

## STRATEGIES

Major issues were identified at the regional vision workshop as part of the overall Plan process. The issues were organized into the following categories:

- Natural Areas;
- Historic;
- Mining;
- Agriculture;
- Transportation;
- Sewer and Water;
- Community Facilities and Services;
- Housing;
- Economic;
- Intermunicipal Cooperation; and,
- State Plan Endorsement.

Key strategies have been developed for each of these issue areas. As translated into the regional planning and implementation agenda, these form the heart of the Plan. These strategies are presented below.

### Natural Areas

#### ***Coordinated Planning***

A significant share of lands in the WSCR study area are permanently preserved, either by the state in parks or wildlife management areas (56,000 acres) or by private for-profit or non-profit groups (24,000 acres). These lands provide both an opportunity and a problem for study area municipalities. Because so many lands are preserved, residents of Cumberland County know that they will always be surrounded by considerable natural beauty, and that a “critical mass” exists for an eco-tourist industry. However, the large number of acres in state or non-profit hands also limits the ability of municipalities to foster the development of lands and thus create jobs. Many miles of Township roads run through these natural areas, and the Townships must keep these in good condition, even when taxes are not paid on these properties.

Given the large percentage of these lands in the Townships, the most fundamental strategy for natural areas is to improve the coordination of the County and municipalities with the State and non-profit conservation groups, particularly with regards to acquisition. Open space elements in

municipal master plans and the County Open Space Plan should specify and prioritize remaining natural areas that are worthy of preservation. These plans should also indicate when further acquisition of open space areas will not be in a municipality’s interest, because such areas are needed to fulfill other important municipal goals.



Because these lands are an important public good, and critical to the County’s important eco-tourism industry, these lands should be highly accessible. A comprehensive inventory should evaluate the adequacy of the signing for these natural areas, both for tourists trying to locate these areas and for tourists within the natural areas. An inventory should also document whether the roads and other facilities, such as rest areas, are properly maintained. Other, less visible aspects of management, such as proper security, should also be evaluated. Some



of these responsibilities fall upon the municipalities, and some on the State or County. In all cases, however, it should be the goal to maintain visitor-friendly natural areas. Following the inventory, needed improvements should be prioritized, and possible funding sources identified, so improvements can occur in a comprehensive manner.

Many lands in the WSCR study area are regulated by CAFRA and the Pinelands Commission. The CAFRA zone encompasses over 117,000 acres, and the Pinelands area covers 40,000 acres within Maurice River Township. These agencies and their decisions have a major impact on land development in the study area municipalities. Both the NJDEP and the Pinelands Commission should work closely with the affected municipalities to ensure that access to and use of all lands, both preserved and non-preserved, reflect continual municipal input.

### ***PILOT Programs***

A robust PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) program is recommended to help pay the cost of needed services or improvements on lands owned by the State or non-profit organizations. As noted earlier, municipalities must pay for services, such as road maintenance or fire protection, for natural areas even though these properties make no contribution to the municipal revenues. This is, of course, true across the state. However, in Cumberland County the lands owned by public entities or non-profit groups are so considerable that an unusual burden is placed on certain municipalities.

A PILOT is an attempt to compensate local governments for lost tax revenue. It can also be a way to generate funding to help improve access and other needed infrastructure and services for public lands.

PILOTS already exist in the study area. PSE&G has established estuary enhancement areas in Greenwich, Commercial and Maurice River Townships. In Greenwich Township, although the estuary enhancement area was set up under a non-profit subsidiary, PSE&G established a PILOT with Greenwich Township whereby it contributes to the Township approximately the amount of money it would have been responsible for if the land were taxed as private, undeveloped land. The PILOT is indexed to the inflation rate, so the contribution will continue to increase in the future. Further, PSE&G provides its own security, by contracting through another natural non-profit group in the area, the Nature Conservancy. It has also contributed to signing improvements in the area.

It would be ideal if the PILOTS created by other non-profits in the area were similar to that established by PSE&G. It would also benefit the study area municipalities if the State, recognizing the special circumstances of the large percentage of lands in public ownership and the minimal tax base of much of the study area, would provide or increase PILOT funding for WSCR municipalities. It could be established, as part of this understanding, that the payments to the municipalities would result in direct improvements to infrastructure in, or leading to, the natural areas, as well as for services to the natural areas. PILOT payments could be based, in part, on the percentage of lands within a municipality that are not taxable.

In summary, townships would receive compensation not simply for lands that are off tax rolls – as is currently done – but for needed governmental services and facilities.

### ***Cohansey Greenway System Concept***

The Cohansey River is a special resource for the Region. It runs through Upper Deerfield, Bridgeton, Fairfield, Hopewell and Greenwich. *The Cohansey River Management Plan* (1998) was intended to balance the conflicting issues of environmental protection and economic development along the river.

Significant public conservation lands exist along the river including PES&G Estuary Enhancement sites, preserved farmlands, parklands and wildlife management areas. The lower portion of the Cohansey River has been identified as a particularly outstanding example of the CAFRA zone, due to its vast wildlife habitat. Public access along the river is limited and the value of this river corridor could be enhanced with better public access.

The *Cohansey River Management Plan* recognizes the importance of keeping a navigable river channel up to Route 49, and connecting the waterfronts in Bridgeton, Fairton and Greenwich to the Delaware Bay. The Plan also states that people should have access to areas along the river in the developed areas of Bridgeton, Fairton and Greenwich.

The development of an intermunicipal Cohansey River Greenway Plan would assist in the planning, implementation and management of a greenway system or multipurpose path to provide access and recreational opportunities along the river. It will serve the Region and can also be an ecotourism destination with links to the Bayshore bicycle trail and the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail. There are sections of the Cohansey River Corridor in public ownership which can be established in the initial section of the greenway from Sunset Lake in Upper Deerfield to Cohansey Park and the waterfront promenade in Bridgeton. Other sections may require acquisition of public easements to link current public land holdings. Special techniques may be required such as elevated boardwalks to traverse sensitive environmental areas such as the wetlands. Funding can be sought through the Green Acres Trust Fund and other sources for planning and development of this greenway system.

**Marine-Based Industry/Recreation**

The importance of supporting marine-based industry and recreation activities was identified as a need in the regional vision workshop. A breached dike on the Cohansey River should be restored, and dredging and other maintenance is needed in the Maurice River, Fortescue Creek and Fairton Marina. The ability to dredge depends, in turn, on the availability of dredge spoil sites, and NJDEP should work with area municipalities on this provision. Study area municipalities should identify other areas in need of improvement, continue maintenance of existing efforts underway and coordinate with NJDEP for priority funding.

**Historic**

**Protection of Historic Resources**

Cumberland County has historic resources which are important to its sense of place and its attractiveness as a visitor destination. These resources make the area a viable destination. There are two historic districts, in Bridgeton and Greenwich. Even outside these two districts, however, there are older centers with numerous historic structures, such as Dorchester and Leesburg in Maurice River Township. Port Norris has a number of fine historic structures on Main Street in need of repair. While many centers may not have the same concentration of historic



properties as Greenwich and Bridgeton, taken together, a tour of historic areas can provide an enjoyable driving or bicycling excursion for visitors to Cumberland County. It should also be noted that the rehabilitation of historic structures in disrepair can help generate local economic activity, by employing local craftsmen.

Municipalities should thus make an extensive effort to document and evaluate its existing historical resources. Properties could be added to the National Historic Landmarks Register, and the National or New Jersey Register of Historic Places. To fully develop their potential as historic attractions, municipalities can take a more active role through establishing an historic preservation commission, developing a strong historic preservation element in their master plan and adopting an

historic preservation ordinance. Currently, only Bridgeton and Greenwich have historic preservation ordinances. Municipalities can also establish informal advisory committees if there is not sufficient



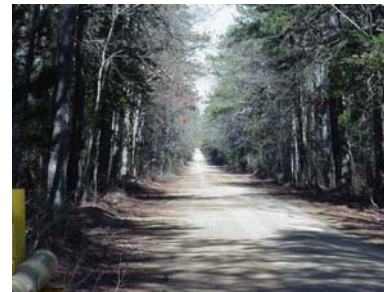
personnel for an historic preservation commission as provided for in the Municipal Land Use Law. A planning board can also act as an historic preservation commission for smaller towns.

Finally, New Jersey can abet historic preservation by creating an historic home tax credit. Currently, tax credits can be used for

buildings renovated by county or municipal governments, or non-profit groups.

**Protecting Scenic Roads**

As part of a strategy to promote areas of outstanding scenic, natural, recreational, cultural, historic or archaeological significance, an effort to protect those scenic landscapes should be encouraged. These include the open farmlands surrounding Greenwich and Othello, and the



marshes visible from CR 553 in Downe or Lawrence Townships. Open views across farmlands and fields and the tidal lands are an important part of the landscape setting. Protecting these unique aspects of the landscape will support ecotourism opportunities drawing visitors to the Region. These features are also important to the quality of life of the study area

municipalities. Within the Pinelands portion of the study area (Maurice River Township) scenic corridors are designated within the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. The Plan and Maurice River Township's development regulations ordinance designate all public paved roads in the Pinelands area (excluding Pinelands Villages, or roads which provide for internal circulation within residentially developed areas) as special scenic corridors. Additional setback requirements are imposed along such scenic corridors in an effort to maintain the vistas along such roadways.

These scenic roads and views can be protected from the encroachment of development, through strategies described in the following section.

### Scenic Roadways

Cumberland County should prepare a Scenic Roadway Plan to identify sections of county roadways that are attractive, and along which driving, bicycling or walking would be an enjoyable experience. Design guidelines should be prepared for use in the Cumberland County Planning Board's development review process for projects on County roadways. These guidelines can also serve as model guidelines to be incorporated into municipal ordinances.

Monmouth County, NJ serves as an example for this strategy. The County adopted a scenic roadway plan, which provides guidelines for developers to follow in installing a wide range of features, including curbs, drainage, grading and clearing, guiderails, bridges and culverts, detention/retention basins, fences and walls, and identification signs.

The County can also consider preparing a scenic corridor management plan, which involves mapping the scenic viewshed along a scenic roadway, describing the notable scenic features, and identifying necessary improvements and management tools, such as local ordinances.

### Municipal Tools

Following creation of a County Scenic Roadway Plan, municipalities are encouraged to adopt various guidelines or ordinances to more directly protect desirable landscapes. Among the tools that municipalities can use to preserve scenic roadways and historic resources are:

- Scenic corridor overlay district – preserves a viewshed through requiring development to be sited in the least visible location of a viewshed, such as along the periphery of a site or where natural feature can provide screening. Physical structures within a scenic roadway buffer could be strictly regulated;
- Agricultural district – restricts development to agriculture or nursery operation;
- Design district – regulates the physical appearance of structures; and
- Historic district – regulates alteration to historic structures.

### Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

A scenic roadway can also be designated at the state or national level. The New Jersey Department of Transportation created the New Jersey Scenic Byways Program in 1995; its principal goal is to preserve the views of the state's landscape from a roadway. A route must be at least five miles in length to qualify, and is nominated by the State Scenic Byways Program Advisory Committee and the Commissioner of NJ DOT. Routes that are designated as state scenic byways may also be designated as a scenic byway at the national level, and be eligible to receive Federal Scenic Byway discretionary grant funding. Recently, a \$150,000 grant was provided from the Public Lands Highway Discretionary Funds Program to develop a scenic corridor through the Salem-Cumberland-Cape May area, constituting the Delsea region of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail. WSCR municipalities should support and coordinate with the project to ensure that important local attractions are included, thus promoting the region.

A scenic byway plan should include a scenic inventory, long-term management and maintenance recommendations, "viewsheds" management, and describe economic benefits and funding needs and sources. Some communities nominate a scenic byway to increase tourism and bolster their economic base; others use it as a way to conserve the byway corridor resources that reflect the community's character. Additional benefits include federal funding, recognition, increased tourism, technical assistance in the scenic byway process, planning for protection and managed growth and consideration for financial assistance for plan implementation.

To enhance the economic vitality of communities along the Mullica River corridor and Delaware Bay region, the Pinelands Rural Economic Development Program has suggested designating a New Jersey and National Scenic Byway, which would promote more widespread recognition and appreciation of the natural and cultural assets of the Pinelands.

### **Mining**

#### ***Proactive Planning***

Sand mining and glass manufacturing has historically had a profound effect on the economy of Cumberland County. There are almost 2,000 acres of land developed to mineral extraction in the WSCR study area, with most municipalities containing at least one sand mine facility. The

mining activities extend beyond municipal borders and have intermunicipal effects. Both public and private lands are the site of sand mines.

One of the issues identified for the study area is the need to proactively plan and regulate the activities on, and reclamation of, the mined lands. While many of the Cumberland County municipalities address mining activities in their own zoning ordinances and Master Plans (Downe, Commercial, Fairfield, Lawrence and Maurice River Townships), there has been an expressed interest in developing intermunicipal plans and a model reclamation ordinance so that municipalities and the region can establish common policies and goals. Reclamation Plans should be prepared before any mining activities begins and should be used to evaluate the best and future use of the land based upon its current zoning. WSCR municipalities have expressed interest in using reclaimed mine lands for everything from wildlife habitat to an off-road vehicle park.

In addition, with mining such an important part of the economic and cultural heritage of the WSCR, it is recommended that the large sand mining companies create a museum or heritage facility that would demonstrate the importance of silica sands to the economy.

## **Agriculture**

### ***Preserve Agriculture***

Agriculture has long been the backbone of Cumberland County's economy, generating over \$2 billion per year and employing over 5,000 people.



Given the prevalence of agricultural lands in the region, and the role of agriculture in the area's culture, farmland preservation is a critical issue. Because of its potential for combating suburban sprawl, and its assistance in sustaining an agricultural economy, farmland preservation should continue to be promoted in the study area.

### County Ranking

The County should continue to develop its farmland preservation program, which stands as a model in the effort to prioritize parcels for preservation. The County is in the process of revising its farmland preservation program to better identify strategic lands; this effort will place a greater emphasis upon municipal agricultural zoning districts. As with all such programs, the need to develop a critical mass of preserved agricultural lands, and thus better maintain the viability of the agricultural industry, is key. Municipal master plans should also reflect farmland preservation goals and priority areas.

### Farmland Easement Values

Land values in Cumberland County are relatively low by New Jersey standards, which can be attributed in large part to the lack of development pressure in the area. Indeed, the ratio of accepted easement values to agricultural products sold is lower in Cumberland County than any other



county in the state. There is concern that funding made available for farmland easements in Cumberland County by the New Jersey Department of Agriculture may actually be too low, and thus not be sufficient to entice farmers to selling the easement on their property's development rights. A study is thus needed to review the level of assessments on farmland in the County and determine whether these are in the same relationship to purchase offers as found elsewhere in the state.

### ***Balancing Development***

Preserving farming and agricultural activities, and limiting the encroachment of residential development are two of the major issues identified within the WSCR. One of the strategies used to protect farmland is to focus future residential and commercial growth in the existing centers.

Many municipal zoning, subdivision ordinances and master plans can be tailored to better to accommodate farming practices and minimize the amount of farmland that is lost to residential and commercial

development. Various techniques intended to protect farmland have been successfully implemented in New Jersey municipalities.

#### Development Transfer

One planning tool used to encourage farmland preservation is the use of transfer of development rights (TDR). TDR's were recently approved for use in the entire state by the New Jersey Legislature. Under this technique, development rights are transferred from one parcel to another parcel. The "sending parcel" is thus preserved, and more development is permitted on the "receiving parcel" than would otherwise be the case.

This technique can be used to preserve farmland and concentrate residential and commercial development in designated centers, with the necessary infrastructure to support development at higher densities. The net result is to conserve valuable land, and make centers more viable. For new centers, such as the planned village in Stow Creek, new development can be designed to create a walkable and livable community. Examples of innovative new centers in New Jersey include the Town Center in Washington Township, Mercer County, and a new center in Chesterfield Township, Burlington County. In March 2005, Hopewell Township was selected by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (NJDCA) for a TDR Demonstration Project. With state funding assistance, Hopewell Township has initiated a planning process for a township-wide TDR program. The program is intended to preserve much of the Township's farmland by transferring development rights to a new center in and around the sewer service area. A draft plan will be presented to the public by the end of 2005.

#### Zoning Provisions

For residential development, cluster subdivisions can reduce the extent of developed land by reducing the average lot size while preserving farmland or open space. For example, Readington Township in Hunterdon County has mandatory cluster provisions for tracts of 40 acres or more, or for tracts of 30 acres or more that are adjacent to deed restricted farmland or open space. The clusters comprise lots of 1.5 acres in size. A key provision requires a minimum open space set-aside of 70 percent and states that land which is currently being farmed shall, to the greatest extent possible, remain farmland.

Fredon Township in Sussex County incorporates a six-acre average lot size in its AR-6 zone, with a minimum lot size of one acre, provided that at least 50 contiguous acres of farmland is preserved. At least 75 percent of the preserved farmland must be Class I or II soils. The clustering provision is also available to the AR-2 zone, which has a two-acre average lot size. The entire tract in both districts must be 80 acres or more.

Upper Freehold Township in Monmouth County permits "agricultural preservation subdivisions" in its Agricultural Residential district. In this district, 75 percent of tract acreage must be preserved as farmland through the Monmouth County Agricultural Development Board or the State Agricultural Development Board. Up to 50 percent of the homes that would be permitted on the entire tract as a conventional subdivision can be developed on the remaining acreage.

#### ***Water Supply***

When the NJDEP reactivates its watershed planning program, it should place a premium on the need to prioritize water supply for farms, if increasing demand ultimately leads to allocating water supply.

#### ***Right to Farm Ordinance***

Another technique includes "Right to Farm" ordinances which establish parameters that permit farmers to conduct essential farming practices that may create nuisances to adjacent commercial or non-residential property owners. Within the Cumberland Region, municipalities including Fairfield, Hopewell and Lawrence Townships have established "Right to Farm" ordinances.

#### ***Develop Industries Related to Farming***



Part of what makes the Cumberland Region so special is its farmland. The WSCR is one of the largest agricultural regions in the State of New Jersey. The marketing of farm products through produce stands, "pick your own" operations, or active farm markets all contribute to the farming identity. One of the issues identified at the regional vision

workshop is the need to develop industries that support agricultural

priorities of the region. This includes not just agriculture, but also aquaculture, hydroponics, and marine-based industries. Through municipal land use controls, regulations should be put into place that encourage agri-industry types of businesses. Municipal zoning ordinances and performance-based standards should ensure an agri-industry's appropriate location and compatibility with surrounding uses. Zoning districts should explicitly recognize agricultural industries.

### Agri-Industry

The best way of preserving farming in Cumberland is to improve the profitability of farming operations in the region. Given the higher costs of living in New Jersey, farmers that rely upon traditional row crops to



survive will increasingly find themselves at an economic disadvantage. Farmers will thus need to better identify farm products that can occupy market niches. For example, farmers can identify products that are prized in the Hispanic community, grow those products, and cooperate with wholesalers to market the products

in those areas. In general, foods that are sought after in ethnic communities would be desirable commodities. Nursery and landscape crops are responsible for an increasing share of farming revenues in the County, and farmers should continue to diversify into this area.

The state should provide funding for farmers to transition into new products, as the equipment required to grow these new niche products often differs dramatically from existing equipment. Farmers should also



take advantage of the proximity of the Food Innovation Center (FIC) in Bridgeton, which is a partnership between Rutgers University and the NJDA. Farmers can be counseled on how to realize a vision they may have for new operations, or can join an Entrepreneurial Network to discover how other farmers in the area are preparing to diversify into new products and operations.

### ***Agricultural Enterprise District***

Another way to maintain farmland viability in Cumberland County and create investment in rural areas is through the use of an Agricultural Enterprise District (AED)<sup>1</sup>. This would be a state program, but managed at the County level, by the County Agricultural Development Board (CADB). The CADB must establish the area's agricultural viability, calculate the number of farmers willing to enlist and win the support of the municipality. Those with viable, productive agriculture and CADBs with the staff and resources necessary to run the program are qualified. The district is then designated by the State, County or municipality. Farms that voluntarily apply and meet the criteria can be included in the zone, as well as farm-related businesses.

Funding would be similar to the UEZ program. The State would return taxes paid by farm landowners (including State inheritance, income or sales taxes). Alternatively, the county or municipality would dedicate property taxes paid by farmers to the program.

Benefits could include:

- Grant funding or cost-share programs for individual farmers;
- Exemption from sales tax on equipment and supplies used in agriculture production;
- Exemption from property tax on single-purpose farm buildings and structures;
- Regulatory streamlining for all state and county rules;
- Strengthened "Right to Farm" protection;
- Marketing and promotion of major commodities;
- A county link with the Statewide Farmers' Market Line computerized database; and
- Job training.

This would require action by the Department of Agriculture and New Jersey Legislature.

<sup>1</sup> The Agricultural Enterprise District. Prepared for The Cumberland County Agricultural Development Board. Prepared by the Heinrich Hultgren Team. September, 2001.

## Transportation

### Roadways

Perhaps the greatest transportation priority for municipalities in the WSCR study area is an improved regional connection to the interstate highway system that provides easy access to the vast mid-Atlantic market. However, there are two significant obstacles to improving any regional connection to Cumberland County: lack of funding, and the perceived environmental and demographic impacts of constructing new roadways.

Route 40 and County Route 540, among others, have been identified, as offering the greatest potential for improved access to the region. Business stakeholders have also called for improvements to Route 322. More ambitiously, interest has been expressed in a new interstate highway through the region, from Delaware Memorial Bridge to Atlantic City. This roadway could be referred to as the Southeast Extension of the NJ Turnpike. It would pass through Cumberland County or would include a limited access spur into Cumberland County, with a possible connection to NJ Route 55 and to Bridgeton. The roadway could make its way southeast following proposed alternative routes for completion of Rt. 55, or could go northeast from Cumberland County to connect with the Atlantic City Expressway in Atlantic County.

Such a roadway would benefit Salem, Cumberland, Atlantic and Cape May counties. Funding should be provided for a study to investigate routes; potential impacts on the environment, economic development, conservation, open spaces, farming and on local and regional planning should be considered. Exits from the roadway should be limited to areas

where counties, municipalities and regions agree that development is appropriate. The study could be spearheaded jointly by several regional authorities, including the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, South Jersey Transportation Authority, Delaware River and Bay Authority. County improvement authorities could also be involved.



In the near term, a greater push should be made for more discrete improvements. In some respects, Route 40 would be easier to improve on-alignment than CR 540, as it has a more adequate vertical and horizontal alignment, and there may be few environmental issues. To make better use of Route 40, however, a southern bypass of Woodstown Borough in Salem County is required. Pilesgrove Township, which would be the site of the bypass, is opposed to the bypass. Further, the Woodstown Bypass was eliminated from the State study and development program, as the State is not making sufficient funding available for larger projects.

Similarly, the Route 55 extension to Cape May was also eliminated from the State study and development program due to a lack of funding. State legislators have proposed bills to fund concept development and design of the Route 55 extension.

A study to improve CR 540 should be added to the SJTPO Unified Planning Work Program. While it would be more difficult to improve CR 540 to NJDOT principal arterial design standards than Route 40, it currently offers perhaps the fastest route from Bridgeton to the Delaware Memorial Bridge. Improvements to Route 77 should also be considered for the State study and development program.

A number of the more critical regional roadway improvements have been clearly identified. At this point, less emphasis should be placed on a transportation needs assessment, and more on securing the funding needed to advance the projects through the NJ DOT project development process. A priority should be to restore Route 55 and Woodstown Bypass projects to the State study and development program. At the same time, the environmental impacts of major roadway projects, whether the Route 55 extension or a new east-west roadway, would need to be addressed. For any local access roadways in Cumberland, efforts should be made to discourage strip development.

In addition to those improvements that enhance access to Cumberland County, it is also a regional priority to improve east-west roadways within Cumberland County. Access to Route 55 is particularly important; one possibility that should be considered is a limited access spur of Route 55 from Vineland to Bridgeton. It may be feasible in the near future to implement needed improvements to a cross-county route,

CR 552. This roadway is currently under study by the SJTPO, and the needed improvements have not yet been identified. Improvements to Route 56 should also be considered, as recommended in the Route 56 corridor study.

A number of principal arterial routes transverse Maurice River Township including State Routes 55, 47 and 49 and County Routes 347, 550 and 670. These roadways serve as major conduits between the Philadelphia and Wilmington metropolitan areas and the lower Atlantic County and Cape May County areas. However, these are also critical to the Maurice River villages for accommodating local traffic, and congestion on them inhibits circulation within the Township. The roadways are vital links since they are the only bridge crossing of the Maurice River and its tributaries, the Manumuskin and Muskee Creek.

These highways also serve as emergency evacuation routes from the Shore areas. It has been estimated that the Shore communities south of Port Elizabeth would require more than 36 hours of continuous evacuation to escape a coastal hurricane. If large numbers of evacuees were trapped in traffic when a storm arrives, local emergency management personnel would be overwhelmed with a large number of non-residents requiring shelter and services. Planning and funding must be put forth to see that both regional motorists and local residents are efficiently and safely handled in an emergency.

Development along key roadways in the future may erode roadway capacity and safety. An access management study could identify actions to preserve the capacity of CR 552, Route 56, Route 77 and other major roadways even in the absence of major physical improvements. An access management strategy would provide guidelines on the frequency and spacing of driveways, and would encourage adjacent land uses to provide internal roadway links.

### **Transit**

The Cumberland County Improvement Authority has applied for funding for a new fixed-route transit line which would extend from Carll's Corner in Upper Deerfield to Vineland. This will help address the need for an east-west transit line in the northern part of the county; the SJTPO should be encouraged to support this program. Under this grant program, funding is guaranteed for only one year following an award;

presuming that funding is initially authorized, funding should be extended for an additional year.

There should be development of a Landis Avenue transit link and the continued expansion of the County's C.A.T.S. system. These new transit connections will enable residents from the WSC Region and throughout the County to get to and from work or job training.

The Cumberland County Improvement Authority has received an award from the Federal Transit Administration for a Jobs-Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program. This would support a "demand-response" system, in which transit-dependent County residents could request the CCA van to pick them up at pre-scheduled times. Although typically created to respond to the transportation needs of social service clients, this service could be used to transport persons from their home in more rural areas to their workplace, every day from Monday through Friday, if necessary. Until population density increases in certain areas thus making fixed route transit service more viable, innovative transportation systems such as the use of demand-response transportation should be used to meet the needs of transit-dependent County residents. Funding should be sought to continue and expend transit programs.

A particular challenge in the study area is the lack of transit options for lower income farm workers, many of whom are immigrants, and travel from housing typically found in Vineland, Millville and Bridgeton, to outlying farms. A flexible carpool or vanpool service should be considered to address these needs.

### **Rail**

The Winchester & Western Railroad has been identified as an important asset, particularly for major bulk good companies in the county, such as minerals. The Winchester & Western service could be further encouraged if the State adopted a program similar to that found in Pennsylvania, and helped fund the construction of rail sidings for new industrial customers. The State could also take on a greater share of rail maintenance, over its existing 70% share.



### ***Bike Routes***

Possible bike routes have been identified through the Cumberland County Bike Plan. However, a number of actions must still take place. Roadways that are currently suitable for bike travel must be signed. A bikeway brochure should be prepared. Along with indicating bike-compatible roadways, possible rest stops for bicyclists should be indicated. The County Tourism Department should also integrate the bikeway plans with other County attractions. More ambitiously, the County should evaluate acquiring easements to develop an off-road bike path system within the WSCR municipalities. The Cohansey Greenway would be part of this effort. Municipalities should also plan for bike facilities as part of the circulation plan in their master plans.

### **Sewer and Water Sewer**

A relatively small area of the WSCR study area is currently sewered, with the Cumberland County Utilities Authority (CCUA) being the sole public sewer provider. The major obstacles to expansion of the CCUA sewer service area are financial and environmental.

Significant public sewer expansion could still take place within the CCUA planned sewer service area; the Borough of Shiloh and parts of Hopewell, Upper Deerfield and Fairfield Township are approved for public sewer regardless of the amount of discharge. This public sewer service area largely corresponds to the area within the planned Bridgeton Regional Center, and expansion will be critical to realize the goal of concentrating a greater amount of development within the center. Financing the expansion of public sewer within this area should thus be a municipal priority, with assistance from the State and from the US Rural Development Administration.

NJDEP has indicated that it will more rigorously screen any future request for needed permits, if this leads to significant growth outside centers. Municipalities in the WSCR should thus review the center boundaries currently proposed to ensure that any area that could possibly benefit from public sewer in the future is included within these centers.

Package treatment plants should also be more widely employed in the study area as an “interim” measure between septic facilities and public sewer systems, or even as a final measure. Package treatment plants have increased in reliability in recent years, and NJDEP regulations should be more flexible in permitting their use. Package facilities will permit a somewhat greater density of development in centers that could not feasibly be included in a public sewer service area in the near future, while avoiding the health or technical problems that sometimes arise with septic systems. Package plants also have the benefit of returning water to the same watershed from which it was drawn, and thus benefit water supply planning.

Additional sewer service strategies include: to amend the Rural District Wastewater Management Area by adding Deerfield to the CCUA sewer service area; to pursue the construction of sewage treatment plant and/or pipeline in Port Norris and Laurel Lake and to identify a feasible sewerage treatment plan for Fortescue. Sewer facilities in Port Norris and Fortescue are critical to support ecotourism services in those communities. Fairfield Township is in need of public sewer in its centers.

### ***Water***

A major issue in the study area is whether development could be limited by the water supply. The large part of Cumberland County falls within Watershed Management Area 17, which was projected by the NJ DEP in its 1995 Water Supply Plan to have a “dependable yield” water supply deficit of 9 MGD in the year 2010. Unfortunately, the Area 17 Watershed Management Plan study which was to have more definitively resolved the nature and extent of the water supply deficit in the area was disbanded by the State. This effort could also have identified the most feasible means of addressing the water supply deficit in the County, if indeed it exists. A critical priority, therefore, is for the State to revitalize the watershed management planning effort.

However, a number of actions can be taken to better preserve water resources in the area, even in the absence of a more comprehensive planning effort. Greater use can be made of recycled water and different water conservation techniques. The CCUA plant in Bridgeton, which currently discharges treated effluent to the Cohansey River, should ideally discharge to ground water, and thus recharge the aquifer. This action would be expensive, requiring the infusion of new capital

equipment and the purchase of land. This should thus be a priority for funding, with any action to be phased in over a reasonable period of time.

## **Community Facility/Services**

### ***Public Recreation Facilities***

#### Intermunicipal/County Parks

There is a limited amount of municipally owned parkland within the WSCR. One of the issues identified is a need to develop a greater number of active recreational facilities within the region. As a result, the WSCR should consider developing an intermunicipal park system to help increase the amount of parks and open space within the region. Benefits of an intermunicipal park system include shared costs of land acquisition, park development and on-going maintenance. Shared park systems and services offer the greatest potential for smaller, geographically compact communities. This is particularly true of smaller communities with resource limitations, such as those in the Pinelands or CAFRA region.

The Cohanzick Zoo in Bridgeton is one of the prized recreational amenities in the WSCR area, and visited by households from all over the County. This could serve as a test case for shared financial support from WSCR communities, as shared and regionalized services are considered.

#### County Park/Open Space Plan

Cumberland County is already in the process of developing a County Open Space Plan. Such a plan should explore the possibility of a County park system. It should also incorporate a prioritized list of open space and recreation priorities to serve as a planning tool for state, county and municipal open space and recreation acquisition.

### ***Education***

Cumberland County College is seeking to become one of the 10 new technology incubators designed by the State of New Jersey. Practices that require specialized training, such as aquaculture, are receiving great attention from the County College. The County should promote development of new and innovative technologies, such as solaraquatics and wetlands management. A Food Innovation Research Extension Center has been established by Rutgers University in Bridgeton; to

complement this center, food industry technology should be an emphasis at the County College.

In addition to the agricultural related jobs and economic opportunities, employment training initiatives should also capitalize on the region's glass making heritage by offering glass training programs.

## **Housing**

### ***Affordable Housing***

The housing opportunities within the WSCR reflect the diverse nature of the area and the historic development patterns. Bridgeton, as the urban center, offers a variety of generally older housing stock, ranging from apartments and multi-family units to row housing and single-family housing. There are also settlements along the Delaware Bay including both seasonal and year round housing. River based communities in Maurice River Township and other larger settlements in Port Norris, Fortescue, Fairton, Laurel Lake, Rosenhayn, Seabrook and Cedarville provide diverse housing stock in their centers.

In New Jersey each municipality has an obligation to provide its share of affordable housing needs as determined by the Council of Affordable Housing (COAH). To meet the obligations, COAH has established affordable housing targets for all municipalities in the State.

As of April 2003, only two municipalities within Cumberland County have New Jersey COAH certification: Commercial Township and Vineland City. Upper Deerfield is a 'court town' and is currently under litigation. Other municipalities in the WSCR area should prepare or update their individual Housing Plan elements and achieve COAH certification. This would have two important effects: 1) certification would remove the threat of court action that could accompany new housing developments; and 2) it would enable the municipality to receive Plan Endorsement from the Office of Smart Growth.

The WSCR should also identify ways for the municipalities to cooperatively address their COAH housing obligations. As one example, municipalities could investigate regional contribution agreements (RCAs), through which the construction of new affordable housing units in one community is subsidized by another municipality.

To prepare the housing plans, municipalities should pursue housing grants through the State.

### ***Migrant Farm Worker Housing***

An issue of particular concern to the study area is housing for migrant farm workers. Although there are no farms within Bridgeton, people working on farms in the surrounding areas have often come to locate within the City. It is estimated that as many as 3,000 to 5,000 migrant workers are housed in Bridgeton every growing season. The lack of short-term rental space creates significant over-crowding, neglected housing and other associated problems. Ideally, the need for updated housing for migrant workers could be addressed through a regional effort involving the County, and municipalities surrounding Bridgeton. Health and housing codes should be rigorously enforced to address problems caused by overcrowding and neglected housing in the City of Bridgeton. Affordable housing plans for all study area communities with significant acreage in use as farms and nurseries should include goals for low-income housing that can be utilized by farm workers in the region.

### **Economy**

The WSCR has been economically stagnant since the decline of its historic major industries: glass and fishing. It has experienced a slower rate of growth than the State, with a higher unemployment rate and a lower income level; indeed, its median family income and per capita income were lowest in the State in both 1989 and 1999.



Cumberland County has had success targeting industry for areas with adequate infrastructure, especially in Vineland and Millville. As identified in the *Potentials for Economic Development* report, there are a number of potential industries that could grow in the WSCR communities with the infrastructure to support them. Among them are certain sectors of the glass industry and food processing.

However, large areas of the WSCR lack the infrastructure necessary to accommodate large-scale economic development. In these areas, the

primary activity may be agriculture, including nurseries, specialized produce, or aquaculture.

One way to boost opportunities for diversifying the economy in the region is to improve the communication infrastructure to allow local entrepreneurs to develop businesses that rely on high-speed communications and to help attract and retain new and innovative businesses and industries. The County, Cumberland Empowerment Zone Corporation, and its partners should work together to enhance fiber optic and wireless communication in the County.

In other areas with scenic vistas, historic structures, bird watching, fishing, biking, hiking trails, boating facilities and other recreational activities, eco-tourism is an appropriate economic generator. To enhance development of ecotourism, the region should work with the NJ Audubon Society on its new Wildlife Viewing initiative. This program will bring national attention to the Delaware Bayshore and the opportunities for birding and other wildlife viewing throughout the area. The program also has the potential to secure funding for facilities such as rest stops, viewing platforms, trails, and interpretive centers.

### ***Ecotourism***

The County produced an Ecotourism Plan in 1996. The County's Ecotourism Plan identifies six themes that build on the county's historic and natural resources. These include marine-based industries and recreation amenities: tracing Cumberland County's Maritime Heritage; boating adventures in Cumberland County; hunting, fishing and crabbing opportunities; birding, biking and hiking; and tracing the natural history of glass in the County. The County has initiated a number of efforts to promote this plan. In 2002, a \$300,000 marketing campaign to promote Cumberland County both to the local residents and visitors and investors was completed. However, there is a need to go further to attract the tourism dollars.

The lodging expenditures in Cumberland County fall well below the State average. Cape May generated over 96% of tourism related expenditures in the Southern Shore Region that includes Cape May and Cumberland Counties. A goal to increase tourism activity by 20% over the next five years through targeted marketing and promotional activities would have dramatic economic impact on the rural areas of the region.

Lengthening the stay of tourists – at a minimum, accommodating a greater number of overnight stays – is a key element to gain tourism dollars. Since Cumberland County does not have major attractions, it will be critical to package destinations together for potential tourists to entice them to extend their stay.

The WSCR needs to implement a comprehensive tourism package that will do the following:

- Dramatically increase the number of hotel rooms and restaurants, especially along the Bayshore Route and its historic villages;
- Encourage strategic planning for towns on the Bayshore bicycle trail to focus future business opportunities;
- Establish a County based website to coordinated ecotourism opportunities and program;
- Provide strong coordination of tourism events and attractions, both year-round and seasonal;
- Identify and seek funding for key attractions that will draw visitors to the region, such as a Regional Nature Center; and
- Strengthen the County Office of Tourism and coordinate activities with special emphasis of the WSCR.

As one possibility for increasing coordination, there could be consideration of creating a Cumberland County Vacation Bureau, consisting of any business that would benefit from increased tourism. This would provide a forum in which area businesses could cooperate and creatively plan to link their attractions or services as part of an overall package.

One means of boosting ecotourism would be creation of a nature center. Maurice River Township has long sought a nature interpretive and education center which would provide information on the natural areas of the region. This might be a joint effort of the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and the Pinelands Commission and would be ideally suited to attract some of the shore traffic using Routes 47, 55 and 347.

Smart Growth regulations should realistically encourage and allow for some economic development related to the ecotourism industry. Without such accommodations in the planning process, it will be difficult to build needed facilities for visitors in Maurice River Township or the

other rural communities of the study area. If new commercial uses cannot be built, local governments will confront an increased tax burden in providing litter collection, sanitary facilities and security for the natural areas, with no corresponding increase in property tax revenue.

### ***Agri-Tourism***

As part of the ecotourism effort planned for the Cumberland County area, an agri-tourism campaign should be planned. A brochure should be prepared identifying the farms open to public sales in the County, along with the products sold there, and the days and hours of operation. This could be combined with a list of bed and breakfast operations, motels/hotels, campgrounds, and wildlife management areas. This has worked well in the Skylands Region of northwest New Jersey.

### ***Develop Industries that Support Agriculture***

Food processing, especially small scale, value added processing of fresh foods and aquaculture, including recent efforts in shell fishing and tank farming hold potential to generate limited real estate development in the rural areas.

The growing nursery business in the County can spawn spin-off businesses that serve the nursery industry including truck, fertilizer, seed, burlap and other related goods and equipment.

To support these businesses, the zoning should be evaluated to ensure that appropriate performance standards are in place to accommodate ag-industries in appropriate locations. Intermunicipal revenue sharing could serve to concentrate these industrial facilities in the regional industrial parks where infrastructure and services are available.

The County College and County Technical School should continue and expand educational offerings to support these businesses.

### ***Develop Businesses Which Complement the Region***

Real estate development in rural areas not appropriate for agriculture or aquaculture should focus on micro-businesses and those that support the growing recreation and ecotourism industry.

There is a need to identify financial assistance programs available to smaller business in the rural areas. The Region should look at innovative solutions to support these businesses, such as through the

CCIA by establishing a loan guarantee program for micro-businesses that would serve as an incentive for bank lending.

In addition, funding to support micro-businesses should be pursued. A pilot program possibly funded through the USDA Rural Development or the New Jersey Department of Commerce should be pursued to support a business assistance pilot project in the CR 553 corridor. CR 553 is the most important roadway linking together the shore communities.

The aquaculture industry holds promise in the rural areas of the WSCR. Aquaculture can support the farming industry by supplying a market for some of the by-products which can be used as fish food. Because of the lengthy lead-time in establishing a cash flow in the aquaculture industry, the CDC should develop an outreach program to local bankers.

### ***Support Development Plans/Projects Which Complement the Region***

Certain plans and projects, while pursued individually by municipalities, have the potential to bring about positive benefits for the Region as a whole, either because they improve the attractiveness of the Region as a place to do business, or because of the number of jobs they can create. Following are several examples:

- The Commercial Township Bivalve Park and Marina, by creating up to 200 boat slips, and creating a tourist center and eco-education center, can become a popular regional draw;
- The Hopewell Township Business Park and Town Center will serve as a catalyst for the development of new businesses and jobs;
- The Upper Deerfield Township Redevelopment Plan is also intended to catalyze new businesses and new jobs, and will call for the use of rigorous design standards;
- The Deerfield Township Redevelopment Plan is intended to attract a state-of-the-art greenhouse and other agri-businesses to an area adjacent to the Cumberland County landfill.
- The Florida Avenue Industrial Park in Bridgeton is an important part of redevelopment in this urban center.

### ***Continue Revitalization Efforts***

The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan strongly supports redevelopment and revitalization of our urban areas. Bridgeton, the center of the WSCR, has a redevelopment program

underway with funding available through the Urban Enterprise Zone and Empowerment Zone programs, in addition to recent Hope VI federal funding for housing and commercial development.

### ***Other Strategies***

The development of entrepreneurs should be encouraged to grow the regional economy. The study recommends the coordination of support groups, programs and facilities that encourage development of new businesses. This would be done in cooperation with the area Chambers of Commerce, Cumberland County College, Cumberland County Technical Education Center, Cumberland Empowerment Zone Corporation, NJ EDA, economic development departments, Cumberland Development Corp. and other local and regional business resources and local and county governments. Programs may range from educational initiatives in elementary, middle and high schools, and the college and technical education center, to setting up support networks, providing new business start-up support services and establishing special loan or other incentives to create a business-friendly environment.



To enhance the movement of goods, communities should work together to locate and construct a freight distribution facility. This project could involve a transfer station that facilitates the intermodal connection between rail and truck transportation, or a full-scale distribution center.

Rail accessible property is becoming harder to find in the corridor between Washington and New York. Even in the undeveloped rural areas of Cumberland County, finding rail accessible land with public services and facilities is difficult. Municipalities should thus consider revising their zoning ordinances to protect land with rail access for future industrial and commercial use.

To assist in marketing the region, funding should be sought to implement a Global Information System as a tool to provide instant access to prospective sites for new commercial and industrial development. The region should partner with the County government to enhance the County's existing Geographic Information System

computer. This GIS system could be used to host an inventory of available properties within the WSC region, thereby enhancing the accessibility of this information to prospective developers. Funding should also be sought for a Land Use Simulation program which could be used to create computer graphic simulations of projects and developments. This can be used to help communities build public understanding and support for the types of "smart growth" that the regional plan envisions.

## **Intermunicipal Cooperation**

### ***Establish Intermunicipal Revenue Sharing***

Revenue sharing can help in successful implementation of the WSCR plan. It can temper ratable chasing and inefficient, uncoordinated planning. It can also help balance the benefits of development with the less tangible quality of life amenities for which the WSCR is known.

The basic purposes of tax revenue sharing are:

- To reduce competition among communities for attracting non-residential properties;
- To create a fair distribution of tax benefits from development in each community; and
- To permit a 'smart growth' approach to regional land-use planning to be undertaken in a rational manner curtailing haphazard and conflicting development.

Cost and revenue sharing agreements have been very successful elsewhere. The two most outstanding examples are in Minnesota, where Minneapolis and St. Paul (with seven counties and 187 jurisdictions) entered into an agreement under the State "Fiscal Disparities Act" in 1971; and New Jersey, where the Meadowlands are being planned and developed by the New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, a regional agency. Other approaches have been implemented through Joint Intergovernmental Agreements. The summary of these cost and revenue sharing agreements are presented below. Their applicability to the WSCR is then addressed.

#### Minnesota Approach

The Minnesota approach includes only non-residential properties created after the date on which the program was first adopted. Sixty

percent of added assessed values are retained by the community where the new properties are located, and 40 percent are placed in the pool to be shared by all communities. This division recognizes that the host community must bear most of the added costs of servicing that property, but also that other communities may also have to bear some added costs. The distributions are independent of expenditure needs.

#### Joint Intergovernmental Agreements

Joint Intergovernmental Agreements have been allowed in Virginia, Kentucky, Colorado, Michigan and Ohio through State enabling legislation. This approach permits local governments to enter into a contractual agreement for a specific development, or an area where development might occur. The contract described contributions in terms of services or infrastructure and the revenues to be received from the development.

#### Hackensack Meadowlands

A regional commission, the New Jersey Meadowlands Development Commission, controls development and apportions property tax revenue among 14 municipalities. This tax-base-sharing program is aimed at ensuring that those communities that contain valuable tidal wetlands do not suffer financially because the wetlands cannot be developed for business or industrial development. The 1972 Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission and Redevelopment Act provide the legal basis for the tax base sharing program. Forty percent of the increase in each municipality's tax base over the initial 1970 valuation is subject to the tax-sharing program. Redistribution is based on the number of school children and the proportion of property each town has in the Meadowlands District. All affected municipalities equitably share in the new financial benefits and new costs resulting from the development of the Meadowlands District as a whole.

#### ***WSCR Revenue Sharing***

##### CDC Intermunicipal Industrial Park

The Cumberland Development Corporation has initiated development of an industrial park to serve as a revenue sharing mechanism for the Region. Most of the CDC municipalities have relatively limited commercial potential, and the infrastructure and supporting improvement costs of multiple municipal industrial parks would exceed the financial abilities of an individual host community. This plan has

designated this project as a priority for the region, due to its ability to promote smart growth and regional economic development.

The proposed intermunicipal industrial park is an innovative approach to revenue and cost sharing. The exact parameters of the revenue sharing approach are currently being assessed. This will serve as a demonstration project of revenue sharing techniques and regional smart growth strategies that could be replicated in other places as a possible answer to problems of suburban sprawl and ratable chasing that occurs between municipalities and regions.

The CDC municipalities have received federal assistance in determining the feasibility of the project and have agreed on a proposed site in Upper Deerfield Township. Options to permit municipalities to invest in capital projects in other municipalities, as well as methods for revenue and cost sharing, are under study. The costs for land acquisition and/or options are being investigated along with innovative ways to utilize the State's redevelopment laws for cost and revenue sharing and governance.

#### WSCR Revenue Sharing District

Through the WSCR strategic plan, it is apparent that other options are needed to help share the revenues of the region. The extent of constrained lands in the Region, the lack of infrastructure and limited accessibility all have established a dichotomy of have and have-nots in the Region, in one of the poorest counties in New Jersey. The need to more equitably distribute revenue and to share benefits was a main impetus for this study. As shown in the prior examples, both nationally and in New Jersey at the Hackensack Meadowlands, opportunities exist to expand approach to revenue sharing looking for unique innovative solutions.

Property tax reform, if ever implemented in New Jersey, would help stem the ratables chase for more non-residential development and help guide development to appropriate areas. But it will not solve the revenue disparities of the WSCR municipalities. The nature of the Region, with the unique Bayshore habitat and extensive natural lands precludes significant development for many of the WSCR municipalities. These untaxed lands provide recreational and environmental benefits for the Region and the State. There is a need to balance the areas which can appropriately handle large-scale development – such as in

the Bridgeton Regional Center - with the public lands in those other Bayshore municipalities. This presents an opportunity to derive a regional solution, with innovative ways to share the wealth - both in tangible revenues and the wealth of the quality environment.

#### **Shared Services**

The WSCR municipalities have identified the need to reduce costs of providing public services through a shared services approach. Currently the level of municipal services varies for the WSCR municipalities. Bridgeton, as an urban community provides a full range of services to its residents. Most of the other municipalities have much more limited services. As an example of intermunicipal cooperation, there are limited public works services sharing staff between Bridgeton and Fairfield. With all the towns, there are mutual aid agreements between EMS service providers.

As the WSCR area grows in the future, there will likely be greater demand for services such as trash removal, road maintenance, parks and recreation, and building inspection. Services such as tax collection, animal control, and courts can also be shared. Sharing services can help to lower costs and provide a greater level of services to the residents.

The WSCR study participants acknowledge that these programs should be further explored. Funding would be needed through the State, likely through the Department of Community Affairs, to develop a workable plan and program for the WSCR. Certain services may be intermunicipal, serving adjacent municipalities or regional in aspect. For example, the need for Animal Control may require that the County or the Region lead the efforts. The only municipal Police Department is in Bridgeton; the other 11 municipalities in the WSCR rely on the State Police for policing and security. Given that the State has discussed charging municipalities for police services, the need to explore a regional police department would be a possible option. Cooperative shared road maintenance agreements should be considered since many towns do not have road departments.

The Interlocal Services Act and the Consolidated Municipal Services Act allow any two or more local units to contract to provide jointly any service or function which any one of them can provide for itself. These laws are available to any combination of municipalities, counties, school

districts, and, under certain conditions, local public authorities. As noted in the WSCR Region Profile, due to the rural nature of the region, funding for community services, such as parks, is rather difficult.

#### Regional Efficiency Aid Program

According to DCA, New Jersey has provided \$19.54 million in direct credits to residential taxpayers whose towns or schools have participated in shared service agreements.

The funding is being provided through the state's Regional Efficiency Aid Program, or REAP, which offers property tax relief as an incentive for local officials to combine services and cut costs and taxpayers will continue to receive a benefit as long as the shared service activity is in place, as well as credit for any additional actions taken by their municipality or school district.

REAP, and its companion program, REDI, the Regional Efficiency Development Initiative, are designed to help municipalities and school districts reduce spending and save taxpayer dollars. Legislation creating the two programs was signed into law in April 1999. (It should be noted, however, that the REDI program was put on hold in 2002 due to a lack of state funding.) The state has devised formulas to calculate the amount of tax relief a specific shared services action would generate under REAP. The formulas take into consideration such factors as the type and difficulty of the shared service, as well as the fiscal stress and population of the community.

A tax credit is applied to property tax bills for each calendar year in which the shared services agreement is in effect. Property owners whose home is their principle residence, and tenants in dwellings of five or more units, are eligible for the REAP assistance.

#### ***Rural Enterprise Zone***

The WSCR recommends the creation of a "Rural Enterprise Zone" to help develop local management capabilities and generate economic incentives for conservation, maintenance and revitalization. Similar to an Urban Enterprise Zone, the REZ is intended to give rural regions with predominantly lower income communities the tools to improve economic and community conditions. Rural municipalities in the Western Southern Cumberland Region that endorse and remain active partners

in the Regional Plan would receive direct economic benefit from the expansion of ecotourism and retail business, and receive financial compensation for participating in regional planning and for providing large amounts of open space for all the residents of New Jersey.

These new zones will require new state legislation. Qualified businesses within the region would be permitted to charge a reduced state sales tax of 3% and the full 3% would be returned to the municipality and/or region for such uses as economic and community development projects, roads, public lands, public education, building maintenance and preservation of farmland and open space. A designated percentage of all the sales tax revenue generated from the qualified businesses in the REZ would go to the host community, a regional economic development fund and to the existing urban enterprise zone in the WSC region. Designated or endorsed centers in rural areas could receive special consideration in such a program.

It should be noted that a Rural Enterprise Zone would require policy-making and legislation at the state level, and thus would likely be one of the longer-term strategies.

#### ***Bridgeton Regional Center Partnership***

To support Bridgeton's redevelopment efforts and to support an expansion of the Bridgeton Regional Center to encompass Upper Deerfield and Hopewell, and possibly parts of Fairfield Township, there needs to be a cooperative, ongoing planning effort undertaken, in addition to continued cooperation with the WSC Region. A Bridgeton Regional Center Partnership should be formed to address issues and needs of the Center in a comprehensive manner. The Partnership should meet on a regular basis to coordinate on inter-governmental issues and services.

#### ***Regional Planning***

In addition to the Bridgeton Regional Center Partnership, other regional planning efforts could also be undertaken. Maurice River and Commercial Townships, which share the Maurice River as their common boundary, have always been oriented toward the City of Millville for educational services and basic retail services. Downe and Lawrence Townships also have commercial, social and educational ties to Millville. A Maurice River Region Planning Committee could be

established to coordinate economic development, growth management, conservation, and shared services between these five communities.

As the WSC Regional planning process moves forward, other opportunities may present themselves for “intra-regional” planning, such as committees involving bayshore communities, or those involving predominantly agricultural communities. Even if separate “intra-regional” planning committees are established, however, it will always be important for all of the municipalities to actively participate in policy and planning initiatives of the WSCR. A sustained, cooperative process will be needed to ensure success of the revenue sharing plan, intermunicipal industrial park, Rural Enterprise Zone, and other significant projects.

### **State Plan Endorsement**

#### ***Obtain Plan Endorsement Status***

The WSCR Plan will most greatly benefit those communities that follow through with the actions necessary to gain Plan Endorsement. Each municipality must individually approve the WSCR Plan to receive Endorsement. Municipalities should also take steps to ensure that their municipality receives plan endorsement and centers are established under NJ Office of Smart Growth guidelines.

As part of the WSCR strategic plan, a planning and implementation agenda has been developed. Funding should be sought to implement the planning agenda.