniment to residential development and should be better controlled in terms of scale, hours of operation, lighting, proximity to neighbors' properties, and so on.

These should be addressed in a more comprehensive fashion and linked to impervious coverage within the Borough's Land Development Code.

13. In several cases in Essex Fells, due to the hilly nature of the terrain, many properties slope severely. This is particularly true of rear yards that slope downward on the northern side of Fells Road near Verona. In some cases, property owners have filled the rear of properties or graded properties so severely as to create significant differences in elevation between adjacent properties. This is unacceptable and must be corrected by rigorous enforcement of the Land Development Code relating to grading.
14. Currently, accessory uses (supplementary apartments over garages or to the rear of the main structure—e.g., a carriage house) are not permitted in Essex Fells unless in existence before 1983. These are units for which rent can legally be charged, if desired.



Detached accessory use on Roseland Avenue in Essex Fells

Several accessory uses were grandfathered at the time of the original stoppage. Stoppage occurred

during the 1960s as accessory uses increased in the form of college housing for both Northeastern Bible College and Caldwell College. They were allowed again as a conditional use in 1983 if they existed at that time.

There is renewed demand for these types of units for many reasons, such as for those individuals who desire to remain in Essex Fells after selling their homes. This type of use, thriving in the 1960s, should be allowed to provide housing for retirees, divorced individuals, widows, and widowers if they choose to remain within the community. This could be achieved by once again allowing accessory uses (carriage houses as a conditional use) in the single-family residential zones accompanying new or extensively remodeled housing. Additional accessory uses of this type would be limited to a doubling of those that currently exist (20 units). Issues such as height of and rooms in an accessory structure must also be addressed.



Above: Water aeration plant near Trotter Tract

Below: Recycling area behind the Service Building



15. Environmental issues, which include storm water management, have not been adequately recognized by, and incorporated into, local planning documents. Environmental advocates promulgate the environmental agenda locally rather than incorporating goals within the master plan. The planning process should recognize ongoing environmental efforts as necessary for the continued quality of life of the community and not address them on an ad-hoc basis.

16. The problems in the Essex Fells Land Development Code involve the following: procedures for retaining rain water; the use of solar power generators; green rooftops; the administering of pesticides as part of lawn fertilization; geothermal heating and cooling; and wind power. Essex Fells is a small community of 806 dwelling units. Its contribution to global warming, admittedly, is small. Every little bit helps, however, and local ordinances should encourage solar hot water and other green building practices that affect both energy demand and energy supply.

When used, solar roofs should be limited and located on the rear roof.

17. Home occupations are a growing issue in the Borough. There are a number of houses who use either internal space in the main structure or in garages to receive and ship materials. This is not permitted within the Borough and actions should be taken to bring the practice to a halt.

18. Following the Great Recession, there has been an increase in the number of homes that are in foreclosure, abandoned or vacant for extended periods. There has also been a growing issue of new construction and renovation work that does not advance for years. Local ordinances should encourage homeowners to maintain their properties, and provide remedies for the Borough to address properties in need of rehabilitation. The Land Development Code should, where feasible, be tightened to ensure new construction and renovations are pursued at a reasonable pace.

IV. GOALS/OBJECTIVES RELATED TO DEALING WITH PROBLEMS

Goal #1: Very Large Properties on Large Lots

For existing or future development parcels that are above the minimum acreage in a zone, undertake a study to determine the maximum-size house permitted relative to such acreages. In the interim, development permissions using current FARs for lots significantly above the minimum acreage would be limited to a small multiple (1.5 times) of the maximum allowed house size for the minimum acreage of a particular zone until such time as the study is completed. The study should also include recommendations for the percentage of areas counted as floor area for both basements/cellars and attics/half-stories.



Replacement of sound housing on Gordon Road

Goal #2: Advisory Extraterritorial Zoning Review

Investigate entering into agreements with surrounding communities (West Orange, Caldwell, Roseland, West Caldwell, North Caldwell, and Verona) that Essex Fells will be brought into discussion involving a change in use that would occur

on its borders. This is a municipal extraterritorial zoning agreement that is in addition to the current public notification process. This would replace ad hoc notification and petitions for attendance when zoning changes on Essex Fells' borders are being contemplated. Recommendations by communities not involved in the zoning change would be solely advisory.

Goal #3: Fencing Provisions

Review local fencing provisions to discourage fixed fencing other than for public safety reasons. Encourage lot-line landscaping, if necessary, using indigenous species to provide privacy as opposed to fixed fencing. Encourage invisible fencing to contain animals. Encourage pool-immediate fencing to provide security around swimming pools. For all fixed fencing, select the best height to accomplish the security objective. Discourage or reduce the maximum height allowable for fencing in front yards. Require provisions for emergency public access in situations of gated properties.



Traffic going south on Runnymede Road

Goal #4: Reduce Cut-Through Traffic & Speeding Throughout the Borough

Control the traffic speed on Borough streets. In 2017, the Borough Council commissioned a traffic study of several roads within Essex Fells that have been the subject of increased public concern regarding traffic volume and speed as it affects the residential quality of living and public safety. The subject roadways evaluated were Oldchester Road, Rensselaer Road, Devon Road and Fells Road. The study: (1) concluded that the 25 mph speed limit that applies on all of these roads is generally disregarded and (2) considered several techniques for reducing travel speeds. Subsequently, the Borough Council approved the installation of stop signs at Devon/Oval, Fells/Oldchester and Fells/Forest, in each case converting the intersections that were 2-way stops into 4-way stops. In addition, the Council approved a pilot program installing 4 speed humps in the spring of 2018; the modification of Fells Road to narrow the cartway and better distinguish the edge of road activities (bicyclists, pedestrians) from vehicular travel paths; and certain other traffic calming measures. The impact of these initial steps should be monitored, and the Borough should continue to explore additional traffic calming measures. All streets in Essex Fells, except for Roseland Avenue, should be limited to 25 mph or less to improve the safety of walkers, joggers and bikers, to preserve the long-standing residential character of the community and to reduce cut-through traffic. The stretch of Roseland Avenue in the Borough of Essex Fells should be reduced to 30 mph to bring it into accord with similar speed levels on this

road in Caldwell. The Borough should also undertake a study whose charge is to find ways to reduce cut-through traffic. This may involve designating certain streets as one-way.



The Glen near Essex Fells School

Goal #5: Replace Older/Destroyed Trees on Public & Private Lands with New Trees

Establish a program of regular replacement of dying trees on public lands. This could be done on a regular basis through contract with New Jersey sugar maple and dogwood tree farms. Such farms exist in Hunterdon/Warren and Burlington/Salem counties in New Jersey and outside the state in New York and Pennsylvania. Incentives could be offered to residents to do the same on private property.

Goal #6: Night Sky

Develop a zoning provision to limit all further illumination of residential properties and structures using tree canopies as the height for such illumination. Enforce sunset provisions for existing lighting installations upon change in ownership of the structures where they currently exist. This is already being done in 14 communities and in Fort Bend County in Texas; in 11 counties in

Virginia; in State College, Pennsylvania; in the cities of Harley and Ketchum in Idaho; in Eagle County, Colorado; and in the cities of Mammoth Lakes and San Benito County, California.

Goal #7: *Biking/Pedestrian Paths*

Create a limited pedestrian/biking path within the community on one side of the street. Shift the centerline marking off-center to accommodate the new biking/pedestrian lane. Parking would be banned to accommodate this lane. "Limited" means that it would go and return from central points in the community on one side of the street. It would not, at the outset, be either communitywide or on both sides of the street.

Goal #8: *Continue to Enforce the Discontinuation of Flag Lots*

Review the flag lot provision in the Essex Fells Land Development Code to minimize the development of such properties to the rear of other properties. Developable properties should have adequate street frontage to avoid their positioning behind other properties.

Goal #9: *Create a Means to Limit or Stop the Loss of Historic/Unique and Sound Properties*

Investigate alternatives to limit the demolition of historic/unique or sound properties in Essex Fells. This would involve evaluating the costs/benefits of an agreeable form of historic preservation within the community. This might follow

state versus federal historic-designation guidelines. Further, this goal would be tied to a carbon-footprint element of the Master Plan that seeks to minimize sound-structure replacement.

Goal #10: *Create a Means to Review the Architectural Plans of Replacement Properties or Significant Additions to Existing Properties*

Establish a building advisory committee that would review the architectural drawings of proposed new/replacement housing and significant additions to existing housing. The committee would be made up of members of planning/zoning boards and building-industry members who live within the community. Each group would be equally represented. The purpose of the review of plans would be to offer advice to builders on consistency with current practices in the community and would occur whether or not the property was officially before either the planning or zoning boards. The review would concern both the design and scale of the structure as well as the materials used on the structure and within the impervious coverage. It may also include paint color, roofing materials and solar installations.



Residential dwelling on Holton Lane

Goal #11: *Develop a Comprehensive Lighting Ordinance*

Develop comprehensive lighting provisions within the Land Development Code that deal with decorative, security, and recreational lighting. This ordinance should involve visibility of lighting at the property line, height of lights, location relative to the sky and to neighbors, and, most particularly, hours of operation. The above is particularly true of decorative and security lighting.

Goal #12: *Develop a Private Property Recreation Provision within the Land Development Code*

Address within the Land Development Code the scale and type of recreational facilities that may occur on private property. These would include maximum size of facilities, distances from side and rear yards, the prohibition of these uses from the front yard, meeting impervious coverage requirements, and safety standards, as well as insurance requirements for such facilities, lighting maximums, and allotted hours of operation. The ordinance would also deal with the number of such facilities that are permitted on a single property.

Goal #13: *Strengthen Property Grading Provisions Such That the Slopes Across Properties Remain Uniform*

It is against existing Land Development Code provisions to use cut-and-fill to make properties level or to bring in fill from other locations to create the same situation. This portion of the Land Development Code must be reviewed to strengthen its provisions. Grading should not occur on one property that creates significant elevation differences

for neighboring property owners. Property heights should be equal at the lot lines so as not to create a situation where property owners are walled-in by the grading activities of their neighbors.

Goal #14: *Revisit the Accessory Use Provision in the Land Development Code to Define Its Role in Local Housing*

There is a demand for accessory-use housing from (1) those who would choose to remain within Essex Fells as elderly singles or couples, and (2) the occasional affordable housing unit (2 per decade) that Essex Fells might have to provide. About 10 units are currently legal; about 5 others exist illegally.

A goal would be to allow no more than 5 percent of such units locally in all zones, including those that already exist there. Existing accessory uses would be counted (legal and illegal), and all would be made legal before this provision would apply. This would allow a maximum of 20 additional such units.



Detached accessory use at Oldchester and Stewart Roads

The reactivation of the accessory use is even more necessary now than it was twenty years ago when the first affordable housing plan was submitted by Essex Fells. Now, retirees, divorced individuals, and widows/-widowers could benefit from this accessory use housing, which could be made available

through waiting lists to former Essex Fells residents.

Goal #15: Incorporate Environmental and Stormwater Management Elements within the Master Plan of Essex Fells

Previously, there was no Environmental Element within the Master Plan. This Element should be, and is, incorporated in the 2018 Master Plan. Further, the Essex Fells Stormwater Management Plan should be, and is, recognized by the 2018 Master Plan in the form of a Stormwater Management Element.

Goal #16: Bring the Essex Fells Land Development Code into Conformity with Fuel Shortage and Global Warming Objectives

Undertake an analysis of zoning provisions that advance fuel shortage and global-warming objectives and ensure that the Essex Fells Land Development Code encompasses them. This would involve appropriate use of solar hot water, rain-catching devices fed by gutters and leaders, green roofs, use of fertilizer on private properties (including large recreational).

Goal #17: Enforce the Restrictions on Home-Based Commercial Activity

Undertake an analysis of zoning provisions that address home occupations and consider whether the enforcement mechanisms need to be strengthened.

Goal # 18: Strengthen Provisions in Land Development Code to Address Vacant and Abandoned Properties and Inactive Construction Projects

Ensure that the Essex Fells Land Development Code includes appropriate provisions that address the negative impact on the community of vacant or abandoned properties and construction projects that are commenced but not pursued at a reasonable pace.

Goal #19 Consider Updates to the Land Development Code relating to Smart Growth Strategies and Storm Resiliency with Respect to Energy Supply

Essex Fells has one commercial use and no gas stations, making the identification of suitable electric vehicle charging stations difficult. Nevertheless, consistent with the Planning Board's obligations under recently enacted P.L. 275, C. 275, the Borough should consider changes to the Land Development Code to take into account the expected increase in electric vehicles, the related possibility of public charging stations and the public safety risks associated with private charging stations in or near homes.

The Borough in 2017 installed a natural gas generator at Borough Hall, to improve the resiliency of its police station, firehouse and administrative offices in the event of storm-related power outages. It also has generators supporting other critical infrastructure, including the Borough's water utility. The Borough Council and Office of Emergency Management should periodically review and update these backup plans to ensure the resiliency of Borough infrastructure and the continuity of municipal operations during severe storms. The Borough should also consider measures to reduce the risk of falling trees and tree limbs causing downed power lines and the loss of electricity for residents.

V. NOTABLE EVENTS OCCURRING WITHIN THE COMMUNITY SINCE THE LAST MASTER PLAN

Several major events have occurred since the last Master Plan Reexaminations (1992, 1999, 2008) were completed. These include the following:

1. Refinement of the FAR (floor-area ratio) requirements and provision of a guide for builders/remodelers to complete.
2. Closing of the Northeastern Bible College, and condemnation of the land for municipal recreation fields.
3. Renovation of Borough Hall and associated changes in police dispatching duties occurring at about the same time.
4. Renovation of the Essex Fells School property.
5. Settlement of the *Mount Laurel* litigation and the construction of multifamily and affordable housing.
6. Challenge of the Borough's enforcement of conditions of a nonconforming commercial use.
7. Beginning of the loss of historic and unique sound housing due to demolition of existing structures and replacement with others.
8. Application was granted for a cell tower at the Trotter Tract site, however it was never constructed, and the approval was rescinded.
9. The building of a new recreation-convenience structure.
10. The appearance of home occupations wherein products are distributed from residential structures

11. The storage/parking of excess vehicles within the driveways of individual homes.

12. The growing number of full-time healthcare workers.

These will be discussed below.

#1: *Refinement of FAR/Guidelines for Builders*

The FAR is an overarching land-use control in Essex Fells at a time when there is a desire to build larger and larger homes. So important are the FAR procedures that they have been described and illustrated in a handout that is available to local builders/architects/remodelers (2002). These procedures provide detailed descriptions on how to calculate FAR, especially as it relates to basements, half-stories, and all garages.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment often has multiple requests monthly for rulings related to the FAR either because a property needs a variance or because a landowner already has a nonconforming structure under the existing ordinance. Notwithstanding the rationale, the Zoning Board confers an average of almost one variance monthly on an average of one property. Variances are to be kept to a minimum and this has been encouraged through the use of the handout. The guidelines explain the concept of FAR and take the applicant step-by-step through the FAR calculation. At the end of the exercise, the applicant knows the size of structure that can be on the lot and how his/her plans comport. Currently, the procedure is manual, but a simple spreadsheet available on a CD could and should replace the existing handout.

#2: *Closing of the Northeastern Bible College and Ensuing Land Condemnation (Essex Fells v. Kessler Inst. 1995)*

The Northeastern Bible College, due to financial difficulties, closed its campus at Essex Fells in 1991. The Borough purchased 2.5 acres for \$500,000. Upon closing, college officials were approached by the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation to sell for a local physical rehabilitation facility. The Borough of Essex Fells simultaneously initiated condemnation proceedings, which were contested by Kessler. Essex Fells' action was not upheld, and a significant settlement (\$4.6 million) was obtained by Kessler. The Bible School's buildings (3) were demolished, and new athletic fields were built on the site. Two lots that were on the site were sold by the Borough for private development.

The overall action, costly for tax purposes, has seen the area transformed into everyday athletic fields for the Borough's children. This action originally placed significant strain on the budget. The result, however, has been more than worth the effort—the fields are constantly in use by the youth of the community. Relatively recently, bathrooms and a snack bar have been added.

The above action is important for a number of reasons. On the positive side, the Borough was able to achieve a long-desired local recreation goal. On the negative side, it—with other actions—it came with a natural financial cost.



Playing field at the Essex Fells Fields

#3: *Renovation of the Essex Fells School/Closing of Hawthorne Road through the School*

The Essex Fells K–6 School addition/renovation (4,200 square feet) was completed in 1999. This included the addition of a media center and science room, upgraded HVAC, new roofs and windows/doors on both buildings, and the repainting of both buildings. These improvements were necessary, as the school grew from about 170 students in 1990 to about 235 students in 2002. The 2017-2018 population of the K–6 school is 230 students. The buildings are constantly maintained. In the summer of 2017, the boilers were replaced and the gymnasium was air-conditioned. These expenditures were funded as operational items. In the future, new roofs will be required. The gymnasium continues to be used as cafeteria space. 90% of students participate in a purchase-lunch program operated by the PTA. No gymnasium activities can be scheduled during this one-hour period. Safety is a primary concern at the school. Hawthorne Road between the two school buildings was closed to vehicular traffic in 1996. There are currently two supervised drop-off areas: Hawthorne Road and an oval in the parking lot on Forest

Way. The Essex Fells Police Department helps coordinate the operation of these two areas. Parking spaces around the school are at a premium. Additional parking spaces were added along Hilltop Road, near the school fields. The administration and the Police Department are constantly trying to improve the safety of the drop-off areas and nearby streets. Significant safety and security measures and upgrades have been made to the buildings in a post-9/11 world. A controlled access system was added, and upgraded in 2017. Other upgrades include: window filming and tinting, the replacement of all Lower Building doors, and cameras and monitors throughout both buildings. Additionally, the buildings have been re-wired so that all phones are tapped into the Public Address system. In the 1990's with enrollment around 170, the possibility of consolidating the school with other West Essex districts was a hot topic of discussion. With steady enrollment, this issue seems to have resolved itself.

As the Borough moves into the future, the school's enrollment is being reduced at the top (primarily 5th and 6th grades) to qualify for more competitive private-school acceptance, and expanded at the bottom to accommodate full-day kindergarten and half-day pre-K. Recurring potential consolidation plans threaten the independence of the school. 2008 County regulations statewide emphasized the consolidation of 170 of the 610 school systems that are not K-12 systems. Essex Fells is not a K-12 system. This would lump Essex Fells, Roseland, Fairfield, and North Caldwell into a single school system with one school board; the Essex Fells School

would be a neighborhood elementary school serving Essex Fells. This issue has seemed to cool lately but was rampant 15-20 years ago.

This potential change could drastically alter the nature of the Essex Fells School in terms of parental/community oversight and support and actually affect the real estate market in the Borough. If these changes come about, there should be serious thought given to the direction in which Essex Fells should proceed. (The school district does not have to accept County edicts.)

#4: *Renovation of Borough Hall; Police Dispatching Changes*

Over the period 2002-2006, the Essex Fells Borough Hall was renovated. The renovation enabled handicap access to be established with an entranceway and elevator; the building spaces were modernized; and more space was provided for police-investigation activities. Administration offices were moved to the second floor, and the main entrance was moved from the front to the rear of the building.





Borough Hall—Rear (top) and front

The renovation originally had some growing pains has been completed.

At about the time of the reconfiguration, as part of a desire to conserve resources and increase municipal personnel efficiencies, a decision was made to share police dispatch services. Essex Fells has also shared a municipal court with North Caldwell for a longer period. Other sharing arrangements include sharing the tax collector with Roseland; an engineer and building inspection services with North Caldwell; tax assessor and library with Caldwell; and health services with West Orange.

#5: *Settlement of Mount Laurel Litigation (Borough of Essex Fells et al. v. W and L Associates LLC, 2000)*

Essex Fells had one of the first affordable housing plans and petitioned for certification from the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) in 1988. Essex Fells had entered into a Regional Contribution Agreement with the City of Orange to transfer one-half of its affordable housing obligation to that city. The other half would have been completed through the legalization of accessory uses to a maximum

of 25 additional units locally. Essex Fells' petition was accepted by COAH in 1988.

Two years later, COAH made pronouncements that all purposes of local government, including recreation, were secondary to the provision of affordable housing. The agency suggested that they would use the last remaining site in a community—in this case, a country club in Little Silver, New Jersey, to develop affordable housing if necessary. Several communities withdrew their affordable housing petitions, including Rumson, Essex Fells, Chesterfield, Oradell, and Buena Vista, among others.

Because Essex Fells was developed, it provided no affordable housing for more than a decade and was sued for not meeting its housing obligation by a developer that wanted 60–70 dwelling units on the Bloomfield Avenue site across from the Forum strip mall. Under current zoning, the site would have yielded approximately 8–10 single-family dwelling units. The judge hearing the case assigned a Master, who rendered a decision that 36 units could be developed on the site, of which 5 would be affordable. An additional 5 units would be sold to the City of Linden under a Regional Contribution Agreement. Essex Fells' affordable housing number (13 units total, including a rental credit of 3 units) was determined after the community received a Vacant Land Adjustment under COAH standards indicating that it had virtually no vacant land remaining to build either market *or* affordable housing.

The development was subject to an ordinance that was drawn up at the request

of the Planning Board. The ordinance is part of the Land Development Code. The last units of the development were completed in 2012.

#6: *Challenging the Borough’s Enforcement of Conditions on the Operation of a Nonconforming Commercial Use (320 Runnymede v. Essex Fells Board of Adjustment, 2006)*

The Borough’s actions were challenged in terms of its enforcement of conditions imposed on the operation of a commercial establishment. In 2004, the Borough’s single viable commercial use (an insurance brokerage office) was transferred to an owner of a civil engineering and surveying consulting business, who wanted to extend the hours of use of the building beyond what the Borough had imposed as conditions of commercial occupancy. The owner also wanted to keep engineering trucks on-site.



Non-conforming commercial use

The owner took the Borough to court, and the judge remanded the action to the Zoning Board, ruling that the community must waive some of the conditions of commercial occupancy of the structure. Ultimately, the owner was allowed to

occupy the structure during normal business hours on Monday to Friday, with reduced Saturday hours and no occupancy on Sunday (except for maintenance activities). A small number of van-sized trucks were permitted on-site. With conviction comes cost to the community, as the judge also ruled that the Borough Attorney’s fees were not reimbursable by the plaintiff property owner.

#7: *Loss of Historic, Unique, and Sound Structures*

The reality of the shortage of development property within the Borough of Essex Fells has caused developers to tear down sound housing, some of which is either historic or unique. Since 2000, at least 15 houses have been demolished in the Borough and have been replaced by much larger structures. This amounts to nearly two percent of the standing stock.

This practice has been a reality in Essex Fells for more than 30 years. It originally subsided somewhat with the institution of the FAR study as part of local zoning requirements. The practice has now been revived and is occurring at a faster rate than before the FAR ordinance. Consequently, historic, unique, and/or sound housing structures are being demolished only to secure additional revenues at the time of sale of the redeveloped property. The practice could cause a loss of truly unique properties built before the turn of the twentieth century and during the 1930s in Essex Fells, which are now more than 110 or 75 years old, respectively. The Zoning Board of Adjustment is leaning toward more favorable treatment on FAR variances for property developers who would keep a large

portion of the original house intact. The continued changeover of housing stock could render the Borough in a position not unlike that of Millburn, New Jersey, which no longer can describe neighborhoods as to their housing characteristics because almost every house is viewed as a tear-down. The practice of tearing down existing housing goes against the desire of the community's goal to retain its historic housing stock (Historic Preservation Element); the FAR ordinance, which was developed to contain this practice; and the carbon-footprint element of the Master Plan, which views this as a waste of energy resources.

#8: *Cell Tower Application*

There was an application for a cell tower before the Essex Fells Planning Board. The application, as requested, contained no use variances and was being submitted subject to an ordinance that was commissioned by the Essex Fells Borough Council and reviewed by the Planning Board.

The co-locating cell-service provider had to establish that a gap in service existed locally and that a proposed site would ameliorate that gap in service. The rationale for the local ordinance was that it represented a better alternative than a tower being constructed on private property within the Borough, which could have happened given the federal government mandate for major cell-service providers to complete their networks. There were hearings before the Planning Board for a site within the deeply forested area of Trotter Tract, away from public view and private properties.

The application was approved by the Planning Board. The Planning Board's decision was contested by a local

environmental/citizens group and the court found for the Planning Board on all counts. The impact of this event pointed to the reality of necessary technological improvements causing unlikely undeveloped natural areas to be sought for sites supporting such technology. The matter was contested and settled in an appropriate way. Ultimately, the property was not developed and the approval was rescinded.

#9: *Recreation-Convenience Structure Built*

A new recreation-convenience structure has been built near the playing fields. This recreation structure has women's/men's restrooms, storage space for sports equipment and space to sell food/snacks/drink during sporting events and Memorial Day celebrations. This is in a Tudor design in keeping with the architectural style of the Borough.

#10: *Presence of Home Occupations*

Trucks have been observed delivering supplies to houses in Essex Fells and other UPS trucks have been observed stopping regularly to pick-up shipping from various locations. In one instance, it was found that a home occupation had been created in the garage in which the owner was receiving bulk shipments, dividing them up, and shipping them to retail clients. The owner received a cease and desist order to stop the practice. This was enforced and the practice stopped. This was the most significant of a growing number of locations in the Borough where home occupations are flourishing. Mostly this involves editing manuscripts, or tax preparation services or other types of activities related to computer use at home. Running a full-scale retail business out of an individual's home should not be allowed.

#11. *The Storage/Parking of Excess Vehicles*

In several driveways of the Borough as many as ten cars are stored. These cars are there continuously night and day. What could be the purpose of having such vehicles lining the driveways? In some cases these automobiles are being offered for sale. They may also be used as rental vehicles.

In addition to automobiles, there are RVs and ski-dos that are stored permanently in driveways. These present a permanent eyesore for neighboring properties. Contractors working on private properties are also leaving commercial vehicles on site, often in front of homes, overnight, on weekends and sometimes for extended periods. The housing code must be enforced to eliminate these conditions in the Borough. This is the combined responsibility of the code official and neighboring residents to keep on top of and enforce.

#12. *Growing Number of Full Time Healthcare Workers as Live-ins*

One of the realities of the baby boom generation is the dual responsibility of the very successful generation towards both their children and their parents. Increasingly during the recession, older children are beginning their careers in the New York Metropolitan Area and continuing to live at home in Essex Fells. This is to be expected.

Less to be expected is the growing health care role for baby boomers with their parents and the number of permanent healthcare professionals that is being introduced to the Borough. This is a healthy trend because parents of the boomers will have full time assistance that could be vital in times of emergency. These workers have needs of their own which typically involve regional transportation via Bloomfield Avenue buses or college/social needs that

are available at Caldwell College. This is a trend and we should be aware of it.

The above events in Essex Fells have caused the community to react in the following ways:

1. To vigorously support the goals and objectives of the FAR study;
2. To cling to and expand the possibilities for additional open space and recreational lands
3. To support primary education and the Essex Fells School as the heartbeat of the community;
4. To realize that modernization often comes at the cost of community character and “feel”;
5. To pay attention to the community’s statewide responsibilities as they relate to the State Plan and to the Council on Affordable Housing;
6. To understand that enforcement of zoning laws is both uncertain as to outcome and costly regardless of outcome;
7. To understand that Essex Fells is not at all free from extensive neighborhood change—houses can be lost without a developer going before either of the community’s development review boards; and
8. To be aware that modern-day conveniences such as the cell phone can have both implications for local land use and loss of natural areas.

VI. THE 2008 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT AND ITS RECOGNITION BY THE 2018 MASTER PLAN

The 2008 Master Plan Reexamination Report (hereafter, the "2008 Report") was adopted by the Planning Board of Essex Fells on June 12, 2008. The 2008 Report recognized prior goals and progress on the goals since the 1999 Master Plan Reexamination Report (hereafter, the "1999 Report") and the 1992 Master Plan Reexamination Report (hereafter, the "1992 Report"), and brought forward many findings that were contained in the 1999 Report and 1992 Report. The last Master Plan of the Borough of Essex Fells was adopted in 1978.

The 1999 Report was prepared by Heyer, Gruel and Talley, P.A., of New Brunswick, New Jersey, in March 1999. That 17-page report essentially confirmed many of the trends and findings of the 1992 Report prepared by the same planning consultants (Heyer and Gruel, P.A.). The 1992 Report was a much more detailed and comprehensive reexamination than was the 1999 Report. At 60 pages, the 1992 Report was sufficiently comprehensive that it formed the basis of the 1999 Report and the 2008 Report. These reports will be discussed in the 2018 Master Plan's recognition of prior goals and progress on goals since the 1999 Report and the 2008 Report.

The 1999 Report brought forward the detailed findings of the Land Use Element, Housing Element, Circulation Plan Element, Community Facilities and Service Plan Element, Recreation Plan Element, and

Recycling Plan Element of the 1992 Report. In addition, it discussed other 1992 Report findings dealing with the Essex Fells School, Essex Fells' Affordable Housing Plan, and Essex Fells' efforts at open-space acquisition.

The 1999 Report contained the below-listed recommendations as they related to the six Elements contained in the 1992 Report. They were as follows:

Land Use Element

The 1992 Report's Land Use Element dealt with maintaining the scale of development relative to the lot and to other properties in the neighborhood. It also dealt with retaining the remaining land in the Borough as open space. The 2008 Report reinforced these goals, and this was clearly the focus of the land-use discussion.

The 1999 Report expressed concerns that the railroad property between Wootton and Buttonwood Roads not be overdeveloped. It further recanted issues relating to uneven property grading, better control of property lighting, and the issue of unsightly fences. The final land-use issue of the report concerned a desire to participate in the control of development in other adjacent communities that impacted Essex Fells at its borders. The 2018 Master Plan supports and expands measures to address the land-use issues evident in 1999 and 2008.

Housing Element

The Housing Elements in both the 1992 and 1999 Reports were both brief. This was due to the fact that Essex Fells had produced a large housing plan in 1987 that was withdrawn when Essex Fells withdrew its

petition for COAH certification in 1990. The only mention of affordable housing in the 1999 Report was that it would be explored after COAH’s release of the Second Round numbers.

The 2018 Master Plan recognizes affordable housing obligations that have been dealt with subsequent to *Mount Laurel* litigation in Essex Fells. The courts are currently the forum in which affordable housing obligations will be determined and as of this date there has been no final judicial determination of state, regional or local needs.



Runnymede Road at Borough Place

Circulation Element

The 1999 Report reiterated the goals of the 1992 Report, which were to: include balanced transportation alternatives (automobile, transit, biking, and walking); maintain and improve the street system; and minimize impacts from cut-through and locally generated traffic.

The 1999 Report suggested local traffic-calming methods (center dividers at intersections; brick crosswalks) and reducing Borough speed limits to deal with traffic issues. This was reiterated in the 2008 report. The 2018 Master Plan recognizes

that efforts have taken place to deal with circulation issues. The Plan supports these circulation measures and recommends others to continue to control traffic within the Borough.

Community Facilities and Utility Service Element

The 1999 Report indicated that it supported priorities of the 1992 Report, as follows: (a) maintaining a viable Essex Fells School; (b) sharing government services; (c) providing superior police and fire services; and (d) maintaining water supply/quality and sewer treatment. This was recognized in the 2008 report. The 2018 Master Plan recognizes that progress has been made in each of these areas and supports these facility and service priorities as continually in need of being addressed.



Pumping station on Runnymede Road

Recreation Element

The 1999 Report adopted the 1992 Report’s goals to: (a) maintain and improve recreation opportunities for all age groups; (b) preserve existing active and passive recreation areas; and (c) acquire additional vacant land for recreational purposes as it becomes available. The 1999 Report goes further in that it says it will open up recreation activities to seniors and will explore the possibility of bicycle paths within the Borough. This was recognized in the 2008 report. The 2018 Master Plan

recognizes progress in these areas and supports more effort in these and other areas.

Recycling Element

The 1999 Report brought forward the 1992 Report's efforts to establish a mandatory recycling ordinance that provides the framework for collection, disposition, and recycling of paper, glass, aluminum, plastic, and yard waste. The 1999 Report recognized that oil and household batteries were also added to the recycling list.

The 2018 Master Plan recognizes the goals stated and accomplishments reported in previous Reexamination Reports.

**VII. ELEMENTS OF THE
CURRENT ESSEX FELLS
MASTER PLAN**

**GOALS, OBJECTIVES,
PRINCIPLES, ASSUMPTIONS,
AND POLICIES ELEMENT**

It is the purpose of this Element to establish the basis of the proposal for the physical, economic, and social development of the Borough of Essex Fells.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives that are important to the Borough of Essex Fells are those that have been listed previously:

Goal #1

Exert more control of large properties on very large lots.

Goal #2

Establish advisory extraterritorial zoning review to prevent border issues.

Goal #3

Limit fencing provisions to allow blending of properties.

Goal #4

Reduce speeding and cut-through traffic through the Borough.

Goal #5

Replace older/destroyed trees on public lands. Offer incentives to residents to do the same on private property.

Goal #6

Recover full night sky that has been lost through tree-canopy lighting schemes.

Goal #7

Create biking/pedestrian paths on a limited basis within the Borough.

Goal #8

Eliminate the effect of flag lots creating houses behind houses.

Goal #9

Prevent the loss of historic/unique/sound properties in the Borough.

Goal #10

Establish an Advisory Review Board for proposed architectural plans for new or significantly altered housing.

Goal #11

Develop a comprehensive lighting ordinance for the Borough

Goal #12

Develop a private property recreation provision in the Land Development Code.

Goal #13

Strengthen property grading provisions of the Land Development Code.

Goal #14

Discourage the growth of home occupations that add to traffic or increased activities around the home.

Goal #15

Discourage the storage of unused vehicles in driveways or elsewhere on site.

Goal #16

Reestablish accessory uses as a limited, locally available land use.

Goal #17

Incorporate Environmental and Stormwater Management Elements within the Master Plan.

Goal #18

Address global warming through a community carbon footprint.

Goal #19

Evaluate Land Use Ordinance to consider whether updates are needed in respect of smart growth and storm resiliency with respect to energy supply.

Each of the above has been discussed previously and is further addressed in the remaining Elements of this Master Plan. All are of critical importance to the community and will be specifically addressed over the next six years.

Principles and Assumptions

Assumption #1

Essex Fells will remain as an exclusively residential community into the future.

Assumption #2

The housing stock of Essex Fells will remain single-family detached.

Assumption #3

All vacant municipal land will serve primarily municipal recreational or municipal conservation purposes.

Assumption #4

All roads within the community will remain at their current widths except if made smaller by bike/pedestrian paths.

Assumption #5

Speed limits will not be increased on local roadways.

Assumption #6

The existing housing stock of the community will be preserved for historical and energy-saving reasons.

Assumption #7

Environmentally significant tracts will be preserved and areas previously disturbed, enhanced.

Assumption #8

The number of trees in Essex Fells will increase as tree restoration programs take hold.

Assumption #9

The trend toward sharing municipal services will be looked at critically so as not to destroy the individual services of the community.

Assumption #10

Essex Fells School will remain under an Essex Fells School Board rather than be joined with another school system.

LAND-USE ELEMENT

The land-use element of the Borough of Essex Fells contains the following:

1. Discussion of current and future land use
2. Goals of the Borough of Essex Fells as they relate to the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan and the County of Essex.
3. Adjacent municipal zoning as it relates to the zoning of the Borough of Essex Fells

Existing Land Use

Essex Fells is primarily a residential community. Of the community's total number of parcels that are taxable, residential parcels (single-family/single-family attached) comprise 751 out of 783 total parcels, or 96 percent. Vacant parcels amount to 25 out of 783 taxable parcels, or 3.2 percent. Almost all of these vacant parcels are noncontiguous, and very few would permit the development of more than a single residential unit under current zoning. Commercial parcels represent 6 out of 783 taxable parcels, or 0.75 percent. These commercial properties are the private clubs, the nonresidential facility, doctors' offices, etc. There are no farm, industrial, or apartment properties in Essex Fells as classified for tax purposes.

With regard to property valuation, Essex Fells residential properties amount to 96.2 percent of all taxable assessed valuation. Commercial properties represent 0.8 percent of taxable assessed valuation, and vacant properties represent 3.2 percent of taxable assessed valuation. Currently, Essex Fells is assessed at about 100 percent of market value. This amounts to about \$815.3 million taxable, or \$815.3 million in market value. The last property revaluation took place in 2017 for an October 1, 2017 assessment date (table 1).

TABLE 1. Essex Fells: Existing Land Use—Distribution of Properties/Value—2017

Type of Use	Land Parcels		Valuation	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Amount	Percentage (%)
A. Non-institutional				
1. Vacant	25	3.2	\$7,145,600	0.9
2. Farm	0	0.0	\$0	0.0
3. Residential	751	95.9	\$785,894,700	96.4
4. Commercial	6	0.8	\$22,047,400	2.7
5. Industrial	0	0.0	\$0	0.0
6. Apartment	0	0.0	\$0	0.0
7. Utility	1	0.1	\$247,614	0.0
8. TAXABLE	783	100.0	\$815,335,314	100.0
B. Institutional				
9. Public School	2	4.4	\$6,724,600	6.2
10. Other School	2	4.4	\$2,199,900	2.0
11. Public Property	34	75.6	\$91,142,490	84.0
12. Charitable	6	13.3	\$7,976,200	7.4
13. Miscellaneous	1	2.2	\$456,500	0.4
14. NONTAXABLE	45	100.0	\$108,499,690	100.0

C. TOTAL	831	100.0	\$928,328,704	100.0
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Source: Essex Fells Abstract of Ratables, 2017

Nontaxable properties also exist in Essex Fells. These amount to a total of 45 additional properties and an additional \$108.5 million of property value that is not taxed. Most of this is municipal property that is either vacant or occupied by public buildings. These amount to 34 of the 45 nontaxable properties. Other properties include churches (6 properties—\$8 million), public schools (2 properties—\$6.4 million), private schools (2 properties—\$2.2 million), and a miscellaneous property (1 property—\$456,500).

Essex Fells’ residential nature is further in evidence when all of the above property types are arrayed by acreage. Essex Fells’ approximately 902.4 acres comprise 559.7 acres in residential use, or 62 percent; 6 acres in commercial use, or 0.1 percent; 6 acres in educational use, or 0.1 percent; 7.4 acres in church/charitable use, or 0.1 percent; 140 acres in municipal parks, or 15.5 percent; 17.5 acres in municipal buildings, or 2.0 percent; 19 acres in County parks, or 2.1 percent; 61 acres in recreation/golf course/playing fields, or 6.8 percent; and 78 acres in roads, or 8.6 percent (table 2).

TABLE 2. Essex Fells: Existing Land Use—Acreage—2015

Type of Use	Acres	Percentage (%)
Residential	559.7	61.4
Residential vacant	6.0	1.3
County park	18.9	2.1
Municipal park	139.7	15.5
Municipal service utility	17.5	2.0
Municipal education	5.9	0.1
Municipal vacant	2.0	0.0
Recreation/golf course/fields	61.3	6.8
Church/charitable	7.4	0.1
Commercial	6.0	0.1
Roads	78.0	8.6
TOTAL	902.4	100.0

Source: Borough of Essex Fells, New Jersey, 2011



Residential dwelling on Rensselaer Road

Future Land Use

As will be discussed in the Housing Element, Essex Fells will grow modestly into the future at a rate of approximately 7–8 new units per decade. The affordable housing–inspired development—the Brownstones on Bloomfield Avenue—which contains 36 additional units, of which five are affordable. This is the most growth that Essex Fells will experience over the next 50 years. These additional units (other than the affordable) are reasonably expensive condominium units with a relatively small number of bedrooms—primarily one- and two-bedroom units. Very little additional vacant land remains. This is true regardless of whether ownership is public or private.

Future land use will involve the above residential development plus the 7 to 8 new units per decade for about two decades, at which point all remaining land will be consumed. Thus, there will be no additional commercial, industrial, apartment, educational, charitable, or other public buildings. The community will remain much as it is described here. Future land use is the mirror of current land use.



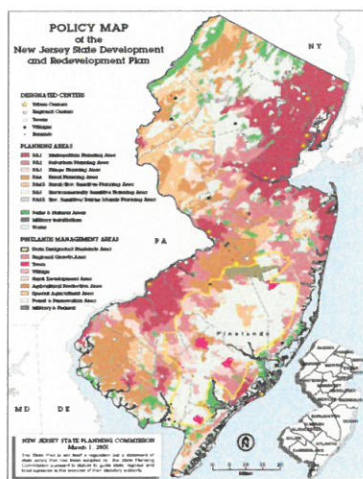
Residential dwelling on Bradley Court

Relationship of the Essex Fells Development Plan to the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (The State Plan) is in its third iteration. Three State Plans (1992, 2000, 2009) have been produced and have been reviewed by impact assessments prepared by Rutgers University. These state plans have produced a map that places Essex Fells and all other West Essex communities in planning area PA-1 or in the Metropolitan Development area. The State Plan has five planning areas (PAs): Metropolitan (PA-1), Suburban (PA-2), Fringe (PA-3), Agriculture (PA-4), and Environmentally Sensitive (PA-5). Planning Areas 1 and 2 will require the most development and redevelopment (Essex Fells is fully developed); Planning Areas 3, 4, and 5 will receive the least development. Another characteristic of the State Plan is its series of centers. These go from large to small as follows: Urban, Regional, Town, Village, and Hamlet. Each has recommended standards for development. Another center-like designation reflecting the absence of development is an Environ—an area where development cannot take place. The planning areas and series of

centers comprise the State Plan Resource Management System.

Essex Fells is in the Metropolitan Development Area (PA-1) but is a fully developed suburban community. It has areas within the community that are protected from development because they are designated as “parkland” or “municipal.” These municipal lands are not large enough to qualify as Environs and instead are termed “critical environmental sites,” or CESs. These are the areas that are to be protected in the Borough (Burchell et al. 2000).



NJSDRP map of developable areas (dark)

Essex Fells participated in the first two rounds of cross-acceptance of the State Plan. It did not participate in the third round because the issues were the same and the process amounted to full preparation of trend data by analysts at the local level and simple replacement of this data by other data used by analysts at the county level. The overall data should have been prepared by Essex County for its inclusive municipalities and data prepared by the municipality allowed to alter the county data. Municipalities were not allowed to alter county

data, just to comment on it. Accordingly, Essex Fells received large population and employment projections that cannot take place in the community given its lack of vacant land.



COAH affordable housing

The issue with the State Plan as it relates to Essex Fells is an understanding that the Borough is growing at less than one housing unit per year, and it contains primarily public employment (Borough, School District) and one nonconforming commercial use. The largest share of the private employment figure (from the Social Security Administration) for the Borough comprises real estate agents working out of their houses, and editors, writers, insurance and stock brokers also having offices in their homes. There are also domestic workers and caregivers who work/live in houses in the Borough even though they have domiciles elsewhere. Both of the above are growth in employment at home that requires neither additional residential nor nonresidential development space. Accordingly, it should not trigger an affordable housing obligation.

Essex Fells, as a developed community, is primarily concerned with maintaining its critical environmental sites. Its parklands are critical to the overall ambience of the community and to the marketing of its housing. Municipal lands are also important

to the community and often exist over aquifers or other sources of Borough water. These areas that are not officially designated parkland (and, as such, have limited future protection) must also be protected from future development. This is Essex Fells' primary involvement with the State Plan—to protect its remaining critical environmental sites from development.

Prior/Current State Plan Goals. There is general agreement on the part of the Borough of Essex Fells with the majority of the eight basic *goal statements* of the current and prior *State Development and Redevelopment Plan(s)*. This is certainly true as these statements relate to:

- (1) Promoting beneficial economic growth;
- (2) Protecting the environment;
- (3) Providing adequate public services;
- (4) Conserving the state's natural resources; and
- (7) Preserving and enhancing historic, cultural, and open spaces.

There may not be full agreement on:

- (5) Densifying the state's urban areas through infilling PA-1 (Metropolitan) and holding free from development large shares of PA-5 (Environmentally Sensitive);
- (6) Providing adequate housing at reasonable cost through a focus on development costs and land-use regulations; and
- (8) Ensuring sound and integrated planning statewide by encourag-

ing more centralized state planning.

In the first case, Essex Fells, as a PA-1 community, does not view density increases in its best interests. The essence of this developed community is its current composition of single-family homes on well-landscaped and well-sized, treed lots. Any change in density, and necessarily housing type (a shift to townhouses), would detract from the local ambience and would depart significantly from the purpose of all local land-use controls, which is the protection of property values. This type of change poses economic jeopardy for Metropolitan (PA-1) communities whose essence is stability in the face of both inner neighborhood and surrounding community change.



Residential dwelling on Fells Road

In the second case, the provision of housing at affordable costs is a complex goal that involves determination of housing markets, housing demand, housing costs, available subsidies, and resultant housing opportunity. This is best left to the state's traditional housing agencies: the New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. Although COAH's Third Round

Numbers are currently in flux, Essex Fells has met the majority of its affordable housing obligation and has been granted a vacant land adjustment by the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). A vacant land adjustment means that virtually no developable land remains for either market or below-market housing.



Finally, the goal of integrated planning can be achieved only by recognizing the important inputs of local planning and the independence of the local planning effort in New Jersey. Many voices give different messages, each reflecting important local concerns. These cannot be subjugated to a "state view," but must be incorporated into a loose federation of combined purpose wherein local views are recognized and woven into state plans. Neither the state nor the county is in a more advantageous position to plan for locals due to the hierarchy of its position.

Prior/Current State Plan Objectives. Again, there is general agreement on the part of the Borough of Essex Fells with many of the *objectives* of the *State Development and Redevelopment Plan*. As objectives serve to implement goals, there would obviously be the same types of agreement and disagreement as is evidenced above for the goal statements.

Essex Fells is in agreement that (1) uncontrolled and inefficient sprawl in rural and developing areas is desirable to control but solely for infrastructure and environmental quality reasons. The community is in agreement that there should be (2) better and integrated transportation planning, but not

that PA-1&2 and other types of communities must “thicken up” to achieve it. The Borough is in agreement that (5) natural resources and (6) agricultural/farmlands and (7) recreation lands be preserved consistent with a healthy state economy, and property-ownership benefits not be denied to specific economic sectors (farmers) or other land-holders. Essex Fells agrees that (9) its historic past must be preserved, and (10) efficient ways must be found to provide public services. This latter component requires study on what is gained versus what is lost by efficiency. Without this information, conclusions on future consolidations cannot be drawn.

Essex Fells is not in agreement that the Office of Smart Growth has (2) a pivotal role in providing affordable housing. This office provides housing and employment projections. Current COAH allocations are too high (see Housing Element). This relates to the fact that the Borough is not in agreement that prior population and employment growth projected under “Trend” conditions should be accommodated under “Plan” conditions if this in large part is to be steered to already developed areas. If there is a desire to limit growth in some areas, the state may have to accept the economic realities of lower future population growth associated with this conservation objective.

The Borough of Essex Fells is not in agreement that (8) magnet forces ought to be applied to encourage more-intensive *suburban* development. Limited carrots may be possible for urban areas, but equivalent suburban measures for the most part are premature, costly, and may not reflect the

desires of residents of these locations. Finally, Essex Fells does not support mandatory compliance by state agencies and all others with a plan at this stage of evolution. If the compromises sought by communities are adopted in the new State Plan and the Plan as a result of these measures seems to achieve a better living and working environment for the citizens of New Jersey, Essex Fells would endorse *voluntary* broad-base support by other agencies.

Agreement on SDRP Statewide Strategies and Policies. The Borough of Essex Fells is in agreement with a majority of statewide comprehensive planning *strategies and policies*. These include:

1. Upgrading professional capacity
2. State funding for local governments
3. County funding for local governments
4. Database sharing
5. Technical assistance
6. Planning education, and
7. Coordinating planning

With regard to (8)—the horizontal and vertical integration of (9) local/county plans and the (10) State Plan, respectively, it is unclear how the processes will be tied together. It is assumed that municipalities prepare their plans, they are integrated by counties, subjected to the bounds of state plans, and then reiterated including necessary compromise. This is an appropriate process only if the views of municipalities are accorded significant weight during review, and only if there is the option of

non-participation if agreement cannot be reached.

The Borough of Essex Fells believes strongly that (11) primary review of local plans remains with the county, and that (12) each state agency should retain its own budget prerogatives. Mandated direct state review of municipal plans is not desired, nor is heavy Office of Smart Growth influence across other state agency budgets.

There is general agreement that (13) counties should prepare plans, but disagreement that county plans must fully reflect the State Plan. The same is true of (14) municipal plans. Project review of regionally impacting land-use decisions is done and should continue to be done through the county. This process need not involve the State in any but an advisory way. Further, any aspect of this process should not replace local review.

Relationship of the Essex Fells Development Plan to the County Master Plan

Essex County has neither a master plan nor a planning department. Most of the county is already developed or in need of redevelopment. Essex County's Department of Economic Development undertakes development and redevelopment activities. This department was in charge of the Cross Acceptance process for the State Plan in Essex County.

Essex County has 21 municipalities occupying 127 square miles, with a population of 797,434 (2015). It is the second most-populous county in New Jersey (Middlesex County is the first). Essex County is

“divided” into thirds: (1) the urban areas—Newark, Irvington, East Orange, Orange, and Bloomfield; (2) the eastern suburbs—South Orange, Maplewood, Millburn, Glen Ridge, and Montclair; and (3) the western suburbs (Livingston, Fairfield, Roseland, Cedar Grove, North Caldwell, West Caldwell, Caldwell, and Essex Fells).

Essex County contains the state's largest city—Newark (281,764 population). It also contains two of the region's largest people- and freight-moving activities—Newark International Airport and Port Newark. The airport serves 37.5 million passengers (2015) and one million tons of air cargo annually. In 2016, the port handled nearly 747,000 tons in cargo.

Essex County provides oversight functions for inclusive municipalities as these functions relate to transportation, health, social services, parks/recreation, public safety, and other matters. Essex County, as is the case with all New Jersey counties, has no zoning powers. Different from other counties, it initiates few direct planning activities.

Caldwell College on Ryerson Avenue



Relationship of the Essex Fells Development Plan to Surrounding Communities

The zoning ordinances of each of the adjacent municipalities were examined. The existing zoning of these municipalities was then compared with the Essex Fells Land Development Code. The zoning of adjacent municipalities is basically compatible with the zoning in the Borough of Essex Fells.

Borough of Caldwell. The Borough of Caldwell is located next to Essex Fells' northwestern corner. Zoning in this area consists of various residential zones: R-D single family residential (22,500 sq. ft. min.), R-A single family residential (10,500 sq. ft. min.), R-A single family residential (20,000 sq. ft. min.), and R-B single family residential (10,500 sq. ft. min.). Also located adjacent to the Borough along Roseland Avenue in Caldwell is the OP-2 Office Professional zone. Located along Dewey and Bloomfield Avenues is the Caldwell B business zone. In general, except for the adjacent commercial zones, the residential zoning in Caldwell is larger than the residential densities in Essex Fells. There are no commercial zones in Essex Fells.

Borough of North Caldwell. The Borough of North Caldwell is located on the northeastern corner of Essex Fells along Bloomfield Avenue. This area is zoned for professional office uses and a strip mall. The area in Essex Fells adjacent to this area is residential multifamily. This zone was created in response to *Mount Laurel* litigation and is now somewhat compatible with the commercial uses directly across Bloomfield Avenue.

Borough of Roseland. Adjacent to the Borough's southwestern border is the Borough of Roseland. Zoning in this area south of the old railroad right-of-way consists of R-2, R-3 and R-4. These are detached single family residential zones

with minimum lot sizes of 30,100, 20,000 and 11,250 square feet, respectively. The residential zoning in Essex Fells generally corresponds to these densities. In Roseland, the area north of the railroad right-of-way is zoned M, or manufacturing, which is adjacent to the Essex Fells Municipal Park Zone. The manufacturing uses in Roseland are of an intensity that could degrade the quality of the Essex Fells parkland. Most of this is the Trotter Tract site. In this area, the parkland tends to act as a buffer between the manufacturing uses in Roseland and the residential and college uses adjacent to the park in Essex Fells. There is another area of Roseland along Fells Road that is zoned "municipal" which, due to its original recreational uses, was compatible with the church use in Essex Fells across Fells Road. With the installation of a cell tower on this site, the uses are no longer as compatible.



Cell tower in Roseland

Township of Verona. The Township of Verona is located along the northeast border of Essex Fells. Zoning in this area consists of R-2 and R-3 one-family residential zones with minimum lot sizes of 20,000 and 10,000 square feet, respectively. The zoning and residential densities in Essex Fells are similar to those of Verona in this area.

Township of West Caldwell. The Township of West Caldwell is located along the northwest border of Essex Fells adjacent to Caldwell. Zoning in this area consists of R-3 and R-4 single family residential zones

with a minimum lot size of 14,000 and 10,500 square feet, respectively. In Essex Fells, except for a limited area of residential (21,780 square foot minimum) lots, the area adjacent to West Caldwell is parkland.



Current Essex Fells Zoning Map

Township of West Orange. Located along the southeastern border of Essex Fells is the Township of West Orange. Zoning in this area consists of the R-2 one-family residential zone (40,000-square-foot minimum) and the R-C single family/townhouse

option zone with a permitted density of four units per acre. The R-2 zoning is compatible with the residential zoning in Essex Fells; the R-C zoning is less compatible and has caused local issues where the two zones come together.

HOUSING ELEMENT –

Essex Fells is a community with large single-family homes that were built during the 1860's, 1890's, 1920's and 1950's. 700 of the approximate (current) 806 housing units were built during those eras. Between 2000 and 2015, an additional 45 units were built in town, 34 of those units (The Brownstones at Essex Fells) comprised a development with 8 of the units designated as affordable housing to fulfill the town's COAH's requirement.

Since the 1980's, Essex Fells has developed virtually no new housing units (other than the Brownstone complex) because there is no available vacant land to build on as indicated in a vacant land survey which was completed during earlier proceedings. Vacant land in the Borough is generally encumbered by environmental or other restraints.

The housing element of the Borough of Essex Fells contains the following:

1. Discussion of current housing conditions and housing need
2. Projection of future housing need, including housing directed to low- and moderate-income households

3. Presentation of the FAR ordinance and recommendations for its revision

Current Housing Conditions and Housing Need

Current Housing Conditions—Physical Deterioration. Housing conditions in Essex Fells are quite good. As of 2015, there were 806 housing units in the Borough. Housing units are almost all single-family (97.0 percent) and almost all in ownership residency (98.8 percent). Throughout the Borough, there are approximately 16 units that are single-family attached and about 45 units that are rental units.

With regard to physical characteristics, in 2015, no units are overcrowded; no units had a component of the kitchen in another room (refrigerator located in pantry); and 3 units have a component of a bath missing (no shower or tub in a third-floor bathroom). Physical housing conditions in Essex Fells are excellent and have been so for the history of the community.



Townhouses and affordable housing on Bloomfield Avenue e

Current Housing Cost. Housing prices in Essex Fells are high. In 2010, the median price of a single-family home was approximately \$1 million. In 2017, it was \$1,180,000. The current median rental level in Essex Fells is over \$4,000 per month. It is very difficult for retiring

households or children of existing households to find housing within the community. The issue of housing need in Essex Fells is not one of physical condition but rather one of cost. Essex Fells historically has been, and continues to be

today, a housing resource for households whose careers are established. It is not a starter housing community, nor has it been in the past.

TABLE 3. Housing Units and Employment—Total Projections for Essex Fells, 2015–2025

Municipality	<u>Housing Units: Totals and Projections</u>						2000–2015 (old)		2015–2025 (new)	
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2025	Old	New	Old	New	
Essex Fells (vs. Census)	761	761	770	806	836	45	30			
	<u>Employment: Totals and Projections</u>						2000–2015 (old)		2015–2025 (new)	
	2000	2005	2010	2015	2025	Old	New	Old	New	
Essex Fells	198	203	208	213	223	15	1	58	156	
Essex Fells (State Plan)							Prior Round Obligation: 40			
Essex Fells Census (COAH)							Rehabilitation/Crowding: 9			

Source: U.S. Census 2011 – 2015 ACS

Future Employment. According to the State Plan projections, Essex Fells' employment has grown by 15 between 2000 and 2015. Projections are that local employment will grow by 10 from 2015 to 2025. This may be high given the fact that the community has only one commercial use and the Essex Fells Country Club; employment at this site has been changed to residential use. Municipal employment is down over the period 2010 - 2015; school employment is up slightly.

Employment increases in Essex Fells occur in private residences, with individuals citing their domicile as their place of work. This is an increasing reality locally as people work from home using computers and the Internet.

There is some domestic employment in Essex Fells, but this figure has been relatively steady over time. There is also considerable landscaping work in the summer months, but this is seasonal and lasts from May to October.

Affordable Housing in New Jersey

In the landmark *Mount Laurel* decision, the New Jersey Supreme Court required that each municipality make provisions for its "fair share of affordable housing." The new legislators enacted the Fair Housing Act (FHA), including the establishment of reasonable fair share housing obligations and standards. Affordable housing is defined in the FHA to mean housing that is affordable to households with an income that is 80 percent or less of the median income for households of their size within their region. They were referred to as Low (less than 50%) or Moderate (50% - 80%) Income Households. A State agency, The Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) was designated in the FHA with responsibility for administering the Act.

COAH proceeded to adopt regulations for the First-Round municipal affordable housing obligations (1987-1993) and the Second-Round cumulative obligations (1987-1999). COAH failed to produce subsequent rules which could be sustained in legal challenges that followed and on March 10, 2015 the New Jersey Supreme Court found that the COAH administrative process was essentially nonfunctioning and returned jurisdiction over affordable housing to the courts. The courts are currently the forum in which affordable housing obligations will be determined and as of this date there has been no final judicial determination of state, regional, or local needs.

The population growth shows an actual decline in population of over 210 persons from 1980 to 2015. Over this period, Essex Fells lost almost 9% of its 1980 population (2,363 in 1980; 2,153 in 2015).

Year	Population (estimate)
2005	2,069
2006	2,032
2007	2,006
2008	2,097
2009	2,138
2010	2,113
2015	2,153

TABLE 4. Population of Essex Fells, NJ 2005–2015

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing 2015 and yearly Census estimates.

TABLE 5. Building Permits in Essex Fells, NJ 1990-2017

TABLE 5. Building Permits in Essex Fells, NJ: 1990 - 2017					
Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1990	2	2000	1	2010	1
1991	2	2001	0	2011	8*
1992	1	2002	2	2012	8*
1993	0	2003	0	2013	9*
1994	0	2004	2	2014	9*
1995	1	2005	1	2015	10*
1996	2*	2006	2	2016	11*
1997	2*	2007 COAH	42*	2017	0
1998	2*	2008	1		
1999	1	2009	1		
Total New / Yearly	13 / 1.3		52*/5.2		56* / 7
Replacement					
*5%-25% involves replacement units					
Yearly/New	1.3				
Replacement					
* 5% - 25% involve replacement units					

Affordable Housing Need: Planning for low-and moderate-income housing need as it relates to future housing growth, the Borough of Essex Fells acknowledges the following for planning purposes. The population growth shows an actual decline in population of over 210 persons from 1980 to 2015. Over this period, Essex Fells lost almost 9% of its 1980 population (2,363 in 1980; 2,153 in 2015).

It should be acknowledged that Essex Fells provided affordable housing during the

First and Second Rounds. In the First Round, Essex Fells entered into a Regional Contribution Agreement (RCA) with Orange, in which Essex Fells transferred 10 units to Orange for approximately \$24,000/unit for a total of \$240,000.

Essex Fells provided subsequent affordable housing for thirteen additional units. Five units were constructed in Essex Fells, five units were transferred to Linden in another Regional Contribution Agreement and credit for three rental units is included.

TABLE 6. Affordable Housing Provided in Essex Fells, NJ: 2004-2018

Current – Round 3	Number of Units
A. Low- and Moderate-Income Units	5 + 3 rental
B. Low- and Moderate-Income Units Transferred to Linden	5
Total:	13
 Price	
3. Growth Share—Residential (1 for 4) (8 units ÷ 4)	2
4. Growth Share—Employment (1 for 16) (15 jobs ÷ 16)	1

Over the period from the beginning of COAH in 1986 to 2015, sixty units of housing were built in Essex Fells; and during that time Essex Fells produced 55 market-rate units and 23 units of affordable housing - 5 units in Essex Fells, 15 RCA units and 3 rentals.

The future affordable housing that needs to be addressed as the Borough of Essex Fells moves forward is two units of Rehabilitation Need. In addition, should any additional property become available for residential development, Section 170-132 of the Land Use Ordinance requires a twenty percent set aside of affordable housing units.

Residential FAR (Floor Area Ratio)

Following a study completed in 1984, the Borough implemented a residential FAR (floor area ratio) ordinance. The intent and purpose of the ordinance is to control the size and mass of homes in relation to lot size and prevent overbuilding. The current ordinance regulates FAR as follows:

Zone District	Maximum FAR
RA-1	0.11
RA-2	0.12
RA-3	0.13
RA-4	0.17
RA-5	0.22
RA-6	0.25

The Planning Board recommends the Borough analyze its housing stock to evaluate the effect of the original FAR ordinance and variances granted from its provisions.

CIRCULATION ELEMENT

The circulation or road plan is designed to provide access by residents to the neighboring communities and to the major east-west thoroughfares of Route 280, and Eagle Rock and Bloomfield Avenues. North-south traffic between Caldwell and Roseland and Route 280 is along Roseland Avenue, the main thoroughfare of the Borough. The necessary ingress to and egress from Essex Fells is provided by Bloomfield Avenue and Eagle Rock Avenue, which border the Borough, and by Roseland Avenue/Runnymede and Fells Roads, which traverse the Borough. The circulation plan is designed to provide easy ingress and egress, and to preserve the quiet residential quality of the Borough in its interior.

The Circulation Element of the Essex Fells Borough Master Plan involves a plan to minimize cut-through traffic in Essex Fells and to manage local traffic efficiently. It also includes a plan to introduce the ability to bike and walk locally. These are the three main components of the Circulation Element.

Cut-through Traffic

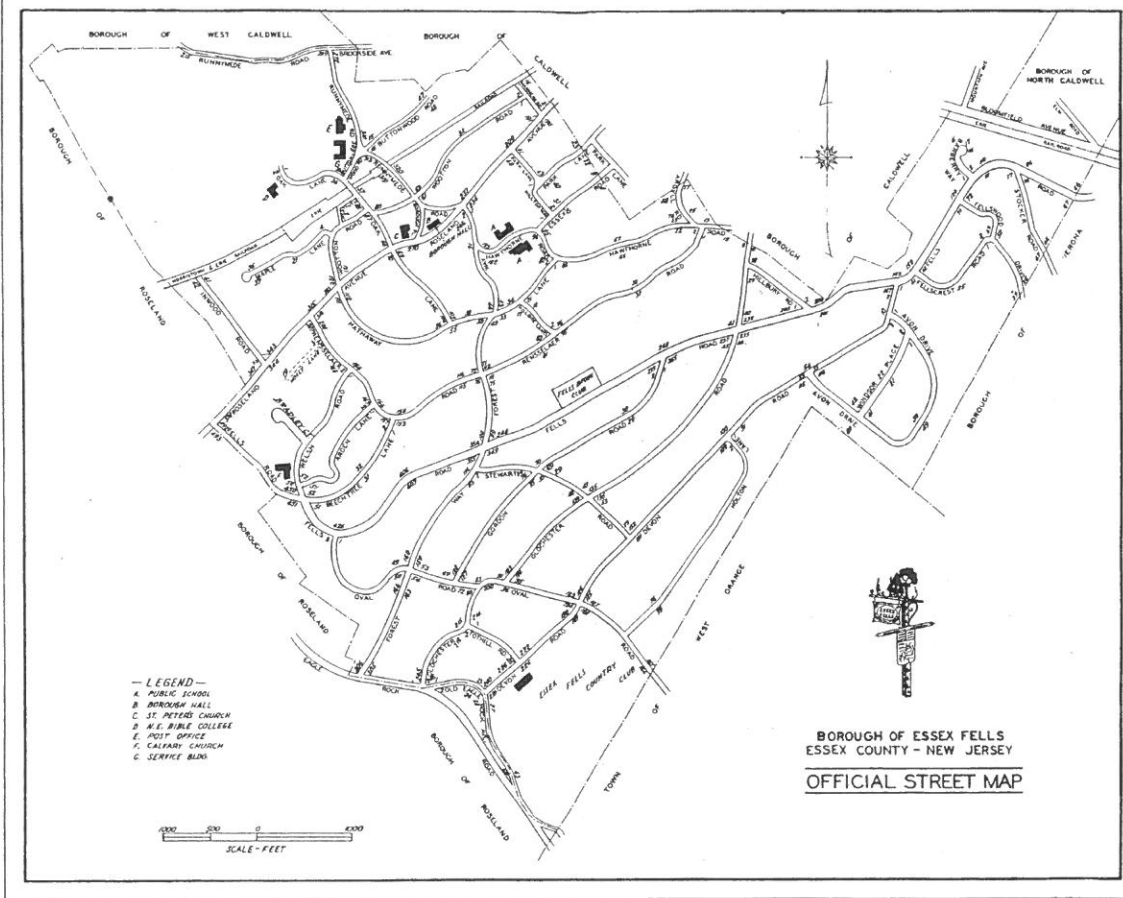
Existing speed limits should be maintained on all local roads to discourage cut-through traffic. Roseland Avenue is the main through street, followed by Runnymede Road and Fells Road, Devon Road, Forest Way, and Oldchester Road. Except for Roseland Avenue (35 mph), each of these streets has a 25-mph speed limit in the

Borough, which should not be raised. The current maximum speed on Roseland Avenue should be reduced from 35 mph to 30 mph.

Managing Local Traffic

Local traffic reaches its highest point of congestion during the A.M. and P.M. peak hours. This is evident along Roseland Avenue heading westbound in the A.M. peak, with queues at both Harrison/Eagle Rock and Bloomfield Avenues (15 to 20 vehicles each). It is also evident along Oldchester Road and Devon Road (in both directions) with a queue during the a.m. peak hours at Old Eagle Rock Avenue/Eagle Rock Avenue. This queue causes a 5- to 8-minute waiting time, which is acceptable and actually serves to deter traffic through the Borough. However, the volume of traffic and the speed at which it is moving is a public safety and quality of life concern for the residents. All other exits and entrances to the Borough have no more than 3- to 5-car queues at peak periods.

Additional efforts the Borough might employ is to consider adding more 4-way stops signs and the possibility of small, decorative traffic circles at Fells/Devon Roads (half-circle) and Fells Road/Forest Way, and at Essex/Hilltop Roads. This would process traffic more efficiently through these locations. This technique has been used in Coral Gables (Florida) with great success, and locally in Bound Brook and South Orange, New Jersey.



Street Map of Essex Fells

Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths

There is a strong desire locally to be able to walk and bike safely on Borough roads. A study should be undertaken to establish combined pedestrian and bicycle paths on a select number of Borough roads. These might traverse Devon Road to middle Fells Road and along Fells Road to Oldchester to Hawthorne, along Hawthorne Road through the Essex Fells School to

Forest Way, south on Forest Way across Fells Road to Oval, south on Oval to Stewart, to Devon. This distance is approximately two miles. This would require offsetting the line markings on those streets and establishing “no parking” requirements on one side of these streets. The study suggested here is a routine pedestrian/bicycle pathway study that would produce suggested routes, crossings, and the width of the pedestrian/bicycle designation.

PUBLIC FACILITIES ELEMENT

Essex Fells public facilities consist of roads; water and sewer lines, and treatment plants; and public buildings. Each of these requires regular maintenance and repair, as well as eventual refurbishing and expansion.

Roads

Essex Fells has fourteen miles of public roads within the Borough. These roads connect to a larger system of roads that provide access to workplace, school, and shopping destinations and to emergency health-care facilities. The roads must be maintained, cleaned, have snow removed, and be kept in a state to allow traffic to move efficiently. Most roads are currently in good repair after extensive resurfacing over the past several years.



Gated residential dwellings on Devon Road

Essex Fells has had a tradition of “keeping the trains running”—in other words, maintaining the roadways through efficient use of its public works department. This aspect of the local public persona should be continued. Effort should be made, and funds allocated, to keep roads in good repair. Resurfacing monies typically come through grant support from the State of New Jersey Department of Transportation and should continue to be sought. A problem with roads involves sewer gratings which are higher than the road surface. These are identified with plastic cones but still provide problems for drivers unfamiliar with Essex Fells. The Borough should also maintain sewer gratings free from leaf and other debris collection.

Water/Sewer Lines—Water Department

Water and sewer lines run through the Borough on all streets, and some have been in place for more than 100 years. These lines have to be replaced regularly. A portion of these lines should be scheduled for replacement each year in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This should be coordinated with any major road resurfacings that are scheduled. Street sewer hardware (gratings and manholes) must also be reseated and replaced as necessary. This should also be coordinated with roadway resurfacings as a CIP item.

The Essex Fells Water Department sells water to North Caldwell, Caldwell, Roseland and Essex Fells. Gross revenues amount to approximately \$1 million annually. Essex Fells maintains a total of 16 wells: 8 are located in Essex Fells, 6 in Roseland, and 2 in West Caldwell.

The Water Department has an aeration facility within the Trotter Tract; three water tanks (two low-service [one concrete, one steel] off Fells Road and one high-service off Fellscrest Road; and the #1 Pumping Station on Runnymede Road. The Water Department has two generators to prevent sewer backup in case of a power failure. They are located at the end of Oval Road near the country club and on the Caldwell side of the Fells/Devon Road intersection.

The Essex Fells Water Department must maintain its resources so that it can continue to sell water. This means that the quality of the water must be regularly tested and, if found to be decreasing, improvements to treatment must be undertaken. This would involve making major changes to improvements in the treatment facility. It also means that the Essex Fells water tanks, wells, and transmission lines must be inspected regularly and repaired/refurbished as necessary. The Water Department has three full-time employees who handle the routine maintenance.

Public Buildings

Essex Fells has five public buildings. These include the following:

1. *Borough Hall*, which contains police, fire, and administration services;
2. *Service Building*, which contains public works;
3. *Essex Fells School*, which serves students from Pre-K to Sixth grade;
4. *Essex Fells Post Office*
5. *Water Department Building*

Borough Hall. Two of the five buildings—Borough Hall and Essex Fells School—have been extensively remodeled over the past twenty years. Borough Hall received a \$1.1 million upgrading (elevator, new administration offices, new public safety spaces); Essex Fells School completed a significant addition in 1999 and more recently received a \$0.5 million upgrading (computer room/library, entranceway, offices). Borough Hall has received additional work to repair cracks in the floor underneath the Fire Department, and in the rear wall of the building. A fire department shed was installed at the rear of the building, near the brook, to hold fire department equipment. The shed was subsequently removed to create a parking spot for the Fire Department's utility truck, and an attached overhang was constructed over the parking spot.

Service Building. The Service Building is currently being evaluated, and several areas are undergoing renovation and re-

refurbishing. Recently, within the Service Building the second floor was improved. The second floor was completely repainted. In addition, wainscot has been put on the

ceiling. Emergency and exit lighting were also added.



Service Building and the Public Works Department



The Public Works/Water Department should occupy a new steel building to the rear of the Service Building. This building would contain (1) four bays, with in/out access; (2) a DPW office with two desks; and (3) a small locker room to wash up and change clothing. This would consolidate Public Works operations in a relatively inexpensive structure and allow the Service Building to accommodate other activities.

School Buildings. The Essex Fells School consists of two buildings. The building proximate to the Glen is the pre-K to third-grade building; the building proximate to the athletic fields is the fourth- to sixth-grade building. A significant addition, 4,200 square feet, was completed in 1999. A science and a media room were added, and many updates were completed.

The fourth- to sixth-grade building contains the gymnasium, which doubles as a cafeteria from 11:40 A.M. to 12:40 P.M.

Additional space is desired to alleviate this condition (which prevents athletics during this one-hour period). Meeting rooms are also overutilized in the pre-K to third-grade building and require space. All classrooms and the Media Center have SmartBoards, Laptops, Desktops and Document Cameras. In addition, there are over 80 iPads for the students' use.

Traffic studies show that while the number of cars during the short drop-off/pick-up time (5-7 minutes) is heavy, having two areas (Hawthorne Road by the Pre-K playground and an oval in the Forest Way parking lot) has shortened the duration and improved the safety.

Currently, 230 children (including 22 pre-K students) occupy both buildings. This is 90% capacity and is estimated to increase slightly over the next couple of years. The average class size is 13, and the ranking of the school is consistently in the Top 10 of all Elementary Schools in New Jersey. The

Essex Fells School continues to be a gem in the community. In 2016, it was awarded National Blue-Ribbon status, which means it must be in the Top 1% nationwide on Standardized Tests. The Essex Fells School has 45 employees including: a

Superintendent/Principal, teachers, aides, a Business Administrator, custodians, and administrative workers.



Post Office—Essex Fells, New Jersey

Post Office. The fourth building is the Essex Fells Post Office, which is currently rented to the U.S. Postal Service. There is a repair and repainting budget allocation (\$10,000 to \$15,000 annually), but the building needs additional capital attention. The Post Office needs new rear windows, a roof, and a new heating system. It also needs ceiling and floor repairs. Other than this, the building appears to meet the needs of its tenants.

The Essex Fells Post Office building is probably in the worst shape of all Borough-owned facilities. It has received a recent interior painting but has not had major attention for a decade. This structure should be included for repairs on the Borough's capital improvement program.

RECREATION ELEMENT

The Recreation Element for the Borough of Essex Fells contains recommendations and required actions for:

1. Public recreation areas;
2. Municipal lands used for recreation; and
3. Private clubs.

Public Recreation Areas

Public recreation areas include Essex Fells Fields and the lands around the Essex Fells School. Both contain considerable land upon which multiple activities take place. Essex Fells Fields are the primary sites for multiple soccer and lacrosse teams sponsored by the Borough. There are multiple fields, bathrooms, and a concession stand. The space is busy from 3pm. to 7pm. daily, on Saturday and occasionally on Sunday

The Essex Fells Fields site has also been the locus for various Memorial Day activities. The Essex Fells School is the site for grades 2–3 soccer in addition to boys' baseball and girls' softball.

It is the goal of the Borough to maintain and expand public recreational areas. This includes maintaining the facilities themselves; naturally fertilizing and cutting grassed areas; and repairing and cleaning access roads and parking areas. These activities are done using the municipal budget. The recreation areas have undergone physical improvements (fencing, handrails, guardrails); lacrosse wall; and informal

bench seating. The Essex Fells Fields area has also had constructed a building containing permanent bathrooms, storage space for sports equipment, and a small sales area for food and souvenirs on the days of sporting events.



Essex Fells Fields. *Top:* Playing field. *Below:* Basketball court.



Memorial Day 2008, Essex Fells Fields

Municipal Lands Used for Recreation

Municipal lands used for recreation include the Trotter Tract, the Essex Fells Pond (including walking trail), and the skating rink behind the pond. Walking occurs on Trotter Tract; fishing derbies and skating occur on the pond.

All open lands in Essex Fells are recreational fields or natural areas. It is the intention of the Borough of Essex Fells to preserve both of these natural areas in as near to their current form as possible so that these recreational activities can continue. Neither should be significantly altered due to prospective development or for other municipal goals. No development activity ought to occur in either place.

Private Clubs

Two private clubs exist in Essex Fells—the Essex Fells Country Club and the Fells

Brook Club (swimming and tennis). Each of these clubs is private and has its own memberships, but they are within Essex Fells. Because these clubs offer such a range of activities, public tennis and swimming facilities have not been developed. This has an impact on those who are not members of these clubs.

It is the goal of the Borough of Essex Fells to encourage that each of these clubs openly and regularly seek membership from the Borough’s population and that they conduct activities that are open to the public.. This would create harmony between private and public recreation events and encourage memberships to be drawn from a broad base of Essex Fells residents.

Essex Fells Country Club (front)



Fells Brook Club swimming pool

RECYCLING ELEMENT

Former governor Jon Corzine initiated legislation to enforce mandatory recycling provisions in local master plans. Essex Fells supports recycling and currently encourages all property owners to participate in the Borough's recycling efforts. Essex Fells currently divides recyclable materials into four categories: metal, commingled (glass, plastic, aluminum/tin cans), cardboard, and paper (junk mail, magazines, and newsprint).

Residents drop off material at the appropriate recycling bin or individually pay the Borough's solid waste contractor to drop it off for them. When Dumpsters are full, the solid waste contractor takes them to regional disposal sites (twice weekly). One Borough worker is designated part-time to the

recycling area. This individual cleans and maintains the area, takes materials from plastic bags and disposes of the bags, and disposes of related material that people drop that do not fall into the above categories.

The recycling area needs to have a paved surface. Currently it is soil, which must be raked and cannot be blown. The recycling area would provide a neater appearance if the area was black-topped. This should be scheduled in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

The four main DumpstersTM need a tin roof and fencing, also to improve their appearance. Both of these expenses are minimal to improve the appearance of the area around the Service Building, which is the recycling area.

DESIGN ELEMENT

There is a desire within Essex Fells to maintain the community as it currently is. The design component of the Master Plan would accomplish the following objectives:

- a. Establish a Design Advisory Committee to inform builders of historic building practices and materials used in the construction of residential structures.
- b. Encourage the Zoning Board and Planning Board to be cognizant of design in development approvals before their boards and coordinate the design approach between the two boards.
- c. Ensure that lighting, fencing, recreational uses on private property, and audio sound emissions, parallel basic design initiatives.
- d. Ensure that the floor-area ratio (FAR) as well as setbacks and side/rear yards are adjusted for the oversized lots in particular zones.

Design Advisory Committee

The Design Advisory Committee would be made up of 6 members, one-half from the Planning/Zoning boards and one-half from members of the building community who live locally. This committee would comment on and advise builders of new housing or major additions on current building practices of the community. The purpose of the review would be to maintain compatibility between the existing streetscape and new additions/significant replacements of structures in a neighborhood. Plans would be reviewed at the time that they are presented to the building official.

Zoning Board and Planning Board Coordination

It is incumbent on the Zoning and Planning boards to have a similar view of compatible neighborhood design within the community. The boards would exercise this unanimity of purpose at the time of project approval before the boards. Thus, in a development application, each board could inquire as to the type of design and materials contemplated, and the results of the Design Advisory Committee review. While this could not determine or influence the outcome leading to a judgment before these boards, testimony could be solicited on intended design. Further, the boards could communicate to the applicant that they encourage updating and improvement of existing structures, which maintains the current streetscape.

Lighting, Fencing, Grading, Storage, and Recreational Uses

Lighting, fencing, grading, and recreational uses cannot impinge on neighboring properties or take away from the community as a whole. This is a goal of all Land Development Code provisions governing the above activities. It is important to ensure that recreational lighting is not visible to neighbors and that decorative lighting is not injurious to the night sky view of the entire community.

Fences must be kept to scale and largely be foliage-based and not of fixed metal, concrete, or wood varieties. Security fencing is necessary immediately proximate to pools; privacy fencing is not. The deer population has caused neighbors to erect

somewhat greater than six foot fencing on the interiors of their property. As long as this is done on the interiors of properties, until the deer problem abates, this is acceptable.



Six-foot iron and wooden fencing on front/side yards

Grading must be of the type that is compatible with adjacent properties. Elevations requiring side walls for stability must not be created by a single property owner causing requisite actions of adjacent property owners. No extensive cut/fill can take place, nor can fill import or export be used to create surfaces that are different in height from property to property. This is implicit in the Land Development Code, but currently it is not being observed by developers of new

properties or some residents of existing properties.

Storage of vehicles of any type in driveways should not be permitted within the Borough. A limit should be placed on the number of vehicles that are accorded off-street parking in driveways (2) and RVs/skidoos should not qualify.

Recreational uses must be kept to scale, operate during reasonable hours, and not have lighting that impacts neighboring properties. Recreational uses are subject to impervious coverage, and if they do not meet such requirements should not be allowed.

Floor-Area Ratio (FAR)

The floor-area ratio must be re-examined and potentially revised so as not to afford the opportunity to create overly large structures on very large properties in a particular zone. A reverse type of expansion would also affect the minimum size of side and rear yards associated with these properties. These would be appropriately increased. Other adjustments to the FAR also need to take place. These include raising the percentage of area below-grade that is counted in the FAR and, in addition, counting a share of areas with 5 feet or more clearance in half-stories/attics as FAR floor space.

The intent is to keep properties somewhat in scale with surrounding properties even though lots may be overly large. Until an updated study is completed, the recommended standard for oversized properties in a zone cannot be more than 1.5 times the allowable size of the structure associated with the minimum permissible lot size.

PUBLIC SERVICE ELEMENT

Department	Number of Personnel
Administration	3
Police	13
Fire (all volunteer)	40
Public Works	5
Water Department	3
Recreation	1
Education	45
TOTAL (Non-volunteer)	70

Administration

Administration currently has 3 full-time employees (the Borough Administrator/Municipal Clerk and two others). The Borough also has several part-time officials who perform similar roles for other municipalities, including a CFO, Tax Collector/Tax Assessor and Construction Official/Zoning Officer. Current staff levels are adequate.

Police Department

The police department currently has 13 officers. Two police vehicles are on patrol, each with one officer on a continuous basis.

Fire Department

The fire department has approximately 40 volunteers, including a chief, an assistant chief, and 3 other officers. The department

has 3 vehicles: 2 high-pressure pumpers and a utility truck.

Public Works

The public works department has 5 employees, including the superintendent. These employees perform regular maintenance of Borough buildings, land, and equipment. They also clean, plow and maintain local roads, pick-up leaves (in the Fall) and other yard debris left curbside by residents. Leaves are collected and recycled into mulch.

Water Department

The Borough owns its own water utility. The Department consists of a Water Superintendent and two other employees. These employees maintain and operate all of the equipment necessary to transmit water for domestic consumption to the residents of Essex Fells, Caldwell, and North Caldwell.



Essex Fells School—Lower Building

Education

The Education Department (the Essex Fells School) has 45 employees, including: teachers, a chief administrator/principal, and a business administrator. The remaining employees include teacher aides, office employees and custodians. All grades, pre-K through 6, now have Smartboards and document cameras. In addition to laptops in the Technology classroom, desktops and laptops in the Media Center, all classrooms have desktops. There are over 80 iPads available for use throughout the school.



Essex Fells Pond in summer

HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT

The purpose of this Element is to provide the beginnings of a process to designate and regulate historic sites in the Borough of

Essex Fells (N.J.S. 40:55D-65.1). Essex Fells was a planned development envisioned by Anthony Drexel of Philadelphia, who developed similar communities along the Main Line (of the Pennsylvania Railroad) in Philadelphia. His son-in-law, John Fell (from whose name part of the Borough's name is derived) in 1881 purchased a 1,000-acre tract of land from the Village of Caldwell with money borrowed from Drexel. The land contained numerous short hills, each of which is a "fell"; and the "s" was added to the community's name. In 1892, rail service was extended to Essex Fells via the Roseland Railway.

Ernest W. Bowditch developed the site plan for the community in 1893. Bowditch, who frequently worked with Fredrich Law Olmstead, also developed site plans for Tuxedo Park, New York, The Breakers in Newport, RI and Euclid Park (Cleveland, Ohio). All of these plans contained curvilinear streets that followed land contours to blend the community layout with nature.



St. Peter's Church on Roseland Avenue

Essex Fells was incorporated in 1902 after separating from Caldwell. The first map and general plan of Essex Fells was completed in 1913. This was the basis of the first zoning ordinance. In 1934, the Planning Board was established; the first Master Plan was completed in 1936 (EFCBC 2002).

There are a number of historic structures in the Borough of Essex Fells. These include St. Peter's Episcopal Church (Roseland Avenue, 1730); the Ryerson House (Hathaway Lane, 1734); the two Gould houses (Roseland Avenue, 1750, 1870); the Schofield house (Wootton and Runnymede Roads, 1880); Martha May Annex (Welsh Road, 1885); and the five Drexel houses (Oak Lane, Wootton Road, Roseland Avenue, Rensselaer Road, Hathaway Lane, 1895). From 1889 to 1905, 50 houses were built north and south of Roseland Avenue. A second building period took place during the 1920s–1930s (including 30 Henry G. Morse houses on Rensselaer, Hawthorne, Oldchester, and Gordon). A final period took place in the 1950s and 1960s, including houses by James Timpson. In 1963, a modern house on the corner of Oval and

Devon was designed by renowned architect-planner Richard Meier, for his parents.

Without protection, these properties are in jeopardy of being lost. It is time to protect their current form and ensure their duration. This can be done through a historic preservation ordinance that would derive its purposes from this Element of the Master Plan. The locations of most houses to be preserved are East and West of Roseland Avenue between Rensselaer Road and Oak Grove Road in Caldwell. This would affect properties in a minimal way but ensure that the exteriors of these properties remain intact. This would require establishment of a zone of protection as well as a specific ordinance governing permissible actions. All applications for variances and demolition of buildings over 75 years old should be forwarded to the History Committee for review and recommendation.

The Council should also consider changes to the zoning regulations that would encourage the preservation of designated historic structures in the Borough and incentivize investment in such homes.



Residential dwelling on Roseland Avenue

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT ELEMENT

The goal of the Stormwater Management Act (N.J.S. 40:55D-95) is to reduce flood damage and minimize stormwater runoff from new land development. The act minimizes impacts of developed areas to the downstream discharge points. Under the act, every municipality is required to prepare a stormwater management plan as an integral part of its master plan and to adopt a Stormwater Control Ordinance (40:55D-93 to 40:55D-94). Essex Fells has both a Stormwater Management Plan (NJPDES#: NJG 0148792; PI ID#: 190668) and a Stormwater Control Ordinance. The substantive requirements of both the Plan and the Ordinance are set forth in N.J.A.C. 7:8. N.J.A.C. 7:8 was promulgated again in 2004 after rule changes that reflected a decade of study of stormwater management. As an example, the new provisions require post-development runoff rates that are lower than the pre-development rates.



Stormwater on residential property

Stormwater management deals with the following: *erosion control*; *groundwater recharge*; *stormwater runoff quantity*; and *stormwater runoff quality*.

Erosion Control. Projects must meet Essex/Hudson County Soil Conservation District standards in terms of how the site is contained using plastic and other soil-containing materials.

Groundwater Recharge. Projects must replenish the development-site area with a numerical percentage of projected lost water (N.J.A.C. 7:8-5.4).

Stormwater Runoff Quantity. N.J.A.C. 7:8-5.4 allows for three options in order to satisfy the increase in rate of runoff and also the impacts due to the increase in the volume of runoff. Based on 2-, 10-, and 100-year storm events, these are percentages of the volume of runoff compared with pre-development rates.

Stormwater Runoff Quality. This specifies the type of treatment that must be used to attain certain levels of water quality. Treatment usually involves a structure (a prefabricated device) utilizing settling, vortex separation, and/or other appropriate technology to remove pollutants from stormwater runoff.



Storm sewer on side of roadway

The stormwater management plan (SMP) also describes long-term operations

and maintenance measures that will be employed on existing and future stormwater facilities. The above are all parts of the Essex Fells Plan.

Part of the local regulations is the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, which is a statement of all actions that the community must do in its plan and ordinance as it relates to stormwater table inlets (catch basins). This includes inspections, cleaning, and so on. The Essex Fells Master Plan hereby recognizes the Essex Fells Stormwater Management Plan as an integral Element of the Master Plan.

The above is particularly important for Essex Fells in that larger homes with more impervious coverage are causing significant runoff problems on neighbors' properties. It may be necessary to control such water runoff activities with holding tanks on the property where the runoff problem begins. Regulations must be enforced to comply with NJ DEP's regulations for the Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act Rules N.J.A.S.7:7A Statutory Authority: N.J.S.A.13:9B-1 et seq.

ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENT

The retention and improved health of natural resources—air, water, soils, habitat, and species—are critical in determining the future land use resiliency and success of a community. Protecting and preserving natural resources can lead to balanced growth and enhanced economic development. Resources are not inexhaustible; misuse and abuse of the environment has produced negative economic outcomes: insufficient fossil fuel, polluted

waters, unclean air, and costly flooding and fires.

Essex Fells' original 'infrastructure planning' by Ernest W. Bowditch, an associate of F. W. Olmsted, follows the Olmsted School's concept to create towns that preserves the original natural environment of the locations.

At the local level, most environmental problems cross jurisdictional boundaries and are caused by numerous small pollutants; yet, also at the local level, governments play an increasing role because of their traditional responsibility for land use and planning. This takes the form of: (1) protecting sensitive lands; (2) conserving open space; (3) providing for tree planting and other greening initiatives; and (4) promoting sustainable development.

Protecting Sensitive Lands

Throughout the Borough of Essex Fells, in terms of the original land design of the community, there are open public lands that may run adjacent to privately owned properties. These public lands are frequently not maintained by the public sector and are often abused by the private sector. Such lands need to be inventoried and placed in a program of identification and improvement. Identification would inventory the site and label its significant environmental attributes. Improvement would put the site on a program of best practices to maximize its environmental assets. This has already been done for the "Glen" nearby the Essex Fells School. The transformation of the site for both environmental education and habitat protection is outstanding. This type of

activity is also being done in the reforestation efforts from Gordon Road to Fells Road, and along the brook on Fells Road from Forest Way to Oval Road.

Foliage in the Glen (top); the Glen near Forest Way (bottom)



Initiatives like these, which involve both landscape architects and environmental planners, must go forward on all interstices between properties throughout the Borough.

Conserving Open Space

An enormous effort has been undertaken to preserve open space within the Borough of Essex Fells. This included acquiring land once occupied by the Northeastern Bible College and creating playing fields; the multiple improvements of these fields to allow active open space; the retention and use of the Trotter Tract as both passive and active open space; and the conversion of almost all Borough-held open space lands into municipally designated parklands. All of these lands in their natural form will be protected. All properties that are potentially available for acquisition should be considered. Current tax abatement for future donation of open space also might be looked into.

Tree Planting

Trees define Essex Fells. If there is a single factor challenging the community, it is its trees. They have been saved as part



Trees along Beechtree Lane

of the original community design and they will continue to be saved as a result of the tree-inventory provisions of the Land Development Code. The reality is that the sugar maples are dying of old age (100+ years), and the dogwoods have been killed by pestilence. They need to be replaced. In 2008, 65 dogwoods were sold for local planting on *private* property. This replacement program should continue annually and be augmented to include sugar maples until the dogwoods and sugar maples have been replaced. A program for *public* lands ought to parallel this private program to restore dogwood and sugar maples on public lands.

The Land Development Code should be reviewed to determine retention diameters of trees that might vary by species and are mature trees currently unprotected by the Code. Trees that have fallen should be removed by owners. For all requests that are submitted to the Planning and Zoning Boards, proper tree removal should be required and completed before getting any approvals.



Brook along Fells Road (top); Fells Brook Club near pool

Sustainable Development

The principle of sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This affects the types of chemicals used as well as the amount of water used on lawns. It also has larger implications for private and public energy consumption (Burchell and Listokin 1975).

The important factor is that sustainable development seeks mutually reinforcing policies that link economic development and environmental protection. Economic development cannot come at the cost of environmental protection, and vice versa. The essence of the above approach is that local land-use policies are sensitive to the needs of future generations. This should become a guiding statement for all Essex Fells land-development regulations (Daniels and Daniels 2003).

CARBON FOOTPRINT ELEMENT

This is the appropriate time for Essex Fells to embrace socially responsible development to preserve the health and safety of its citizens by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. By taking measures to reduce energy consumption, the Borough of Essex Fells can contribute to reducing global warming. This will involve a variety of public and private actions to reduce energy consumption (Burchell and Listokin 1982).

Public Actions

Essex Fells could seek to join Local Governments For Sustainability (ICLEI), a public information group that provides materials on achieving energy sustainability for local governments. This information will enable the Borough to provide a benchmark for its current condition against which it can set goals for reduction.

Public actions would include:

1. Replacing public vehicles as they are retired with either hybrid or energy-efficient vehicles. A goal of increasing current average mileage by twice over the next decade is clearly reachable.
2. Replacing public building HVAC systems with more energy-efficient systems as they are upgraded or replaced.*
3. Insulating public buildings to increased levels as they are refurbished or replaced.*
4. Replacing windows and doors of public buildings with those materials that will retain the maximum amount of desired temperature.*
5. Encouraging public employees to live closer to reduce journey-to-work.
6. Posting information on the Essex Fells Web site regarding levels of energy efficiency that are suitable for various types of appliances.

7. Having the Design Advisory Committee inquire of the builder as to the energy efficiency of proposed appliances and HVAC systems for both new and remodeled private structures.
8. Installing pedestrian and bicycle paths locally as an alternative to automobile travel.

*Each of these would apply to proposed renovations of the Service Building and the Post Office.



Safe walking/biking paths can be developed locally



Residential dwelling on Oval Road

Private actions would include the following (Daniels and Daniels 2003):

1. Residents becoming aware of fuel efficiency as a prime criterion when automobiles are replaced.
2. Requiring architects of proposed additions or new housing to present insulation plans, window and door choices, and proposed HVAC/appliance efficiencies to the Design Advisory Committee. In addition, the same should be done with potential installations of solar panel (roof) heating, and if permitted, the panels should not be installed on the front roof.
3. Encouraging residents to work at home more often to reduce average travel distances.
4. Encouraging residents to carpool and use mass transit available at the Borough's edges for journeys-to-work.
5. Encouraging walking/biking to and from school along designated pedestrian/bicycle paths.
6. Encouraging multiple-family carpooling to school rather than one-family, one-child single trips.

VIII. BACKGROUND DATA UPON WHICH THE 2018 MASTER PLAN IS BASED

Introduction

When creating a new master plan, it is important to be aware of the trends affecting the community in the context of the county and state. Historical growth relative to the host county and/or the State of New Jersey plays a role in influencing future growth directions of a municipality. Also important is the socioeconomic construct of the community and its change over time. Information about these topics constitutes the final portion of the report that has been prepared for the Borough of Essex Fells.

Growth and Demographic Change in the Borough of Essex Fells—2000-2015

Essex Fells is a small suburban community located in Essex County in Northeast New Jersey. It is almost entirely residential, having only one nonconforming commercial use. The Borough is approximately 15 miles from New York City and is consistently rated near the top of *New Jersey Monthly* magazine's "Best Places to Live: Top Towns." In 2017, Essex Fells was rated as the 22nd best place to live out of New Jersey's 513 municipalities. In 2008, it was rated the 10th best place to live in the state. The town dropped on the list over time due to the increased real estate costs. The Borough spans 1.4 square miles, extending from the borders of Caldwell to the northeast, Roseland to the southwest, West Caldwell to the northwest, and West Orange to the Southeast.



Looking southeast at the corner of Gordon Road and Stewart Road

The Borough is part of a 1702 purchase of 14,000 acres of land known as the "Horseneck Tract."¹ The tract contained present-day Caldwell, West Caldwell, North Caldwell, Fairfield, Verona, Cedar Grove, Roseland, and Essex Fells, and portions of Livingston and West Orange. The land was purchased from the Lenni Lenape Native Americans for goods worth \$325. Over time the tract was divided up by the various boroughs and townships that exist in this western area of Essex County. The wooded area south of Caldwell eventually became incorporated as the Borough of Essex Fells.

1. Max K. Vorwerk, *A History of the Horseneck Riots* (1976). Retrieved from the World Wide Web at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~genepool/njriots.htm>.

New Jersey Monthly Magazine

Best Places to Live: Top Towns 2008

Rank	Municipality	County	2006 Population	2000-06 Population Growth	2007 Median Home Sales Price	Change in Home Price 2000-07	2007 Median Property Taxes	Open Space Land (%)	2005-06 ASK4, GEPA, HSPA Averages	2006 Crime Rate Index	2006 Unemployment (%)
1	Chatham Township	Morris	10,279	1.9%	\$797,500	125%	\$9,948	36%	96/95/94	4.5	1.4
2	Upper Township	Cape May	11,363	-6.2%	\$295,000	95%	\$3,632	49%	88/85/87	16.9	2.0
3	Verona Township	Essex	12,937	-4.4%	\$420,000	100%	\$8,136	19%	96/86/94	16.4	2.4
4	Oceanport Borough	Monmouth	5,751	-1.0%	\$510,000	125%	\$6,622	10%	91/91/92	7.1	2.2
5	Lincoln Park Borough	Morris	10,856	-0.7%	\$350,000	115%	\$6,271	28%	93/81/83	8.0	3.5
6	Shamong Township	Burlington	6,873	6.4%	\$372,500	108%	\$6,664	59%	95/90/92	5.5	3.0
7	Millstone Borough	Somerset	431	5.1%	\$392,500	98%	\$5,879	18%	91/88/92	0.0	0.0
8	Lavallette Borough	Ocean	2,752	3.3%	\$700,000	180%	\$4,830	22%	79/95/94	11.6	3.0
9	Mahwah Township	Bergen	24,560	2.1%	\$425,000	93%	\$5,787	48%	94/90/95	6.3	3.9
10	Essex Fells Township	Essex	2,071	-4.2%	\$1,065,000	113%	\$12,705	16%	98/89/93	7.6	2.5

Best Places to Live: Top Towns 2017

Rank	Municipality	County
1	Chatham	Morris
2	Glen Rock	Bergen
3	Ho-Ho-Kus	Bergen
4	Rumson	Monmouth
5	Bernardsville	Somerset
6	Berkeley Heights	Union
7	Wyckoff	Bergen
8	Montvale	Bergen
9	New Providence	Union
23	Essex Fells	Essex

Demographic Characteristics

Population

Population growth in Essex Fells reflects that of the overall county. From 1990 to 2000, both Essex Fells and Essex County *increased* in population at an order of magnitude of approximately 1-2 percent. Between 2010 and 2015, both jurisdictions increased almost 1.9% and 1.7%. From 2000 to 2010, both Essex Fells and Essex County *decreased* in population at an order of magnitude of approximately 1-2 percent. Between 1950 and 1990, Essex County lost 125,000 in population, or 15 percent of its

1950 population. From 1970 to 1980, the State of New Jersey increased by 184,400 (7.2 million to 7.4 million), or by 2.6 percent; from 1980 to 1990, the increase was 386,000, or 5.2 percent. New Jersey was growing somewhat into the 1970s and 1980s; Essex County and Essex Fells were not. The state, Essex County, and Essex Fells grew somewhat in population from 1990 to 2000. While New Jersey's population continued to grow from 2000 to 2010, the population of both Essex County and Essex Fells declined slightly. They bounced up slightly between 2010 and 2015.

TABLE 9. Population, Borough of Essex Fells, New Jersey: 1950–2010, 2015

Year	Population	Population Change	
		Number Change	Percent
1950	1,617	151	10.3
1960	2,174	557	34.5
1970	2,541	367	16.9
1980	2,363	(178)	-7.0
1990	2,139	(224)	-9.5
2000	2,162	23	1.1
2010	2,113	(49)	-2.3
2015	2,153	40	1.9

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing 1950–2010, 2015

TABLE 10. Population, Essex County, New Jersey: 1950–2010, 2015

Year	Population	Population Change	
		Number Change	Percent
1950	905,949	68,609	8.2
1960	923,545	17,596	1.9
1970	932,526	8,981	1.0
1980	851,304	(81,222)	-8.7
1990	778,206	(73,098)	-8.6
2000	793,633	15,427	2.0
2015	797,434	3,801	.05

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 1950-2010, 2015

The Borough of Essex Fells' population according to the 2015 U.S. Census was 2,153 (table 11). This was a slight decrease from its 2010 population of 2,113. Essex Fells' rate of population decline is slightly lower than that of its host county, Essex, which had a 2000 population of 793,633 decreasing to 783,969 in 2010, a 1.2 percent decrease. From 2000 to 2010, the total population of the State of New Jersey grew from 8,414,350 to 8,791,894, an increase of 377,544, or 4.5 percent. By 2015, the state population was 8,904,413, an increase of 1.9%.

Essex Fells builds approximately 5 new (not replacement) houses each decade. Each of these new units contains, on average, 3 new residents. Steadily decreasing household sizes and increased vacancies due to seasonal vacancies have contributed to a small net population decline.

TABLE 11. Total Population (Persons), 2000-2010; 2015

	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	2,162	2,113	2,153
Essex County	793,633	783,969	797,434
New Jersey	8,414,350	8,791,894	8,904,413

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010, 2015

Essex Fells' population since 2000 (table 12) has decreased by about 59 persons, or 2.4 percent. This is due to continued household size decreases exceeding the number of net new housing units over the years 2000 through 2010.

TABLE 12. Essex Fells: Population Estimates Post-2005

Source: U.S. Census Population Estimates Program 2005-2009, U.S. Census of Population and Housing 2010.

Year	Population (estimate)
2005	2,069
2006	2,032
2007	2,006
2008	2,097
2009	2,138
2010	2,113
2015	2,153

Households

Households in Essex Fells increased from 728 to 753 between 2010 and 2015 (table 13). Essex County experienced very slight household growth during this ten-year time frame, and then had a decrease to 278,085 in 2015. The State of New Jersey experienced significant growth in the number of households over the period. In 2000, New Jersey had 3,065,774 households; this increased to 3,214,360 households in 2010 and then experienced a decrease in 2015 to 3,189,486.

TABLE 13. Total Households, 2000-2010, 2015

	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	737	728	753
Essex County	283,692	283,712	278,085
New Jersey	3,065,774	3,214,360	3,189,486

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; ACS 2011-2015.

Household Size

The size of the average household in Essex Fells in 2015 was slightly less than 3 (2.89). This is made up of individuals living alone (1 person), empty-nesters (2 people), and the typical-size child-rearing family (4+ people). Obviously, the former two groups must add close to 33 percent of the households to average about 3 persons during this time period. (table 14). The same is true from 2010 to 2015, household size remained at about 2.89.

TABLE 14. Average Household Size per Unit, 2000-2010; 2015

	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	2.93	2.90	2.89
Essex County	2.72	2.76	2.76
New Jersey	2.69	2.74	2.73

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010, ACS 2015

Essex County’s household size increased only slightly between 2000 and 2015, from 2.72 to 2.76. New Jersey’s household size is similar to that of Essex County and also increased at a very slight rate.

Essex Fells’ household size is about 6 percent higher than that of New Jersey as a whole, but is decreasing rather than increasing. This is true also in 2015 for these relationships.

Housing Characteristics

Housing Units

Following a decrease in household size and additional vacancies, an increase in housing units occurred in Essex Fells between 2000 and 2015 (table 15). Essex Fells experienced a 4.7% percent increase in housing units over this 15-year period, from 761 in 2000 to 770 in 2010 to 806 in 2015. This increase in housing units is due to housing construction of 45 units over the decade, of which 5 units were single family detached homes and 24 units were multifamily construction on Bloomfield Ave. (see p. 15). Concurrently, growth in housing units has also taken place in Essex County, a 4.0 percent increase from 2000-2015. Compared to the state of New Jersey as a whole, Essex Fells and Essex County had experienced much less growth in housing units between 2000 – 2015. This reflects Essex County’s urban nature and its focus on redevelopment rather than new development, and Essex Fells’ suburban nature and focus on infill development, in both cases, rather than new development on greenfields.

TABLE 15. Total Housing Units, 2000-2010; 2015

	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	761	770	806
Essex County	301,011	312,954	313,824
New Jersey	3,310,275	3,553,562	3,577,942

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010, ACS 2011-2015

Housing Unit Type

Essex Fells has witnessed varied growth rates among single-family and multifamily housing units. During the past decade, single-family increased by 1 unit from 749 in 2000 to 750 in 2010 (table 16). Multifamily housing has increased from 0 in 2000 to 8 units in 2010. The only housing unit classified as “other” is zero. Most of these were single-room occupancy (SRO) structures that were not being replaced in their original dormitory style. Essex County experienced an increase in “other” housing units between 2000 and 2015, increasing from 256 to 626 units.

Essex County has also seen a 5.8 percent increase in single-family housing units, from 115,031 in 2000 to 121,739 in 2010 and to 122,093 in 2015 (table 16).

Multifamily housing units increased slightly in Essex County: 185,724 in 2000 and 190,589 in 2010 and to 191,375 in 2015. The State of New Jersey experienced a faster rate of growth in single and multifamily housing over the period 2000-2010: both single family and multifamily housing increased by 7.3%. Single-family housing increased by 320,000 and multifamily increased by 10,000 in 2015. Other units increased by 1140 from 2000-2010 and by 20 from 2010-2015.

TABLE 16. Housing Type by Place (Units): 2000–2010; 2015

Place	Housing Type	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	Single Family	749	750	782
	Single Family Attached	12	12	16
	Multifamily	0	8	8
	Other	0	0	0
Essex County	Single Family	115,031	121,739	122,093
	Multifamily	185,724	190,589	191,375
	Other	256	626	354
New Jersey	Single Family	2,080,235	2,231,637	2,550,027
	Multifamily	1,195,653	1,282,836	1,292,357
	Other	34,387	35,535	35,553

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

Single-family housing is the dominant form of housing in the Borough of Essex Fells, representing 97.4 percent of the total housing stock in 2010; single-family attached and multi-family housing units represented just 1.6 and 1 percent, respectively; in 2015 it was 97.0%, 2%, and 1%. (table 17). Essex County had 38.9 percent of its total housing units single-family, whereas a significant 60.9 percent of units were multifamily. These percentages were about the same in 2015. New Jersey, as of 2010, had 63.2 percent of its housing units single-family; 35.7 percent

were multifamily (table 17). The state as a whole is very different from Essex County, and both are very different from Essex Fells. Essex County and most of its eastern, close-in municipalities are home to a variety of low-rise, mid-rise, and high-rise apartments. In each case, these qualify as multifamily units. This distribution is much different from most of the West Essex communities, especially Essex Fells and North Caldwell, which are dominated by single family housing.

TABLE 17. Housing Units by Place (Percent): 2000–2010; 2015

Place	Housing Type	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	Single Family	98.4%	97.4%	97.0%
	Single Family Attached	1.6%	1.6%	2.09%
	Multifamily	0.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Essex County	Other	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Single Family	38.2%	38.9%	38.8%
	Multifamily	61.7%	60.9%	61.1%
New Jersey	Other	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
	Single Family	62.8%	63.2%	65.8%
	Multifamily	36.1%	35.7%	33.3%
	Other	1.0%	1.1%	0.9%

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010. American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2005-2010; 2011-2015

Housing Vacancy

From 2000 to 2010, Essex Fells has experienced an increase in vacant housing units (table 18). In 2000, the Borough had 24 vacant single-family units; in 2010 it had 36, a growth of 29.2 percent. Overall vacancy in Essex Fells rose from 3.2 percent

to 4.1 percent over the period 2000 to 2010 (table 19). By 2015 Essex County’s vacancy rate increased over the 15-year period, from 5.7 percent to 10.5 percent. New Jersey experienced a 2.1 absolute percent increase in its vacancy rate, from 7.4 percent to 9.5 percent, and by 2015 New Jersey was at

10.5% (table 18). Nationwide, in most other states, in New Jersey, and in Essex County, vacancy rates increased from 2000 to 2015.

Vacancy in single-family units in Essex Fells rose from 3.2 percent to 6.61 percent over the period 2000 to 2015 (table 19). Multifamily vacancy increased to 62.5 percent (5 units) in 2010; and to 0% in 2015, which represented unoccupied newly constructed units on Bloomfield Avenue (the only multifamily structure in Essex Fells). Essex County’s vacancy rate in

single-family housing increased from 2.6 percent to 4.5 percent over the 10-year period. Over the same period, Essex County’s multifamily vacancy experienced a 7.7 absolute percent increase to 17.0%. New Jersey experienced a 2.0 percent absolute increase in its single-family vacancy rate and a 3.0 absolute percent increase in its multifamily vacancy rate (table 20). Both Essex County and New Jersey increased over the period from 2000-2015.

TABLE 18. Vacant Housing by Type and Place: Units, 2000-2010; 2015

Place	Housing Type	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	Single Family	24	36	53
	Single-family Attached	0	1	0
	Multifamily	0	5	0
	Other	0	0	0
Essex County	Single Family	2,960	4,211	N/A
	Multifamily	14,307	25,002	N/A
	Other	8	29	N/A
New Jersey	Single Family	131,888	164,852	N/A
	Multifamily	108,737	168,923	N/A
	Other	5,005	5,427	N/A

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

TABLE 19. Vacancy Rates (Percent), 2000-2015

Place	2000	2015
Essex Fells	3.2%	6.6%
Essex County	5.7%	11.4%
New Jersey	7.4%	10.5%

TABLE 20. Vacancy Rates by Type (Percent), 2000 - 2015

Place	Housing Type	2000	2015
Essex Fells	Single Family	3.2%	6.6%
	Single-family Attached	0.0%	0%
	Multifamily	0.0%	0%
	Other	0.0%	N/A
Essex County	Single Family	2.6%	N/A
	Multifamily	7.7%	N/A
	Other	3.1%	N/A
New Jersey	Single Family	6.3%	N/A
	Multifamily	9.1%	N/A
	Other	14.6%	N/A

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

Multifamily dwelling on Oak Lane



Housing Tenure

The Borough of Essex Fells has had a decrease of 2.5 percent from 717 to 699 owner-occupied housing units from 2000 to 2010 (table 21). There were 708 units in 2015. The 717 ownership units represented 97.3 percent of the 2000 housing stock; the 699 ownership units represented 96 percent of the 2010 housing stock and the 708 units represented 98.8% of the 2015 housing stock (table 23). It went up by 2.8% in 2015. The number of renter-occupied housing units went down by 9 in 2015. Renter-occupied units represented only 4 percent of the housing stock in 2010, and 2 percent of the absolute percentage in 2015 (table 23).

Comparing Essex Fells to Essex County, there are pronounced differences. Essex County’s owner-occupied housing units decreased by 1.1% over the past period,

while Essex Fells’ owner-occupied housing units increased slightly by 1.5% percent over the same period. Renter-occupied housing units amounted to 54.4 percent of the total housing stock in 2000 in Essex County and 55.5 percent of the stock in 2015. Renter-occupied housing in Essex Fells amounted to 2.7 percent of the stock in 2000 and 6.3 percent in 2015 (table 23). In Essex Fells and Essex County, ownership housing as a percentage of all housing did not change more than a couple of percentage points over the period (table 23).

Similar but more pronounced trends exist in tenure of housing in the State of New Jersey from 2000 to 2010. New Jersey’s owner-occupied housing, as a share of all housing, increased by 2.7 percent over this 10-year period, while renter-occupied housing decreased by 2.2 percent. The decrease in direction of renter-occupied housing in New Jersey was the same change observed in Essex County. In New Jersey, owner-occupied housing represented 65.6 percent of all housing in 2000 and 67.8 percent in 2010; renter-occupied housing represented 34.4 percent of all housing in the state in 2000 and 32.2 percent in 2010 (table 23). For 2015, the numbers were 64.5 % owner occupied and 35.5 renter occupied.

TABLE 21. Owner Occupancy by Place (Units), 2000-2010; 2015

Place	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	717	699	708
Essex County	129,489	133,912	123,847
New Jersey	2,011,298	2,179,336	2,056,107

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2015

TABLE 22. Renter Occupancy by Place (Units), 2000-2010;2015

Place	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	20	29	45
Essex County	154,247	149,800	154,238
New Jersey	1,053,347	1,035,024	1,133,379

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009, 2011-2015

TABLE 23. Owner/Renter Occupancy (Percent), 2000-2010; 2015

Place	Housing Type	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	Owner-Occupied	97.3%	96.0%	98.9%
	Renter-Occupied	2.7%	4.0%	1.2%
Essex County	Owner-Occupied	45.6%	47.2%	44.5%
	Renter-Occupied	54.4%	52.8%	55.5%
New Jersey	Owner-Occupied	65.6%	67.8%	64.5%
	Renter-Occupied	34.4%	32.2%	35.5%

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

Crowding



An accepted definition of crowding in the United States is that an occupied dwelling unit has more than one person per room. Less than 1% of the occupied housing

units in Essex Fells (in 2010) are crowded; there are one or fewer persons per room in over 99% of units (table 24). In 2000 and in 2015, the number of units with 1.01 persons or more per room was zero.

Essex County and New Jersey have smaller proportions of overcrowded housing units in 2010 versus 2000. Additionally, both Essex County and the State of New Jersey have less overcrowded units than they did 15 years ago. These overcrowded housing units represent only a very small percentage of the overall housing stock in each of these jurisdictions. In 2015, both jurisdictions have the same movement from 2010 to 2015 as they had from 2000 to 2010.

TABLE 24. Crowding Levels by Place (Households), 2000-2010; 2015

Place	Crowding	2000	2010	2015	Change 2000-2015
Essex Fells	1.0 or less	737	721	753	16
	1.01 or more	0	7	0	0
Essex County	1.0 or less	261,468	274,066	265,314	3,846
	1.01 or more	22,268	9,646	7,506	-14,762
New Jersey	1.0 or less	2,911,462	3,146,858	3,085,948	174,486
	1.01 or more	153,183	67,502	65,228	87,955

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

Incomplete Kitchen Facilities

Essex Fells, Essex County and the State of New Jersey each have a very low percentage of units without complete kitchens. An incomplete kitchen could be a sink, refrigerator, or stove/oven in a different room or adjoining alcove. An incomplete kitchen can also mean nonexclusive use of these facilities (sharing). Essex Fells had a decrease from 2000 to 2010 in housing units without complete kitchens, from 2 units in 2000 to 0 units in 2010 and 2015 (table 25).

Parent Essex County had an increase in housing units without complete kitchen facilities over the period with the percentage

of incomplete kitchens out of total kitchens decreasing from 1.3% in 2000 to 1.1% in 2015. The State of New Jersey also experienced an increase in units without complete kitchens, from 0.8 percent in 2000 to 1.8 percent in 2010 of the total kitchens, and then dropped to 0.7% in 2015.

Again, all of these figures of housing deficiency are at very low levels. The United States as a whole has one of the best overall housing stocks in the world. The New York Metropolitan Area's housing is better than the United States as a whole; New Jersey's housing is better than the New York Metropolitan Area's; and Essex Fells' housing is far better than New Jersey's housing.

TABLE 25. Incomplete Kitchen Facilities by Place (Units), 2000-2010; 2015

Place	Kitchen Facilities	2000	2010	2015	Change 2000-2015
Essex Fells	Total	761	770	753	-8
	Incomplete	2	0	0	-2
Essex County	Total	301,011	312,954	313,824	12,813
	Incomplete	3,896	11,892	3,330	-566
New Jersey	Total	3,310,275	3,553,562	3,557,942	247,667
	Incomplete	26,253	63,964	25,501	752

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

Incomplete Plumbing Facilities

Essex Fells Borough, Essex County, and the State of New Jersey have very low percentages of units lacking complete plumbing. It could also mean nonexclusive use of these facilities (sharing). The former is the absence of a toilet, tub/shower, or sink (hot and piped water) in a bathroom. All of the jurisdictions have a proportion of housing units lacking this equipment that is around one percent. Essex Fells had only a slight increase from 2000 to 2010 in housing units without complete plumbing, which comprises 1.2 percent of all housing units

(table 26). This amounted to the identification of units in a rental structure in the Borough, wherein there was no sink or shower/tub in the bathroom. Either these were not present at all, or they were in another room. The percentage of housing units with incomplete plumbing facilities in Essex County remained the same at 1.1%. New Jersey increased in housing units without complete plumbing facilities from 0.7 percent to 1 percent, over the period. Most housing stock in the state is in very good condition.

TABLE 26. Incomplete Plumbing Facilities by Place (Units), 2000, 2010, 2015

Place	Plumbing Facilities	2000	2010	2015	Change 2000 - 2015
Essex Fells	Total	761	770	806	45
	Incomplete	5	9	3	-2
Essex County	Total	301,011	312,954	313,824	-12,813
	Incomplete	3,340	3,442	1,592	-1,748
New Jersey	Total	3,310,275	3,553,562	3,577,942	267,667
	Incomplete	23,085	35,536	11,588	11,497

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Race

Essex Fells' population was 95.9 percent white, 1.2 percent black, 1.6 percent Asian, and 1.3 percent "other" in 2000 (table 27). Racial characteristics in Essex Fells remained about the same from 2000-2015, with a very slight decrease in both the white and black population, and a slight increase in both the Asian and "other" population over the time period. In 2015, the population

was 92.5% white, 0.9% black, 5.0% Asian and 1.6 % other.

Essex Fells' white population percentage is 2.2 times higher than that of Essex County (42.6 percent) and 1.4 percent times that of the state as a whole (68.6 percent). As in the case of Essex Fells, both Essex County's Asian and "other" populations are increasing equivalent to the loss of the white and black population. New Jersey's percentage loss of white population over the decade is twice as great as that of Essex

County and nearly three times greater than that of Essex Fells. This is true for this

information for all three years – 2000, 2010 and 2015.

TABLE 27. Race by Place (Number, Percent, and Change): Persons, 2000-2010; 2015

Place	Race	2000	2010	2015	2000 % of Place	2010 % of Place	2015 % of Place
Essex Fells	White	2,074	1998	2059	95.9%	94.6%	92.5%
	Black	26	23	18	1.2%	1.1%	0.9%
	Asian	34	46	112	1.6%	2.2%	5.0%
	Other	28	46	37	1.3%	2.1%	1.6%
Essex County	White	352,937	333,868	348,634	44.5%	42.6%	41.7%
	Black	325,185	320,479	328,121	41.0%	40.9%	39.2%
	Asian	29,468	35,789	44,625	3.7%	4.6%	5.3%
	Other	86,043	93,833	114,639	10.8%	12.0%	13.7%
New Jersey	White	6,099,439	6,029,248	6,257,974	72.5%	68.6%	67.7%
	Black	1,127,266	1,204,826	1,314,132	13.4%	13.7%	14.2%
	Asian	481,794	725,726	876,171	5.7%	8.3%	9.5%
	Other	705,851	832,094	879,076	8.4%	9.4%	9.5%

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; ACS 2011-2015

Educational Attainment

Between 2000 and 2010, Essex Fells experienced a slight increase in the education of its population, aged 25 and over. In 2000, the Borough of Essex Fells had 32.0% of its residents with a graduate degree, while in 2010 that percentage rose to 33.4%, an increase of 1.4% percent. By 2015, this figure was 36.7% (Table 28). In 2000, 3.8% residents aged 25 and over had an associate degree; in 2010, this figure

increased to 4.5%. By 2015, this declined to its original percentage of 3.7%. The percentage of residents with a Bachelor’s degree declined. Additionally, in Essex Fells in 2000, approximately 137 residents aged 25 and older had a high school diploma or less whereas in 2010 the figure was about 122. By 2015, this number was 110 (Table 29).

BOROUGH OF ESSEX FELLS, NEW JERSEY

TABLE 28. Educational Attainment Levels by Place (Those Residents Aged 25 and Older), by Percentage: 2000, 2010, 2015

Place	Education	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	Less than 9th grade	1.2%	0.0%	0.3%
	9th to 12th grade, no diploma	1.7%	1.0%	0.1%
	High school graduate	9.5%	9.9%	7.6%
	Some college, no degree	11.5%	13.3%	11.4%
	Associate Degree	3.8%	4.5%	3.7%
	Bachelor's Degree	40.4%	37.9%	40.2%
	Graduate or professional degree	32.0%	33.4%	36.7%
Essex County	Less than 9th grade	9.3%	7.9%	7.6%
	9th to 12th grade, no diploma	15.1%	8.7%	8.2%
	High school graduate	27.2%	30.4%	28.77%
	Some college, no degree	16.8%	15.5%	17.2%
	Associate Degree	4.1%	5.4%	5.6%
	Bachelor's Degree	16.5%	19.6%	19.87%

TABLE 29. Educational Attainment Levels by Place (Those Residents Aged 25 and Older), by Persons: 2000, 2010, 2015

Place	Education	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	Less than 9th grade	17	0	4
	9th to 12th grade, no diploma	24	12	2
	High school graduate	137	122	110
	Some college, no degree	165	163	165
	Associate Degree	54	55	53
	Bachelor's Degree	581	465	583
	Graduate or professional degree	460	410	532
Essex County	Less than 9th grade	47,859	39,637	40,091
	9th to 12th grade, no diploma	77,545	43,651	42,829
	High school graduate	139,578	152,526	150,710
	Some college, no degree	86,465	77,768	90,330
	Associate Degree	20,956	27,093	29,133
	Bachelor's Degree	84,953	98,339	103,667
	Graduate or professional degree	56,214	62,716	67,850
New Jersey	Less than 9th grade	373,429	307,945	324,700
	9th to 12th grade, no diploma	641,048	355,322	368,745
	High school graduate	1,661,493	1,782,530	1,741,562
	Some college, no degree	998,872	953,446	1,029,575
	Associate Degree	298,096	390,854	385,049
	Bachelor's Degree	1,063,665	1,338,378	1,387,201
	Graduate or professional degree	621,196	793,551	854,655

. Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

Resident Workforce (Occupation of Those Who Live in Essex Fells)

In 2010, 64.3 percent of employed residents in Essex Fells were working in management, professional, and related occupations (table 31). In 2015, this number increased while the number of those in sales went down. The percentage of production, transportation, and material moving occupations increased from 1.4 to 4.3 percent from 2000 to 2010 and then went down to 2.7% in 2015.

Essex County had a small absolute percentage decrease in professional occupations (0.4), split with a larger increase in service occupations (4.4 percent). Growth in this geographic area of the state

has occurred primarily in the service occupations and in construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations, while sales, farming, transportation occupations declined relatively. The most precipitous declines have taken place in the sales industry throughout the state, related in part to the growth of the Internet.(Table 31)

As a state, New Jersey has experienced growth in management and service occupations from 2000 to 2015, at the expense of sales and transportation employment. Sales and office occupations lost the most absolute jobs (Table 30)..

TABLE 30. Occupations of Residents by Place (Persons), 2000-2010

Place	Occupation	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	Management, Professional, and related occupations	617	523	649
	Service Occupations	43	36	71
	Sales and office occupations	247	219	253
	Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0	0	0
	Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	23	0	12
	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	13	35	27
Essex County	Management, Professional, and related occupations	119,659	126,854	N/A
	Service Occupations	53,121	72,797	N/A
	Sales and office occupations	97,192	89,375	N/A
	Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	207	360	N/A
	Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	22,811	32,074	N/A
	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	43,400	38,921	35,976
New Jersey	Management, Professional, and related occupations	1,501,037	1,715,435	1,751,411
	Service Occupations	583,952	697,437	716,343
	Sales and office occupations	1,123,921	1,147,955	1,059,562
	Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	6,963	8,664	8,000
	Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	306,196	350,884	300,667
	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	472,960	411,531	445,777

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

TABLE 31. Occupations of Residents by Place (Percent), 2000-2010; 2015

Place	Occupation	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	Management, Professional, and related occupations	65.4%	64.3%	69.4%
	Service Occupations	4.6%	4.4%	7.2%
	Sales and office occupations	26.2%	27.0%	25.7%
	Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	2.4%	0.0%	1.2%
	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	1.4%	4.3%	2.7%
Essex County	Management, Professional, and related occupations	35.6%	35.2%	N/A
	Service Occupations	15.8%	20.2%	N/A
	Sales and office occupations	28.9%	24.8%	N/A
	Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.1%	0.1%	N/A
	Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	6.8%	8.9%	N/A
	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	12.9%	10.8%	N/A
New Jersey	Management, Professional, and related occupations	37.6%	39.6	40.9%
	Service Occupations	14.6%	16.1%	16.7%
	Sales and office occupations	28.1%	26.5%	24.7%
	Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
	Construction, extraction, and maintenance occupations	7.7%	8.1%	7.0%
	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	11.8%	9.5%	10.4%

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

**Journey to Work
(Of Those Who Live in Essex Fells)**

In 2015, 78.7 percent of Essex Fells’ working residents drove alone in a private vehicle as their journey to work. Approximately 2.1 percent of the working residents were part of a carpool, 11.4 percent used public transportation, and 1.5 walked to their employment, and 7.2 percent worked at home. Those who drove alone in a private vehicle, used “other means” of transportation, walked or biked, or carpooled decreased, while those who walked or biked, or used

public transportation or worked at home increased (table 32).



Looking west on Roseland Avenue

The mean travel time to work for Essex Fells' working residents increased from 29.1 minutes in 2000 to 31.5 minutes in 2010 to 32.4 minutes in 2015. This is a moderate change in travel time over a 15-year period. It is due to the dispersion of employment in the metro area and the chaining of shopping and convenience trips to the overall work trip.

Differences in Essex Fells versus Essex County appear in the use of public transportation in 2015. Close to one half the percentage of Essex Fells residents compared with residents of Essex County use public transportation (11.4 percent versus 22.8 percent in Essex County). Differences in Essex Fells versus the state as a whole also appear in those who drive alone or carpool to work. In Essex Fells, 2.1 percent of residents carpool, while in New Jersey as whole, 7.5 percent of residents carpool. (tables 32 and 33).

Similar change trends can be seen in Essex County and New Jersey as they relate to journey to work. Each has witnessed increases in the number of workers who use public transit or work at home, while experiencing decreases in the number of workers who carpool or walk/bike to work. New Jersey, with the sixth largest transit system in the United States, has a smaller percentage of its work trips by residents driving alone than the nation (61.2 versus 82.0 percent). Workers in New Jersey as a whole use public transportation at about one-half the rate of Essex County (but twice the rate of Essex Fells). From 2010 to 2015, public transportation has increased by 0.6 percent in New Jersey, resulting in 11.6 percent of all work trips. Walking and biking

has increased slightly by 0.1 percent statewide over the 5-year period (2010-2015) and constitutes only 3.8 percent of all work trips.



New York bus at commuter bus station; Bloomfield Avenue

The mean travel time to work for Essex Fells residents has increased from 31.5 to 32.4 minutes (2010-2015), a .9 minute increase (table 34). Essex County had its mean travel time to work increase from 30.5 to 33.8 minute over the same period, an increase of 3.5 minutes. The State of New Jersey's mean travel time to work increased slightly from 29.6 to 30.1 minutes (2010 to 2015), an increase of 0.5 minutes.

TABLE 32. Mode of Transportation to Work (by Persons); 2000-2010; 2015

Place	Mode	2000	2010	2015	Change 2000-2015	
Essex Fells	Car, truck or van_-drive alone	733	644	781	48	
	Car, truck or van - Carpooled	38	33	21	-17	
	Public transportation Including taxicabs	84	40	113	29	
	Walked or biked	11	4	6	-5	
	Other means, including Motorcycles	4	18	0	-4	
	Worked at home	62	54	71	9	
	Essex County	Car, truck or van_-drive alone	201,772	210,051	227,119	25,347
		Car, truck or van - Carpooled	39,295	33,385	27,091	-12,204
Public transportation Including taxicabs		61,185	71,987	84,613	23,428	
Walked or biked		14,420	15,997	17,813	3,393	
Other means, including Motorcycles		2,436	6,260	3,340	904	
Worked at home		9,106	10,085	11,133	2,027	
New Jersey		Car, truck or van_-drive alone	2,828,303	3,002,907	3,010,947	182,644
		Car, truck or van - Carpooled	412,299	352,789	339,749	-72,550
	Public transportation Including taxicabs	371,514	461,986	464,074	92,560	
	Walked or biked	130,447	155,395	159,240	28,793	
	Other means, including Motorcycles	27,317	71,398	62,858	35,541	
	Worked at home	106,556	155,395	169,094	62,538	

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing 2000, 2010; American Housing Survey 2005-2009; 2011-2015

TABLE 32. Mode of Transportation to Work (by Percentage) 2000-2010; 2015

Place	Mode	2000	2010	2015	% Change
Essex Fells	Car, truck, or van – drove alone	78.6%	81.2%	78.7%	-2.6%
	Car, truck, or van – carpooled	4.1%	4.2%	2.1%	-2.1%
	Public transportation (including taxicab)	9.0%			
			5.0%		-4.0%
	Walked or biked	1.2%	0.5%		-0.7%
	Other means (including motorcycle)	0.4%	2.3%		1.9%
	Worked at home	6.7%	6.8%		0.1%
Essex County	Car, truck, or van – drove alone	61.5%	60.4%		-1.1%
	Car, truck, or van – carpooled	12.0%	9.6%		-2.4%
	Public transportation (including taxicab)	18.6%	20.7%		2.1%
	Walked or biked	4.4%	4.6%		0.2%
	Other means (including motorcycle)	0.7%	1.8%		1.1%
	Worked at home	2.8%	2.9%		0.1%
New Jersey	Car, truck, or van – drove alone	73.0%	71.5%		-1.5%
	Car, truck, or van – carpooled	10.6%	8.4%		-2.2%
	Public transportation (including taxicab)	9.6%	11.0%		1.4%
	Walked or biked	3.4%	3.7%		0.3%
	Other means (including motorcycle)	0.7%	1.7%		1.0%
	Worked at home	2.7%	3.7%		1.0%

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

Median Household Income

Essex Fells has experienced significant growth in median household income, from \$148,173 in 2000 to \$182,439 in 2010, and then dropped to \$172,386 by 2015. (Table 35). Median household income in Essex County increased by 12.1 percent, and in New Jersey by 34.3 percent over the period 2000–2010. Essex County experienced the smallest increase in median household income of the three entities over the ten-year span, from \$49,944 in 2000 to \$55,990 in 2010 and back to \$52,044 in 2015. The base from which it grew was only about one-third of Essex Fells, or 90 percent that of the State of New Jersey. Median income had dropped both in Essex County and throughout New Jersey by 2015, by 7.1% and 0.5% respectively.

Essex Fells’ current median income is over 3 times that of Essex County and over twice that of the state as a whole. This is true for 2010 and 2015.

TABLE 35. Median Household Income by Place, 2000-2010; 2015

Place	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	148,173	182,439	172,386
Essex County	49,944	55,990	52,041
New Jersey	55,146	74,053	73,702

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

The changes over time range from:
 Essex Fells: -5.5% (2010-2015)
 Essex County: -7.1% (2010-2015)
 New Jersey: -0.5% (2010-2015)

Households below the Poverty Level

Essex Fells has very little poverty but has experienced a slight increase in the number and percentage of households below the poverty level over the period 2000 to 2010 (table 36). In 2000, 6 households of 737, or 0.8 percent of all households in Essex Fells, were below the poverty level. In 2015, this number grew to 12 households of 753, or 1.61 percent of all households. In some cases, these are adults who own their own home, living on fixed incomes (a false indicator of poverty) or, in a very few cases, adult dependents of parents who own the home who do not make a significant income (a somewhat true indicator of poverty).

During the same time period, New Jersey also experienced an increase in households below the poverty level. In 2000, New Jersey had 254,121 or 8.3 percent of its households below the poverty level; in 2015, this number grew to 331,706 or 10.4 percent, an increase of 2.1 percent over the period 2000-2015 (table 37). Essex County had a decrease in the percentage of households below the poverty level. In 2000, Essex County had 43,812, or 15.4 percent of its households living below the poverty level; in 2010 this number was 39,663 households or 14.0 percent in poverty.

In 2015, Essex County (+20%) and New Jersey (+15%) increased their numbers and percentages (from 2010) of those living above the poverty level.

TABLE 36. Households below the Poverty Level by Place (Households), 2000-2010; 2015

Place	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	6	15	12
Essex County	43,812	39,663	47,552
New Jersey	254,121	288,115	331,706

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

TABLE 37. Households below the Poverty Level by Place (Percent), 2000-2010; 2015

Place	2000	2010	2015
Essex Fells	0.8%	2.1%	1.6%
Essex County	15.4%	14.0%	17.1%
New Jersey	8.3%	9.0%	10.4%

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey, 2005-2009; 2011-2015

The trend of increased median household income along with an increase in the percentage of households below the poverty level is common in the United States overall. This exemplifies the poor becoming relatively poorer. However, the Borough of Essex Fells has very low levels of poverty compared to Essex County and New Jersey as a whole. In 2010, the percentage of households below the poverty level in Essex County is nearly 7 times that of Essex Fells; the percentage of households below the poverty level in New Jersey is over 6 times that of Essex Fells.



Non-conforming commercial use off Runnymede Road

At-Place Employment: Essex Fells

At-place employment comprises those who work in Essex Fells, regardless of where they live. At-place employment consists of both private and public sector workers. The data that reports their incidence in Essex Fells comes from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Due to the overwhelming residential nature of Essex Fells, there is relatively little at-place employment. In 2015, employment amounted to 240 employees working mostly for the local government (including education), country clubs, and other miscellaneous in-home professional services. There is only one non-conforming commercial use in the Borough (on Runnymede Road) in the form of an engineering office containing 9 employees.

The largest employer in Essex Fells is the Essex Fells Country Club with a staff of approximately 75 workers. This represents 31 percent of the total

employment in Essex Fells. The second largest employer in Essex Fells is the Essex Fells' School with 64 employees, comprising 27 percent of total employment. The third largest employer is the Borough of Essex Fells Municipal Department consisting of 26 municipal and utility employees, or 11 percent of total employment. Local churches and nursery schools employ 20 workers (8 percent); doctor's offices employ 12 workers or 5 percent of total employment. The U.S. Postal Service employs 7 workers in town or 3 percent. There are Miscellaneous CEOs residing in town (15), and miscellaneous service providers residing in town (12) together amount to 11 percent of employment in Essex Fells.

**TABLE 38. At-Place Employment:
Essex Fells, 2015**

Employer Type	# of Employees	% of Total Employees
Municipal/Utility	26	11%
School	64	27%
Churches/Nursery Schools	20	8%
Post Office	7	3%
Country Clubs	75	31%
Nonresidential Facility (Stewart Engineering)	9	4%
Doctors' Offices	12	5%
Miscellaneous CEOs Living in Town	15	6%
Miscellaneous Service Providers Living in Town	12	5%
Total	240	100%

Source: *New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development*

The same definition holds for at-place employment in Essex County and in the State of New Jersey. At-place employment

consists of both private- and public-sector workers who work in the county or state regardless of where they live. The data that reports their incidence comes from the ES-202 records of the Employment Security Administration. This is the office that keeps track of private- and public-sector Social Security records.

This data was available from the *New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan Impact Assessment* for 2000 and from the Employment Security Website for 2004, 2006, and 2016. Data are more detailed for the latter periods.

As of 2016, New Jersey had approximately 4.355 million jobs. Jobs increased by about 43,200 annually from 2006 (3.923 million jobs) to 2016. However, employment for the state has decreased in the interim from 2006-2016. Jobs were not growing significantly in New Jersey between 2008 – 2010. Early on, these declines from past increases were in federal government employment but during that period all sectors of public and private employment declined.

Jobs in Essex County show an even worse picture. Jobs declined in Essex County by 16,000 from 2006 to 2016, or by 4.4 percent. Federal government jobs in the county declined by 13% between 2006 and 2016, while private sector jobs decreased by 3.5%.

Essex Fells is following trends in Essex County in that it is declining slowly in local-government employment and private-sector employment but increasing in these sectors plus others in New Jersey.

TABLE 39. At-Place Employment: Essex Fells, Essex County and New Jersey, 2004-2016

EMPLOYMENT		State Plan Data 2000	Covered Employment (September)		
			2004	2006	2016
Essex Fells	Total – Federal Government		9	9	7
	Total – State Government		0	0	0
	Total – Local Government		76	89	90
	Total – Private Sector		126	218	143
	Total – All Covered Employment	220	211	316	240
Essex County	Total – Federal Government		9,570	9,234	8,000
	Total – State Government		23,478	24,385	22,000
	Total – Local Government		40,836	41,735	40,000
	Total – Private Sector		282,697	284,393	273,900
	Total – All Covered Employment	380,567	356,701	359,747	343,900
State	Total – Federal Government		62,825	60,355	70,000
	Total – State Government		138,306	141,217	150,000
	Total – Local Government		407,109	412,954	470,000
	Total – Private Sector		3,274,682	3,315,577	3,664,800
	Total – All Covered Employment	3,900,389	3,877,209	3,922,504	3,354,800

Source: ES-202 Employment Records 2004, 2006, 2016



Residential dwellings at Fells Manor

Summary of Housing and Demographic Data: Essex Fells Borough and Comparisons

Over the period 2010 to 2015, the Borough of Essex Fells declined slightly in its population (1.9 percent loss). The County of Essex also declined in population

(1.7 percent loss) during the same period after rebounding in population between 2000 and 2010 (1.2 percent growth). New Jersey continued to gain population during the same period (1.3 percent growth), but at nearly half the growth rate occurring between 2000 and 2015 (4.5 percent growth).

In Essex Fells, household-size decline due to families having fewer children has caused population to decline slightly, while housing units are increasing slightly. In both cases, these are very small negative and positive numerical percentage changes.

At-place employment in Essex Fells comprises local government, federal government, and private-sector employees. The number of state and federal government² jobs has remained constant over time, while local government jobs have grown slightly. Private sector jobs are growing, but it is a false indicator. The bulk of this category is people who work at home as compared with private employment in local nonresidential structures. Only one nonresidential structure exists locally, and employment has increased only slightly there. Real employment growth is at a standstill in the community.

The housing stock of Essex Fells is overwhelmingly single-family (97 percent), with several small single-family attached structures and one multifamily structure on Bloomfield Avenue. The housing stock is in excellent condition; the median house is worth approximately \$831,200; and there is no evidence of structural inadequacy or housing overcrowding.



Residential dwelling on Bradley Court

The median household income of the community is about \$172,386 in 2015, and one-half of the households have multiple workers.

Essex Fells is a community of households with established incomes, whose residents commute to work in New Jersey alone in an automobile or, less so, by park-and-ride and mass transit. Their commuting times have increased over time, as have the number of household members who work.

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Interviews/Conversations

(2008-2018)

Edward Davis

Mayor
Borough of Essex Fells

Edward Abbot

Former Mayor
Borough of Essex Fells

Martin Bierbaum

Author, New Jersey State Development and
Redevelopment Plan

Shirley Bishop

Former director, New Jersey Council on
Affordable Housing

Robert Burchell

Chairman, Planning Board
Borough of Essex Fells

William Bloom

Vice Chairman, Planning Board,
Borough of Essex Fells

Jody Hocart James

Secretary, Planning Board
Borough of Essex Fells

Patricia Wahl

Member, Planning Board
Borough of Essex Fells

Edgar G. Kaup

Member, Planning Board
Borough of Essex Fells

Peter S. McMullen

Member (alternate) Planning Board
Borough of Essex Fells

James Irwin

Member (alternate) Planning Board
Borough of Essex Fells

James Kearney

Chief, Fire Department
Borough of Essex Fells

Christopher Boeckel

Former Chief, Fire Department,
Borough of Essex Fells

Patricia Wahl

Council President
Borough of Essex Fells

Gary T. Hall

Special Counsel, *Mount Laurel*,
Borough of Essex Fells

Mike Davis

Business Administrator,
Essex Fells School

Roger Kerr

Superintendent, Department of Public
Works, Borough of Essex Fells

Stuart Koenig/Michael Sullivan

Planning/Zoning Board Attorney (current),
Borough of Essex Fells

Martin F. Murphy/Robert H. Oostdyk, Jr.

Borough Attorney
Borough of Essex Fells

A. Michael Candido

Chair, Zoning Board of Adjustment,
Borough of Essex Fells

Gerry Nolan

Former Chair, Zoning Board of Adjustment,
Borough of Essex Fells/Caldwell



The Pond at the Centennial (2002), Winter.

Photo by Jeffery Eastman



The Pond at the Centennial (2002), Summer.

Photo by Pat Hughes Brandt

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