

THE INFORMED CITIZEN
Potential items for October 2012 DRAFT

IS HOLMDEL EVOLVING TO AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT?

People Are Attracted to Holmdel by:

- Rural Atmosphere
- Excellent School system
- Low Taxes

Reasonable Property Values Access to Recreational Activities Parks, Open Space, Farmland, Rural Roads Environmental Sensitivity Good Water Quality & Quantity

Trends Toward Urbanization Concern Us:

1. **Redevelopment Plan for Lucent Property** Allows 225 Residences on Lucent Tract. This means that housing density will exceed that of ½ acre zoning if stream buffers and wetlands are preserved. This is the tip of the iceberg, considering other uses permitted. Consider how these changes will impact traffic, way of life and ultimately property values. A redevelopment plan may be needed but we feel the current one is fundamentally flawed and has not been given adequate benefit of public input.
2. **Threat of Rezoning** to Allow Increase in Residential Ratables to “Solve” Budget Problems. A “Cost of Services” study for Holmdel in 1999 showed that for every \$1.00 collected from residential sources the Township paid \$1.38 cents for services. Rather than a budget fix it sets up a tax penalty in the long range. Residential ratables create a tax penalty across the five communities studied in Monmouth County and across communities in a number of other states per the study. This suggests that this is a pervasive problem, and the numbers may change in an updated study but not the conclusion. What we need to do is comply with our well thought out and time proven Master Plan guidelines and zoning ordinances.
3. **Precedent Setting Actions** that could challenge Holmdel’s large lot zoning. Holmdel successfully defended large lot zoning of Chase and other property in a developer’s challenge. Key to that court decision was Holmdel’s consistency in zoning over time as supported by our Master Plans and the fact that septic systems require the large lot area to absorb effluent adequately. Developer initially wanted to build 550 residences, but property has been subsequently preserved. Actions in items 1 & 2 above could set a precedent that could undermine defense of zoning density on up to 1000 acres of Holmdel’s land in the future.

Most of the southern portion of Holmdel has a NJ State mandated designation of Planning Area 5 which is Environmentally Sensitive. This happened in part because a Holmdel Town Wide Survey indicated that the majority of residents wanted to preserve the Chase Property as Open Space; otherwise, this area could have been designated a “village center” that would have been twice the area of Red Bank! Allowing high density zoning in any part of southern Holmdel could reopen that issue.

Other Implications of Urbanization Trends:

Extension of sewer infrastructure can create “unexpected” problems. How? Developers know that courts are likely to support their suits to declare low density zoning as arbitrary and capricious if sewer infrastructure is in place near proposed development. Installing sewers is an unacceptably expensive alternative to septic maintenance.

The importance of water quality and quantity is becoming increasingly more visible. Sewers discharge water to ocean whereas septic recharge aquifers. Impervious surface inhibits recharge of aquifers. Sponge effect of aquifers averages helps moderate increasing variability of rainfall and reduces stream bank erosion that is filling Swimming River Reservoir with mud.

What to do?

If you are concerned about urbanization trends in Holmdel, we suggest you consider the following,

- Bring your concerns and recommendations to the Township Committee.
- Document concerns in writing with letters to Township Committee and copy to the press.
- Ask Township Committee to solve budget problems by controlling costs. Increasing ratables probably will not help. Lucent Redevelopment is not likely to help even under the more

optimistic assumptions. Even long-range economics may be undermined by tax break incentives. Furthermore, industrial developments can depreciate surprisingly rapidly.

- Others . . . Don't expand sewer infrastructure. Get public input and more to revise Redevelopment Plan.
- Revisit recommendation of task force to get professional help to help determine what is best course of action on Lucent property from Holmdel's perspective.