



# 2017 Complete Streets Case Study

## Cape May County, New Jersey



# About

This report was developed by the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center of the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

The Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center (VTC) is a national leader in the research and development of innovative transportation policy. Located within the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, VTC has the full array of resources from a major research university on transportation issues of regional and national significance.

The New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center (BPRC) assists public officials, transportation and health professionals, and the public in creating a safer and more accessible walking and bicycling environment through primary research, education and dissemination of information about best practices in policy and design. The Center is supported by the New Jersey Department of Transportation through funds provided by the Federal Highway Administration.

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# Acknowledgments

The authors would like to extend special thanks to Leslie Gimeno, Cape May County Planning Director, and Dale Foster, Cape May County Engineer, for their invaluable insight into the history and implementation of Complete Streets in Cape May County.



Figure 1. A boardwalk to the beach, Cape May, New Jersey

# Table of Contents

2	<b>Introduction</b>
4	<b>Key Findings</b>
5	<b>Background</b>
7	Transportation
8	<b>Cape May County Transportation Network</b>
10	<b>Creating Complete Streets Successes in Cape May County</b>
10	Regional Pathways through Countywide Planning
10	Dedicated funding through the Open Space Program (2013)
10	Partnering with Municipalities
10	Identify ‘Highly Visible, Low-Hanging Fruit’
12	<b>Successes</b>
14	<b>Challenges</b>
14	Complete Streets Policy
14	Fluctuating Population
14	Limited Public Transportation
14	Environmental Concerns
14	High Costs for Degrading Infrastructure
16	<b>Next Steps</b>
16	Multi-Use Bridge:
16	County Bikeway Classification
16	Rio Grande Avenue Road Diet
16	Sunset Boulevard Safety Improvement Study
16	<b>Conclusion</b>
17	<b>Complete Streets Case Study: Appendices</b>
17	<b>Cape May County, New Jersey</b>
18	<b>Appendix: Open Space Program</b>



Figure 2. Victorian home in Cape May City



Figure 3. Downtown Cape May, New Jersey

# Introduction

In 2009, the New Jersey Department of Transportation adopted a Complete Streets policy which defined a complete street as one designed to provide safe access for all users by implementing a comprehensive integrated multi-modal network of transportation options. The benefits include increased safety for all users, connections between origins and destinations, and the promotion of healthier and more livable communities. Since the policy's adoption, Complete Streets has built momentum throughout the state. As of December 2017, 8 counties and 139 municipalities have followed the lead and adopted their own local Complete Streets policy.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center, part of the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, has developed a series of case studies intended to highlight Complete Streets leaders in New Jersey. The first round of case studies was published in 2016 and focused on Passaic County, the Borough of Somerville, and Cherry Hill Township and can be found on the BPRC website ([njbikeped.org](http://njbikeped.org)). The purpose of this report, funded by the New Jersey Department of Transportation, is to highlight Cape May County's Complete Streets achievements. The report is based on findings provided in interviews with Leslie Gimeno, Cape May County Planning Director, and Dale Foster, Cape May County Engineer.

Cape May County utilizes a dedicated funding source to support and promote Complete Streets initiatives throughout the county. The Open Space Program, expanded in 2013 to include recreation projects, provides an incentive for the county's 16 municipalities to incorporate Complete Streets into their infrastructure improvement plans. In addition to the dedicated funding source, the county's economy provides a unique opportunity for Complete Streets and active transportation to flourish. The county's tourism economy brings heavy pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the summer months, which has ensured that alternative modes of transportation have been an important consideration throughout the county.

The report begins with a summary of key findings followed by background information including historical, demographic and land use data collected from county and Census documents. This information is essential in understanding the context of Complete Streets in Cape May County. The report then explores the implementation of Complete Streets in Cape May County, including the county's innovative funding program. Successes and challenges are then highlighted for the benefit of other communities looking to implement Complete Streets and a number of next steps provide readers with insight into the county's future Complete Street efforts. The research team hopes that this report will serve as a valuable tool for engineers, planners, elected officials, and advocates who want to move forward with Complete Streets in their communities.

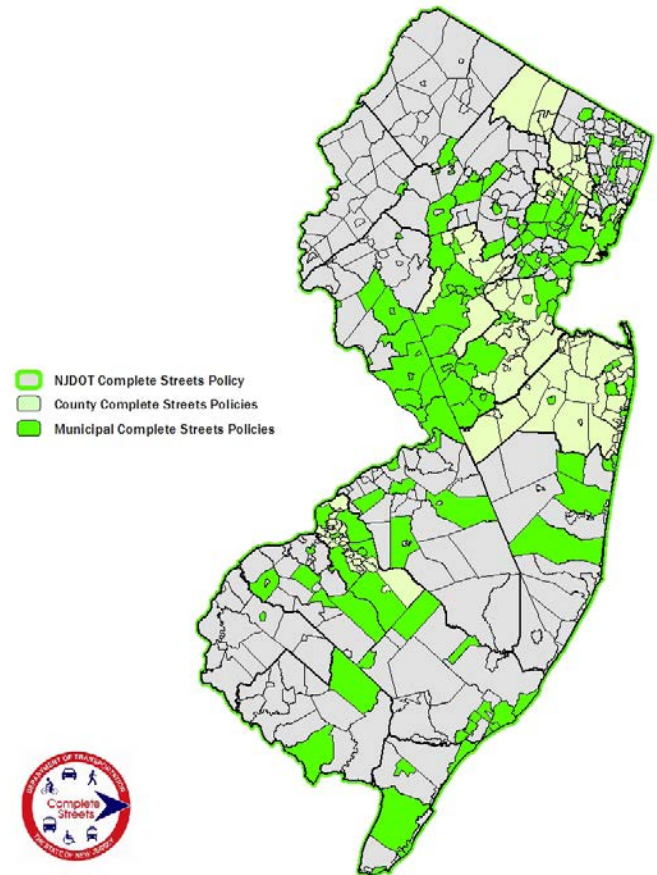


Figure 4. Map of New Jersey's Complete Streets policies

## Complete Streets in New Jersey

New Jersey is a national leader in the campaign to complete the streets. According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, New Jersey ranked 1st nationally in terms of local policy adoption in addition to NJDOT's award-winning internal policy.

- 1 statewide award-winning policy
- 8 out of 21 counties have a policy
- 141 out of 565 municipalities have a policy
- 42% of New Jersey residents are covered by a municipal Complete Streets policy
- 52% of New Jersey residents are covered by a county Complete Streets policy

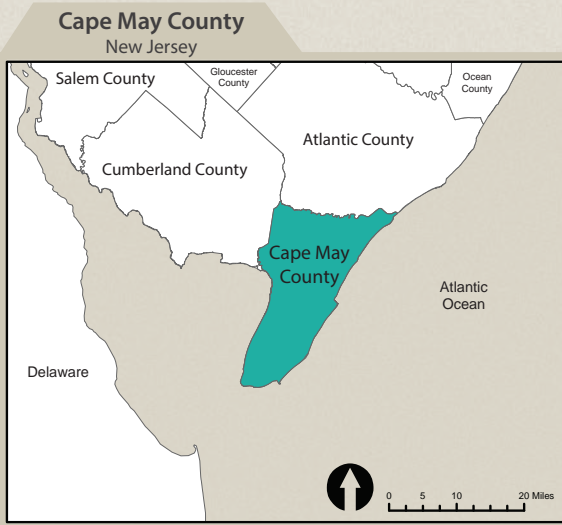
As of January 20, 2018

# Cape May County, New Jersey

## Complete Streets



### Background Data, 2015



### Population

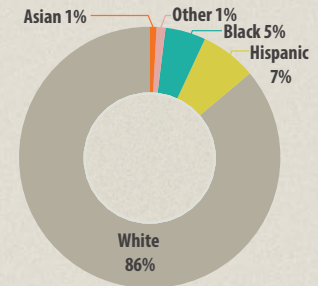
**95,405**  
**RESIDENTS**  
7.8 X higher  
in Summer

**48 Yrs**  
9 years above the  
state average.

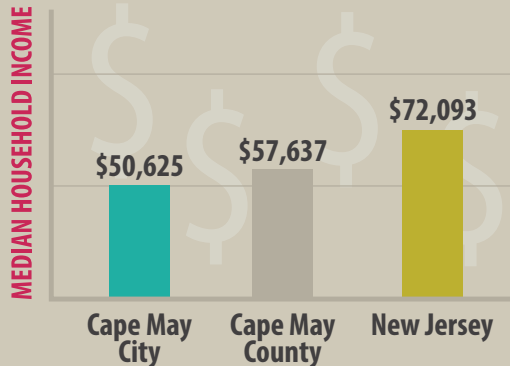
### DENSITY

1,478 Cape May City  
153 Cape May County  
1,210 New Jersey

### RACE/ETHNICITY

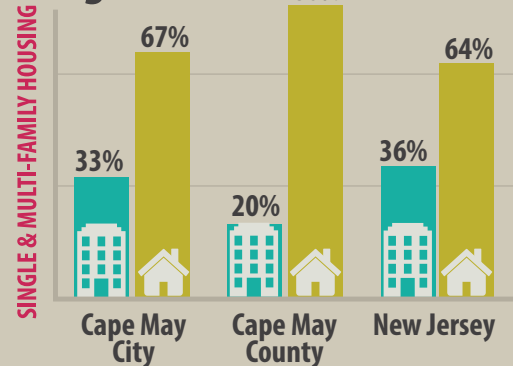


### Economics



**\$17,184** RETAIL SALES  
PER PERSON  
which is slightly more than the state average

### Housing



The proportion of walking commutes is  
**3X HIGHER** than New Jersey



### Cape May, NJ



### Commute time to work

Cape May County  
22 minutes



New Jersey  
31 Minutes



# Key Findings

**1. Creating a Countywide Plan:** Bicycle and pedestrian needs have long been included in Cape May County's transportation initiatives. Not only has the county benefited from setting an example that promotes Complete Streets that consider alternative transportation, they have been proactive in promoting countywide planning. From their 2006 Transportation Master Plan to the findings from the 2008 inventory and analysis, regional planning has been a key component to Complete Streets in the county.

**2. Open Space Program's Dedicated Funding:** The Open Space Program provides dedicated funding that encourages communities to design and implement Complete Streets improvements.

**3. Partnering with Municipalities:** Cape May County maintains a supportive and productive relationship with each of its municipalities and works closely with them throughout the design process.

#### 4. Successes:

- **Middle Township Bicycle Path and Pedestrian Trail**
- **Diamond Beach Path and Entranceway to the U.S. National Wildlife Refuge**
- **West Avenue Road Diet**

#### 5. Challenges:

- **Lack of countywide Complete Streets policy**
- **Fluctuating populations**
- **Limited public transportation**
- **Environmental concerns**
- **High costs for replacing degrading bridge infrastructure**

#### 6. Next Steps:

- **Multi-Use Bridge**
- **County Bikeway Classification**
- **Rio Grande Avenue Road Diet**
- **Sunset Boulevard Safety Improvement Study**



Figure 5. Users of all types enjoying Cape May City's boardwalk area



Figure 6. Bike path sign near the Cape May Zoo

# Background

Cape May County is the state’s southernmost county and the second least populated county in New Jersey. Throughout the winter months, the county is home to approximately 94,430 residents across 251 square miles (see Table 1). In the summer months, the population surges to roughly 800,000, making Cape May County the third most populated county in the state during the tourist season from June to September. Additionally, the summer tourist season leaves the county with a density nearly three times that of New Jersey (3,182 people per square mile as compared to 1,195 for the state).

In addition to the county’s drastic population changes and large tourism economy, Cape May County is unique in a variety of ways:

**History:** Cape May County has a long and rich history, with the first settlers arriving in the 1600’s. The county is also home to Cape May City, with its iconic Victorian buildings situated along narrow cobblestone roadways. Originally designed for horse-drawn carriages, these historic roads have since been retrofitted to accommodate modern vehicles, but their historic character remains a popular draw for bicyclists and pedestrians.

**Topography:** Located at sea level, Cape May County is home to a number of scenic areas, waterways, and wetlands. Its flat terrain influences a variety of unique transportation options and leisure activities, including miles of easily accessible boardwalks and trails.

**Transportation:** Cape May County’s extensive network of waterways and bridges offer unique transportation opportunities (see Figure 12 and additional details on page 7). The Cape May-Lewes Ferry provides interstate connections to Delaware. Several bridges in the county have been transformed, or are currently under construction, to include pedestrian and bicycle lanes that cross over extensive waterways. The Route 52 Causeway connecting Somers Point in Atlantic County with Ocean City in Cape May County, was recently upgraded and has been lauded as both a major transportation improvement and an area attraction. A similar multiuse bridge expansion is currently underway on the Garden State Parkway (see Figure 24), which will become a part of a larger connectivity initiative of multiuse trails that will eventually span throughout Cape May and Atlantic counties.

**Access to Nature:** The area serves as a destination for travelers from Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington D.C., and New York looking to access the region’s outdoor attractions. The county houses extensive open space, including 30 miles of beaches, areas designated for wildlife protection, national recreation areas, and state and local parks.

Cape May County features an array of diverse neighborhoods varying both in character and population density. In more urban areas such as Cape May City, large ornate Victorian homes are densely situated on narrow tree-lined roads. These areas typically have a population density of nearly 1,500 people per square mile. Dennis Township, in contrast, provides a rural setting with suburban housing and just over 100 people per square mile (see Figure 7). A significant proportion of Cape May County’s land is utilized for natural purposes, such as preservation, agriculture or recreation, while only a small portion is utilized for residential purposes (see Figure 8).

The county’s identity is shaped as much by its historic and natural attractions as it is by its tourism economy. Cape May City advertises itself as “The nation’s oldest seashore resort,” according to the city’s tagline. The 2016 Cape May County Tourism Report stated that tourism represented 56.6 percent of the county’s private employment and garnered more than \$530 million in taxes in 2015. With thousands of tourists traveling throughout the county during the summer months, the county has always paid particular attention to the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. In fact, Cape May City was the first place in New Jersey to convert a car-oriented street into a pedestrian plaza—The Washington Street Mall—in 1971.

Considering Cape May County’s large tourism economy, with summer rentals of beach properties throughout the shore communities, it is surprising to see that owner-occupied housing comprises a significantly larger proportion of county residents (77%) as compared to the state proportion (64.1%, as shown in Table 1). The average home value in Cape May County is approximately \$20,000 below the state average with concentrations of high median household incomes located in central Cape May County (see Figure 9). A majority of Cape May County’s housing stock is comprised of single-family homes (78%) with a significant majority of residents living in a home they own, rather than rent.

Table 1. Comparison of population and housing

Metric	Cape May County	New Jersey
Land area	251.4 mi <sup>2</sup>	7,355 mi <sup>2</sup>
Population	94,430	8,958,013
Population per square mile	375.6	1,195.5
Median Household Income	\$59,338	\$73,702
Retail Sales per capita	\$17,184	\$14,992
Avg. Walk Score	37 (Car Dependent)	-
Owner-Occupied Housing	77%	64.1%
Median Home Value	\$296,100	\$316,400
Median Rent	\$1,045	\$1,213
Persons Below Poverty Line	10.4%	10.9%
Median Age	48.4	39.5
Single-Family Housing	78%	64.1%
Multi-Family Housing	23.6%	35.9%

US Census Bureau, 2017

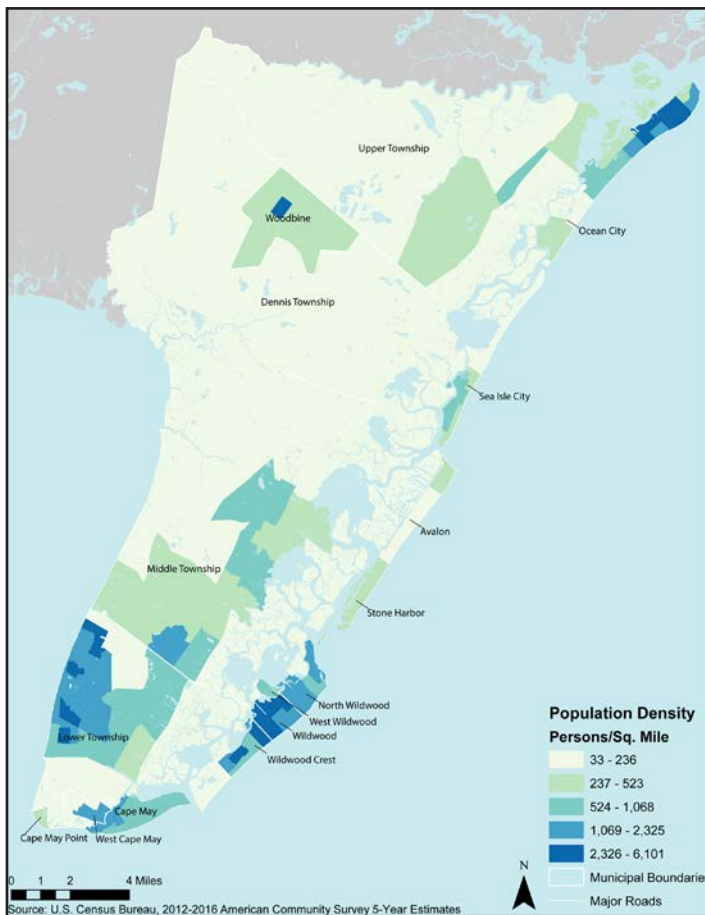


Figure 7. Cape May County Population Density Map

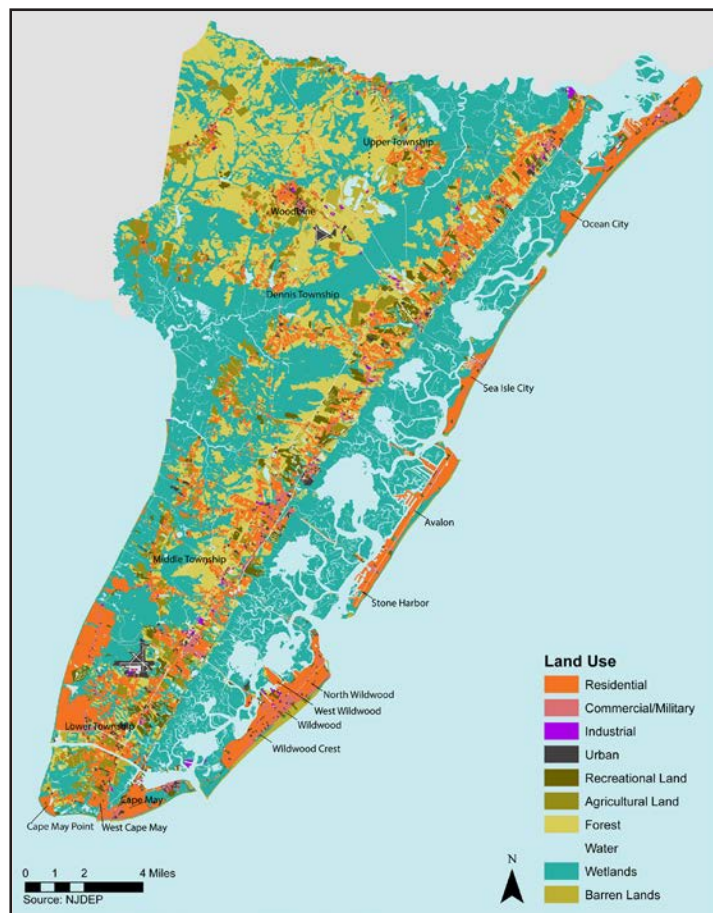


Figure 8. Cape May County Land Use Map, 2012

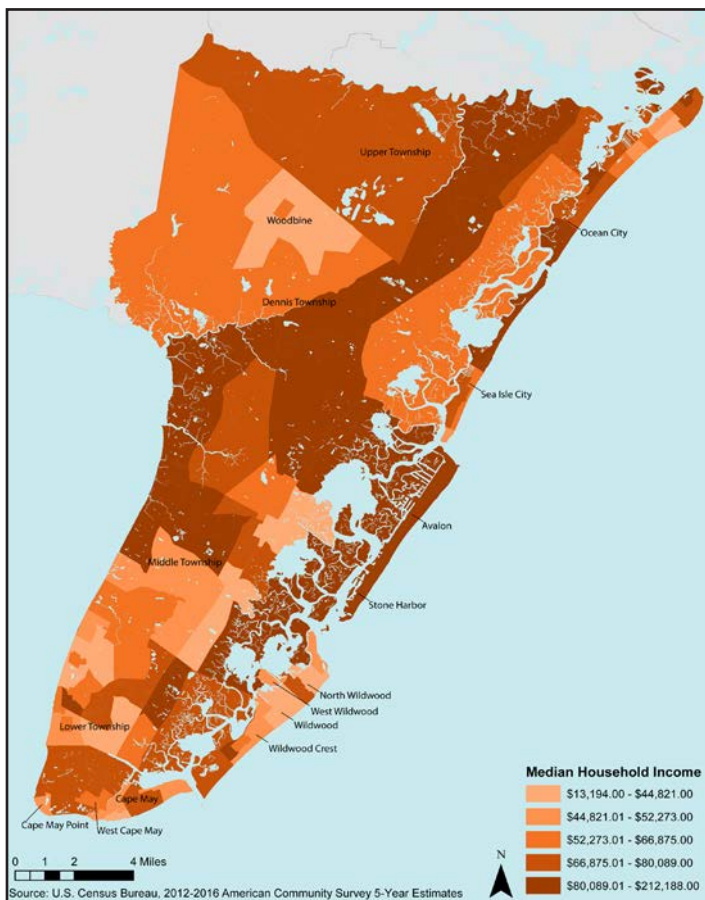


Figure 9. Map of median household income in Cape May County

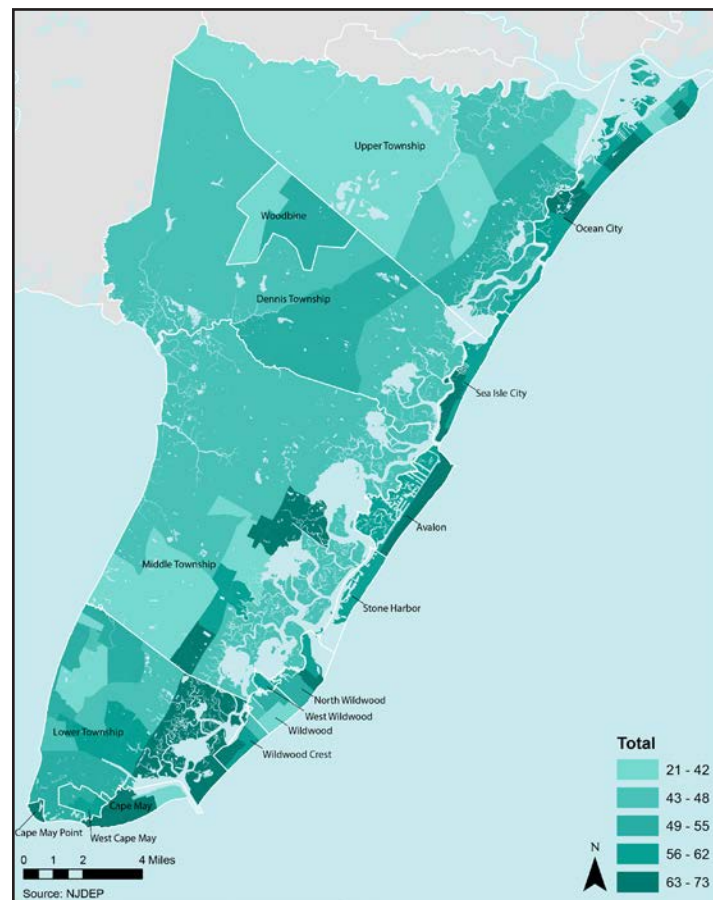


Figure 10. Median age of residents in Cape May County

In addressing Cape May County’s context and character, it is important to look at the makeup of the county’s population for which Complete Streets will serve. The county’s median age is 48.4, nearly a decade older than the New Jersey average (see Table 1 ). Additionally, there are pockets of communities within the county with median ages above 63 years (see Figure 10). One striking data point in the county’s population is that more than nine out of ten residents are White (see Table 2). In fact, the percentage of White residents is nearly twice that of New Jersey as a whole. Meanwhile, the proportion of Black or African American residents is less than half the state average while Asians represent only 1.3 percent of Cape May County’s population. Additionally, only 7.2 percent of the county’s population is Hispanic or Latino.

Table 2. Comparison of race and ethnicity of residents

Metric	Cape May County	New Jersey
White	91.2%	57%
Black	4.6%	12.8%
Native American	0.7%	0.3%
Asian	1.3%	8.3%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.1%
Two or More races	1.7%	2.7%
Hispanic or Latino	7.2%	17.7%

US Census Bureau, 2017

Cape May County is facing an aging population (48.4 years), with an average age nearly ten years greater than that of the state (see Figure 10). Less than one third of county residents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher (31.5%) and the county’s median household income is below \$60,000. The median household income is approximately \$12,000 below the state average, yet the average rental price in the county is just about even with the state average (see Table 1). Despite these challenges, the proportion of people living below the poverty line is approximately one in ten for both the county and the state (10.4% and 10.9%, respectively). This may be attributed to a high proportion of low-wage service jobs in the tourism economy where workers may not necessarily need a college-degree and are able to earn wages above the poverty line.

### Transportation

Cape May County’s large swaths of open space and numerous dense cities provide a variety of transportation benefits. Residents of Cape May County report much shorter average commute times (22.5 minutes) than the state average (31.2 minutes), as shown in Table 5. Active transportation is much more common in Cape May County than across the state. The proportion of people who walk to work in Cape May County is nearly twice that of the state. In addition, a larger proportion of people bicycle to work in Cape May County compared to the state as a whole. However, public transportation in the county is utilized significantly less than the state average (2% in Cape May County as compared to 11.2% throughout the state, see Table 3). Public transit is limited in the county, even when considering lines that operate on seasonal This can be attributed to limited service, with a number of bus lines operating on seasonal schedules.

Cape May County is bisected by two major highways. The Garden State Parkway terminates in Cape May County at the famous Exit 0 and connects northern New Jersey and New York to the Jersey shore. US Route 9 runs parallel to the Garden State Parkway and begins in Delaware. It continues across the Delaware Bay via the Cape May-Lewes ferry and extends north through eastern New Jersey to New York. County Route 47, or Delsea Drive, connects the county with southwestern New Jersey. Limited NJ Transit bus lines run throughout the county, including service to Philadelphia, New York, and various locations throughout New Jersey. While Cape May County houses several major highways, its greatest transportation achievements in recent years have related to pedestrian and bicycle improvements, including projects of all sizes from multi-million-dollar bridge upgrades to large-scale regional trail projects to upgrades along several blocks of local roadways. These improvements have made active transportation a safe option for users throughout the county.



Figure 11. Bicyclist enjoying the bicycle lane on Rt 9/Lincoln Blvd.

Table 3. Transportation to Work

	Cape May County	New Jersey
Avg. Commute Time	22.5 min.	31.2 min.
Drove Alone	78.9%	71.9%
Carpooled	6.0%	8.1%
Public Transit	2.0%	11.2%
Bicycle	2.2%	0.3%
Walk	5.3%	3.0%
Worked at Home	4.3%	4.1%

US Census Bureau, 2017

# Cape May Transportation Network



Figure 12. Map showing major transportation links throughout Cape May



Figure 13. Bicyclist utilizing a shared lane in Cape May County, NJ

# Creating Complete Streets Successes

## Regional Pathways through Countywide Planning

Bicycle and pedestrian needs have long been included in Cape May County's transportation planning. In 2002, Cape May County officially opened the Cold Spring multiuse path, which utilizes the Atlantic City Electric right-of-way and serves as the longest county-owned trail. The trail, along with various disjointed trails throughout the county, created a starting point for the regional plan that would soon be implemented.

In 2008, Cross County Connection Transportation Management Association (CCC) conducted a Bicycle Facilities Inventory and Analysis for Cape May County. The inventory promoted opportunities for a "region-wide network of bicycle facilities that, in conjunction with public transit, can be used by commuters to reach employment and other destinations throughout the region" (CCC, 2008). While the report focuses on a regional network of trails to support commuting, the benefits of the network can be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike, regardless of their destination. The network gaps highlighted in CCC's inventory and analysis provided the basis for moving forward with plans to implement a regional trail network. Implementation of such plans required support from the county and state as well as excellent communication and collaboration across jurisdictions. Coordination efforts have been so successful that plans are being considered to extend the network into neighboring counties.

## Dedicated funding through the Open Space Program (2013)

Cape May County's dedication to alternative modes of transportation gained momentum in the early 1990's through the utilization of ISTEA money (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991), which provided funding opportunities for active transportation. More than a decade later, as county elected officials sought better ways to support local municipalities, the expansion of the Open Space Program was put into place to help fund opportunities for Cape May County's municipalities to improve access to the area's communities and their assets.

The fund brings in approximately \$4.8 million annually from the dedicated tax. The program's healthy growth has allowed municipalities to apply for funds without competing for them. If a project is approved by the board, funding is provided as a lump sum after inspection of the completed work. The program does not provide funding for maintenance and all project applications must include a detailed maintenance plan, including a budget and proof of funding. Annual inspections of grant-funded projects ensure that such maintenance is sufficiently carried out.

## Partnering with Municipalities

Cape May County is home to just 16 municipalities and is able to maintain strong relationships with each of them. While the county has led the way in promoting Complete Streets on county roads, they rely on municipalities to submit projects for the Open Space Program. Working closely with municipalities throughout the design process also allows the county to maintain a supportive and productive relationship with each municipality. These relationships have helped to promote county-wide projects that span multiple municipalities.

## Identify 'Highly Visible, Low-Hanging Fruit'

Much like Passaic County in the 2016 case study, Cape May County noted the importance of starting small and identifying projects that could be considered 'low-hanging fruit.' The simplest of which is incorporating Complete Streets improvements into resurfacing projects. In the early 1990's, Cape May County started to focus on planning for alternative modes of transportation. The first project, the Cold Spring Bikeway, was located in a visible area with a lot of usage. The county utilized an electric right-of-way as a starting point to gain support for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Once the path was completed, interest grew for more infrastructure. The county realized that with each project's completion, demand grew for even more projects. County Engineer, Dale Foster, noted that by "starting with sensible projects and a 'build it and they will use it' mentality" the county was able to create momentum. In fact, when the county resurfaced Bay Avenue, bicyclists were using the designated bicycle lane before it was even completed, when it was just a traced outline.



Figure 14. Bicyclist enjoying the bicycle lane on Rt 9/Lincoln Blvd.



Figure 15. Bicycle and Pedestrian infrastructure in the county highlights the natural beauty of the area



Figure 16. Washington Street Pedestrian Mall, Cape May City, NJ



Figure 17. Washington Street Pedestrian Mall, Cape May City, NJ



Figure 18. Pedestrian infrastructure in downtown Cape May City

# Successes

County Planning Director, Leslie Gimeno, called the Open Space Program, “a tremendous asset that really tipped the scales in favor of Complete Streets.” Just four years after the expansion of the Open Space Program, a number of successes have been achieved throughout the county.

## Middle Township Bicycle Path & Pedestrian Trail

**Project Duration:** Long-term, completed in phases over several years  
**Cost Estimate:** \$1.75 million  
**Source of Funding:** Cape May County Open Space Program and NJDOT

The Middle Township Pathway is evidence of Cape May County’s commitment to regional bicycle and pedestrian connectivity. This ten-foot wide paved pathway provides 7.5 miles of off-road trails connecting the Cape May County Zoo to the Rio Grande section of Middle Township. From there, the trail connects with the Cold Spring Path for an additional 3.9 miles of off-road trails before merging with Sandman Boulevard where on-road bicycle lanes provide connections to the Cape May-Lewes Ferry and Cape May City. In 2015, the final section of the trail was unveiled, marking the completion of the project which took over a decade and provides approximately 15 miles of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure throughout the county.

Middle Township’s Mayor Tim Donohue noted in a press release that the township was “proud to have created what will likely become the spine of a comprehensive, regional bike path that will serve as an invaluable amenity for so many.” Plans then began to extend the trail northward into Upper Township. In the spring of 2017, the county’s Open Space Board approved over \$2 million in funding for such an expansion, which will occur on the Atlantic Electric Company’s right-of-way.



Figure 19. Middle Township Bike Path and Walking Trail



Figure 20. Middle Township Bike Path and Walking Trail



Figure 21. Middle Township Bike Path and Walking Trail



Figure 22. Diamond Beach Path Entranceway, Lower Township

Figure 23. West Avenue road diet, Ocean City

## Diamond Beach Path and Entranceway to U.S. National Wildlife Refuge, Two Mile Beach Unit

**Project Duration:** Short-term, completed in conjunction with resurfacing projects  
**Cost Estimates:** \$262,393  
**Source of Funding:** Cape May County Open Space Program

The Diamond Beach Path in Lower Township provides a safe connection for bicyclists and pedestrians between Wildwood Crest, Lower Township's Diamond Beach, and the U.S. National Wildlife Refuge (see Figure 22). The project displays the county's commitment on filling important gaps in the active transportation connectivity network. Making the connection required obtaining a right of way on Seaview Avenue and installing a dedicated bicycle lane on either side of the travel lanes that transitions into sharrows (shared-lane markings) further north. Seaview Avenue is a two-lane roadway that runs north-south from Wildwood Crest down to the entrance of the U.S. Wildlife Refuge between Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Avenue.

Seaview Avenue is lined with small single-family beach bungalows. From Seaview Avenue, pedestrians and bicyclists may turn on East Rambler Road, where bicycle lanes continue, before reaching the entrance to the Wildwood Crest Pathway. The pathway runs along the oceanfront to the beginning of the boardwalk in front of the Wildwood Convention Center. The pathway provides more than four miles of active transportation connectivity for residents and visitors of the Wildwoods and Lower Township.

## West Avenue Road Diet

**Project Duration:** Short-term, completed in conjunction with resurfacing projects  
**Cost Estimates:** Varies depending on sharrow style and is usually included in a full resurfacing project  
**Source of Funding:** NJDOT; Passaic County Corridor Enhancement Program

The West Avenue road diet in Ocean City (see Figure 23), is evidence of the county's commitment to incorporating Complete Streets upgrades into resurfacing projects throughout the county. West Avenue is a north-south roadway that runs parallel to Ocean City Beach from Battersea Road to 59th Street. West Avenue is an important connector that dissects the barrier island from north to south. It is densely lined with multi-family housing. Originally, the roadway comprised four lanes of vehicular traffic. In 2015, the county resurfaced the section between 35th Street and 59th Street. The road diet included eliminating one lane of traffic and creating a center turning lane, such that only one lane remains for vehicular traffic in either direction. Two five-foot buffered bicycle lanes now exist on either side of the roadway between the vehicular travel lanes and on-street parking. In addition to providing bicycle infrastructure on the busy roadway, the county hopes to achieve better safety for pedestrians by calming traffic that was often moving faster than the stated 35-mile-per-hour speed limit.

The county's West Avenue road diet has even inspired residents and members of the local Bike Ocean City advocacy group to call on the municipality to make similar improvements along other roadways. Namely, residents and bicycle advocates have called on the municipality to implement similar upgrades on Ninth Street, the busy main entrance to the barrier island.

# Challenges

While Cape May County has witnessed a number of successes, understanding some of their greatest challenges could help other communities prepare for and overcome possible obstacles.

## Complete Streets Policy

Although current staff and elected officials have worked to ensure that Complete Streets considerations are included in roadway improvements and plans, the county has yet to pass a Complete Streets Policy. These priorities have been driven by the county's tourism economy, which highlights every summer the need for roadways that are bicycle and pedestrian compatible. The lack of policy has not caused problems as of yet, which is attributable to the Complete Street Champions currently working with the county and the incentive provided in the Open Space Program. Still, the potential for future problems looms as new employees and elected officials step into office. A Complete Streets Policy would provide institutionalized assurance, beyond that of the funding program, that Complete Streets ideals will be promoted in all projects moving forward.

## Fluctuating Population

With a population that fluctuates from under 100,000 to over 800,000\* during the tourist season, the county is presented with the challenge of accommodating the transportation needs of its summer guests without over-burdening the county's natural resources or those resources raised by its year-round residents. In addition, the county noted the population changes as a major challenge to expanding public transportation options.

## Limited Public Transportation

Public transportation is one area of Complete Streets where Cape May County falls behind. While fluctuating populations create unique challenges for public transportation, there is still much that can be done to ensure that all modes of transportation flourish throughout the county.

## Environmental Concerns

One of Cape May County's greatest attractions, its access to nature, also causes some of the county's greatest challenges when retrofitting older roadways for pedestrian and bicycle use. Considerations for protected habitats, flood hazards, and other environmentally protected areas require additional time and resources to develop creative solutions that address the county's transportation issues without negative impacts on county's natural resources. While county officials noted environmental issues as a major challenge, they have been very successful in supporting Complete Streets projects that have maintained the county's pristine natural resources and habitats.

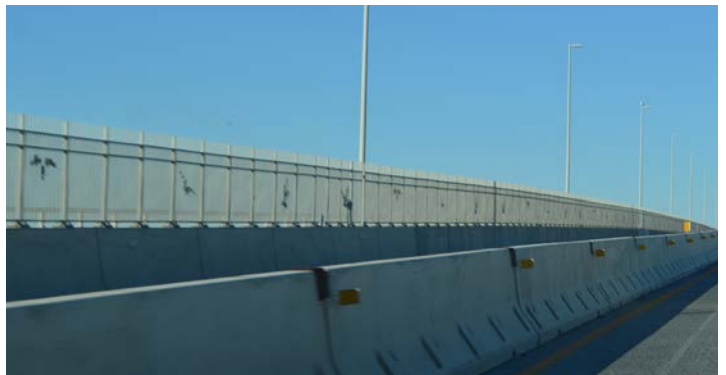
## High Costs for Degrading Infrastructure

Connecting communities across Cape May County's shoreline is more of a challenge than for the inland municipalities connected by trails like that of Middle Township. Providing pedestrian and bicycle connections amongst these coastal communities often requires the use of bridges or causeways. In the case of the Route 52 Causeway, connecting Sommers Point in Atlantic County to Cape May County's Ocean City, rebuilding the bridge with dedicated bicycle and pedestrian lanes equated to a total cost of \$400 million, NJDOT's largest infrastructure project in South Jersey. County efforts to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure on a much smaller bridge just two miles south were found to be cost-prohibitive. In a county where numerous bridges are in dire condition, there is little room in the budget for providing pedestrian and bicycle enhancements, even if they could attract visitors and ensure safety for alternative modes of transportation.

*\* According to the Cape May County Planning Department and US Census Bureau*



**Figure 24.** Construction on the Garden State Parkway Causeway with bicycle and pedestrian features



**Figure 25.** Bicycle and Pedestrian path along the Garden State Parkway Causeway



Figure 26. Sidewalks near downtown Cape May

# Next Steps

Cape May County is continuing to build momentum with a number of Complete Streets projects currently being considered. The following list provides just a small selection of these diverse county projects.

## Multi-Use Bridge:

Some of Cape May County's most photographed spots are located near the county's many waterways. The benefits of these waterways comes with a cost, though. Connecting communities throughout the county requires a number of bridges of varying sizes. The county is currently working on a multi-use bridge that will provide a connection for pedestrians and bicyclists from Marmora to Ocean City. Additionally, bridge upgrades along the Garden State Parkway include plans for a multiuse path that connects Upper Township to Somers Point in Atlantic County. The Parkway bridge, however, will not be completed until 2019 at a cost of \$192.7 million. It is expected to develop into an attraction that will rival the nearby Route 52 Causeway between Somers Point and Ocean City.

## County Bikeway Classification:

The county is currently working with Taylor Design Group to develop a classification system for the county's bikeways. The system will provide users with much-needed information regarding the level of difficulty of each trail. The wayfinding signs will let riders know which trails are safe for children and highlight trails which require highway crossings. The goal of the program is to ensure that bicyclists have all the information they need to make educated route decisions. While the system will benefit everyone in Cape May County, it is particularly important given the many visitors who travel by bicycle in areas that they may not be particularly familiar. The project is expected to be completed in the fall of 2018.

## Rio Grande Avenue Road Diet:

Rio Grande Avenue is a county road that serves as the entrance into Wildwood. The \$10 million project will address flooding issues while improving safety for all users. Initial renderings include extending sidewalks from four feet to 11 feet, installing bicycle lanes, and installing a pull-off for the NJ Transit bus line. Included in the designs for the bus pull-off is an area designated as a small city park. The project is expected to be completed in time for the summer crowds arriving for Memorial Day weekend in 2019.

## Sunset Boulevard Safety Improvement Study:

Sunset Boulevard is Cape May County's most heavily bicycled roadway, witnessing more than 200 bicycles an hour in the summer months, but it currently lacks infrastructure to support the many bicyclists, pedestrians and skaters that travel along this scenic roadway. It was highlighted in Cape May City's 2016 Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan as a roadway in need of improvement. The county has hired engineers at NV5 to conduct a survey and assessment that will guide innovative improvements.

# Conclusion

Cape May County has ensured the proliferation of active transportation by prioritizing Complete Streets initiatives throughout the county. The county's commitment to regional active transportation planning has helped build and maintain momentum in the implementation of county-wide bicycle and pedestrian plans. Additionally, their creative use of the Open Space Program has sent a clear message to their municipalities that there is not only support, but also funding for projects that prioritize safety for alternative modes of transportation. The funds have opened the door to projects that otherwise could not have been completed under tight budgets. The county has also lead by example, ensuring that all resurfacing projects consider opportunities to provide safer travel for pedestrians and bicyclists. The numerous innovative projects that are expected in the near future from throughout the county provide inspiration to counties throughout the region.



Figure 27. Cape May City Administration Building in Cape May Court House, NJ



# Complete Streets Case Study: Appendix

## Cape May County, New Jersey





## **Cape May County Open Space Program**

### **PROGRAM GUIDE - 2017**

\*\*\*UPDATED 3/9/17\*\*\*

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## **Cape May County Open Space Program PROGRAM GUIDE - 2017**

### **Program Introduction:**

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1989, the voters of Cape May County approved, by a two to one margin, a ballot question endorsing the establishment of a trust fund to preserve open space and agricultural land. The trust is funded by a County property tax of one cent per \$100 assessed valuation (known as the Open Space Preservation Tax) and currently generates approximately \$5 million annually. Once the funds were in place, the County established the Division of Open Space and Farmland Preservation to administer the program, which focused on the outright purchase of open space parcels, and the purchase of development rights on active agricultural lands from willing sellers. From 1989 to 2015, the County was successful in purchasing 1,251 acres of open space (\$27,050,304 spent) and deed restricting 3,163 acres of farmland (\$35,147,903 spent). This has resulted in the permanent preservation of 4,414 acres through the utilization of nearly \$62 million of Trust Fund dollars.

In 1997, the State of New Jersey passed a number of laws which expanded the potential function of the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund programs to include recreation and historic preservation. In 2012, the County met with municipal representatives and collectively came to the conclusion that it was in the best interest of the municipalities, their residents, and visitors to consider the expansion of the program. Therefore, a thorough review of the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Program was conducted, and new program documents were developed. Each year, the Open Space Review Board revisits its policies and procedures based on information provided by stakeholders, and updates this Program Guide and all application materials. This ensures that the Program is meeting the needs of those it is intended to serve in an efficient and effective manner.

This Program Guide reflects the goals, policies, and objectives of the Cape May County Open Space Board. The Farmland Preservation Program is operated under the guidelines provided by the State of New Jersey and the State Agriculture Development Committee. However, this level of guidance for the Open Space Program was not provided through the State or required by legislation; therefore each County's Open Space Program is different. The purpose of this document is to provide a well defined framework for the Open Space portion of the County's overall program.

The decision to expand the Open Space Program into the realms of recreation and historic preservation beginning in 2013 has helped to enhance and protect our collective community assets, providing quality of life and economic stabilization benefits. Since that time, a diverse array projects have come into fruition and have been added to our County's collection of resources for enjoyment by our many residents and visitors.

## **SECTION 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS**

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### **Purpose and Objectives:**

The purpose of the Cape May County Open Space and Farmland Preservation Program is to permanently preserve public land of county significance and to support current and future regional conservation, recreation, community enhancement, and historic preservation needs throughout the County. The Program will interact with municipal officials and other stakeholders to identify community and regional needs and will utilize program funds to establish a diverse yet interconnected network of public spaces.

Program objectives are as follows:

- Permanently preserve regionally significant public open spaces and natural resources for recreation and/or conservation purposes
- Preserve active farmland throughout the County to maintain the viability of the County's agriculture industry
- Provide amenities at regional parks and recreation areas to meet local service needs
- Preserve and enhance historic resources
- Provide needed spaces and amenities for community enhancement
- Partner with local municipalities to provide funding for local open space, farmland preservation, recreation, or historic preservation initiatives, including the repayment of local debt service for these purposes

## **SECTION 2: ELIGIBILITY**

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### **Program Eligibility:**

The following entities are eligible to apply for funding:

- Private Property Owners (Farmland Easements or Open Space Land Acquisition only)
- Cape May County's 16 municipalities
- Agencies or Departments of County Government
- Non-Profit Organizations with missions directly related to Historic Preservation (*for Historic Preservation projects only*)

### **Eligible Projects:**

Eligible purposes, as defined by public law (N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.2 et seq), and approved by the Board of Chosen Freeholders may include the following:

1. Acquisition of land for conservation and recreation purposes
2. Development of lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes
3. Acquisition of farmland or acquisition of development easements for farmland preservation purposes
4. Historic preservation of historic properties, buildings, facilities, sites, or areas; "structures", as defined by the Department of the Interior, National Park Service are eligible on a limited basis (see Section 7 below)
5. Payment of debt service on indebtedness issued or incurred by the county or municipality for any of

the purposes set forth above

Any funded projects must be open and accessible to the general public. A long-term management / maintenance agreement with the County of Cape May, dictating the terms of accessibility and usage of the site will be required.

### **Ineligible Projects:**

The following purposes are considered ineligible to receive funding from the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund:

1. Any maintenance, care, custodial, equipment (trucks, tractors, boats, etc.) or policing expenditures associated with active and passive recreation and historic sites
2. Lands that are and will remain predominantly covered by buildings or structures not appropriate for environmental education, recreational use, or historic preservation
3. Projects that will have a significant adverse impact on environmental resources or open space values.
4. “Soft costs”, such as engineering, architectural, surveys, permits, licensing fees, environmental analyses, audits, administration, operational costs, including in-kind services (salaries and wages) of the applicant, unless otherwise specified through the terms and conditions of an application being submitted under a “Special Dedicated Funding Round”
5. Any costs incurred prior to the submission of the application; please note that the issuance of a purchase order and/or the award of a contract shall constitute the incurrence of costs

## **SECTION 3: APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS**

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### **Application Deadlines:**

Applications for Land Acquisition, Park/Recreation Development, and Historic Preservation Programs will be accepted three times per calendar year. Decisions on the applications will be made prior to the beginning of the next funding cycle. In 2017, the dates are as follows:

- Monday, April 17<sup>th</sup>
- Tuesday, August 15<sup>th</sup>
- Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup>

In 2017, it is anticipated that there will be a Special Funding Round. As of the date of this publication, details are not yet available. Please check the website for an updated Program Guide prior to the development of applications for the August and December, 2017 Funding Rounds.

**An application must be received by the Cape May County Planning Department by 4:00 pm on those dates; failure to do so will automatically defer the project until the next funding round.**

All applications received during the application period will be reviewed for completeness. Once deemed complete, the applications will be pooled and reviewed by the Open Space Board. Application review will commence at the first regular meeting of the Open Space Board following the application deadline. Applicants will be scheduled for brief (5-7 minute) presentations during the specific meeting where their application is being reviewed. Decisions on all applications in the pool will be made prior to the next

application deadline.

### **Application Content:**

The application consists of two components: 1) the Application Form; and 2) the Application Narrative. Applicants are encouraged to provide any documentation and/or associated material as specified by the appropriate application form, including but not limited to photos, schematic drawings, engineers estimates, copies of permits, letters of support, etc.

If the applicant is a municipality, a resolution authorizing the application and documenting community support is required as part of the application. Applications submitted without such documentation will be considered incomplete.

#### **1) Application Form:**

Applicants are required to complete the Open Space Program Application Form in its entirety, including signatures on designated lines. Assistance for completion of the form is available from the County Planning Department, if needed.

#### **2) Application Narrative:**

In addition to the Open Space Program Application Form, applicants are also required to provide an Application Narrative that provides details on the project. Application Narratives differ based on the type of project being proposed. The Application Form should be utilized as the cover sheets for the Application Narrative. The document does not necessarily have to be typed, but it must be legible. Additional details may be required, as determined by the Board. The applicant will be asked to provide any necessary revisions.

## **SECTION 4: APPLICATION REVIEW AND EVALUATION**

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### **Factors for Consideration:**

The Open Space Review Board has developed the following set of guidelines to be utilized when considering each application. No numerical value or ranking system is attributed to each of these individual factors.

#### **Factor Set #1: Land Features**

- Existing Land Use / Details of Site, including development restrictions, utility easements, conservation easements, etc.
- Surrounding Land Uses: Adjacency to Preserved Lands, Parks, or Natural Lands
- Site Setting: Aesthetic, Environmental and Historic/Cultural features
- Accessibility to projected users, community and regional perspectives to maximize broad spectrum of potential users
- Risk of Loss: development pressure / site decay / encroachment

### **Factor Set #2: Community Needs & Planning**

- Level of municipal, community, and/or community organizations' support/commitment
- Quality and quantity of existing municipal open space, recreation, and historic resources
- Project provides diversification of open space, recreation, and/or historic resources for the region
- Consistency with local planning documents and initiatives
- Protection of parcels contributing to regional water quality and/or water supply

### **Factor Set #3: Leveraging of Investment / Long Term Viability**

- Demonstration of how project leverages existing and planned investment in community and region
- Project matching investment by applicant and/ or municipality
- Use of project funds to maximize community benefit
- Project readiness and timeline for completion
- Past success of applicant with similar projects

### **Application Review:**

When applications are received, they will be subject to an initial review for completeness by Planning Department staff. Applicants will be contacted if there are any deficiencies in their application, and will be asked to provide the necessary documentation. Once the application is deemed complete, it is eligible for placement in the pool of applications for review by the Open Space Board.

The Open Space Board meets monthly to review applications. Applicants are highly encouraged to attend the meeting where their project is being vetted in order to provide additional information and answer questions raised by Board Members. Visual aids, such as site schematics or plans are welcome, but are not required. The Board will hear comments from applicants and other interested parties during an open public section of the meeting. Project specifics amongst board members and their professionals are discussed during closed session. Additional information on the project may be requested as a result of the meeting.

Based on the review of the application, and the monies available in the Trust Fund, the Open Space Board can take the following actions:

- Recommend the approval of the project by the Board of Chosen Freeholders
- Decline the application and dismiss it from the review process
- Defer decision on the application, and place it in the pool for the next funding cycle

Applicants will be notified in writing after determination of the course of action selected by the Board. Please note that approval by the Open Space Board does not guarantee funding of the project; final decisions on applications are made by the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders, and are dependent on the availability of monies in the Trust Fund.

There will be multiple opportunities for public comment. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend the regularly scheduled meetings of the Open Space Board. If a project is recommended for positive action, the matter will also be heard before the Board of Chosen Freeholders. This will be either in the form of a public hearing on the project OR in the regular public comment where a resolution regarding a particular project is listed on the Freeholder Agenda. Meeting schedules for both Boards can be found on the Cape May County website at: [www.capemaycountygov.net](http://www.capemaycountygov.net) .

## **SECTION 5: POST-DECISION PROCESS – RECOMMENDED PROJECTS**

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Prior to the formal commitment of County Open Space Funds by the Board of Chosen Freeholders, the County and the applicant will determine the parameters for funding and memorialize the same in the form of a lease/management agreement, shared services agreement, or other legal document deemed appropriate by County Counsel. This document (or documents) shall dictate the terms of use for the land, buildings, and/or facilities situated thereon, including but not limited to the following:

- Intent and purpose of the project
- Public accessibility
- Short- and long-term plan for land use and land management
- Specific timeframes with milestones for park development and/or historic preservation project
- Guarantees for completion of project within the stated timeframe
- Parameters for public use and public access, including the proposed user fee schedule (if applicable)
- Parameters for sponsorships, subleases or other third-party agreements for use of the property
- Guarantee and schedule for maintenance, monitoring, and inspections
- Development of minimum standards for site amenities
- Other issues deemed necessary by the nature of the project, or as required by County Counsel

For Park/Recreation projects, NJ Statute (N.J.S.A. 40:12-15.1 et seq) requires that a public hearing be held prior to the formal commitment of funds to the project by the Board of Chosen Freeholders. Appropriate public notice will be given, and applicants will be requested to attend the Public Hearing to answer any questions posed by the Board of Chosen Freeholders and/or the general public. After the Public Hearing, there is a 45 day waiting period, after which the Board of Chosen Freeholders can formally take action on the project.

Public hearings are also held for Historic Preservation Projects. These projects also require an agreement between the County and the applicant. In addition to the bulleted items above, said contract will also specifically provide the terms of financing for the approved project. Please note that for projects that are listed on the State and/or National Historic Register, applicants will be responsible for meeting the terms and conditions associated with that designation, including obtaining Project Authorization from the State Historic Preservation Office prior to beginning work on the project and inspection and approval after the completion of the project. Details are provided in the grant contract between the County and successful applicants.

## **SECTION 6: NOTES FOR MUNICIPAL APPLICANTS**

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### **Land Acquisition – Municipal Partnerships:**

On occasion, partnerships with municipalities are developed whereby a municipality will pre-acquire a property and be repaid by the Open Space Program. The Open Space Program must be an active party in the initial acquisition; no “retroactive” funding will be provided to municipalities for lands previously purchased. In the case of a municipal “pre-acquisition” where the property will cost in excess of \$1 million, the Open Space Board reserves the option to recommend multi-year payout. This will be done in limited circumstances, as warranted by factors such as the balance of the trust fund, cost of the property, and volume of incoming applications. Please note that if a multi-year payout is recommended per statute, a public hearing by the Board of Chosen Freeholders is required, therefore a slightly extended timeframe is required for acquisition and/or reimbursement for municipal acquisition.

### **Park/Recreation Development Projects – User Fees:**

Any user fees charged by municipalities for Open Space-funded projects must be modest, customary, and reasonable in relation to the type of facility developed and the programs offered at that facility. The Open Space Board must deem the proposed user fees to be necessary for the operation of the funded site. The municipality must demonstrate that the fees collected are recaptured for the purpose of maintaining and operating that particular facility through the establishment of a dedicated line item in the municipal budget. Municipal obligations in this regard, including annual reporting requirements, will be made part of the Shared Services Agreement executed between the County and the municipality.

### **Park/Recreation Development Projects – Mortgages and Guarantees:**

For grant projects in excess of \$500,000, the County may require the execution of a forgivable mortgage or other suitable guarantee to secure the County’s investment. Guarantee will be for the value of the improvement and shall continue for the life expectancy of the improvements made with grant funds.

## **SECTION 7: NOTES FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION APPLICANTS:**

### **Project Eligibility – “Structures”:**

The Cape May County Open Space Program’s Historic Preservation Program has been modeled after the NJ State Historic Preservation Program and uses the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service’s criteria for eligibility and definitions.

The National Park Service distinguishes “Structures” from “Buildings” as “those functional constructions made usually for purposes other than creating human shelter”. Examples and explanation of criteria can be found at: ([www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15\\_4.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_4.htm)) .

The concept of funding “structures” was discussed at the Open Space Board’s meeting held on June 28<sup>th</sup>,

2016. Conclusions were as follows:

- The National Park Service’s definition of the word “structure” must be met in order for a structure to be eligible; eligibility would be determined through the process of obtaining a Certificate of Eligibility and/or listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places.
- Structure must have significant roots in Cape May County’s history
- Structure must have documented permanent “residency” in Cape May County of Cape May
- Structure must be accessible to the general public free of charge, or for a nominal charge
- Educational programming documenting structure’s significance to/in Cape May County must be provided on an ongoing basis
- A cap of \$150,000 in Open Space grant funds will be established annually for “moveable” structures
- Applications for Historic Preservation projects for Structures would be accepted only once per year, during the August funding round. Applications for Buildings will continue to be accepted during all three funding rounds.

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