

July 9, 2007

Mr. Ted Largman
Chairman
Morris Township Environmental Commission

Dear Ted,

At the May EC meeting, you encouraged me to participate in the Re-exam of the 1994 Master Plan. I therefore submit the following comments and suggestions which speak to two elements of The Plan: Open Space and Land Use. I do not consider myself an expert in any topic or element addressed in The Plan. However, I hope my comments will serve as an example of an alternative way of thinking which could assist the drafters of the Re-exam. I see a connection between open space issues and how we deal with “density” and hope that our planning experts will develop my insight into something practical and useful in the Re-exam document.

A review of the 94 Open Space Element with the benefit of hindsight, leads me to the following comments.

- 1) Based upon a current inventory of developed and undeveloped land available for purchase, there needs to be plan/program to purchase small parcels (as small as single lot) in neighborhoods zoned multi unit or single family, RA35 or smaller lot size where there is lacking a form of open space within ½ mile. These parcels would be developed as sitting areas, playgrounds, gardens, picnic areas, playing fields, or fitness courses according to the demographics and needs of the neighborhood. They should be centrally located. They could be derived by razing a structure and returning the land to an open state. Existing recreation and Open Space Trust funds may cover the cost.
 - a) Where there is no form of open space within ½ mile and no opportunity to acquire or create some, the remedy is a plan to improve transportation and transportation safety to alternative sites. Hence, walkways, bikeways, crossing guards, patrols, shuttles, supervised activities make access easy and worthwhile.
 - b) Demographics should not be a reason to lower the bar for open space. For example, if a neighborhood is “gray”, open space is as important as in one with lots of small children. Therefore, I suggest that development of open space use “convertible” designs and plan a progression based upon expected changes in the needs of the neighborhood. For example, a public garden tended by the “neighborhood” could easily become a picnic area. An open field for T-ball could become a playground.

Review of the 94 Land Use element with the benefit of hindsight, leads me to the following comments.

- 1) The definition of “density” must be expanded so density can become a metric that informs us of the health of our community and allows us to set targets or limits or

find remedies, if we go too far. In addition to the max. density for a given zone, we need to understand the overall density of the Township. This density measurement would include highways, streets, driveways, buildings, residents, jobs, resident vehicles, commuter vehicles, public vehicles, towers and poles.

- a) The small, open space parcel plan described above is away to inject open space into pockets of high density.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Sincerely,

Ron Goldberg

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