

General Trends

Based on the development applications submitted to the Morris County Planning Board over the last 10 years, the general trends of development activity in the residential and nonresidential sectors can be identified.

Although there was a slight increase from the year before in the number of new residential subdivision projects submitted for County review, the lot yield from those subdivisions was noticeably smaller. No new preliminary plats for subdivision projects were submitted to the County Planning Board from the N.J. Highlands Preservation Areas of Morris County. Preliminary plats for subdivisions which received municipal approvals prior to March 29, 2004 or exempted by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection continued to provide building lots for the Highlands Preservation Area's housing market. Before the enactment of the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act on March 29, 2004, municipalities in the Highlands Preservation Area

had contributed the largest portion of new approved residential units over the prior 10 years. The absence of new residential subdivision projects in the Highlands Preservation Areas, the diminishing supply of approved lots, and the sluggish housing market, all contributed to the record low number of 124 lots recorded at the Office of the County Clerk for Morris County. As for minor subdivision activity, it was minimal throughout the Highland Preservation Areas. According to Highlands Applicability Determination Applications received from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, exemptions were approved for lot line changes, new lots for septic systems to replace failed septic systems for lake front homes, and for new home construction on existing lots and approved subdivision lots.

New site plan activity within the Highlands Preservation areas was very limited for some municipalities

and more numerous for others. According to Highlands Applicability Determination Application exemptions received from the N.J.D.E.P., site plans which received municipal approvals prior to March 29, 2004 or exempted by the N.J.D.E.P. were permitted to build with conditions. For example, N.J.D.E.P. exempted a 16,000 sq. ft. commercial building proposed on a 12.2 acre site on Route 206 in Roxbury Township which had prior municipal approval. Also, the exempted Subaru dealership at Route 46 in Mount Olive Township had received municipal approval in 2003. Another example of N.J.D.E.P. exemption was for a small parking lot expansion for MPG Properties at Route 206 South in Roxbury Township.



Their parking lot needed to be expanded from 29 spaces to 36 spaces. Increase in impervious surface was only 1,899 sq. ft. The existing building and parking lot expansion on the 1.1 acre site was within the 125% limit of the existing footprint of existing impervious surfaces on the site and the project did not increase cumulative impervious surface by one-quarter acre or more. In

Montville Township, the 1,452 sq. ft. addition to the Lake Valhalla Club for kitchen facilities and the 250 sq. ft. yacht club store building were given a N.J.D.E.P. exemption under the above mentioned conditions.

Other exemptions from N.J.D.E.P. were given for municipal and county road resurfacing and drainage projects, bridge and culvert replacement, expansion of a public works garage and facility in Mount Olive Twp., rehabilitation of Harrington Park in Washington Township, sewer extension by the Washington Township M.U.A. for several homes on Fawnridge Drive, water main replacement and upgrade to the existing water treatment plant filtration system for the Fayson Lake Water Company in the Borough of Kinnelon, and the new Abenaki water system connection to the Jefferson Township public water system. Also, the Dickerson Elementary School and the Bragg Intermediate School for the Chester School District received an exemption

for school alterations and additions. Lastly, cell phone companies who co-located on existing cell towers, the J.C.P&L's new substation in Mount Olive Township and the Mount Olive Baptist Church addition and parking expansion received exemptions.

Of the twelve municipalities within the Highlands Preservation Areas, Mount Olive Township (32) and Washington Township (30) had the most exemptions given by the N.J.D.E.P. followed by Chester Township (19), Borough of Kinnelon (18) and Jefferson Township (14) and Rockaway Township (14).

Map C (Section 11) highlights the New Jersey Highlands within Morris County. As can be seen by the above activity taking place within the Highlands Preservation Areas, municipalities, county and the private sector are trying to work within the framework of Highland Preservation Area rules and regulations to provide necessary infrastructure improvements for roads, water, sewer and electric conveyance systems. Also, public facilities, schools and church upgrades are being accommodated. The impact from the Act's environmental restrictions since its enactment on March 29, 2004 is becoming clearer as development proposals work their way through the N.J.D.E.P. review process.

Within the Highlands Planning Areas of Morris County which is highlighted on Map C (Section 11), new residential subdivisions submitted for County review continued to be predominately small, less than 12 lots, and occurred as infill development in established neighborhoods. In these areas, an oversized lot or combination of lots with dwellings became targets for redevelopment. Developers razed the homes and constructed short cul-de-sac roads to municipal and county roads. Often, these subdivisions required extensive clearing and grading for home sites and elaborate drainage systems to detain storm drainage entering older municipal and county drainage systems.

There was a noticeable increase in minor subdivision activity than the year before. Often, an older home on a lot became a tear down for developers seeking a two lot minor subdivision approval to construct large expensive homes, often out of scale with homes in the neighborhood. In response to this situation, several municipalities passed ordinances to limit the size of a new home on a small lot. During 2006, residential single lot tear downs were commonplace throughout Morris County and garnered a lot of publicity in local newspapers.

In the multi-family housing sector which includes apartments, townhouses, and age restricted developments, there was a 69% increase in the number of

dwelling units proposed from the year before. This trend has continued from 2004. It is anticipated that the number of dwelling units produced from the above categories will continue to increase in the coming year (s) to fill the gap in the housing market caused by the limited supply of single family detached housing from subdivisions. Redevelopment of properties formerly used for single family detached homes, office, commercial and industrial sites have become more available for conversion to keep this trend going. Also, the strong growth in age restricted housing has been the mainstay of this trend since 2003. There was no activity in senior housing and assisted living projects during 2006. What is missing from the equation and needs to be continually addressed is affordable housing for all income groups especially for our young working population.

Non-residential development which includes offices, commercial and institutional uses continued to show strength outside the Highlands Preservation Areas. In most cases, this occurred as redevelopment of old commercial and industrial sites. A trend to be watched is the redevelopment of old municipal landfill sites. The Town of Dover has redeveloped their 49 acre North Street landfill site for the FedEx distribution facility. Also, a three-story office building and 108 room hotel (Phase II) was approved for construction in 2006. In Mount Olive Township, the old Combsfill North landfill was sold to Target Corporation in 2006 for commercial development. Another interesting trend is the attraction of self storage facilities and medical office buildings to seek locations close to age restricted housing projects and visa-versa. It is curious to note that Life Time Fitness will construct a large health and fitness club at Fernwood Road in the Borough of Florham Park which is about one-half mile from the Northgate age restricted housing project presently under construction. These nodes of development common to one another are becoming more prevalent in Morris County.

More development data in support of these general trends are presented in subsequent sections of this report.

Section II of this report contains Tables I through VIII which present specific development information for Morris County's 39 municipalities. Charts A through G within Section I are based on those tables and show development activity for 2006 in contrast with the previous nine years. The observations and comments offered in Section I make frequent reference to the tables of Section II as well as the charts contained herein.