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# 2026 Master Plan Reexamination Report

Township of Mansfield

Adopted by the Land Use Board: \_\_\_\_\_, 2026

Prepared for:

Township of Mansfield  
Warren County, New Jersey

Prepared by:

**Daniel N. Bloch, P.P., AICP, EADA**

NJ Planner License No. 33LI00610700

The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with NJSA 45:14A-12.

**Colliers Engineering & Design**

Shelbourne at Warren  
53 Frontage Road, Suite 110  
Hampton, New Jersey 08827

Main: 908.238.0900  
Colliersengineering.com

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# I. Introduction

The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq.) stipulates that each municipality in the State of New Jersey shall reexamine its Master Plan and development regulations at least every ten years. Specifically, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 states:

“The governing body shall, at least every ten years, provide for a general 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, a copy of which report and resolution shall be sent to the County Planning Board and the municipal clerk of each adjoining municipality.”

The purpose of a Master Plan Reexamination (“MPR”), prepared in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law, is to periodically reexamine the master plan, zoning, and land development regulations of a municipality to determine whether they continue to address the development goals and objectives of the municipality and to provide recommendations that will address proposed changes in development goals, the impact of development within the municipality and the impact of planning and development regulations by the County, the State of New Jersey and the Federal government.

The Mansfield Township Master Plan was adopted in January 1999. Subsequent Reexaminations were adopted in 2001, 2008, 2018, and 2021. The most recent Reexamination, In 2021, recommend new Affordable Housing Zones (AH-1, AH-2, AH-3, AH-4) and additional changes to the master plan and zoning regulations.

This 2026 MPR amends and updates the 2021 MPR to recommend further changes to the Township’s master plan and zoning ordinances in relation to affordable housing and the Fourth Round Consent Order.

This Reexamination of the Township of Mansfield Master Plan conforms to the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law and addresses the requirements of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 by including the following:

- A. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of 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 assumptions, 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", N.J.S.A. 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.
- F. The recommendations of the planning board concerning locations appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure, including but not limited to, commercial districts, areas proximate to public transportation and transit facilities and transportation corridors, and public rest stops; and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary or appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure.

It is important that a Master Plan be kept up-to-date and flexible so that it can respond to changing conditions and reflect the current land use policies of the municipality. The Master Plan should be a document that is easily amended so that it can respond to both concerns and opportunities. The aforementioned requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law are addressed in the sections of this report that follow.

## Municipal Summary

The Township of Mansfield is located in the southeastern portion of Warren County, New Jersey. It is bordered by Washington Township, Oxford Township, Liberty Township and the Town of Hackettstown in Warren County. Mansfield's southern boundary is coincident with the Musconetcong River, which separates Mansfield from Lebanon Township in Hunterdon County and Washington Township (aka. Long Valley) in Morris County.

The Township of Mansfield was founded as Mansfield-Woodhouse Township in 1754 from Greenwich Township in Sussex County. It was later incorporated as Mansfield Township in 1798, and was one of the six municipalities within Warren County at its creation in 1824. With approximately 30 square miles today, Mansfield is much smaller in area than it was in 1824, with portions broken off to form Franklin Township, Washington Township, Washington Borough, Oxford Township, and Hackettstown.

Historically, Mansfield has maintained its rural agricultural characteristics in the northerly two-thirds of the Township. Meanwhile, the southern portion along State Route 57 is built-up with suburban shopping centers, apartments and single-family residential development. The Township has not seen any significant changes in land use since 2008 that impact the overall character of the municipality.

# II. Significant Changes in Assumptions, Policies and Objectives

## Changes in Demographic and Economic Conditions

At the time of the 2021 MPR, the latest US Decennial Census data was from 2010, and the most up-to-date American Community Survey (ACS) was from 2016. It is instructive to compare the most recent 2020 Census data with 2010, and also with the most up-to-date American Community Survey (ACS) data, which is from 2024. The ACS is an ongoing survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The ACS gathers information previously only available in the decennial census.

Key Demographic Indicators - Mansfield Township			
Subject	2010 <sup>1</sup>	2020 <sup>1</sup>	2024 <sup>2</sup>
Total Population	7,725	7,781	7,778
Median Age	40.7	43.9	38.8
Total Households	2,972	3,139	2,947
Total Housing Units:	3,316	3,351	3,016
Owner Occupied	1,739	1,740	1,830
Renter Occupied	1,233	1,399	1,117
Average Household Size:			
Owner Occupied Unit	2.81	2.64	2.90
Renter Occupied Unit	2.15	2.39	2.12

- 1. U.S. Census Data
- 2. American Community Survey Data

Key Economic Indicators - Mansfield Township			
Subject	2010 <sup>1</sup>	2020 <sup>2</sup>	2024 <sup>2</sup>
Median Household Income	\$74,063	\$88,605	\$88,845
Per Capita Income	\$32,259	\$34,823	\$41,989
Percent of Individuals Below Poverty Level	6.3	4.5	6.8

- 1. U.S. Census Data
- 2. American Community Survey Data

The above data indicates a slight increase in total population in Mansfield between 2010 and 2020 of 0.72 percent followed by a population decline by 0.04 percent between 2020 and 2024. Despite that, the population has remained fairly consistent since 2010 with less than 1 percent change.

The number of housing units and households in Mansfield increased between 2010 to 2020, followed by a slight decrease from 2020 to 2024, mirroring the change in population described above. It should be noted, however, that the difference in data sources could cause this anomaly since the ACS is based on estimates whereas the Decennial Census is based on actual counts.

The median age in Mansfield in 2010 was 40.7 years; in 2020 it was 43.9 years, and in 2024 it was 38.8 years. The 2024 median age is younger than both Warren County (44.0 years) and the state (40.1 years).

In terms of income, both median household income and per capita income have increased over the years. The reported median household income in 2024 of \$88,845 is lower than both Warren County and the state by 6% and 15% respectively. The per capita income shows a steady increase over the years in contrast to the up and then downward trend of the reported household income. The 2024 per capita income of \$41,9889 was slightly lower than Warren County (\$46,877) and the state (\$53,818). The percentage of individuals below the poverty level at 6.8% in 2024 is less than Warren County (9%) and the state (9.2%). Nevertheless, it is considerably higher than in 2020 (4.5%).

Median household income has increased by approximately 20 percent since 2010. Meanwhile, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index for the NY-NJ-PA region has increased by 43 percent for the same period.<sup>1</sup> This indicates that while wages have increased, they have not kept pace with inflation during the same period.

Housing construction data from NJ Department of Community Affairs (“NJDCA”), which tracks all Certificates of Occupancy and demolition permits issued for housing units for all New Jersey municipalities, is shown below. With annual data between 2010 and 2024.

Historic Trend of Residential Certificates of Occupancy & Demolition Permits																
	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24	Total
Cos Issued	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	2	12	8	2	2	0	25	53	110
Demolitions	1	2	3	4	1	1	0	6	3	2	0	2	0	2	1	28
Net Development	0	-1	-3	-4	-1	-2	1	-4	9	6	2	0	0	23	52	78

Source: "New Jersey Construction Reporter" - New Jersey Department of Community Affairs

As shown, 110 housing units were built between 2010 and 2024. The number of demolitions during the same time period was 28. During the last ten years, new COs (108) have exceeded demolitions (18), with most certificates being issued in 2023 and 2024.

## Land Use Changes

Property tax data is utilized to identify changes in land use since the 2018 MPR. The NJDCA-Division of Local Government Services (“DLGS”) publishes a summary of the tax ratables for each year. From 2017 to 2024, the Township lost 33 vacant parcels, which could indicate that tracts have been developed since the last MPR, which is supported by the fact that residential parcels increased by 125 lots, indicating that new residential development has occurred since 2017.

The most notable change since 2017 is the decrease in total equalized assessed property values<sup>2</sup> from \$728.6 million to \$708.9 million for private properties in the Township. Based on these values,

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Consumer Price Index - New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA (1967 to 2025). Accessed February 6, 2026. <https://www.bls.gov/regions/northeast/data/xg-tables/ro2xgcpiny1967.htm>

<sup>2</sup> These values have been adjusted using to the State Equalization Ratio for the respective year. The equalization ratio is the rate of property assessed value compared to market value. The equalization ratio in 2017 was 92.62 percent, meaning that the Township assessed properties an average of \$92.62 for each \$100 in market value. The equalization ratio in 2024 was 69.81 percent. The assessed property values reported by the DLGS have been adjusted to represent comparable market value; however, these figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

the average residential property value was \$245,000 in 2017, which fell to \$237,000 by 2024. This decrease in value is most likely attributable to shifting market conditions.

Property Tax Ratable Base						
Land Use Type	Number of Parcels			Property Value		
	2017	2024	% Change	2017	2024	% Change
Vacant	737	704	-4.5%	\$17,831,084	\$13,244,800	-25.7%
Residential	1,797	1,922	7.0%	\$441,647,484	\$456,606,800	3.4%
Farm Homestead	188	185	-1.6%	\$56,796,264	\$51,562,200	-9.2%
Farmland	302	304	0.7%	\$3,608,470	\$2,959,600	-18.0%
Commercial	61	61	0.0%	\$125,128,752	\$107,765,050	-13.9%
Industrial	14	14	0.0%	\$18,703,844	\$17,428,500	-6.8%
Apartments	4	4	0.0%	\$64,848,197	\$59,316,600	-8.5%
<b>Total Value</b>	<b>3,103</b>	<b>3,194</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>\$728,564,095</b>	<b>\$708,885,574</b>	<b>-2.7%</b>

Source: [http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dlgs/resources/property\\_tax.html](http://www.state.nj.us/dca/divisions/dlgs/resources/property_tax.html)

### Employment Changes

The NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (“NJDLWD”) maintains tabulations of employment and wage data for employers covered under the New Jersey Unemployment Compensation Law. The data is published quarterly and annually, utilizing the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). The data shows that in 2017 there were 28 private sector businesses in Mansfield, which increased to 75 by 2024. There were 1,003 private sector employees in 2017, earning an average annual salary of \$38,546. In 2024, there were 942 employees earning an average of \$48,508 annually. This decrease in employment data indicates a decline in economic conditions in the Township since 2017.

### Changes in State Planning Regulations

#### State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP)

In March 2001, the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) was adopted, which amended the previous plan adopted in 1992. In 2010, the State released a new draft State Plan, which was approved but never adopted. In 2025, the State adopted the *2025 New Jersey Development and Redevelopment Plan*, which amended the previous plan adopted in 2001. The document sets a vision for 2050, aiming to create prosperity and opportunity, dynamic and revitalized towns, centralized development and redevelopment, jobs, and a clean environment. The State Plan is intended to guide comprehensive planning and strategic investments by state, county, and municipal governments, while addressing the urgent challenges of climate change, environmental justice, and technological change. As this is the most recent SDRP, it has been reviewed for the purposes of this report. The Plan has ten aspirational goals as follows:

- Economic Development – Promote economic growth that benefits all residents of New Jersey.
- Housing – Provide an adequate supply of housing for residents of all ages and incomes in communities of their choosing that meet their needs and offer ready access to the full range of supportive goods and services.

- Infrastructure - Economic opportunity through nation-leading infrastructure.
- Revitalization and Recentering – Revitalize and recenter the state’s underutilized developed areas.
- Climate Change – Effectively address the adverse impacts of global climate change.
- Natural and Water Resources – Protect, maintain, and restore the state’s natural and water resources and ecosystems.
- Pollution and Environmental Clean-up – Protect the environment; prevent and clean up pollution.
- Historic and Scenic Resources – Protect, enhance, and improve access to areas with exceptional archeological, historic, cultural, scenic, open space, and recreational value.
- Equity – Implement equitable planning practices to promote thriving communities for all New Jerseyans.
- Comprehensive Planning – Foster sound and integrated planning and implementation at all levels statewide.

It is noted that new mapping and planning area designations will be forthcoming.

### **Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL)**

Notable amendments to the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) since the 2008 MPR include:

1. The MLUL was amended to include the “Statewide Non-residential Development Fee Act” at N.J.A.C.40:55D-8.1 through 8.7, which allows municipalities to collect development fees for non-residential development to be utilized for the provision of low- and moderate-income housing (Sections 32 through 38 of P.L.2008, c.46, approved July 17, 2008).
2. The Statewide Non-residential Development Fee Act was later amended by the “New Jersey Economic Stimulus Act of 2009” (P.L. 2009, c. 90, approved July 28, 2009).
3. N.J.A.C. 40:55D-66.11 now provides that renewable energy facilities on parcels comprising 20 or more contiguous acres that are owned by the same person or entity shall be a permitted use within every industrial district of a municipality (P.L. 2009, c. 35, adopted March 31, 2009).
4. A Master Plan Reexamination Report is now required at a minimum of once every 10 years instead of every 6 years (P.L. 2011 c. 65, approved on May 4, 2011).
5. The MLUL was amended to define "inherently beneficial use" for purposes of zoning variance and specifically includes facilities and structures that supply electrical energy produced from wind, solar, or photovoltaic technologies (P.L. 2009 c. 146, approved on November 20, 2009).

6. The MLUL was amended to add a “Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Plan Element” to the components that comprise a municipal master plan, which shall provide for, encourage, and promote the efficient use of natural resources and the installation and usage of renewable energy systems; consider the impact of buildings on the local, regional and global environment; allow ecosystems to function naturally; conserve and reuse water; treat storm water on-site; and optimize climatic conditions through site orientation and design (P.L. 2008, c.54, approved on August 5, 2008).
7. General development plan (GDP) protection can now be extended to development projects situated on sites less than 100 acres based on certain criteria. GDP’s can now be sought for projects with a non-residential floor area of 150,000 square feet or more, or with 100 residential dwelling units or more, on sites of 100 acres or less (P.L. 2011 c. 86, approved July 1, 2011).
8. Senate Bill Number 921 titled “An Act concerning solar panels and impervious surfaces and amending and supplementing various part of the statutory law” was signed into law on April 22, 2010. The law exempts solar plans from impervious surface or impervious coverage calculations.
9. Senate Bill Number 2989 titled “An Act concerning the collocation of wireless communications equipment and supplementing P.L.1975, c.291” was signed into law on January 17, 2012. This law amends the MLUL to allow for an application for development to collocate wireless equipment to not be subject to site plan review provided the application meets certain requirements.
10. The MLUL was amended to allow municipalities to authorize noncontiguous development, including the transfer of floor area ratio or density between noncontiguous parcels (P.L. 2013, c. 106, approved August 7, 2013).
11. The MLUL was amended to require that for any land use element of a municipal master plan adopted after the effective date of P.L 2017 c. 275 (January 8, 2018), the land use element shall include a statement of strategy concerning: smart growth, including consideration of potential locations for the installation of electric vehicle charging stations; storm resiliency with respect to energy supply, flood-prone areas, and environmental infrastructure; and environmental sustainability (P.L 2017 c. 275, approved on January 8, 2018).
12. Senate Bill Number 2126 titled “An Act concerning solar energy and wind energy and supplementing P.L.1979, c.111” was signed into law on December 14, 2011. This law amended the Municipal Land Use Law (hereinafter “MLUL”) to permit a wind energy generation facility or structure constructed and operated on the site of any landfill or closed resource extraction operation to be a permitted use within every municipality outside of the Pinelands Area.
13. Assembly Bill Number 2785 titled “an Act concerning municipal master plans, amending P.L.1975, c.291, and supplementing title 13 of the Revised Statues” was signed into law on February 4, 2021. This law requires any land use plan element adopted after the effective date

to include a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment which shall analyze current and future threats to, and vulnerability of, the municipality associated with climate change-related natural hazards such as increased temperatures, drought, flooding, hurricanes, and sea-level rise.

14. Electric Vehicle Charging Space Requirements. Senate Bill 3223 titled “An Act concerning electric vehicles supply equipment and make-ready parking spaces and amending and supplementing P.L.1975, c.291 (C.40:55D-1 et seq.)” was signed into law on July 9, 2021. This law amends the MLUL’s definition of inherently beneficial to include electric vehicle charging infrastructure. It also amends the law to permit electric vehicle supply equipment as a permitted accessory use and structure in all zoning districts within a municipality and precludes variances. The law states that an application for the installation of electric vehicle supply equipment at an existing gas station, retail establishment, or any other existing building shall not be subject to site plan or other land use board review provided it does not violate any bulk requirements. Moreover, all applications involving five or more multi-family units must provide 15% of the parking spaces as “make-ready” spaces and install electric vehicle supply equipment in at least one-third of the 15% of “make-ready” spaces. There are also requirements for parking lots containing certain numbers of spaces to provide “make-ready” and/or actual charging equipment. The act took effect immediately and any development applications filed after July 9, 2021, will be subject to these requirements.
15. Prohibition of appeals to land use decision. Assembly Bill Number 4881 titled “An Act concerning appeals of electric meetings held under the Municipal Land Use Law during the emergency declared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic” was signed into law on September 24, 2021. This law does not allow a decision of a municipal agency made at, or based in whole or in part, on a meeting held by means of electronic equipment where some or all participants are not in the same physical location to be appealable on grounds attributable to lack of a physical quorum, lack of a reasonable opportunity to be heard or otherwise participate in the meeting, etc.
16. Time of Decision. Senate Bill Number 82, titled “An Act concerning the review and approval of applications for development and supplementing P.L. 1975, c.291” was signed into law on May 5, 2010. This new law repealed the “time of decision” rule. Previously, municipalities could make zoning changes prior to a formal decision on a development application. For example, if a property owner filed a development application to build a multi-family residential building in a zoning district that permitted such uses on the date the application was filed, the municipality could amend its zoning to prohibit such multi-family use while the application was pending. This would require the application to either amend its application or seek a use variance. The new law (P.L. 2010, c. 9) requires that those development regulations that are in effect on the date of submission of an application for development shall govern the review of that application. Any provisions of an ordinance, except those relating to health and public

safety that are adopted after the date of submission are not applicable to that application. The law went into effect on May 5, 2011.

It should be noted, however, that what constitutes an “application for development” was recently before the State Supreme Court in *Dunbar Homes, Inc. v. Zoning Board of Adjustment of Franklin Township* (233 N.J. 546, 563 (2018)), where the Court found that a complete application must be submitted to receive protection under the development regulations in effect at the time.

17. Virtual Public Meetings. Assembly Bill Number 3850 titled “An Act concerning the conduct of public meetings during periods of emergency and supplementing P.L. 1975, c.231” was signed into law on March 20, 2020. This law allows public meetings, including zoning and planning board meetings, to be conducted electronically during a public health emergency.
18. Temporary Supplemental Zoning Board. Senate Bill Number 3212 titled “An Act concerning municipal zoning boards of adjustment, supplementing P.L.1975, C.291, and amending P.L.2005, c. 133 and P.L.1991, c.256” was signed into law on August 9, 2019. The law allows a municipality to establish a temporary, supplemental zoning board to address any backlog of applications. A municipality that determines a need for a supplemental zoning board must adopt an ordinance to establish one.

### **Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL)**

A “Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area” provision was included in the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-6) by P.L. 2013, C. 159, approved on September 6, 2013. This amendment significantly changes the way that municipalities may designate areas in need of redevelopment pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.). Chapter 159 provides that a municipality shall make a decision to utilize or reserve the power of eminent domain at the beginning of the redevelopment process. When a planning board investigates whether an area should be designated as being “in need of redevelopment”, the municipality must indicate whether it is seeking to designate a potential redevelopment area as a “Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area” or a “Condemnation Redevelopment Area”. The evaluation criteria for each type of redevelopment area are the same except for determining whether the power of eminent domain will or will not be exercised.

On August 9, 2019, Assembly Bill 1700 titled “An Act concerning the designation of certain areas as in need of redevelopment and amending P.L.1992, c.79” was signed into law. The law expands the eligibility criteria for designating certain areas as being in need of redevelopment. Specifically, the law amends Criterion B by adding retail, shopping malls, and office parks to the list of discontinued uses, and establishes a specific time frame of two years of such vacancies.

### **Council on Affordable Housing (COAH)**

Mansfield did not participate in COAH’s First Round of Substantive Certification but petitioned for Second Round Substantive Certification on April 13, 2000. Mansfield received Second Round Substantive Certification from COAH on August 2, 2000. COAH extended the expiration of the Second Round Substantive Certification to December 31, 2008, for all municipalities.

Mansfield petitioned for Third Round Substantive Certification on August 2, 2006. Mansfield was notified that the COAH review process had begun by letter from COAH dated October 13, 2006. Mansfield had received no further correspondence or had otherwise been contacted by COAH since the October 13, 2006, letter. COAH ceased all reviews, including Mansfield's, when litigation was filed on January 24, 2007, opposing the Third Round Rules.

Pursuant to the March 10, 2015, Supreme Court Order, Mansfield Township filed a motion with the court on July 8, 2015, seeking a Declaratory Judgement that the municipality has fulfilled its constitutional obligation to provide affordable housing.

On December 12, 2018, Mansfield Township entered into a Settlement Agreement with the Fair Share Housing Center to memorialize the terms of settlement of the Township's affordable housing obligations. The Settlement Agreement outlined Mansfield Township's affordable housing obligations as follows:

- Present Need (Rehabilitation Obligation): 33 units
- Prior Round Obligation: 3 units
- Third Round Prospective Need: 142 units

On February 28, 2019, a Fairness Hearing was held and the Honorable Judge Miller found the Settlement Agreement to be fair and deemed it to be preliminarily in compliance with the Township's affordable housing fair share obligation. The Township adopted a Housing Element & Fair Share Plan on June 21, 2021, to address the affordable housing obligations. The Township received an Order of Conditional Judgment of Compliance and Repose ("JOR") for the Third Round on March 15, 2022. On June 17, 2025, the Township of Mansfield adopted a Housing Element and Fair Share Plan ("HEFSP") for the period between 2025 and 2035 (known as the Fourth Round) providing compliance with its constitutional obligation to provide a realistic opportunity for affordable housing. This HEFSP is prepared utilizing the Prior Round Rules, Third Round Rules (as applicable), and the amendments implemented in P.L. 2024, c.2.

### **Affordable Housing Reform (Fourth Round)**

On March 20, 2024, Governor Murphy signed legislation that dramatically modified the State's affordable housing regulations. The 75-page bill, known as A4, abolished COAH, modified the process of affordable housing compliance, amended bonus credits, and, among other changes, set forth several important deadlines. P.L. 2024, c.2 ("Amended FHA") charged the Department of Community Affairs ("DCA") with the preparation of Fourth Round obligations and set forth aggressive timelines for compliance. Major changes to the regulations include:

- Increasing the cap on age-restricted units from 25% to 30%.
- Creating the Affordable Housing Dispute Resolution Program, which will be responsible for resolving challenges regarding obligations and housing plans, and reviewing housing plans for compliance.
- A municipality or other interested party may file an action through the Program seeking a realistic opportunity review at the midpoint of the certification period, including a review of any inclusionary development site in the housing element and fair share plan that has not received preliminary site plan approval prior to the midpoint of the 10-year-round.

- Failure to meet certain deadlines results in the loss of immunity from exclusionary zoning, which includes builder’s remedy lawsuits, and appears to occur instantly.
- The housing element must also include an analysis of consistency with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
- Municipalities seeking Vacant Land Adjustments are now required to identify sufficient parcels likely to redevelop during the current round to address at least 25% of the prospective need obligation that has been adjusted and adopt realistic zoning that allows for such adjusted obligation.
- Transitional housing is now defined and creditworthy if it meets the micro requirements.
- The bonus credits have been radically amended. The rental bonus credit, which many towns relied on in the third round, has been eliminated and replaced with several bonus options. However, most bonuses are now 0.5 instead of 1.
- All parties are entitled to rely upon regulations on municipal credits, adjustments, and compliance mechanisms adopted by COAH unless those regulations are contradicted by statute or binding court decisions.
- The length of deed restrictions for rental units has been increased to no less than 40 years. For-sale units remain at no less than 30 years.

In October 2024, DCA published a report on its calculations of regional need and municipal present need (Rehabilitation Obligation) and prospective fair share obligations (Fourth Round Obligation). The report is entitled “Affordable Housing Obligation of 2025-2035 (Fourth Round) Methodology and Background”.

The DCA calculated Mansfield Township’s present need obligation as 7 units and its Fourth Round prospective need obligation as 418 units. Municipalities were required to adopt a binding resolution outlining their present and prospective fair share obligations by January 31, 2025. On January 22, 2025, the Township Committee adopted Resolution 058-2025 accepting the DCA’s calculations of the Township’s present need of 7 units but seeking a downward adjustment of the 418-unit prospective need obligation to a recommended 196 units based on errors with the DCA land capacity analysis identified by the Township.

The Township also filed a “Complaint for a Declaratory of Compliance with the Fair Housing Act” as part of the compliance certification process outlined in the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts Directive #14-24.

During the 30-day challenge window, Mansfield Township received a challenge to the Township’s calculations from the Fair Share Housing Center (“FSHC”) and the New Jersey Builder’s Association (“NJBA”). The Township and the Challengers entered into mediation through the Affordable Housing Dispute Resolution Program (“the Program”) and ultimately agreed that Mansfield Township’s prospective need obligation shall be 355 units. The Honorable Judge Miller, J.S.C. issued an order on April 8, 2025, ordering that Mansfield Township’s present need shall be 7 units and the prospective need for the Fourth Round housing cycle shall be 355 units (Docket No. WRN-L-47-25).

Mansfield Township's Land Use Board adopted a Housing Element & Fair Share Plan addressing the Fourth Round obligations on June 16, 2025, and the HEFSP was endorsed by the Township Committee on June 25, 2025.

### **Affordable Housing Marketing**

On July 1, 2020, Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill Number 2527 titled "An Act concerning the online marketing of affordable housing units and supplementing P.L. 1985, c.111." This law requires developers, owners, property managers, and/or administrative agents to post notices of available affordable housing on the Housing Resource Center website at least 60 days prior to conducting a lottery.

### **The Highlands Act**

Of all the State initiatives since 2001, the one of greatest significance to Mansfield is the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act). The Highlands Act was passed in August 2004 with far reaching consequences for the future of development in Mansfield and the rest of the Highlands Region. The Act established a Preservation Area and a Planning Area with the area under the jurisdiction of the Highlands Council. Mansfield Township has 13,032 acres in the Preservation Area and 5,969 acres in the Planning Area of the Highlands Region.

Through passage of the Highlands Act, the New Jersey Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council) was created and charged with the task of developing a Regional Master Plan to protect the critical natural resources and other features of the Highlands Region. A fundamental aspect of the Highlands Regional Master Plan is the process known as Municipal Plan Conformance. The Highlands Act directed the Highlands Council to develop a set of requirements to protect the Highlands Region, which include mandatory restrictions over land use and development practices within the Preservation Area and provisions for voluntary municipal conformance within the Planning Area. In summary, Plan Conformance on behalf of municipalities is mandated within the Preservation Area and voluntary within the Planning Area.

On December 10, 2008, the Mansfield Township Council adopted a Resolution 2008-104 Notice of Intention to Petition the Highlands Council for Plan Conformance. The Township also participated in Module 1 (Current Municipal Conditions and Build-Out Analysis) and Module 2 (Land Use and Resource Capacity Analysis) of the Highlands Plan Conformance process, which was funded by a grant from the Highlands Council. The purpose of Modules 1 and 2 is to develop a build-out analysis that incorporates the policies and objectives of the RMP.

A Municipal Build-Out Report was prepared for Mansfield in September 2009. The RMP build-out process requires a Limiting Factor Analysis to examine three categories of constraints:

- Land Based Capacity (potential developable lands);
- Resource Based Capacity (Septic System Yield and Net Water Availability); and
- Utility Based Capacity (public water and wastewater).

The Municipal Build-Out Report provides the results of the local build-out analysis based on potential developable lands and existing municipal conditions, including sewer and water supply capacity and Net Water Availability where relevant. It incorporates the results of Modules 1 and 2, which were completed through a detailed process involving a cooperative effort of the municipality

and the Highlands Council. The RMP build-out analysis for Mansfield estimates the following new development results for potential developable lands for the entire municipality:

- Development in Wastewater Utility Service Areas: 14 residential dwelling units and 119,375 square feet of non-residential development, resulting in a wastewater demand of 6,525 gallons per day (gpd), or 0.006525 million gallons per day (MGD), and estimated public water supply demands of 4,300 gpd, or 0.0043 MGD.
- Development in Septic System Areas: 237 septic systems in the Planning Area for all RMP Land Use Capability Zones and HUC14 subwatersheds, and 56 septic systems in the Preservation Area.

The build-out results based on potential developable lands are not constrained by water supply utility capacity and wastewater utility capacity. The water supply demands from the build-out are constrained by water availability resulting in a constraint on build-out potential of 0.000566 MGD in one subwatershed, which is 18 percent of the land-based total build-out demand for the Hackettstown WPCF, and a constraint on build-out potential of 0.001367 MGD in another subwatershed, which is 41 percent of the land-based total build-out demand for the NYK Logistics and Megacarrier facility. The remaining wastewater utility capacity, after all RMP build-out demands are met, is constrained by water availability.

To date, the Township has not completed any of the other Modules and has not petitioned the Highlands Council for Plan Conformance.

## **Water Quality Management Planning**

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) administers the Statewide Water Quality Management (WQM) Planning rules, N.J.A.C. 7:15, in conjunction with the Statewide WQM Plan, which together constitute the Continuing Planning Process conducted pursuant to the Water Quality Planning Act, N.J.S.A. 58:11A-1 et seq., the Water Pollution Control Act, N.J.S.A. 58:10A-1 et seq., and N.J.S.A. 13:1D-1 et seq., and as required by Sections 303(e) and 208 of the Federal Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.). The intent of the continuing planning process is to align federal, state, regional and local land use planning to ensure that these land use plans do not conflict with each other.

NJDEP readopted the WQM Planning rules on May 20, 2008, with the rule readoption effective May 21, 2008, and adopted rule amendments, repeals and new rules effective July 7, 2008 (see 40 N.J.R. 4000(a)). The rule amendments and new rules provide the following:

- Reassign wastewater management planning responsibility to the county boards of chosen freeholders and require counties to update WMPs;
- Establish clear standards for delineating appropriate sewer service areas to protect environmentally sensitive areas as well as clear, environmentally protective standards for the review of WQM plan amendments;
- Set forth clear standards to require identification of adequate wastewater management alternatives, address water supply, and control nonpoint source pollution (including controls related to stormwater, riparian zones and steep slopes);
- Require updated WMPs to address septic density in a manner that demonstrates compliance with a 2 mg/L (ppm) nitrate planning target on a HUC 11 watershed basis or as required by development type and location.

- Make provisions to allow the withdrawal of sewer service areas and redesignate these areas as general wastewater service area of 2,000 gallons per day or less and less than six residential units (restricted septic service areas) where the applicable WMP is not in compliance with the mandatory update schedule contained in the rules; and
- Require municipalities to develop a septic system inventory and tracking system through an ordinance or other means which will ensure that septic systems are functioning properly through a mandatory maintenance program.

P.L.2011, c.203 was enacted on January 17, 2012, which permits a Wastewater Management Planning Agency to prepare and submit to the NJDEP at least that portion of a wastewater management plan designating sewer service area, which shall comply with the NJDEP's regulatory criteria. The law requires that wastewater service area designations and sewer service area designations remain in effect and not be withdrawn for a period not to exceed two years. This law expired on January 17, 2014.

The Warren County Board of Chosen Freeholders opted not to accept the role of responsible entity for wastewater management planning in Warren County. Each municipality in Warren County is therefore responsible for preparing their own municipal wastewater management plan. Mansfield last adopted a wastewater management plan in 2007, which projects wastewater needs through the year 2024. The Township of Mansfield has not updated its wastewater management plan based upon the 2008 or 2016 NJDEP Wastewater Management Planning Rules.

### **Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment**

On February 4, 2021, Governor Murphy signed into law Assembly Bill Number 2785 titled "an Act concerning municipal master plans, amending P.L.1975, c.291, and supplementing title 13 of the Revised Statutes." This law requires any land use plan element adopted after the effective date to include a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment which shall analyze current and future threats to, and vulnerability of, the municipality associated with climate change-related natural hazards such as increased temperatures, drought, flooding, hurricanes, and sea-level rise.

### **2019 New Jersey Energy Master Plan**

Governor Murphy unveiled the finalized 2019 New Jersey Energy Master Plan ("EMP") Pathway To 2050 in January 2020, envisioning initiatives to achieve 50 percent clean energy by 2030 and 100 percent clean energy by 2050. The plan concedes that the State's current trajectory will not allow it to meet these goals, so the EMP identifies major contributors to the state's carbon footprint—such as transportation and electric generation—and evaluates carbon neutral solutions. In reducing the dependence on fossil fuels, the EMP outlines seven key strategies guiding New Jersey's path to energy efficiency, each with underlying goals and objectives intended to aid the transition to a clean energy future.

While the strategies, goals, and objectives of the EMP are geared primarily toward state agencies and policy, many have the potential for replication on the local level, including, conversion of fleet vehicles to electric, installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, increasing transportation options, reducing congestion, encouraging transit oriented development, installation of alternative energy systems, improving energy efficiency in new and existing construction, develop shared bike and scooter programs, and incentivize energy efficient purchasing. As such, Goal 6.1 and its underlying objectives seek to encourage municipalities to establish and enact community energy

plans that will allow them to identify their own priorities and obstacles that will allow them to complement the Energy Master Plan. The EMP suggests that a Community Energy Plan could include community redevelopment mechanisms to increase public space, walkability, and bike-ability; decrease congestion and idling; and enable equitable, multi-modal transportation opportunities to improve public health and quality of life. The EMP suggests that solid waste reduction plans, such as through a municipal composting program, could provide numerous benefits, including the reduction in energy resulting from a reduction in waste that is sent to the landfill.

## **Complete Streets**

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (“NJDOT”) finalized a Complete Streets policy in December of 2009. The policy requires that future roadway improvement projects that are federally or state funded will include safe accommodations for all users, which includes bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, and the mobility-impaired. The purpose of the policy is “to create and implement a Complete Streets Policy in New Jersey through the planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operation of new and retrofit transportation facilities within public rights of way that are federally, or state funded, including projects processed or administered through the Department’s Capital Program.” In December of 2012, the NJDOT issued [A Guide to Creating a Complete Street Implementation Plan](#). This was followed in 2017 by a [Complete Streets Design Guide](#). The 178-page Guide is divided into four chapters and provides guidance on the planning and design process and a lengthy toolbox for implementing complete streets. The final chapter provides street typologies. The document provides helpful information and tips for both practitioners and citizens.<sup>3</sup>

Most recently (July 2019), NJDOT released a [Complete & Green Streets for All Model Complete Streets Policy & Guide](#) report. This report indicates that 160 communities have adopted a complete streets policy via resolution.<sup>4</sup> The document is described as a “one-stop resource for adopting and implementing Complete Streets policies and practices.” This document describes green streets as streets that “use green infrastructure practices installed within the public right-of-way to manage stormwater while preserving the primary function of a street as a conduit for vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.”<sup>5</sup>

More locally, Warren County adopted a Complete Streets Policy & Implementation Plan in 2025.

## **Medical Marijuana**

On January 18, 2010, Governor Corzine signed into law Senate Bill Number 119 titled “New Jersey Compassionate Use Medical Marijuana Act.” This law permits the use of medical cannabis for persons with certain conditions. The law permits entities to operate as alternative treatment centers, which are a dispensary for medical cannabis.

## **Adult-Use Recreational Cannabis**

On February 22, 2021, Governor Murphy signed into law Assembly Bill Number 21 titled “An Act concerning the regulation and use of cannabis, and amending and supplementing various parts of

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/completestreets/pdf/NJCS\\_DesignGuide.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/completestreets/pdf/NJCS_DesignGuide.pdf), accessed February 20, 2024

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/completestreets/pdf/CS\\_Model\\_Policy\\_2019.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/completestreets/pdf/CS_Model_Policy_2019.pdf), accessed February 20, 2024, page 2.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/completestreets/pdf/CS\\_Model\\_Policy\\_2019.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/completestreets/pdf/CS_Model_Policy_2019.pdf), accessed February 20, 2024, page 5.

the statutory law.” The law legalizes recreational personal use of cannabis for adults and provides municipalities with 180 days from the date the law was signed to prohibit or establish zoning provisions regulating the six classes of cannabis – cultivation, manufacturing, wholesaling, distribution, retail, and delivery. Municipalities that do not act within the 180-day period will be “locked in” for a five-year period to standards established by the law. Mansfield Township adopted a prohibition of all cannabis establishments within the municipality (Ordinance 2021-11, adopted June 23, 2021).

### **Certain Housing Exempt from Zoning Regulations**

On June 30, 2021, Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill 1676 titled “An Act concerning hospitals and supplementing P.L.1971, c.136 (C.26:2H-1 et seq.)” The law allows hospitals to construct housing for individuals who are homeless or housing insecure and deems such housing as a permitted use in all residential and non-residential districts of a municipality and exempt the use from local zoning restrictions.

### **New Jersey Land Bank Law**

On July 11, 2019, Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill Number 1214. Bill 1214 is known as the New Jersey Land Bank Law, which will allow New Jersey towns and cities to designate a land bank entity to obtain vacant, abandoned, and neglected properties for productive reuse purposes. This law provides municipalities with a tool to revitalize and reuse properties for public benefit. The law provides for accountability to local communities through the requirement for community advisory boards with mandatory access to certain information and opportunities for the board to comment on the land bank entity’s decisions. Land bank entities will further be required to develop and maintain an online, publicly accessible database of current and former land bank properties. The community advisory board must issue an annual report on the accuracy, integrity, accessibility, and comprehensiveness of the land bank entity’s online database.

### **Innovation District Designation Program**

On August 8, 2019, Governor Murphy signed into law Assembly Bill Number 5111, creating the Innovation District Designation Program. The program, established within the New Jersey Commission on Science, Innovation, and Technology, encourages development of innovation districts within New Jersey. Innovation districts promote the development or redevelopment of an area in a manner that facilitates collaboration between government, higher education institutions, and private enterprises, and are a strategic way to promote development in science and technology throughout the State. Municipalities may apply individually or jointly for designation of an area as an innovation district.

### **Stormwater Management Program**

Enacted on February 2, 2004, New Jersey’s stormwater management program, comprised of two separate Rules (N.J.A.C. 7:8 and 7:14A), establishes a framework for addressing water quality impacts associated with existing and future stormwater discharges. Together with the new Flood Hazard Control Act Rules (N.J.A.C. 7:13), they provide for Category One (hereinafter “C1”) Water Protection, including a 300-foot Special Water Resource Protection Area or riparian buffer for new major development adjacent to all C1 waters and upstream tributaries of C1 waters within the same HUC-14 sub-watershed. These regulations do not have implications in Mansfield since no C1 classified waterways exist.

The Township has complied with the 2004 rule changes as follows:

1. Obtaining a Stormwater Permit from the State of New Jersey and addressing the Statewide Basic Requirements (SBNs) under that permit on a recurring basis.
2. Preparing and adopting a Stormwater Management Plan.
3. Preparing and adopting a Stormwater Control Ordinance.
4. Reviewing development applications for compliance with the adopted Stormwater Control Ordinance where applicable.

Mansfield Township is classified as a 'Tier A Municipality' and is responsible for preparing a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SPPP) and providing updates as necessary pursuant to its MS4 Permit. In addition, the Annual Stormwater Report, which is required to be filed each year with NJDEP, requires certification that the SPPP has been adopted and is current. The Township adopted an update to the SPPP in June 2025 in accordance with the latest amendments to N.J.A.C. 7:8, requiring 'major developments' to implement the use of Green Infrastructure (GI) Best Management Practices (BMPs) to treat stormwater runoff and enhance water quality, reduce stormwater runoff volume, and encourage infiltration and groundwater recharge.

## Changes in County Planning Regulations

### Warren Heritage Byway (NJ State Route 57)

New Jersey State Route 57 is a 19-mile two-lane roadway that runs west from Hackettstown through Mansfield Township, Washington Township, Washington Borough, Franklin Township, Greenwich Township and Lopatcong Township. The entire Route 57 corridor was designated a State Scenic Byway in February 2009. The Warren Heritage Byway Corridor Management Plan ("WHBCMP") was released in November 2010.

The WHBCMP provides the following description of the Warren Heritage Byway through Mansfield Township:

#### **Mansfield Township MP 12.67-20.54**

Entering Mansfield Township, the views become more attractive as the Musconetcong River gets closer to the roadway. The hamlet of Anderson (MP 14.1) is a favorite scenic spot with its historic homes, hotel, and church at the bottom of a large hill.

One of the best locations to access the river for recreation and other uses is the Point Mountain Section of the Musconetcong River Reservation at MP 14.4. This site consists of over 700 acres of parkland along the Musconetcong Mountain range and gorge, providing visitors with opportunities for mountain biking, fishing, horseback riding, canoeing, cross-country skiing, hiking, hunting, nature study and picnicking.

Departing from the River Reservation, travelers encounter Penwell Lime Kiln #1 (MP 14.7) just off Route 57. A site of countywide importance, this lime kiln is representative of the process used to burn limestone rock. The resulting lime

was used to stabilize and change the pH of farm soils and was incorporated in a variety of construction materials.

Beginning at MP 15.3 and continuing through MP 18.2, travelers along Route 57 can see glimpses of the Musconetcong River flowing alongside the highway. Across from the river at MP 15.8 is Miller Farmstead, a cluster of outbuildings and a farmhouse listed on the State and National Historic Registers. The farmstead covers 108 acres, and was constructed in 1924 in the Greek Revival style.

Historic Beattystown (MP 19.3), originally known as Beatty's Mill, was settled circa 1760. The oldest historic village in Mansfield Township, it was originally settled as a mill town. At that time, it was the most important trade center on the southeastern edge of what would become Warren County.

The WHBCMP provides the following vision statement for the corridor:

- To preserve and enhance the beauty of natural, cultivated, and built landscapes and their relationship to our history, culture, and future.
- To enhance tourism in proximity to centers of recreation and commerce.
- To encourage land uses that create and complement scenic viewsheds, vistas, and panoramas.
- To highlight historic sites and, through heritage tourism, help residents and tourists discover the stories in the landscape.
- To mitigate the tensions between preservation and development.

According to the WHBCMP, the zoning in Mansfield could impact the quality of the scenic corridor. Specifically, the WHBCMP states, "Directly on Route 57, at Port Colden near the Mansfield Township border, there are areas zoned for Planned Industrial on three acre lots and Valley Residential on four acre lots. Development of this Valley Residential zone could affect scenic viewsheds, depending on the location and design of new structures; this area appears to be one of those most vulnerable to the potential loss of scenic resources."

To guide future land use along the byway and help protect the corridor's valued qualities, the WHBCMP recommends a number of strategies and techniques, including land acquisition, scenic easements, scenic corridor overlay zoning, or conservation zoning. NJDOT has prepared a Route 57 Corridor Plan Implementation Toolkit to guide municipalities in implementing techniques to protect the byway. Guidelines for scenic corridor overlay zoning, scenic easements, and conservation zoning can be found on the NJDOT website at <https://www.state.nj.us/transportation/works/studies/rt57/maps.shtm>.

### **Warren County Transportation Technical Study Update (2018)**

The Warren County Transportation Technical Study represents the first phase of updating the 2004 transportation plan element of Warren County's Master Plan. A review of transportation and demographic trends found a need for more robust, accessible, and affordable mobility options.

### **Warren County Light Industrial Site Assessment (2020)**

This study was undertaken to understand the potential long-term impact of warehousing and distribution development in the County. White was identified as having three sites of industrial-zoned land, zoned industrial and low-density industrial, which were included in the analysis.

## Warren County Transportation Master Plan (2021)

The Warren County Transportation Plan helps provide a vision for the County's transportation network through 2045. The plan identifies areas of concern and provides recommendations and a phased implementation plan to address transportation needs, overcome challenges, and leverage opportunities across a broad range of projects, policies, and strategies.

## Warren County Transportation Master Plan Amendment (2023)

Subsequent to the Warren County Light Industrial Site Assessment (2020), the county began to experience many of the industrial areas in that Assessment under development pressure for warehouse development. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration there has been an increase in the number of truck accidents in the county, number of fatal accidents attributed to the increases in freight traffic in the county, and a significant increase in volume of truck traffic in the County. This amendment addresses truck traffic issues by implementing a truck route map that will be part of a larger truck routing strategy to guide existing and future truck traffic onto the roadways most suited for heavy truck traffic.

## Changes in Municipal Land Use Regulations

Since the adoption of the 2021 Mater Plan Reexamination, the Township Committee adopted the following ordinance amendments affecting land use:

- **Ord. No. 2021-07** (Adopted 6-23-2021) - Amending Chapter 363 "Zoning" to Add New Affordable Housing Zoning Districts
- **Ord. No. 2021-08** (Adopted 6-23-2021) - Amending Chapter 365 of the Affordable Housing Ordinance to Address the Requirements of the Fair Housing Act and Uniform Housing Affordability Controls.
- **Ord. No. 2021-09** (6-23-2021) - Amending Chapter 363 "Zoning" by Adding a New Section 363-A31 Entitled "AH-2 Affordable Housing District".
- **Ord. No. 2021-10** (Adopted 6-9-2021) - Amending Chapter 363 "Zoning" by Adding a New Article XVI Entitled "AH-1 Affordable Housing District".
- **Ord. No. 2021-16** (Adopted 11-23-2021) - Amending and Revising Chapter 360 "Administration and Procedures", Amend Chapter 361 "Design and Performance Standards", and Amend Chapter 363 "I Industrial District".
- **Ord. No. 2022-07** (Adopted 6-8-2022) - Amending the Code to Add Section 215 to Regulate Short-Term Rentals.
- **Ord. No. 2022-10** (Adopted 7-13-2022) - Amending Chapter 363 "Zoning"
- **Ord. No. 2022-11** (Adopted 7-13-2022) - Replacing the Entire Contents of the Existing Affordable Housing Ordinance to Address the Requirements of the Fair Housing Act and Uniform Housing Affordability Controls.
- **Ord. No. 2022-15** (Adopted 8-10-2022) - Ordinance Replacing Article IX, Part 3, Storm Water Management
- **Ord. No. 2022-18** (Adopted 10-12-2017) - Ordinance Deleting in its Entirety Chapter 270 "Residential Property, Vacant, and Abandoned," and Replacing Same
- **Ord. No. 2022-25** (Adopted 10-26-2022) - Amending Chapter 215 Short-Term Rentals

### III. Master Plan Problems & Objectives

As required under N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 (a) and (b), the following section of the MPR examines the major problems and objectives relating to land development in the Township of Mansfield that were included in the 2008 MPR and identifies the extent to which such problems or objectives have changed. The goals and objectives of the 1999 Master Plan were reiterated and reviewed in the 2008 MPR. There was one main goal with nine additional specific goals, each with one or more related objectives, as follows:

#### Overarching Goal:

The main goal of the 1999 Master Plan is to protect the quality of life in Mansfield and to preserve this unique and historic community for generations to come. This rural, agricultural and residential community includes intact hamlets and villages, reflecting the community life of previous centuries. Mansfield's mountainous conditions, along with other environmental constraints, have resulted in less-than-average population densities and provide a rural and peaceful setting. These environmental constraints need special protection.

To achieve this main goal, the following specific goals and objectives are established for Mansfield Township:

#### 1. Agricultural Preservation

**Goal 1:** *Preserve active farmlands and encourage their continued viability which recognizes that farming is an integral component of the economy of the Township and the region.*

**Objective 1A:** *Manage growth and development in agricultural areas such that the best agricultural soils should be permanently preserved for farming and development should occur first on the least usable agricultural soils.*

**Objective 1B:** *Encourage and coordinate local agricultural land use preservation with the programs of the state and county and with adjoining municipalities.*

**2008 MPR Review:** *This goal remains as valid in 2008 as it was in 2002, if not more so. The Township of Mansfield, since 2002, has seen several parcels acquired and preserved as farmland within the Township. These have in general either been acquired utilizing monies from the open space trust fund or via the efforts of state and county agencies. As of June 2008, over 600 acres have been preserved.*

**2018 MPR Review:** *Agricultural preservation continues to be an important objective for Mansfield Township. Prior to 2008, there were a total of 835.1 preserved agricultural acres in Mansfield. Since 2008, an additional 704.8 acres have been preserved. Mansfield now ranks the seventh highest in total agricultural acres preserved of the 22 municipalities in Warren County.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Sources: Warren County Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan Update, May 2017 and New Jersey SADC Farmland Preservation Program website, accessed May 15, 2018.

**2026 MPR Review:** According to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture<sup>7</sup>, one additional farm of 286 acres has been preserved in Mansfield Township since 2018. This brings the total preserved farmland to 1,826 acres in Mansfield Township.

## 2. Environmental Protection

**Goal 2:** *Protect environmentally sensitive areas, preserve the natural environment, and ensure a compatible balance between economic and environmental interests.*

**Objective 2A:** *Protect environmentally critical areas from development by preventing encroachment on sensitive areas such as wetlands, 100-year flood plains, and steep slopes in excess of 25%.*

**Objective 2B:** *Continue to require new development to observe rigorous performance standards to minimize adverse environmental impacts.*

**Objective 2C:** *Relate development standards and the permitted intensity of land use to the carrying capacity of the soil and water supply with the objective to preserve natural features.*

**Objective 2D:** *Ensure that development respects the conditions of the site, including limited water supply and restricted potential for wastewater disposal, which are the result of the soils and geology native to the Township.*

**2008 MPR Review:** *This is still a valid goal of the Township. However, much of the preservation of environmentally important areas has been usurped by the State through several vehicles; the Highlands Act, C-1 stream corridors and most recently riparian buffers. While all of these vehicles seek to preserve parts of the environment, they do so in a manner that is oriented toward the large-scale overview of regional environmental protection without attention to the need for a compatible balance between environmental interests and economic interests.*

**2018 MPR Review:** *There has been no substantial change in environmental regulations since 2008. The NJDEP maintains environmental jurisdiction within the Highlands Preservation Area, C-1 stream corridors, freshwater wetlands and flood hazard areas. The Township continues to require an environmental impact statement for all development applications to promote the protection of environmental resources. Additionally, it is noted that approximately 22 percent of the Township (4,188 acres) is preserved as open space. The vast majority of the preserved land is held by the State of New Jersey (3,926 acres). Mansfield Township holds 178 acres of open space, Warren County holds 77 acres, and the Heritage Conservancy owns 6 acres.*

**2026 MPR Review:** No change since 2018.

## 3. Residential Development

**Goal 3:** *Preserve the existing housing stock and provide the opportunity for the development of a wider variety of housing types to meet the needs of different income and age levels, family compositions and lifestyles.*

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<sup>7</sup> Source: New Jersey SADC Farmland Preservation Program website accessed February 5, 2026.

**Objective 3A:** Encourage residential clustering that maximizes the amount of common open space to be achieved.

**Objective 3B:** Continue to meet the Township's Mt. Laurel affordable housing obligation through the rehabilitation of substandard housing units.

**2008 MPR Review:** While preserving the existing housing stock, Mansfield, since 2002, has also sought to diversify its type of housing stock. A case in point is the age-restricted Regency at Mansfield development which is expected to break ground in 2009. Mansfield currently does provide housing for a wide variety of income levels housing both large lot detached single family homes and a number of garden apartments. An area of the Township, which is not zoned residential, but which should be considered as a potential area for residential development is the area currently zoned Industrial south of Port Murray Road near its intersection with Route 57. The area known as Hillcrest Manor 2 is the location of numerous 25 x 100 foot lots, many of which have been foreclosed by the Township for lack of tax payments. There are scattered residences in this area and due to the problem of land accumulation and lack of access it is not likely to be developed for industrial uses. The Township is also currently responding to the Third Round Council on Affordable Housing requirements and is seeking ways to provide additional affordable housing. Township sponsored affordable housing could potentially be located on foreclosed lots in Hillcrest Manor. The Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act has and will have a substantial negative impact on the establishment of new residential developments, particularly in the Preservation Area.

**2018 MPR Review:** There has been no substantial change in residential development since 2008. The Regency at Mansfield development is under construction. The Township is currently in litigation regarding the affordable housing requirements and compliance with the March 10, 2015, Supreme Court Order.

**2026 MPR Review:** There has been a marked increase in residential certificates of occupancy since 2018, with approximately 78 new COs issued between 2023 to 2024, likely from the Legacy at Mansfield Meadows (Ryan Homes) development recently constructed on Route 57. The Township is currently working towards compliance with the 2025 Affordable Housing Consent Order.

#### 4. Economic Development

**Goal 4:** Encourage development of industrial, commercial, office, research and service uses, selected and regulated so as to preclude land use incompatibilities and in an amount that would increase the tax base which supports the local government and the public school system without disturbing the fragile residential-agricultural balance in the remainder of the Township or negatively impacting traffic circulation.

**Objective 4A:** Guide future commercial development into appropriate areas to provide a desirable diversity of goods and services within convenient reach of concentrations of population.

**Objective 4B:** Create a favorable atmosphere for industrial development in appropriate locations by providing adequate land area and municipal services.

**2008 MPR Review:** Since 2002 Mansfield has seen little in the way of industrial tax base growth and in fact due to plant closures has seen a reduction in the industrial tax base. In most cases the current climate of state regulation and low- and moderate-income housing regulations have effectively stifled opportunities for development. In one particularly egregious case an industrial facility that has been in the Township for 75 years was thwarted from expanding an existing factory after five to ten years of

product development when it was placed in the Highlands Preservation area only the width of a rail line removed from being placed in the planning area and not being in the preservation area. If the facility was in the planning area expansion would have been allowed. The location of the boundary between the preservation area and planning area appears particularly arbitrary in this case since environmental conditions are the same on both sides of tracks. The Township has fared somewhat better in the area of retail development most notably the Shoppes at Mansfield which were a result of the 2002 Master Plan Amendment.

**2018 MPR Review:** Since 2008, the Township has not seen much economic growth in terms of new retail or other nonresidential development. The shopping centers will continue to see turnover in retail tenants, such as the former Sears store now being occupied by Marshalls or Bensi's restaurant in the Shoppes at Mansfield now a Taphouse Grille. Ruby Tuesdays recently closed its restaurant along Route 57. Some properties are looking for other ways to increase economic activity, such as the Bank of America ATM kiosk now open as a second principal use on the QuickMart property.

**2026 MPR Review:** Since 2018, the Township has not seen much economic growth in terms of new retail or other nonresidential development. A new quick service restaurant was constructed along Route 57 in front of the Shoppes at Mansfield and another one is under construction where the former Luncheonette was located on Route 57 in front of the Mansfield Village Square shopping center.

## 5. Circulation

**Goal 5:** To encourage the design of transportation routes and traffic controls to promote the free and coordinated flow of traffic and discourage facilities and routes which would result in congestion or blight.

**Objective 5A:** Protect the Township's rural road system by restricting more intense development and regional traffic to County and collector roads. Planning for future development should recognize the constraints of existing narrow roads with their vertical and horizontal curves, which have limited capacity to handle increased traffic.

**2008 MPR Review:** This matter has been a top priority of Mansfield particularly in the area surrounding Hackettstown where several million dollars of improvements financed by private developers have solved a number of problems. Mansfield has sought to maintain its road system through a combination of state aid grants and local tax money being utilized for local maintenance projects.

**2018 MPR Review:** The Land Use Board reports that traffic problems continue to exist along Route 57 in Beattystown, west of Airport Road. The Land Use Board is concerned that future development in Washington Township (Long Valley) will further exacerbate traffic problems in this area as additional traffic is drawn over the Kings Highway bridge to access the Route 57 retail corridor.

**2026 MPR Review:** No substantial change since 2018.

## 6. Community Facilities and Recreation

**Goal 6:** Ensure the provision of adequate community, recreation and educational facilities to adequately accommodate existing and future needs of the Township. **Objective:** Develop community

recreation facilities for existing and future population centers in concert with the needs and desires of residents.

**Objective 6A:** Encourage the location of new public facilities, such as parks and schools, so that they are within effective service areas of future population centers.

**Objective 6B:** Promote the cooperative use of school facilities for recreational and community activities for all residents to the extent practicable.

**Objective 6C:** Provide adequate public safety services (police, fire, rescue squad) with appropriate facilities, manpower and equipment distributed according to existing and future development patterns.

**2008 MPR Review:** This again continues to be a priority for the Township. The Township has recently sought to expand its recreation and park system. The Township is planning a new park with athletic fields and other recreation facilities on a 128-acre tract in Port Murray. The park is currently under design.

The Board of Education has consistently sought to maintain its facilities to a high standard. Recently the Township Committee donated to the Board of Education several acres of property across the street from the elementary school for school use including recreation uses.

**2018 MPR Review:** There has been no substantial change in this issue since 2008. Plans were prepared for Hector A. Cafferata Jr. Park on Port Murray Road north of the municipal building and a portion of the park has been constructed, including a baseball field and four tennis courts.

**2026 MPR Review:** No substantial change since 2018.

## 7. Utilities

**Goal 7:** Ensure that more intensive development occurs in areas where public sewer and water supply exists or may be easily extended in a limited fashion.

**Objective 7A:** Discourage water and sewer improvements which would increase growth pressures in rural and agricultural areas.

**Objective 7B:** Ensure that new lower-density development areas outside of the public sewer service area adhere to strict environmental performance standards prior to development approvals and follow sound septic system management techniques to assure high levels of ground water and stream quality.

**Objective 7C:** Ensure that the higher density development areas are adequately served by public water, sewers, stormwater drainage and other utility systems in an economic and coordinated manner.

**2008 MPR Review:** Mansfield Township has continued to ensure that more intensive development occurs where there is public sewer and water supply. At the end of 2007, the Township received approval from the NJDEP for a new Wastewater Management Plan. There were several notable features of that plan, which included the creation of a new service area on the western end of the Township to accommodate the new adult retirement community. This area lies within a second water franchise area originally established by the Township as a result of its takeover and reconstruction of a deficient privately owned

water system. That system was then sold to New Jersey American Water Company who is the franchisee. In the Hackettstown area, the existing public sewer and water supply area has been solidified in the new Wastewater Management Plan.

**2018 MPR Review:** *There have been no changes to the Wastewater Management Plan since 2007 and there is no intention of amending the plan at this time.*

**2026 MPR Review:** No substantial change since 2018.

## 8. Historic Preservation

**Goal 8:** *Preserve and protect sites and villages of significant historic interest for present and future generations to appreciate and enjoy.*

**Objective 8A:** *Encourage the preservation and restoration of structures, landmarks, hamlets and villages of significant historic interest. Require design standards in historic areas for new and renovated buildings that will respect the Township's history and rural character.*

**2008 MPR Review:** *The Township has been supportive of the historic elements within the Township but has chosen not to implement ordinances requiring historic conservation within those areas. It does support activities to passively protect and preserve these areas.*

**2018 MPR Review:** *There has been no substantial change in historic preservation since 2008. However, the Township is assisting with the restoration of the Mount Bethel Methodist Church on Mount Bethel Road.*

**2026 MPR Review:** No substantial change since 2018.

## 9. Recycling

**Goal 9:** *Ensure the recycling of materials within the Township in compliance with the New Jersey Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Act of 1987.*

**Objective 9A:** *Establish and enforce Township regulation on the recycling of recyclable materials.*

**Objective 9B:** *Continue to provide for the collection of recyclable materials and increase the types of items to be collected as circumstances allow.*

**2008 MPR Review:** *The Township continues to ensure that recycling of materials within the Township is in compliance with State regulations. Warren County has recently improved the options for recycling in the Township by making available the Eager Beaver Recycling Trailer for community events.*

**2018 MPR Review:** *The Township has improved recycling options for the residents by providing a roll off container for paper and cardboard at the municipal building available 24/7 in addition to the recycling depot open from 8am to noon on the second Sunday of every month.*

**2026 MPR Review:** No substantial change since 2018.

## Prior Land Use Recommendations

This section identifies previous recommendations for changes master plan or development regulations from the 2021 MPR and provides a status update for each:

1. The historic Anderson United Methodist Church located on Block 1507, Lot 7 at the corner of Asbury-Anderson Road and Route 57 is currently vacant. In order to encourage the adaptive reuse of the existing structure, the Land Use Board recommended that the zoning for the property be changed from R-2 Residential to the B-2 Business District.

**2026 Status Update:** As shown on the current Zoning Map dated January 23, 2025, the property remains in the R-2 Zone. It is noted that the historic Anderson Hotel located across the street is operating as a restaurant. The Anderson hotel is in the B-2 Zone.

2. The Land Use Board had discussed changing the zoning along the north side of Route 57, near the Washington Township border, from I Industrial to B-2 Business to encourage economic development in the area. Potential properties to be included in the B-2 District are as follows:

Block	Lot	Address	Owner	Use	Acres
1501	1	435 Route 57	Sharma, LLC	Professional Office	3.12
1501	2	461 Route 57	Logothetis, P C/O Panagiotou, Tina	Farm	18.0
1501	3	495 Route 57	Annuals, Perennials & More, LLC	Farm	10.14
1501	4.01	501 Route 57	Highland Valley Partners, LLC	Farm	3.454
1501	5.01	507 Route 57	Erb, Paul & Joanne	Residential	0.5
1501	5.02	Route 57	Erb, Joanne C	Farm	6.21
1501	6	517 Route 57	NJ Cars, LLC	Commercial (Junkyard)	5.98

The Land Use Board has also discussed implementing a scenic corridor overlay zone in this area, as recommended by the Warren Heritage Byway Corridor Management Plan. Further study of this area of the Township should be conducted to determine the appropriate zoning to encourage economic development that is compatible with the scenic qualities of the Route 57 corridor.

**2026 Status Update:** The January 23, 2025, Zoning Map still shows these properties being located in the Industrial Zone.

3. The following changes were recommended the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance to facilitate compliance with the Township's affordable housing obligations as set forth in the Third Round Settlement Agreement:

**a. Minac Associates (Block 1102, Lot 4.04)**

The Minac Site is a 107.6-acre parcel known as Lot 4.04 in Block 1102 in the Township of Mansfield. The property is currently developed with an 812-unit multi-family apartment complex owned by Mansfield Plaza, LLC. The property contains approximately 20 acres of vacant land, which is separated from the developed portion of the tract by a 285-foot wide

JCP&L utility easement. There is also another 50-foot wide JCP&L easement that runs through the center of the vacant portion of the site. (See Map in Appendix.)

The vacant portion of the Minac Site is currently zoned R-2 Single Family Residential, which allows for single-family dwellings on 22,000-square foot parcels.

The vacant portion of the Minac Site is located in the rear of the existing commercial shopping center containing Home Depot and Weis. It is adjacent to existing multi-family residential development within the northern portion of the same parcel as well as multi-family development on Lot 3.02. To the west, the property is adjacent to an existing single-family neighborhood and an undeveloped farm site (Allen Farm).

This MPR recommends that the vacant portion of the Minac Site, Block 1102, Lot 4.04, be rezoned to a new AH-1 Affordable Housing Zone District to permit a multi-family development with a maximum of 200 market-rate residential units (a density of approximately 10 du/ac). An affordable housing set-aside of 15% shall be met by placing deed restrictions on existing units within Block 1102, Lot 4.04 owned by Minac Associates.

The developed portion of the Minac Site should be rezoned to a new AH-2 Affordable Housing Zone District, which would accommodate the future subdivision of Block 1102, Lot 4.04 without creating nonconformities for the existing multi-family development. No more than 812 dwelling units shall be permitted, all of which exist and 35 of the existing units shall be registered and deed restricted as affordable housing units occupied by qualified low- and moderate-income households. The 35 affordable units shall be created in proportion to the development of 200 units in the AH-1 zone and phased in accordance with UHAC regulations. The affordable units shall be integrated throughout the existing development. Maximum building coverage, impervious coverage and other requirements should be relaxed to accommodate the existing development on a reduced lot area after subdivision.

**2026 Status Update:** Completed. The January 23, 2025, Zoning Map shows the Minac properties being within the AH-1 and AH-2 Zone Districts.

**b. Allen Road (Block 1102, Lot 9)**

The Allen Farm Site is a 15.7-acre parcel known as Lot 9 in Block 1102 in the Township of Mansfield. The property is an active farm with several agricultural structures erected in the central portion of the site. The Allen Farm Site is located along the east side of Allen Road, adjacent to the existing commercial shopping center containing Home Depot and Weis. It is adjacent to the vacant portion of the Minac Site on Lot 4.04 as well as the existing single-family neighborhoods to the north and west. (See Map in Appendix.)

The Allen Farm Site is currently split zoned between the R-2 Single Family Residential, which allows for single-family dwellings on 22,000-square foot parcels, and the B-2 Business District, which permits retail sales and services, offices, indoor recreation, hotels and motels at a maximum floor area ratio of 0.25.

The Allen Farm Site is recommended to be rezoned to a new AH-3 Affordable Housing Zone District permitting multi-family inclusionary housing at a density of 10 du/ac (157 units) and a mandatory affordable housing set-aside of 15% (24 units) in the case of rental housing and 20% (32 units) in the event of for-sale housing.

**2026 Status Update:** Completed. The January 23, 2025, Zoning Map shows the Allen Farm property being within the AH-3 Zone District.

**c. Donaldson Farm (Block 1105.10, Lot 5)**

The Donaldson Farm Site is a 59.4-acre parcel known as Lot 5 in Block 1105.10 in the Township of Mansfield. The property is an undeveloped qualified farm parcel, which is part of the larger Donaldson Farm site of approximately 280 acres. The Donaldson Farm Site is located along the west side of Allen Road, adjacent to the existing multi-family development known as “Alexandria” on the east side of Allen Road. The site is surrounded by farmland to the west and south and abuts the railroad right-of-way to the north. (See Map in Appendix.)

The Donaldson Farm Site is zoned R-1 Single Family Residential, which allows for single-family dwellings on 3-acre parcels.

The Allen Farm Site is recommended to be rezoned to a new AH-4 Affordable Housing Zone District permitting multi-family inclusionary housing at a density of 10 du/ac (157 units) and a mandatory affordable housing set-aside of 15% (24 units) in the case of rental housing and 20% (32 units) in the event of for-sale housing.

**2026 Status Update:** Completed. The January 23, 2025, Zoning Map shows Lot 5 in Block 1105.10 of the Donaldson Farm property being within the AH-4 Zone District.

## IV. Changes Recommended for the Master Plan or Development Regulations

This section identifies specific recommendations for the Master Plan or development regulation, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulation should be prepared. The following changes to development regulations are recommended:

### **1. Expansion of AH-4 Zone (Block 1105.10, Lots 6, 7, 8.01 & portion of 8)**

The Donaldson Farm site is a 59.4-acre parcel known as Lot 5 in Block 1105.10 in AH-4 Zone in the Township of Mansfield. In order to facilitate compliance with the Township’s affordable housing obligations for the Fourth Round, it is recommended that the AH-4 Zone District be amended to include Lots 6, 7, and 8.01, and a portion of Lot 8, in addition to Lot 5. The total area of the AH-4 Zone would be 209 acres.

The property is an undeveloped qualified farm parcel, which is part of the larger Donaldson Farm site of approximately 280 acres. The Donaldson Farm Site is located along the west side of Allen Road, adjacent to the existing multi-family development known as “Alexandria” on the east side of Allen Road. The site is surrounded by farmland to the west and south and abuts the railroad right-of-way to the north. (See Map in Appendix.)

The expansion of the Donaldson Farm Site in the AH-4 Affordable Housing Zone District shall permit multi-family inclusionary housing at a density of 10 du/ac and a mandatory affordable housing set-aside of 20% regardless of tenure. The AH-4 is intended to allow the construction of up to 1,995 multi-family units, including 399 affordable housing units to satisfy the Third and Fourth Round obligations.

## 2. Prohibition of Short-Term Rentals

Short-term rentals for periods of 30 consecutive days or less undermines community cohesion, creates enforcement difficulties, and is inconsistent with the Township Master Plan's goal of preserving the existing housing stock and providing the opportunity for the development of a wider variety of housing types to meet the needs of different income and age levels, family compositions and lifestyles by removing existing housing stock from the market and thus negatively impacting the housing supply and prices for existing and future residents.

Therefore, it is recommended the zoning code be amended to prohibit short-term rentals in all zone districts be adopted.

## V. Recommendations Concerning the Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans

There are no recommendations concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans at this time.

## VI. Recommendations of the Land Use Board concerning locations appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure

As noted in the previous section, Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill 3223 titled "An Act concerning electric vehicles supply equipment and make-ready parking spaces and amending and supplementing P.L.1975, c.291 (C.40:55D-1 et seq.)" on July 9, 2021. This law amends the MLUL's definition of inherently beneficial to include electric vehicle charging infrastructure. It also amends the law to permit electric vehicle supply equipment as a permitted accessory use and structure in all zoning districts within a municipality and precludes variances. The law states that an application for the installation of electric vehicle supply equipment at an existing gas station, retail establishment, or any other existing building shall not be subject to site plan or other land use board review provided it does not violate any bulk requirements. Moreover, all applications involving five or more multi-family units must provide 15 percent of the parking spaces as "make-ready" spaces and install electric vehicle supply equipment in at least one-third of the 15 percent of "make-ready" spaces. For other uses where site plan approval is required, there are also requirements for parking lots containing certain numbers of spaces to provide "make-ready" and/or actual charging equipment. The act took effect immediately and any development applications filed after July 9, 2021, are subject to these requirements.

The above requirements will help to encourage the development of Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure as part of certain new developments; however, the Land Use Board recommends that the Township consider Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure at the following public facilities:

- Township Municipal Building

In addition to the above, while the Land Use Board acknowledges that certain aspects of EV charging cannot be regulated at the local level as it is superseded by state law. For those areas of EV charging infrastructure that are within the control of the Township, the Land Use Board makes the following recommendations:

1. Establishing appropriate setbacks, particularly when parking is permitted in the front yard.
2. Lighting requirements to ensure that no accessory lighting or digital displays associated with the charging infrastructure are visible from the property line.