



SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

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TO: Mayors and Elected Officials, Municipal Planning Board Chairs, Staff and Consultant Planners, Housing Administrators and other interested municipal representatives

FROM: Walter C. Lane, PP/AICP, Director of Planning

DATE: June 16, 2017

Re: Draft Updated Somerset County Master Plan - Housing Element

The Somerset County Planning Board is currently engaged in the process of updating the 1987 Housing Element of the County Master Plan. This project was launched in 2016 when County Planning staff engaged the public in the development of a Housing Trends Assessment Report, which provides a comprehensive platform for the updated plan. Building upon this report, the draft guiding principles, planning objectives and implementation strategies, which are the key components of the updated Housing Element emerged. These draft plan components were presented to county and municipal officials, stakeholder groups and the public starting in early 2017. They have been refined and enhanced, and are now contained in the Draft Somerset County Master Plan – Housing Element document, which is now available at: <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-works/planning/master-plan>.

The draft update is structured around the following six (6) guiding principles: 1) Respond to the changing needs of the County's population by encouraging a broad range of housing types at all levels of affordability, 2) Create healthy, attractive, walkable neighborhoods with proximity and access to jobs, cultural and recreational amenities, services and transportation choices, 3) Align housing policies and strategies with the principles of regional and local smart growth and sustainability, 4) Maximize the dynamic relationship between housing supply, quality of life and the strength of the economy, 5) Support efforts to advance the Federal and State Fair Housing Acts and "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing" requirements, and 6) Enable informed housing policy, regulatory and investment decision-making. It includes a crosswalk that links the Housing Element to the County Investment Framework Map, which is the central component of the County Master Plan that defines areas where policies and investments aimed at supporting growth and preservation are preferred, and which reinforces local master plan priorities.

Your participation in refining the draft updated Housing Element is encouraged. Please review the draft document and share your insights with us. Feedback received during the public involvement process will be used in the process of refining and finalizing the draft plan. Our goal is to adopt the plan this fall. Written comments can be submitted to me at PlanningBd@co.somerset.nj.us by **July 30, 2017**.

You are also invited to participate in a public meeting to be held on Wednesday, **June 28, 2017 at 6pm**, which will be held in the Freeholder Meeting Room, Third Floor, Somerset County Administration Building, 20 Grove Street, Somerville.

Thank you for sharing your knowledge and expertise with us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Cc: Somerset County Planning Board

- Mission Statement -

The County of Somerset is committed to excellence and innovation in public service, promoting the well-being of all residents and communities by providing effective, efficient and responsive leadership.

Somerset County Is An Equal Opportunity Employer