

## FIGURE CP-5

AERIAL VIEW OF UNDEVELOPED BOARD OF EDUCATION LAND  
GLOUCESTER CITY, NJ

Photo by: Peter P. Karabashian Associates, Inc.

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*The Gloucester City Board of Education has approximately 14 acres of wooded land along Little Timber Creek that is being held for future expansion of athletic facilities. It is recommended that the City and Board of Education evaluate expanding the athletic facilities in the residual area adjacent to the Cold Spring School (at upper left) and develop an alternate use for the water's edge area.*

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### **C. Promote the Development of Wetlands to Mitigate the Filling of Wetlands in the Gloucester Point Redevelopment Area**

As shown in Figure CP-4, N.J.D.E.P. has mapped the location of several areas that are Freshwater Wetlands in the Gloucester Point Redevelopment Area. As reflected in this map, not only are there wetlands along the water's edge (approximately 10.5 acres), but there are approximately 7.75 acres of wetlands at various locations in the interior of the site. Given the history of industrial development in the Gloucester Point Area, it is unlikely that much of the area mapped as wetlands there could be considered as high quality wetlands deserving of preservation and protection.

To allow for the implementation of the recommended redevelopment strategy of Gloucester Point,<sup>3</sup> it is recommended that the City develop a Mitigation Program to allow these wetlands areas to be filled so that redevelopment can occur. The first step in the process would be to field verify, in conjunction with N.J.D.E.P. staff, the extent of the wetlands in Gloucester Point. Once this has been accomplished, the City must identify sites to implement a program for mitigating the removal of these wetlands. Under the Fresh Water Wetlands Protection Act Rules, mitigation may consist of:

- Restoration of existing wetlands in the development area to reverse or remedy impacts on the wetlands state open waters which is to occur at a ratio of 1 acre restored per 1 acre lost, modified or disturbed.
- Creation of new wetlands in upland areas, generally at a ratio of 2 acres created per 1 acre lost, unless it can be demonstrated that by restoring or creating a lesser area there will be a replacement of wetlands of equal ecological value.
- Enhancement of existing degraded wetlands to the extent that the enhanced wetlands will have a resource value and functions similar to an undisturbed wetland. The ratio of wetlands enhanced to wetlands lost is determined on a case-by-case basis, according to the assessed loss of ecological value of the disturbed wetlands.
- The contribution of money or land to the Wetlands Mitigation Bank or other public or private non-profit conservation organization approved by the Wetlands Mitigation Council and N.J.D.E.P.

Based on the conditions in Gloucester Point and the extensive water's edge in Gloucester City, there appears to be ample opportunity for the City to either address any mitigation needs through the creation of new wetlands or the enhancement of existing degraded wetlands areas. As indicated in the previous section, several small pockets of wetlands could be created on the Board of Education property adjacent to Little Timber Creek. Conceivably, wetlands could also be created as part of the proposed expansion of facilities at the Newton Creek Recreation Area.

In pulling together this Mitigation Plan the City should make contract with firms that have a successful track record in effectively implementing mitigation projects.

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<sup>3</sup>See Economic Plan for details of Gloucester Point Redevelopment.

**D. Promote the Preservation and Enhancement of Enhancing the Natural Urban Environment**

Upon hearing the phrase "natural urban environment," most people think of public parks and open space areas. Although these are part of the natural urban environment, they are not its only components. The natural urban environment consists of everything from backyard landscaping and sidewalk planting to nature preserves and nearby wetland areas. A city's residents expect the government to maintain the natural urban environment and do not realize that they have a role to play in protecting and enhancing the natural urban environment through such activities as tree planting in their backyards and landscaping to create wildlife habitat.

There are two key problems in the natural urban environment:

- The lack of awareness among residents of the importance of the managed natural urban environment;
- The absence of a collective effort by residents to develop a comprehensive program for a natural urban environment.

People do not realize the importance of nature within the urban environment. If the natural urban environment is not maintained and capitalized upon, then Gloucester City will lose the opportunity to experience some of the natural phenomenon that can be found in the few pockets of undeveloped land in the City, such as resident and migratory bird species, other forms of urban wildlife, and the clean air that results from urban reforestation programs.

In addition, the promotion of habitat improvements (e.g. tree planting and selective shrub planting) in public and private spaces identifies Gloucester City as a progressive community and brings security to homeowners by maintaining the value of real estate. It is common knowledge that communities with tree-lined streets and a collective theme "which plans with nature" are successful in preserving real estate values.

Most property located near parks or open space areas that cannot be developed retain a higher retail value. Open space also serves as a source of community identity and pride. If Gloucester City works to protect and maintain its limited open space, the residents would be appreciative of the value and pride added to the community as a result. Individuals, neighborhood groups, or businesses can become actively involved in the reforestation of the street scape by sponsoring tree-planting. Not only would there be an increase in community pride and cooperation, but the scenic value of Gloucester City would be enhanced.

To have a successful community, all elements should be considered, especially the natural. People are innately drawn to open spaces and parks. It provides a place of solace and refreshment from the hectic urban pace. To plan a community that does not include opportunities for open space that will be protected for future generations is poor planning.

By maintaining clean streets, introducing vegetation into the streetscape, and other projects to improve the appearance of the community, Gloucester City would become more attractive to visitors and to those looking for a place of permanent residence. The increased number of both residents and visitors, in turn, would be beneficial to the commercial areas of the City. In addition, the positive publicity Gloucester City would gain from placing an emphasis on nature coexisting in an urban environment would set the City apart as a prototype, progressive community.

Education is one of the keys to protecting and enhancing the natural urban habitat. Introducing nature trails with appropriate signage, directional signs to point out historic City landmarks, providing residents with guidelines for landscaping, and maintaining public open space will all help enhance the natural urban environment of Gloucester City.

The appearance of the downtown area can be improved with a theme for all businesses to emulate. One example of a downtown improvement would be to introduce a Comprehensive Plan for street tree plantings along Broadway. Collectively, the implementation of such an urban reforestation effort, combined with themed signage and lighting, would induce local merchants to join the rest of the community in appreciating Gloucester City's natural heritage. Examples can be seen in communities similar to Gloucester City that have taken an active role in improving the streetscape, by doing simple improvements such as refurbishing storefronts, hanging awnings along store windows, and planting flowers along newly-paved sidewalks.

Communities that have made these improvement have seen "For Rent" signs disappear from vacant commercial buildings and new clientele stopping to shop.

Another means of encouraging the natural urban environment is to develop standards for back yard landscaping and open space regulations. If a plan were implemented allowing the adjoining of back yard space via a collective landscape plan, the number of open spaces in the community would functionally increase. In addition to cooperation between residents and the unification of the community, collective landscape programs would also increase the scenic value to accomplish the goals of the community.

The State of New Jersey has recognized the importance of proper management of urban community tree resources. Through the New Jersey Forest Service,<sup>4</sup> the state has implemented a Community Forestry Program to assist in the planning, design, and management of vegetation on public lands in and around the community in order to maximize the visual, social, economic, and environmental contributions made to the well being of the municipality. Through the community forestry effort, the state will assist and advise the municipality and local organizations in developing and implementing activities such as tree selection and planting, community involvement, ordinance development, public awareness, education and long-term strategies for comprehensive natural resource plantings.

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<sup>4</sup>N.J.D.E.P. Division of Parks and Forestry, Forestry Services.

The types of assistance provided through the Community Forestry Program include:

- Technical assistance to the municipality and local tree action groups for the purpose of promoting and delivering community forestry activities.
- Green Communities Challenge Grant Program, which provides funding to municipalities, schools, and non-profit organizations to develop unique community forestry projects following the themes of program development plans, implementation projects, tree maintenance projects, and demonstration research projects.
- Tree City USA Awards provide public recognition for community forestry programs.
- Small Business Tree Planting Grants provide matching grants to local governments and non-profit organizations to hire small businesses to plant trees on publicly-owned property.
- The State Foresters Community Forestry Committee consists of representatives of leading organizations in the state that provide expertise in addressing issues of the Community Forestry Program and has also produced a tree planting and care manual for municipal use.
- Municipal Tree Person Representative Program provides a contact person in each municipality to increase the effectiveness of information between the state, the Urban Forestry Program, and the local municipality.

#### **E. Improve Surface Water Quality Through a Reduction in Non-Point Source Pollution**

Non-point source pollution (NPS) is the type of pollution that results from everyday activities such as fertilizing the lawn, changing motor oil, storm water discharges, animal waste, and littering. These contaminants become part of the water cycle during a rainfall when runoff picks up pollutants and carries them to local waterways where they may be ingested by plants, fish, animals, and humans. NPS is considered the greatest threat to water quality in the state. The Federal Clean Water Act requires all state and local political jurisdictions to address non-point source pollution through the implementation of management measures beginning in 1996. N.J.D.E.P. has prepared a Best Management Practices Manual to assist local governments in implementing procedures to reduce non-point source pollution and programs such as roadway quality inlets.

In addition to the actions that the municipality is required to undertake, it is important that Gloucester City make local residents aware of the connection between human activities and NPS. The City can also provide information on actions and programs that can be implemented by individuals or community-based organizations to reduce NPS.

The primary focus of educating the public on the causes and remedies of NPS should be on programs conducted in cooperation with the local Board of Education that target school-age children and their parents.