

# **Gloucester City Reexamination Report**

**City of Gloucester City  
Combined Planning and Zoning Board  
Camden County, NJ**



**Adopted: July 15, 2009**

# **REEXAMINATION REPORT**

**Adopted by the  
Gloucester City Combined Planning and Zoning Board  
Camden County, NJ**

**July 15, 2009**

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The original adopted version of This Reexamination Report has been  
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## I. The Gloucester City Master Plan Reexamination Report

### Introduction

All New Jersey municipalities that have enacted a zoning ordinance and other land development regulations are required by the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) to have a Master Plan. The Master Plan is adopted and maintained by the Planning Board, but implementing ordinances, such as zoning, are adopted by the Governing Body (City Council).

The MLUL also requires municipalities to either prepare a new Master Plan or to reexamine the current Master Plan at least once every six years. The periodic review of the Master Plan is such a fundamental element of New Jersey Law that failure to reexamine the Plan creates a rebuttable presumption that land development regulations in the municipality are no longer reasonable. Moreover, the New Jersey Supreme Court has held, in its landmark *Medici* decision, that all zoning decisions made by the Governing Body, and by the Combined Planning and the Zoning Board must be based upon the Master Plan. Whether adopting a new Master Plan or preparing a Reexamination Report, the process initially begins with a review of major changes in policies and conditions that have occurred since adoption of the last Master Plan or Reexamination Report.

Gloucester City's last Reexamination Report was dated September 2002, but it was not adopted by the Planning Board until July 13, 2003. Therefore, this reexamination report must be adopted on or before July 13, 2009.

The basic requirements of the Reexamination Report, as contained in the MLUL, are:

1. A review of the prior reexamination report and other planning documents (including housing and redevelopment reports);
2. A List of Major problems that faced the City at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination Report in 2003, and the City's objectives towards land development;
3. Changes affecting these issues and objectives since 2003;
4. Changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives upon which the Master Plan was based;
5. Changes recommended for the Master Plan and its underlying objectives, policies, and standards, including whether a new Master Plan should be prepared;
6. Recommendations regarding Redevelopment Plans.

This Reexamination Report will address these requirements. It is not viewed as a final step, but rather as an interim report necessary to comply with the requirements for a 6-year reexamination. It will form the outline for a major Master Plan Update, work on which has already begun. It will follow this Reexamination Report as soon as is practical.

### **Review of the Last Reexamination Report**

The prior reexamination report analyzed the last complete City Master Plan, which was dated December 1995 but not adopted until January 1996. It established 10 goals for the future. The Reexamination Report concluded that many of these goals had been addressed, but others were continuing to evolve and required attention. In addition, three new issues were identified. These were the evaluation of the parking plan to support the Broadway Corridor; the evaluation of the Route 130 Corridor; and the evaluation of the West Broadway neighborhood and the impacts upon it of proposed nearby school construction plans. In total, sixteen issues were identified and discussed in the Land Use Element.

The 2002/3 Reexamination Report noted that the City has a history of redevelopment initiatives and recommended that this process continue. This process should continue. There is also a need to codify and reaffirm the recommendations of the various Redevelopment Plans as part of the Master Plan Process. Changing conditions have led to a continuing evolution of planning policy, in response to a changing economic and physical environment.

The City continues to encourage the redevelopment of areas that meet the statutory criteria for areas in need of redevelopment, with the goals of improving the City's tax base, its economy, and the quality of life for its residents.

## **II. Major Problems That Faced the City at the Time of the Adoption of the Last Reexamination Report**

Neither the 2002/3 Reexamination Report nor the 1995/96 Master Plan specifically addressed the assumptions upon which the plans were based or the challenges faced by the City. This omission will be addressed in the new Master Plan.

### **The Promise and the Challenge**

The picture that emerges from these prior documents is one of a city with a long and proud history that was integrally tied to the river, and to the commerce that it brought. The community traces its origins to a Dutch trading post (Fort Nassau) that was established in 1626, although nothing of that historic structure remains. The flags of four nations have flown over the area now occupied by Gloucester City: The Netherlands; Sweden; England; and the United States. Gloucester City's early importance of the City can be seen in the fact that it once served as the seat of government for all of the land now occupied by Atlantic, Gloucester, and Camden Counties.

The key to Gloucester City's growth was its location on the Delaware River, at the mouths of the Newton and Timber Creeks, and opposite what was to become South Philadelphia. Gloucester City was described as an "industrial boomtown" during the 1840s. The City's ports brought raw materials for the manufacture of a wide array of products and, during the first half of the Twentieth Century, shipbuilding gained a position of economic prominence. Much of the City's housing stock was constructed to house the workers at these industrial plants, and Broadway provided the principal local shopping district for its residents.

Gloucester City suffered a gradual economic decline that coincided with the national trend away from manufacturing and towards a service based-economy. The regional prominence of Gloucester City was eclipsed during the nineteenth century by the adjacent City of Camden, a city that in turn eventually was eclipsed by other municipalities in the County and in the Region. Gloucester City's development was further limited by the creation of new municipalities from land formerly belonging to the City. Today, the land area of Gloucester City is just 2.2 square miles, with another 0.6 square miles of its area within waterways. The 2000 census found 11,484 people living in Gloucester City. There were 4,213 households, with two thirds of these households being defined as families. There were a total of 4,604 housing units in the City, of which 9% were found to be vacant and 33.8% were renter-occupied. 66.2% of Gloucester City's housing stock was owner occupied in 2000.

### **Access**

The City is well positioned regionally, but it has not been well served by the local highway network. The Walt Whitman Bridge passes directly above Gloucester City. The bridge provides access to Philadelphia and to the Schuylkill Expressway to the west; and to the North-South Freeway (Route 42), to Interstate Route I-295, and to the Atlantic City Expressway to the east. While these connections are an asset, direct access to the bridge and its highway network is circuitous and awkward because of its elevated route through the city.

Similarly, U.S. Route 130 bisects the city at its intersection with an elevated section of Route 42 in such a way as to create a wide, unattractive, and bifurcated artery that poses danger to pedestrians and confusion to motorists. The divided nature of the highway at this point also limits economic opportunities for the businesses on

either side. This problem has previously been identified, but solutions are expensive and require the cooperation of local, state, and federal agencies.

Public transit in Gloucester City is currently limited to bus routes. This fact limits the eligibility of the City to state and federal funding designed to encourage transit villages and transit-oriented development.

### **Demographic Summary**

The 2000 median household income of Gloucester City residents, as reported in the census, was \$36,855. This was just 76.6% of the median household income for Camden County, which was \$48,097. This relatively low median income level, the level of business distress, and its location as an urban commercial center, helped approximately 30% of Gloucester City to qualify as an Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ). UEZs are designed to encourage development and redevelopment within disadvantaged neighborhoods and nonresidential areas that located in older urban centers. Incentives made available to entrepreneurs and investors within a designated UEZ include tax and regulatory relief and provide access to targeted grant funds and services. A key incentive of the UEZ is the ability of retailers to charge their customers a reduced state sales tax.

Gloucester City's vision of revitalizing its waterfront for port and industrial uses continued during the period covered by its 1995/96 Master Plan and, to some extent, in its 2002/3 Reexamination Report. This vision has been complicated by the realization that prior uses have contaminated much of the land near the river with hazardous materials that must be remediated before significant redevelopment can occur. New opportunities continue to be suggested and land use in this area will continue to be a focus of the new Master Plan. The waterfront is an unquestioned

jewel in the City's crown. The question is not whether to improve it, but rather what are the highest and best uses for these lands.

Other issues to be explored in the forthcoming Master Plan are similar to those first raised in earlier planning studies. These may be summarized as encouraging economic development of the business community while improving the residential neighborhoods within the City. This task will be facilitated by some of the developments that are highlighted in the next section.

The City has sought to encourage a business-friendly environment and to minimize bureaucratic inconveniences to its residents. These policies will continue, while protecting the City's rich historic heritage and protecting/improving its natural environment.

The City will continue to meet its affordable housing obligations, including the rental requirements, but it seeks to encourage new residential growth that is owner-occupied as a method of improving the stability of the community. Past accomplishments include the Carpenter's Square and Gloucester Towne rental apartment buildings for seniors and for disabled households. Family housing is provided at the Historic Mills Houses and at scattered sites developed by the . As described in the separate Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, Gloucester City has fully met both its prior round and growth share affordable obligations.

### **III. Significant Changes Since The Last Master Plan**

#### **Infill Development and Redevelopment**

There has been much progress that the City can be proud of.

New infill development of both residential and nonresidential uses has continued, in addition to the renovation and rehabilitation of older buildings. The largest residential project since the last Reexamination Report has been Beazer Homes' 63-unit Meadowbrook Run development. Although the proposed redevelopment of Gloucester Point by Beazer Homes was abandoned in the face of a depressed home buying environment throughout the region, the City has redesigned the site as part of its mixed-use Freedom Pier Redevelopment Project, obtained subdivision and site plan approvals, and is now soliciting proposals from developers.

A major commercial development has been the construction of a new Commerce (now TD) Bank on Broadway, at Cumberland Street. The City facilitated the project by selling a small parcel of municipal land to the bank. This cooperative transaction allowed the bank sufficient area to permit the drive-through facilities that it desired, while providing a sheltered drop-off/ pick-up area for students at the nearby Mary Ethel Costello School. The resulting roadway redesign will also improve traffic safety at the intersection Cumberland Street and Broadway.

An economic development strategy is being coordinated by the UEZ Office and is designed to bring new business to the City by emphasizing the sales tax advantages and grant incentives available through the programs available to it. Entertainment

options have been evaluated near the water and the schooner “North Wind” has been acquired by the non-profit Gloucester City Sail, Inc. It will be based at the Freedom Pier, where it will carry out a mission of education and charter sailings. An “Irish Village” was recommended as a theme for new restaurants and pubs, taking advantage of the large ethnic Irish population living in and near Gloucester City. Several restaurant renovation projects with that theme are now underway.

Redevelopment Plans for the Southport Area need further refinement, but are likely to continue the theme of industrial development.

Redevelopment efforts will also make possible the private renovation of the existing Chatham Square Apartments.

A similar redevelopment project proposed the use of unproductive land adjacent to the Walt Whitman Bridge to generate municipal income through revenue from outdoor advertising and/or cellular telecommunications antenna.

### **Future Transit Opportunities**

Potentially, one of the most significant events that could affect the City’s future is Governor Corzine’s recent announcement of his support for a proposal from the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA) to provide a new passenger light rail service that will include a stop in Gloucester City. The new service will connect Glassboro, in Gloucester County, with the Walter Rand Transportation Center in Camden, where connections to Philadelphia, the PATCO High Speed Line, and Trenton are possible.

The location of the Gloucester City station is not been determined at this writing, but will likely be near a crossing of the existing Conrail freight line. Among the sites

mentioned have been locations near Monmouth Street, Market Street, and Collings Road. Once a station site is determined, it is recommended that the site be evaluated for the potential of transit-oriented development.

The City should maintain close coordination with DRPA and its consultants.

### **Public Improvements**

The City broke ground in March 2009 for a new state-of-the-art water plant that will improve service to local residents.

The Gloucester City Public Schools have embarked on a district-wide expansion and improvement program since the last Reexamination Report was completed. Renovations and additions have been made to the Gloucester City Junior-Senior High School. In addition, a new Early Childhood Center was opened at the Cold Springs Elementary School and all district schools have been renovated, including the Mary Ethel Costello Elementary School and Highland Park School of Success. The Gloucester City Public Schools are planning to break ground soon for an elementary-middle school at a new site on Market Street, which will resolve capacity issues at the current Junior-Senior High School. The closing of the Highland Park school is under consideration.

At the same time, the parochial Gloucester Catholic High School is exploring a move to a new 100-acre campus in Mullica Hill. Although the move is not viewed as definite at the present time, it is likely that at some point a larger high school site will be sought by the Archdiocese. The new Master Plan should evaluate reuse

options for the reuse of the current Gloucester Catholic site on Ridgeway Street if this move comes to pass.

### **Economic Climate**

A significant change that is currently affecting the City, the Region, and indeed the entire nation is the pronounced economic decline that now threatens its very vitality. Economists argue as to whether we are in a recession or a depression, and whether the decline has “bottomed out” or has further to fall, but the evidence is everywhere. In early March 2009 the Dow Jones stock index fell below 7,000, its lowest level since January 1997, although by this writing in May 2009 the Dow had recovered to 8,500. The New Jersey unemployment rate was 8.4% in March, but this is mild when compared to the 1932 unemployment rate of 25%, at the height of the Great Depression. Nonetheless, for those affected, the pain is real.

The pace of major subdivision and site plan applications before the Planning and Zoning Board has slowed, but it should be remembered that the UEZ Office has been successful in attracting a number of new infill businesses to the City. While large-scale redevelopment may be temporarily on-hold, Gloucester City is faring better than some other communities in the region and in the nation, and applicants continue to rehabilitate existing buildings in the City.

The current economic decline should be viewed as a temporary lull which, if taken advantage of, can give the City time to prepare for the expected future increase in development pressure by fine-tuning and improving its development regulations. When the recovery does arrive, Gloucester City should be well-positioned to experience growth due to its location on the Delaware River, directly across the

river from Philadelphia and its access to the Walt Whitman Bridge, Route I-295, and Route 42.

### **Planning for the Future**

In the interim, it has been the City's policy to do everything reasonable to attract new business to Gloucester City and to encourage home ownership. This policy should be continued, provided that an eye is kept on the ultimate goal of making Gloucester City a more livable and attractive community.

Grants obtained through the UEZ office made possible the new streetscape improvements that are planned for Burlington and Market Streets, while streetscape and lighting improvements on Broadway are already underway. Gateway signage and landscaping are also proposed.

A new Master Plan has been authorized by the Governing Body and will coordinate development opportunities for at least the next six years.

### **The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan**

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan and the State Policy Map work together to guide development in the state towards developed areas that have existing infrastructure, while limiting growth in more rural and environmentally sensitive areas. These plans are maintained by the Office of Smart Growth (OSG), which is a division of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.

The State Plan provides a vision for the future that is intended to preserve and enhance the quality of life for all residents of New Jersey. It is the result of a cross-acceptance process that included thousands of New Jersey citizens in hundreds of public forums, discussing all of the major aspects of the plan - its goals, strategies, policies and application. The Plan promotes the Principles of Smart Growth, which it defines as a term used to describe well-planned, well-managed growth that adds new homes and creates new jobs, while preserving open space, farmland, and environmental resources. Smart Growth supports livable neighborhoods with a variety of housing types, price ranges and multi-modal forms of transportation. Smart Growth principles include mixed-use development, walkable town centers and neighborhoods, mass transit accessibility, sustainable economic and social development, and preserved green space.

Like the Municipal Master Plan, the State Plan is revised periodically. A revised Draft Final Policy Map, dated May 13, 2009, has been proposed. Like prior versions, the State Plan Policy Map divides New Jersey into Planning Areas. The Metropolitan Planning Area is the preferred area for development, and it includes most of Gloucester City. The only other area land designation in the City is local parkland. This category should not be developed, but local parkland (cross acceptance) as shown the most recent draft map, dated May 13, 2009, is in error and needs to be corrected. It includes the Gloucester Towne affordable senior apartment complex, the site of the City's new water plant, and some private land. Other sites being actively used for municipal parkland is not designated as such on the map.

Gloucester City was previously designated as Town Center and, although the designation had expired, it was extended as a result of the Permit Extension Act. This extension will continue until December 31, 2010. Continuation after that date will require that City participate in OSG's Plan Endorsement process.

Designated Town Centers are places with existing infrastructure that serve the economy, the community and the environment. They are nodes of pedestrian-friendly residential

neighborhoods and businesses that seek to advance the principles of smart growth. And, Plan Endorsement gives a municipality a priority ranking in State grant programs.

### **Affordable Housing**

Every New Jersey municipality has a constitutional obligation to provide its “fair share” of the region’s affordable housing needs. The methods used to determine this obligation have changed since the obligation was first enunciated by the New Jersey Supreme Court in 1975, in what has come to be known as the “Mt. Laurel Doctrine.” Formal rules for determining this obligation were not established until the Legislature adopted the New Jersey Fair Housing Act in 1985, which in part created a new administrative agency, the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH.) COAH was given the power to establish rules for determining housing need at the municipal level and to develop regulations to permit the satisfaction of that need.

COAH is responsible for distributing regional housing need to the municipal level, for establishing rules by which municipalities may satisfy their affordable housing obligation, and for monitoring their efforts. Gloucester City is located in Region 5, which includes all of Gloucester, Camden, and Burlington Counties. Previously, this demand was based on a complicated formula that assessed the extent of housing in terms of the need for rehabilitation of existing dwellings, the median income of the municipal population and its tax base, and employment opportunities.

In 2004 COAH announced a fundamental shift in the way local fair share was to be computed. The new procedure, known as “growth share,” based future need on the number of new homes constructed in a community and on the number of jobs created. In other words, the more a community grew as a result of both residential and nonresidential development, the higher its fair share-housing obligation would be. Allowances were made for a lack of vacant land. COAH’s growth share methodology first became effective in 2006,

but it was quickly challenged in Court and its rules were partially invalidated by the Appellant Division Court. Revised regulations became effective in 2008, but even these rules are now the subject of continuing legal challenges.

In July of 2008 the legislature adopted legislation that is commonly referred to as the "Roberts Act." Among its provisions is a requirement that 13% of the municipal housing need, as determined by growth share, must now be affordable to very low-income households.

Nonetheless, as noted above, Gloucester City has fully met its affordable housing obligation. A new Housing Element and Fair Share Plan has been prepared by another consultant, Shirley Bishop, PP, AICP, under a separate contract. It is expected the Housing Element will be adopted by the City's Combined Planning and Zoning Board in June 2009, and following its approval, it will be incorporated by reference into the new Master Plan. Gloucester City is under the jurisdiction of the Courts, not COAH, and acceptance of the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan must come from that source.

### **Environmental Regulations**

New Jersey has significantly enhanced its environmental regulations since the prior Reexamination report was adopted. These rules are designed to provide systematic water quality protections, including regulations that update the Stormwater Management Rules. These new rules prioritize groundwater recharge by preventing roadways and parking lots from transporting this resource directly into streams and rivers and require enhanced standards of stormwater management.

Because Gloucester City is almost entirely developed, it will be experience fewer impacts from strengthened wetland regulations. On the other had, its location on the Delaware River and the fact that much of that land was previously used for heavy industrial purposes

mans that the City will benefit from enhanced “brownfields” programs that are designed to assist with the cleanup of contaminated areas.

### **Local Zoning Amendments**

A zoning amendment that was adopted after completion of the last Reexamination Report was the definition of check cashing businesses and their limitation to the highway commercial corridor along Route 130. This change was made because of a recognition that check cashing agencies provide an important function to a segment of the population, but they were thought to be inappropriate for denser commercial districts such as those along Broadway, Market, and King Streets.

It is important to recognize that redevelopment plans act as an overlay upon the zoning map and will modify the underlying land use regulations. For that reason, it is important that the redevelopment plans accurately reflect the land use plan.

### **Historic Design Guidelines**

The City has recently adopted design guidelines that will provide assistance to property owners undertaking renovations and construction within the Historic District. These guidelines provide useful standards regarding colors, materials, and architectural styles that are appropriate for the building and neighborhood in question. They should be cross-referenced in the Development Regulations and will be used by the Historic Preservation Committee as the basis for their recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Board when granting Certificates of Appropriateness within the Historic District.

#### **IV. Changes in the Assumptions and Policies of the Master Plan**

Assumptions and policies were not included in the previous Master Plan and Reexamination Report, although the MLUL suggests that they should form a basis for future municipal planning. Accordingly, the new Master Plan should be founded on a set of realistic assumptions.

##### **Development Expectations**

The Master Plan should be based upon the assumption that geography, incentives, and infrastructure will assure that Gloucester City will regain its historic role as an attractive residential community and as a center for economic activity. Its waterfront location and access to the regional road network; the economic opportunities afforded by the City's status as an Urban Enterprise Zone and expected designation as a Town Center; the new potential offered by the return of passenger rail service; and the availability of reasonably priced housing all support this assumption.

Gloucester City should maximize this potential by following a policy of fiscal independence and by carefully allocating and managing land and water resources for the enhancement of the entire community.

##### **Development Policies**

Gloucester City can assume that its efforts will continue to result in an improvement of the quality and aesthetics of new development. The City should continue to follow existing policies that build on its traditional urban development patterns.

This means that the renovation, redevelopment, and infill construction of both residential and nonresidential neighborhoods will continue.

Pedestrian-friendly development that is attractive, appropriately landscaped, lit, and that is built at or near the street line will be preferred over more suburban patterns. To the extent possible, off-street parking needs will be met in locations other than the front yard.

The City should develop an overall parking strategy in the new Master Plan to assure that adequate off-street parking is provided, and when not possible, that alternatives can be provided through reciprocal actions or in public parking lots. A comprehensive strategy is needed to realistically assess this issue and to develop workable solutions that benefit the long-term interests of the City, its residents, and its businesses.

Gloucester City has, and will continue to meet the affordable housing needs. However, the conversion of existing structures into one or more apartments shall be discouraged and the promotion of home ownership will be encouraged.

Residential densities west of Broadway shall be generally reduced and careful study will be devoted to the potential for transit-oriented development near the new rail station.

Code Enforcement regulations will be used to improve and/or maintain the quality of housing stock in the City.

The City should review the adequacy of recreation and other public services in residential neighborhoods and shall implement techniques and programs to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods.

Commercial and Industrial development shall be promoted so long as it is consistent with the land use plan and environmentally safe. If practical, mixed-use, transit-oriented opportunities should be explored once the location of the new train station is determined.

### **Maintain and Assure the Quality of the Circulation System**

It can be assumed that the City will have to continue to coordinate traffic improvements closely with County and State officials. Although the City owns and controls the majority of the streets in the community, most collector and arterial roadways are under the jurisdiction of other agencies.

Broadway, Collings Avenue, Essex Street, Hudson Street, Jersey Avenue, King Street, Kings Highway, Market Street, Nicholson Road, and Water Street are all County highways that are located within the City.

The Walt Whitman Bridge, Route 42, and Route 130 are under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

Within these parameters, the new Master plan should evaluate the local street system with an eye towards improving safety, increasing on-street parking, particularly west of Broadway, and reviewing the one-way street system.

The Master Plan should recommend a comprehensive system of on- and off-street parking throughout the City.

Implementation of truck routes should also be considered to remove large vehicles from narrow streets that were not designed to serve a commercial function.

To the extent practical, street corridors should be improved with street trees and identified commercial corridors should be upgraded with new streetscapes consisting of decorative paving, lighting, and similar amenities.

### **Improve Recreation and Open Space Within the City.**

An adequate supply of open space and recreational facilities is essential to the maintenance of the quality of life within the City. An assumption of the Master Plan is that the City will continue its efforts to improve both the quality and quantify of these facilities within the community.

To achieve this goal, the Master Plan will review the adequacy of recreational facilities within walking distance of residential neighborhoods to determine if additional parkland is necessary in these areas.

The City has already committed itself to a pedestrian walkway along the river and these efforts shall continue. Public access to the river shall be encouraged except where it conflicts with private property rights or poses a safety hazard.

The previous Master Plan identified existing recreation facilities that were in need of improvement. To that extent that these deficiencies still remain, they should be addressed.

### **Preserve and Conserve Natural and Historic Resources**

The importance of Gloucester City's natural environment and its historic heritage has already been noted. It can be assumed that efforts to preserve and conserve these resources will continue.

The Land Use Plan will designate areas of the Delaware Riverfront for preservation. In addition, the preservation and utilization of open space corridors on Newton Creek and Little Timber Creek should be encouraged.

As a general rule, the promotion and enhancement of the natural urban environment shall be encouraged. This may require the creation of new wetlands to mitigate the filling of areas when authorized by the State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The City will also work closely with DEP, developers, and redevelopers to resolve brownfields and to facilitate their redevelopment when consistent with the land use plan and with sound environmental policy. The City will also work towards the reduction of non-point source pollution.

Energy conservation and green building techniques with Gloucester City shall be encouraged.

Recycling efforts will be reviewed to meet or exceed state standards.

Gloucester City will continue to enforce its Historic Preservation Ordinance and related controls, such as the newly adopted Historic Design Guidelines.

### **Community Facilities**

It can be assumed that the City will continue to review its community facilities to provide a high level of service to its residents, employers and employees, and to visitors.

Progress has already been noted with regard to the public schools and the new water plant, but other needs remain unsatisfied.

Municipal administrative facilities are cramped and split between several buildings. An alternative solution, with funding recommendations, shall be considered in the Master Plan. In this regard, it should be noted that an attractive, well-located municipal building can also provide a focal point for civic activities.

Utility services will continue to be monitored and solutions proposed if necessary.

### **Regional Planning**

Gloucester City is not an island. It is part of a larger metropolitan area and it takes a trained eye and a map to know where the City ends and adjacent municipalities begin. As a result, the City will continue to be mindful not just of the requirements

of the Municipal Land Use Law, its Master Plan, and its development regulations. The City Master Plan will review the Master Plans of adjoining municipalities and will make every effort to assure its compatibility with these plans, as well as those of Camden County, Regional Planning Agencies and Authorities, and those of the state and federal governments.

## **V. Changes Recommended for the Master Plan and Redevelopment Plans**

There is no doubt that much is happening in Gloucester City. The evolving economic climate, the changing regulatory environment, and the opportunities offered by the restoration of passenger rail service demand a thorough review of prior planning concepts for the City. When this is combined with the length of time since the last full Master Plan was adopted, it is clear that this reexamination report must recommend that a complete new Master Plan be prepared as soon as practical. Fortunately, this step has already been authorized by the Governing Body and is under way.

Previous redevelopment Plans should be reviewed, recommendations verified, and all plans need to be codified within the new Master Plan. Opportunities for new redevelopment plans will be suggested as well, when appropriate.

The new Land Use Plan will incorporate and codify the existing redevelopment plans and will address the expected new development in the City. Economic development strategies, related planning initiatives, and strategies for the reuse of expected future development sites, such as that of Gloucester Catholic High School, will be discussed. The utilization of smart-growth techniques to promote an enhanced pedestrian environment and transit-oriented development will be carefully explored.

In the course of these discussions, the Land Development Ordinance should be made more user-friendly. While the current code has features that are beneficial, the

ordinance's use of multiple "notes" to promulgate standards that are typically better integrated into a development codes should be addressed.

## VI. Summary

This Reexamination Report had explored the many changes, challenges, and opportunities that Gloucester City is facing:

- Passenger rail service is now poised to return to Gloucester City and the comparable “River Line” transit development in Burlington and Mercer Counties has brought with it the economic revitalization of many older riverfront communities along this line. Gloucester City should receive similar benefits when this line begins operation.
- The City has retained its classification as a Designated Town Center in the proposed State Plan. This designation provides an enhanced funding environment for State grant opportunities and, when combined with the City’s UEZ status, it offers great potential to fund the City’s dreams. But the Designated Town Center can only be maintained if the City successfully goes through the Plan Endorsement process by the end of 2010. This process is not a rubber stamp and requires much work, but it is a worthwhile goal.
- New land use proposals have been recently suggested that could change the face of Southport, but they still need to be explored. In turn, these plans may require yet another revision to one or more redevelopment plan.

Much has been done, but much remains to be accomplished. This Reexamination Report recommends the preparation of a full Master Plan and, even before its adoption, the Master Plan has been funded and work has begun. This

Reexamination Report is a legally required stepping stone, but much work remains to be done. Now is the time to move forward with it!