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OCEAN COUNTY LAND USE ISSUES

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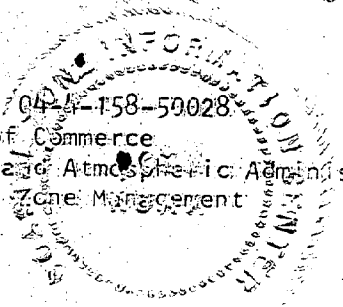
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE NOAA
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W.P.
Dept of Environmental Protection, Ocean M.
Jersey

OCEAN COUNTY LAND USE ISSUES

1. Rapid Growth and Land Use Patterns

Issue-

Ocean County has held its position as the fastest growing county in the State since 1950. The majority of housing now being constructed is year-round rather than seasonal, and the County consistently leads the State in terms of residential development. Such rapid growth impacts upon land use, transportation, recreational facilities and municipal and county services.

Discussion and Analysis-

A number of factors are responsible for Ocean County's dynamic growth rate, which has resulted in the County's more than quadrupling its population since 1950, and has made Ocean the fastest growing county in New Jersey. First, there is a growing trend in housing construction to move away from the highly industrial metropolitan regions and out toward areas with large rural tracts. The counties which have consistently led the State in terms of residential construction since 1970--Ocean, Camden and Burlington--all fall into this category.¹ In addition, Ocean County is within commuting distance of both the New York and Philadelphia metropolitan regions. Development is moving out from these centers, and Ocean County is in the inevitable path of development. Since there are still large tracts of land available for development, Ocean has become a prime location for new residential construction. Also, land costs tend to be lower here than in the more developed areas to the north, so housing can be offered at more moderate prices. Add to all of these factors the recreational amenities inherent in living near the ocean and bays, and Ocean County becomes a very attractive area in which to settle.

The improving transportation network has also been a factor in the development of the County. At present, the Garden State Parkway and Route 9 are the major roads which provide service in a north-south direction. The construction of the Parkway in the 1950's was, in fact, a significant factor in opening up the area to development. The dualization of Route 9 by 1980 will provide a less congested north-south arterial within the County as well as improved access to areas both north and south beyond County lines. Since the majority of those residents who go outside the County for work commute to Monmouth, the dualization of Route 9 will indeed be an attractive feature. Other dualization projects involving Routes 70 and 72 are planned for completion by 1980 and will make the central and some of the southern portions of the County more accessible to the Philadelphia-Camden area. In addition, Interstate 195 will be completed to Route 34 in Allaire State Park by 1979 and will connect the Trenton area with that part of Monmouth County and provide accessibility for northern Ocean County. Added to the above is the possible construction of the Alfred E. Dirscol Expressway, which was planned to run from South Brunswick (Exit 8A) to Toms River. Although land acquisition for rights-of-way has stopped and construction contracts have been cancelled, the potential additional improvement of access to Ocean County is an attractive feature to the County's development.

The fact that the Ocean County Sewerage Authority system will begin operation in the fall of 1976 will eliminate one of the major physical constraints to growth. Under this system, the County has been divided into three service areas. The facilities for the Northern Service Area are expected to be completed in the fall of 1976, those in the Southern Service Area in the spring of 1977 and those in the Central Service Area in mid-year 1978. With the completion of the system, areas which have been unsuitable for development, because of septic problems,

will now be opened up to construction. Development may in fact even occur at higher densities than was previously possible.

One constraint to growth in some portions of Ocean County is the existence of large tracts of "wildcat lands". These are lands which were subdivided into small parcels during the 1920's and 1930's, and were distributed widely, for example, with new newspaper subscriptions. The wildcat lands are located throughout the Townships of Manchester, Lakewood, Berkeley, Jackson and Dover, particularly along old railway lines. It is unknown exactly where and by whom they are owned, but the Ocean County Planning Board estimates that over 15,000 acres are in this classification. The impact of the wildcat lands on development in the County is that there now exist large amounts of land for which legal consolidation is both a lengthy and expensive process. For the time being, then, these lands will not be developed.²

Considering the combination of growth-inducing factors, however, it is understandable why Ocean County has grown and continues to develop at such a rapid pace. The population increased 91.2% from 56,622 in 1950 to 108,241 in 1960. By 1970, it increased another 93% to 208,470. In 1974, it has been estimated that the population has reached 257,785.³ Housing construction also has been proceeding at a rate far above that of other counties in New Jersey. In both 1971 and 1972, more than 17% of the total units built in the State were constructed in Ocean County; in 1973 and 1974, the figures were 13.8% and 11.1% respectively. Since early 1974, there has been a slowdown in all residential construction in the State. This downward trend is reflected in the fact that the number of building permits issued in Ocean County in 1974 was 40% below its total in 1973. Regardless of the downward trend, however, Ocean continues to lead the State in numbers of building permits granted.⁴

A significant portion of the growth which Ocean County has experienced has been in the form of retirement communities. Ocean County is particularly unique in respect to this form of development in that over 80% of all retirement communities in New Jersey are located within the County. There has been a vast in-migration of senior citizens since 1960, and the number of persons in the communities has doubled since 1970. At present, over 32,000 persons live in these communities, and another 15,000 units are planned for the expansions of existing retirement communities. Approximately 40% of all retirement units are located in Manchester Township, and other large-scale retirement communities are also located in Lakewood, Dover, Brick and Berkeley Townships.

While growth on the mainland has concentrated in the northeastern portion of the County, the barrier beach islands are the most densely developed land areas in the County and also contain some of the oldest residential structures. The Island Beach area, in particular, is highly developed. As the northern sections of the County have become built up, development has moved southerly along the coastal bay area and westerly into Jackson and Manchester Townships. Development generally tends to be influenced both by proximity to waterfront areas, particularly the bay shore regions, and by the transportation corridors on the mainland. The bulk of residential development is concentrated east of the Garden State Parkway; however, new development has also begun to spread out along the roadways west of the Parkway.

Although the southern areas are beginning to develop, the majority of the County population is still concentrated in the northern and upper central portions of the County. In 1974, for example, five municipalities - Brick, Dover, Lakewood and Jackson Townships and Point Pleasant Beach Borough - accounted for approximately 60% of the total County Population.⁵ Although Point Pleasant Beach is almost

fully developed, the other four municipalities continue to experience relatively high rates of growth. The townships of Brick, Dover, Lakewood and Jackson accounted for 45.8% of all building permits issued in the County between 1970 and 1974.⁶

South of Toms River and throughout the townships included in the Central Service Area development has started to occur at a rapid rate. Manchester and Berkeley Townships, in particular, are now experiencing high rates of growth. The majority of development in Manchester has been in the form of retirement communities, and Berkeley's growth has been both in retirement communities and in planned residential developments.

Residential development in Ocean County is still predominantly of a single-family character, as illustrated by the fact that over two-thirds of its building permits are consistently in this category. There is a growing trend toward multi-family uses in the northern sections of the County, but the market for such uses is almost non-existent south of Toms River. The Ocean County Planning Board has indicated, in fact, that existing multi-family units have very high vacancy rates, and in some instances multi-family developments are being boarded up.⁷ Compared to the State's leading counties in terms of residential construction, Ocean is the only one with an appreciable number of single family units.⁸

Of the existing land uses in the County, less than 1% is in commercial development. The existing businesses are located primarily along the major roadways in the County resulting in a pattern of strip commercial development. Route 9, in particular, contains a concentration of the strip commercial development within Ocean County. In addition, sections of Route 37 running through Dover Township and Route 70 running through Lakewood are exhibiting an increasing amount of such commercial development.

Ocean County's economic base has traditionally been resort-oriented, and 25% of its taxable ratables is resort and tourist-oriented. As the County continues to grow, however, business activity, which has often been seasonal in nature, is undergoing a shift to year-round commerce. This change is occurring predominantly in the northern portions of the County whereas the shore areas and Route 9 south of Bayville continue as resort-oriented business areas.

Implications-

In light of the many growth-inducing factors Ocean County is expected to continue to grow for some time, undergoing the transition from a resort-oriented to a year-round population. The existence of vast amounts of flat, well-drained land, 168,000 acres of privately owned, vacant land, as estimated by the Ocean County Planning Board in 1973, will insure the area's attractiveness for developers, particularly as the land closer to the metropolitan regions becomes even more built up.⁹

It is possible, however, that the present dynamic rate of growth may slow down somewhat. The fact that a substantial amount of wildcat lands is included in the estimates on privately owned vacant land serves to reduce the acreage which is actually available for development. Furthermore, there has been a downward trend in the number of building permits issued recently, and construction starts in 1974 were 40% below the previous rate. The total number of building permits issued throughout the County in 1974 was 2,866, compared with 7,205 in 1973, and a high of 11,553 in 1972. The County Planning Board has indicated that pressure for multi-family uses and high rise buildings on the barrier beach island is also declining.¹⁰ This may be partially explained by such factors as the

current economic slowdown, the lack of developable land and the attitude of developers that such uses may be denied under CAFRA. In addition, much of the recent growth in the County has been in the expansion of existing development, rather than whole new developments. The exception is Berkeley Township, where the number of units proposed in 1974 totalled over 20,000.¹¹

Prior to the recent economic downturn, the forecasts for Ocean County which were prepared in 1973 indicated a range of from 305,000 to 325,000 for 1980.¹² Regardless of whether or not these projections are realized by 1980, the cumulative impact of the relatively high rate of growth will be such that it places a strain on all levels of services. Police and fire departments, health care facilities, sanitary and solid waste disposal, educational systems, roads - all of these services must be expanded in order to accommodate the increase in the population.

In an effort to provide necessary services for the existing population, however, it is possible to make the area so attractive that even more persons than anticipated move to the area, thus compounding the problem. As an example, a road which is constructed for the purpose of servicing existing areas of population has the indirect impact of opening up to development areas which it traverses. This is not the intent of the road construction but it is the result.

It is imperative that the potential secondary effects of a project be analyzed before that project is undertaken. The construction of the Alfred E. Driscoll Expressway, although it will increase access to the urbanized portions of Ocean County, may also produce negative secondary impacts. The routing of the proposed Turnpike Spur is such that it terminates near the junction of Routes 37 and 9 in Dover Township. This is a congested area already, and the additional traffic

generated by the Expressway may produce even more traffic problems and also more air pollution.

Present development patterns in Ocean County actually compound the problem of effectively and economically servicing an expanding population. Development is being channeled inland because of the scarcity of buildable land closer to the shore. Development in a leap-frog fashion is now occurring at an increasing pace west of the Garden State Parkway, and is at lower densities than would be economically advantageous in the higher cost areas along the coast. The patterns of leapfrogging may be attributable in part to the existence of large tracts of "wildcat lands" and also to the fact that active mining operations are interspersed between the urban areas and those areas where the apparent leapfrogging is taking place. According to the Ocean County Planning Board, Manchester Township exemplifies both situations, as there "really is no viable large scale land tracts in the interstices between traditional development areas along Route 9 and the communities due to existing industrial development, wildcat lands, and major mining operations (ASARCO, for example owns more than 8,000 acres on the eastern edge of Manchester Township)". (Sic)¹³

Although there may be a reasonable explanation for the patterns of discontinuous development, the fact that the location and extent of "wildcat lands" are relatively unknown presents difficulties in the region. In addition, the leapfrogging type of development may be more the result of a desire to profit from the relatively cheaper land away from the urban areas. Whatever the reason, the developments presently taking place west of the Parkway are generally large-scale subdivisions at low densities. The result of such patterns of land use is to contribute to

the perpetuation of suburban sprawl, which brings with it problems such as eliminating valuable tracts of open space, creating the need for more roads, and making services more costly to provide.

Increased growth pressures are resulting in development extending into previously undeveloped areas. Many of these areas are environmentally sensitive and include the Pinelands Region and the land area contained in the Cedar Creek Basin. Both are valuable aquifer recharge areas, contain some of the purest streams left in the State and also support a variety of flora and fauna unique to the mid-Atlantic Region. The fact that these large and unique areas would be irreplaceable if lost to development makes their protection imperative.

The land in proximity to the Lakehurst Naval Air Station is also environmentally sensitive, due to the nature of operations at the base. The testing of equipment and air traffic generated by the Air Station impact on the noise levels of the area. The Navy is presently carrying out a study which will recommend the restriction of development in critical noise zones and approach areas surrounding the base. The establishment of Air Installation Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ) works to protect the public welfare while allowing the Navy sufficient opportunity to expand and carry on its operations. It is significant that such a study has been undertaken at this time, in that retirement community development in Manchester Township is occurring in such a manner that it would soon extend into the areas of concern.

As development proceeds in Ocean County, tracts of valuable open space are either eliminated or interrupted. In addition, the new roads which are constructed in order to service the new areas of population cut across previously rural areas and, at the same time, open up those areas to development. The accompanying increase in the number of cars on the roads also leads to the higher noise levels and quantities of air pollution.

The ultimate effect of Ocean County's present growth patterns is that the recreational character of the area is being changed, and growth patterns are beginning to extend into areas which are environmentally sensitive. Conventional subdivisions resulting in sprawl take up substantially more land than a planned mix form of development. The wasteful use of the land is particularly significant, in that 25% of Ocean County's economic base is still in the resort area. Thus, as the recreational character of the County is eroded, the area may lose its attractiveness to potential visitors, and this will create an economic hardship in the County.

Data Gaps-

Since the population projections for the County tend to vary, a closer examination of patterns of development by type, as well as the analysis of the differing methodologies for the projections should be taken. Another area for consideration is the rate of conversion of seasonal to year-round dwelling units, and the impact such a conversion is having on the character of the County. A study should be made of the exact locations of businesses within the County and any problems created by the pattern of strip commercial development. Also, further information on the extent and impact of "wildcat lands" on development patterns in the County would be valuable.

2. Population:

Issue-

Recently, Ocean County has experienced the in-migration of relatively young, formerly urban families originating from the New York Metropolitan area. These families have been drawn to Ocean County primarily by the availability of lower cost housing comparative to other areas of the State. Due to a relative lack of employment opportunities within the County, however, many of these residents commute back to the New York metropolitan area for work.

Discussion and Analysis-

From 1960 to 1970, the number of college and early working age persons (age 18-24) within the County doubled, increasing from 8,612 to 17,406. During the same period, the mature working age group (25-64 years) increased by over 80%, from 50,358 to 89,847. Although the absolute figures have increased substantially, the age structure of the County has remained the same.

One of the attractions of Ocean County for younger families is its moderately priced housing stock. As an example, the median housing value for a owner-occupied unit in Ocean County is \$18,500, 21% below the State median value of \$23,500. Add to this the fact that new units are constantly being constructed, and Ocean becomes a very attractive area in which to buy, particularly for young families purchasing their first home.¹⁴

Another significant attraction for these people is the improving transportation network, which enables Ocean County residents to work in New York or other metropolitan regions with a relatively brief commuting time. New roads and road improvements, such as the dualization of Route 9 which is planned for completion by 1980, and the possibility of the Driscoll Expressway, will lessen the congestion

on existing roadways. Ocean County is thus becoming an increasingly attractive base from which to commute to Monmouth and Middlesex Counties, as well as to New York and Northeastern New Jersey. In addition, there is frequent bus service from Toms River and Lakewood and commuter train service from Bay Head and Point Pleasant. Therefore, alternative means of service to the Newark and New York areas are available for those who choose not to commute by auto.

Though County employment has increased substantially since 1960, it has not kept pace with the rising numbers of working age persons. From 1959 to 1970, County employment increased from 23,180 to 44,145 jobs, an 82.7% increase which is the largest in the State. During that same period, however, total County population increased by 92.6%, and the number of working age persons doubled. Employment opportunities, therefore, are still insufficient to accommodate Ocean County's working population.

Ocean has historically been a marine and resort-oriented county and is only gradually undergoing a change to a year-round economy. Consequently the County now suffers from a lack of year-round employment opportunities to keep pace with its expanding year-round population. The County's unemployment rate, which averaged 8.9% in 1974, was higher than the State average of 8.3%. It is also significant that the 8.9% is a yearly average, and the unemployment rate would be much higher if seasonal employment were not included. The median income for families in Ocean County also tends to be substantially below the State median income. In 1970, the figures were \$9,246 and \$11,407, respectively. According to a 1974 study by the Ocean County Planning Board, the lower median income in Ocean is a reflection of three County characteristics: the economic development, the large senior citizen population and the seasonal resort orientation of the County.¹⁵

Resort-oriented land uses presently account for 25% of the County's economic base.¹⁶ The shore areas and Route 9 south of Bayville (in Berkeley Township) still consist of predominantly resort-oriented businesses. Where the change to a year-round economy is occurring, the transition for the most part is in the areas north of Berkeley Township. The trend in this area is toward an economy dominated by the construction industry and service sector.

The major employer within the County is the Lakehurst Naval Air Station which employed approximately 5,600 persons in 1975. Toms River Chemical is the largest private employer in the County, providing jobs for approximately 1,200 to 1,400 persons. The Lakewood Industrial Park provides employment for 3,000 persons, while Great Adventure, a commercial recreation area in Jackson Township employed 350 permanent and 2,200 seasonal persons in 1975. Generally, however, the County has very little industry. Only thirteen of the thirty-three municipalities within the County possess any industrial ratables, and an even smaller number (five) has industrial ratables in an amount over one million dollars assessed valuation.¹⁷ The five municipalities are Dover, Lakewood, Lacey, Manchester and Berkeley Townships. In addition, because Lacey procures its ratables from the Oyster Creek Power Plant, which is not a labor-intensive facility, the County does not benefit from this ratable in terms of industrial employment.

In order to boost employment opportunities, the County is trying to attract light industry, research facilities and corporate headquarters. The major obstacles to attracting these types of uses seem to be the relatively slow means of access available to New York City and the heretofore limitation of public sewers throughout much of the County. Because of the importance of the resort economy,

the County is discouraging the location of heavy industry. Such industry may adversely affect the character of the area, thus jeopardizing the resort economy. The outcome of such a decision is that prospective employment opportunities will be further restricted.

As a result of the above factors, a great number of County residents must commute to jobs outside of Ocean. In 1970, the total County work force numbered 65,053, but there were only 44,145 jobs within Ocean County. Therefore, approximately one-third of the full-time employed County residents commuted from Ocean, making it a labor-exporting area.

The following table illustrates that commutation patterns for Ocean County residents:

PLACES OF WORK FOR OCEAN COUNTY RESIDENTS, 1970*

<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>OCEAN CO.</u>	<u>MONMOUTH CO.</u>	<u>MIDDLESEX CO.</u>	<u>BURLINGTON CO.</u>
58,558 100%	38,108 65.1%	8043 13.7%	1656 2.8%	1,496 2.6%
	<u>NORTHEAST N. J.</u>	<u>NEW YORK CITY</u>	<u>TRENTON AREA</u>	<u>OTHER</u>
	4928 8.4%	2,083 3.6%	1,080 1.8%	1164 2.0%
Northeast N. J.:	Jersey City S.M.S.A., Paterson-Clifton-Passaic S.M.S.A., Newark City, rest of Essex County and rest of Newark S.M.S.A.			
New York City:	Manhattan, Bronx and rest of New York City			
Trenton Area:	Trenton City and rest of Mercer County			
Other:	Camden and Gloucester Counties, Atlantic City and rest of Atlantic County, Philadelphia and rest of Philadelphia S.M.S.A.			

Table adapted from: Selected Places of Work by Municipalities of Residences, New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Business Economics, 1973.

From the table, it can be seen that the greatest percentage of those working outside the County commute to Monmouth County. The next largest percentage commute to New York City; then follows Middlesex, Burlington and Mercer Counties. Since Burlington County and, to some extent, Mercer County are the only substantial employment destinations not to the north, it appears that the predominant commuting patterns for Ocean County residents is in a northerly direction.

Implications-

Job market expansion in the County has not kept pace with the year-round population growth, leading to what the Ocean County Planning Board calls a "resource worker imbalance." The total County employment has been projected to grow to 72,251 by 1980, a 63.7% increase over 1970 figures.¹⁸ Even if these employment projections are not fully realized, the rate of population growth is expected to outstrip the additional number of jobs, and Ocean will continue to be a labor export area. As stated in the Economic Development Analysis, which was prepared by the Ocean County Planning Board in June, 1974:

"Considering, (1) the access to northern New Jersey counties and to the Philadelphia and Trenton job markets afforded Ocean County residents by major highway facilities, and (2) the large potential population growth within the next five-year period, export labor force characteristics of Ocean County are unlikely to change in the near future."¹⁹

The high percentage of commuters impacts on various areas. The construction of new and improvements to existing roads will be necessary in order to accommodate the accompanying increases in the number of vehicles. The vehicles will generate more air pollution and also higher levels of noise in the area. Another negative impact associated with a large commuting population is that roads use up valuable open space. And with new highway making areas more accessible, portions of land which were previously rural will be opened up to development.

As more land is developed and the road system improves, the area may become increasingly attractive to potential residents. The cycle thus reinforces itself, and the problem of providing sufficient employment opportunities within the County is compounded. Ocean County already has a history of a higher than State average unemployment rate. With population growth continually exceeding economic growth, the general well-being of the County may be affected.

County officials recognize the problems associated with being a major labor exporting area. It has already been mentioned that the County Administration is trying to attract light industry, research facilities and corporate headquarters. It is possible that out-of-County employers will recognize the benefits of locating in an area with a relatively untapped labor force. The fact that land is cheaper in Ocean County than in the more populated and industrialized counties to the north, is another consideration in Ocean's favor.

Substantial job market expansion is now occurring within the northern and central sectors of the County, which suggest a better economic balance for the future. In addition, the construction of the regional sewerage system will remove one major limitation on industrial development within the County. The sewerage system will also facilitate continued increases in residential development, which may continue to supercede the rate of job market expansion.

The Ocean County Economic Development Agency is attempting to respond to the County's present economic problems. Its primary goals and objectives for the County include: (1) reduction of unemployment, (2) meet normal growth in the labor force, (3) raise labor force participation rate and (4) enhance the County tax base. According to the County Planning Board, a "successful economic development program could alleviate seasonal variations and provide a more balanced economic base in the County."²⁰

3. Retirement Communities

Issues-

Ocean County has become a major retirement center for New Jersey, containing over 80% of the retirement communities in the State. The continual influx of senior citizens impacts upon both the character of the area and on local services.

Discussion and Analysis-

Ocean County's mild climate and recreational character have made it an attractive area for vacations and for year-round living as well. Retired and semi-retired persons traditionally have settled in the communities fronting on the bay and ocean. In recent years, however, two factors have led to the development of retirement villages inland. The two factors are the lack of developable land on the barrier beach islands and along the waterfront, and the rising property values along the coast. Consequently, retirement communities have begun to proliferate inland, and large numbers of persons age 50 and over have begun to settle in the County.

Retirement communities are housing developments intended specifically for retired, semi-retired or soon-to-be retired persons. These communities generally have minimum age requirements and prohibit school-age children. The average age in the communities ranges from the mid-50's in the new developments to a median age nearer to 70 for the older, established communities. The price of units, and thus the income group which will be attracted to a particular development, also varies with the individual communities. As an example, models range from \$14,000 for a one-room efficiency unit to \$54,000 for a six-room house,²¹ to which is added a monthly maintenance fee.

Retirement communities are attractive for a number of reasons. The advantages to the prospective buyer of living in such a setting is that the communities generally provide opportunity for social activity and interaction; upkeep of units as part of the monthly maintenance fee; on-site recreational facilities; and an internal security system. Since many of the residents of Ocean County's retirement villages are formerly from northern New Jersey's urban counties, e.g., Essex, Hudson and Passaic, security is particularly important.

According to the Ocean County Planning Board, the most significant portion of the County's population increase since 1970 is attributable to the in-migration of senior citizens to the various retirement villages within the County. At the present time, there are approximately 30,000 senior citizens living in these communities, half of which arrived in Ocean County after 1970. The construction of retirement communities has continued unabated during the past few years, accounting for 20% of the total County housing starts in 1974. The trend is expected to continue, as many more developments, totalling over 32,000 units, are now existing or proposed in Ocean County.

The growth of these communities is reflected in the increasingly skewed age distribution in the County. In 1970, according to the U.S. Census, the number of persons over 55 years of age totalled 55,000 (26.6% of the total County population) and is estimated in 1975 to be 82,095.²² The number of persons 65 and over in 1970 totalled 32,920 (15.8% of the County), and this figure has increased to 50,760 in 1975. In addition, the updated estimates for persons over 65 demonstrate the continuing increase in numbers of persons over 65 relative to the total population. The updated estimate of 50,760 constitutes 18.5% of the total, compared to 12.8% for the same group in the 1970 census.²³

The impact on age distribution is particularly evident in municipalities with a high concentration of retirement communities. In Manchester Township, for example, the median age is 58.6 years, compared to the County figure of 32.5 years.

With 15.8% of its population over 65, Ocean is far above the State average of 9.7%. In comparison, only Cape May and Atlantic Counties exceed the Ocean County percentage. Significant to note, however, is that Ocean's rate of increase in the number of persons over 65 is surpassing the other two counties. Whereas Atlantic and Cape May Counties' rate of increase from 1970-1974 was 6% and 3.3% respectively, Ocean County's increase in number of persons over 65 was 25.7%.

Municipalities are eager to attract retirement communities; they are perceived as good ratables while demanding few services. In fact, many of the costs of servicing a traditional single family development are internalized by retirement communities. Many senior citizen projects provide their own water and sewers, internal road maintenance, solid waste disposal and security. In some communities, there are also jitney services available to transport the residents to shopping areas and for other activities outside the village. At the same time, the developments do not generate school-age children, so tax abatements may be negotiated on this basis.

Retirement communities are considered an asset for other reasons as well. The residents generally tend to be quite active, both within the development and also in the larger community. Many residents were active in community service organizations in their former homes and continue this involvement upon moving into the retirement community. The residents are also an asset to local fund-raising and volunteer efforts, in that they contribute much of their time in supporting the fire and rescue squads and hospitals. At the Community Memorial Hospital in

Toms River, a part of the Woman's Auxiliary is totally staffed by retirement community residents.²⁴

For a combination of reasons, then, while a township such as Manchester, which contains a number of retirement communities, has not discouraged traditional single-family subdivisions, it has encouraged retirement communities by allocating special zones and allowing the developer slightly higher densities. The legality of zoning for communities which set minimum age requirements, however, is now being challenged in the courts. In Shepard vs. Woodland Township, the New Jersey Superior Court ruled that placing restrictions on age did not "constitute a valid exercise of the zoning power granted to municipalities by the enabling statute."²⁵ The decision is presently under appeal. If upheld, however, the repercussions will be such that the provisions in the municipal zoning ordinance, which have heretofore been favorable to retirement communities, will be nullified.

In their concern for attracting ratables municipalities may often neglect to consider the cumulative impacts of having a large elderly population. A preponderance of senior citizens can, in fact, lead to both social and fiscal imbalances. The most obvious imbalance is the skewed age distribution, a result of the large in-migration of senior citizens to the projects. Since many of these people are retired and on fixed incomes, the per capita income of the town appears lower.

Health care is also of particular concern to senior citizens. As the percentage of senior citizens continues to rise in Ocean County, there is an increasing strain placed on all health services. One must perceive retirement communities not just in the immediate sense, but over a period of time. As the communities become established, the retirees themselves grow older, more prone to maladies and less mobile. There is an ever-increasing demand for

services such as visiting nurses, specialized transportation, "meals-on-wheels" programs, ambulance services and numbers of physicians and hospital beds.

Because of the age factor, persons in retirement communities make greater use of all types of medical services. As an example, the direct correlation between age and increased length of stay (in days) in hospitals has remained consistent over the years. The total number of discharge days (total number of days in the hospital) as measured by Medicare and Medicaid patients (senior citizens) indicates their disproportionate need for health services as compared to other segments of the population. For example, at Paul Kimball Hospital, from the total number of discharge days, the Medicare and Medicaid patients utilized 60.5%, even though their composition as patients was only 46%. The influx of senior citizens has increased substantially the need for all health services and has placed a strain on present health care facilities. In the last three years, the County Health Department's staff has increased from 25 to 108 employees, of which 42 are full-time visiting nurses, 12 are part-time visiting nurses, and one is a full-time physical therapist. An evaluation of the total number of visits indicates that the municipalities with a high concentration of retirement villages require a higher level of services.

The high occupancy rates in the four County hospitals is another example of the impact of a large elderly population. The Medical/Surgical units are of particular concern because they are utilized only by the elderly. The Statewide average for occupancy of beds in all Medical/Surgical units in 1974 was 84.3%. In comparison, all four hospitals in Ocean County registered at least 92% occupancy, and Community Memorial Hospital in Toms River was at 114% occupancy. Although Community Memorial Hospital will be expanding its facility by 128 beds in the next three years, the concurrent increase in numbers of senior citizens will effectively make the expansion insufficient.

Another health care problem in Ocean County which is further aggravated by the increasing number of elderly is the critical shortage of physicians. According to a report prepared by the Ocean County Health Department, the ratio of one primary care physician to 1,000 persons is considered satisfactory.²⁶ At this time, however, the ratio in Ocean County is estimated to be only one physician for every 2,000+ persons. In addition, a study prepared at Yale University notes that the number of physicians required for a particular group increases with the average age of that group.²⁷ Thus it follows that the number of physicians now present in Ocean County is even more inadequate.

The manner and rapidity with which retirement communities are being developed in Ocean County is also a land use issue. A number of factors have channeled the developments inland, one of which is environmental legislation which places restraints on development along the coast. Also, inexpensive and larger tracts of land are available inland, and a constantly improving transportation network makes these areas increasingly accessible. As a result, retirement communities have begun to proliferate inland and are doing so at lower densities than would be economically feasible along the oceanfront. Some developments have incorporated a mixture of residential types, but the majority is in the form of single-family attached or detached. Due to the availability of large tracts of land, the developments also tend to be large-scale projects and therefore occur in a non-contiguous manner. This leap-frog form of land development creates suburban sprawl and makes public services and facilities more costly to provide.

Implications-

The development of retirement communities is proceeding rapidly in Ocean County, and the trend is not expected to change in the near future. Table I includes a

listing of the existing communities, along with the number of units presently proposed. The list indicates that Manchester, Berkeley and Lakewood Townships contain the greatest number of retirement units, both existing and proposed, in Ocean County.

There are several considerations for a municipality which promotes retirement communities. The first is the recent Shepard vs. Woodland decision which ruled against zoning for a particular age group. Thus, there is the possibility that those municipalities which have in the past encouraged the development of retirement communities by allocating special zones will find themselves the subject of court cases.

Another consideration in allowing retirement communities is the increasingly skewed age distribution in the municipality, and the negative impacts which can result. By the force of their numbers, senior citizens can form a voting bloc and defeat bills which do not directly benefit seniors. A high percentage of senior citizens is registered, and they vote consistently on even the most inconsequential issues. As an example, 80-90% of retirement community residents, compared to 10% of non-retirees, vote on school issues.²⁸ The result is frequently that the bond issues are defeated. Seniors are able, then, to utilize the "tyranny of the majority" to keep their taxes low, although this action harms the larger community. This is particularly significant because many retirement communities are locating in areas which are already growing rapidly and requiring new services. Therefore, the ability of the seniors to vote down bond issues for needed services is potentially more harmful.

A large elderly population also produces impacts on a regional level. As the various communities become established and the residents grow older,

TABLE I

Adult Retirement Communities

Ocean County, N.J.

September 1, 1974

<u>Project Name & Location</u>	<u>Current Population</u>	<u>Current # of Dwelling Units</u>	<u>Total Planned # of Dwelling Units</u>
<u>Manchester Township</u>			
1 Cedar Glen City	972	564	564
2 Cedar Glen Lakes	1,816	956	1,250
3 Cedar Glen West	1,500	826	826
4 Crestwood Village	5,760	3,400	6,700
5 Leisure Knoll	67	37	1,800
6 Leisure Village West	1,022	568	5,000
<u>Little Egg Harbor Township</u>			
7 Mystic Shores	56	28	1,400
<u>Lakewood Township</u>			
8 A Country Place	378	210	376
9 Leisure Village	4,321	2,401	2,401
10 Leisure Village East	2,542	1,412	1,412
<u>Dover Township</u>			
11 Dover Walk	40	28	60
12 Gardens of Pleasant Plains	900	430	440
13 Holiday City	3,070	1,535	1,535
<u>Black Township</u>			
14 U.S. at Green-Briar	1,400	700	1,394
15 Laurelton Gardens	374	220	220
<u>Jackson Township</u>			
16 Meadowbrook Village	220	116	148
<u>Bekeley Township</u>			
17 Silver Ridge South	1,140	570	570
18 Holiday City	3,740	1,870	3,200
19 Silver Ridge West	N/A	0	1,100
<u>Ocean Township</u>			
20 Skipper's Cove	N/A	N/A	N/A
Totals	Present Population	Present # of Units	Projected # of Units
	29,318	15,871	30,396

Source: Ocean County Planning Board, "Adult Retirement Communities," September 1, 1974.

they become less mobile and therefore require more services, particularly in the area of health care.

Ocean County is presently experiencing a critical shortage of physicians and hospital beds. With the continued in-migration of senior citizens, the problem of providing adequate health services will be compounded. In addition, ambulance and rescue squads, which are largely volunteer services, will be taxed beyond their limits. Senior citizens support these volunteer activities. Retirement community residents are in fact generally quite active in volunteer activities, which does benefit the total community. However, they cannot provide the manpower which frequent emergencies necessitate. Thus, there is a real possibility that the continued in-migration of elderly will strain present health facilities and services to the extent that the public safety is endangered.

The County should also take steps to plan to accommodate its less mobile population. As an example, shopping centers should include ramps for wheelchairs, and commercial facilities must have fewer steps. In addition, some form of public transit might be initiated to service those no longer able to drive themselves. The individual retirement villages often provide transportation for their residents to shopping areas and for religious services. This service, however, is limited to those specified routes. In 1974, De Leuw, Cather and Company prepared a Transit Study for the County which explored the possibility of a modified demand-responsive system. While no such system now exists, the County has pending before the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) a \$1.5 million capital grant application for a county wide bus system comprised of twelve routes. Special equipment for the elderly and persons restricted to wheelchairs is planned.

Data Gaps-

Recommendations for further research include an analysis of the social impacts on a community with a large number of elderly persons. Kathy Heintz has recently completed such a study, which is now being published by the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University. When available, the study will be reviewed. An additional area for research is the effect of senior citizens and their ability to form a voting bloc on specific bond issues.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Division of Planning and Research, New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry; "New Jersey Residential Building Permits, Annual Summaries", 1970-1974.
- ² Interview with Thomas A. Thomas, Director, Ocean County Planning Board, December 8, 1975.
- ³ Office of Business Economics, New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry, "Population Estimates for New Jersey, July 1, 1974", p.15.
- ⁴ Division of Planning and Research, op. cit., 1974, p.3.
- ⁵ N.J. Department of Labor and Industry, Official State Estimates, July 1, 1974.
- ⁶ Division of Planning and Research, op. cit.
- ⁷ Interview with Thomas A. Thomas, Director, Ocean County Planning Board, September 18, 1975.
- ⁸ Division of Planning and Research, op. cit.
- ⁹ Ocean County Planning Board, Land Use Study, June 1973, p.25.
- ¹⁰ Interview with Thomas A. Thomas, September 18, 1975.
- ¹¹ New Jersey Division of State and Regional Planning, The Secondary Impact of Regional Sewerage Systems, Volume II (unpublished report), p.A-2.
- ¹² Ocean County Planning Board, Population Study, 1973, p.24.
- ¹³ Letter from Thomas A. Thomas, November 7, 1975.
- ¹⁴ Coping With Growth, Ocean County, Princeton University, January 1975, p.14.
- ¹⁵ Ocean County Planning Board, Economic Development Analysis, June 1974, p.24.
- ¹⁶ Interview with Thomas A. Thomas, September 18, 1975.
- ¹⁷ Ocean County Planning Board, Economic Development Analysis, op. cit. p.13.
- ¹⁸ ibid., p.7.
- ¹⁹ Economic Development Analysis, p.20.
- ²⁰ ibid., p.53.
- ²¹ Sound Track of the Film, "Planning for the Impact of Retirement Communities", New Jersey Division on Aging, October 4, 1974.
- ²² Ocean County Planning Board, Ocean County Elders Population Estimate as of January 1, 1975, September 3, 1975.
- ²³ ibid.

