

Information about Willingboro

Willingboro Township is 7.74 square miles of land located in the north-western part of Burlington County bordered by Route 130 on the North, Rancocas Creek on the west, Westampton Township on the south, and Burlington Township on the east. Known as "***A Naturally Better Place To Be***," Willingboro is known for its natural beauty and mature trees and an excellent place to find attractive, well maintained, reasonably priced homes with effortless connections to Philadelphia and New York City.

With a population of over 30,000 residents, the township is comprised of twelve sections, also known as "parks". Together, the parks contain 10,994 single-family homes, 763 townhouses, and one senior housing complex. Additionally, Willingboro has two new apartment complexes and a few pre-Levitt homes.

Before becoming the Willingboro of today, in 1688, the town was a small rural community known as Wellingborough. The land was purchased and designed in the 1950s with federal funds by Levitt & Sons. It was the third planned community constructed by Levitt using the Levittown model. After World War II, the development was featured in nationwide ads calling for new residents to populate the freshly built community. Among the newcomers, veterans made up a large part of the population.

Although New Jersey law prohibited discrimination in housing supported by federal subsidies, Levitt declared he would not sell to "Negros" in Levittown, New Jersey. In 1958, W.R. James, a Black Army officer, applied to purchase a home in town despite the community segregation policy and filed a lawsuit against the Levitt & Sons. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in favor of James, allowing the first Black family to move into the town. By 1970 Willingboro reached a peak population with more than 43,000 residents, but with an increasing number of people of color, white flight led many residents to leave the community.

Since integration, the demographics of Willingboro have shifted tremendously. Willingboro's population has been on a steady decline since the 1970s, losing more than 4,000 residents between the 1990 and 2010 census. The current population stands at almost 32,000 residents per the 2020 census. Census data reports having 69% Black or African American residents 13% Hispanic or Latinx and 16% White making for a diverse landscape.

Willingboro is outfitted with several physical and natural assets, one of which is local management of the Potomac-Magothy-Raritan aquifer by the Willingboro Municipal Utilities Authority (WMUA). This critical water source supplies water to residents in town as well as surrounding communities. Willingboro also has an ample amount of green space throughout the area, including seven public parks, six ball fields, and a golf course. Additionally, a one-room schoolhouse from the year 1866 stands in the center of town and is recorded as one of New Jersey's first properties listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places.

Willingboro is staunchly a middle-income town with a median income of \$83,323 as compared to the US average of \$69,021. Although resident income is considerably higher than the national average, it lags behind the county and state median levels. This economic discrepancy is not only reflected in an income gap but also the commercial activity. Willingboro was designed as a 93% residential bedroom community with the ability to serve residents' needs in town. The reported 5.5% of commercial space has increased in vacancy, forcing a large part of consumer dollars to be spent in surrounding communities.

Today, Willingboro is a community of families, veterans, and seniors but struggles to address the needs of new populations of displaced youth, domestic violence survivors, disabled veterans, and senior citizens. Some of the same factors that pulled residents to Willingboro in the 1950s still exist today. Large lot sizes, as well as proximity and access to larger cities, allow residents to experience suburban living while remaining connected to previous neighborhoods. The town's central location also provides an easy commute to job hubs via both personal vehicles and public transportation. Nearby Joint Base McGuire-Dix Lakehurst continues to position Willingboro as an option for military families. The presence of generations of families creates a robust familial support network encouraging residents to not only stay local but return to the area after higher education. Essentially, Willingboro is missing a master plan that captures the heart & soul of the community, energizes residents and speaks to the current challenges.

In Willingboro, we believe in the guiding principles of **P.O.W.E.R.** in our community. that will promote **P.O.W.E.R.** –

- **P**ublic safety for all;
- **O**ptimizing fiscal strategies for stability and growth;
- **W**ell-connected, educated community;
- **E**conomic development and vitality; and
- **R**eliable and forward-looking infrastructure and facilities.

Our mission, vision and values are designed to address the needs of our residents and ensure the best for our township! Willingboro's vision, mission and values as outlined:

Vision: To be a vibrant and prosperous Willingboro that honors its history, fosters community pride, celebrates diversity and encourages residents to be good neighbors to each other and the environment.

Mission: To provide desirable and resilient neighborhoods for residents, businesses and visitors through open communication with responsible government, multigenerational participation, and community-engaged planning techniques to ensure long-term growth and economic development.

Values: BACK to **BASICS**

Betterment: We develop and implement relevant, creative, thoughtful processes and solutions that enhance the services and outcomes for the community.

Accountability: We accept responsibility and take ownership for our action, inaction and their outcomes.

Service: We engage all people with a focus on listening to and supporting their needs, anticipating and delivering high quality services and ensuring positive outcomes for the community.

Integrity: We act ethically, honestly, and lead by example by demonstrating alignment between our deeds, words and intentions that represent the best interest of Willingboro Township.

Collaboration: We openly share our successes and failures to improve our performances and work together at all levels of the organization and across the organization to accomplish the Township's objectives and to provide our residents and business owners with quality service.

Success: We value being a part of a team that achieves its goals and exceeds expectations while creating winning outcomes for our community.

Project Objectives

The Master Plan is to be prepared and completed in accordance with the requirements of N.J. NJ Rev Stat § 40:55D-28 and may include additional elements desired by the Township and further detailed in the RFP. For example, the Township desires this Master Plan and surrounding process to address the following:

- Preserve and increase resident **quality of life**. Our residents are the heartbeat of our community. In this plan we seek to “plan for people” in an effort to address everyday municipal challenges and needs to create a healthy living environment.
- The **understanding that local and regional planning studies**, as well as market conditions. While there is increased demand for housing and warehouse facilities, Willingboro is near completely built out and has approximately 55% of its land area developed as residential. Residents value the ample green space but there is a need to increase commercial activity to provide residents needed goods and services as well as disperse the tax leavy amongst stakeholders.
- **Sustainability and resilience** should be woven throughout all elements of the Plan. We recognize that climate change is an urgent environmental consideration. Willingboro Township has undertaken Energy Savings Improvement Programs (ESIP) in two of their three governing areas. We also value the quality of our environmental elements and endeavor to maintain/enhance air, water and infrastructure quality.
- **Diversity, equity, inclusion and acessibility** also need to be grounding principles of this project. A robust public process and creative community engagement strategy will be critical to ensuring the Master Plan fairly reflects the needs of the community.

Furthermore, the Township of Willingboro seeks a Master Plan that:

- Is concise, comprehensively written and provides a basis for decision-making about the Township's future;
- Articulates an easily understood vision of the Township's future, crafted from a wide and varied range of community perspectives, and offers an aspirational outlook;
- Is a well-grounded vision supported by a clear, creative, specific, realistic, and cost-effective implementation strategy.
- Provide a basis for decision making about Willingboro's physical development.
- The Master Plan should take into consideration historical studies and analyses prepared by or for the Township, as well as applicable regional planning documents from the Burlington County Bridge Commission and other regional partners including the Commonwealth and incorporate that information into the Master Plan at the appropriate junctures.

The selected consultant will be expected to:

- Inventory and analyze various data including but not limited to data that is physical and demographic and will analyze development trends in order to provide a complete understanding of current conditions.
- Work with the Master Plan Steering Committee and Township staff to develop and facilitate a robust public participation process that utilizes a variety of techniques to inform and be informed by the public.
- Review the Willingboro Zoning Bylaw, among other existing policy and regulatory documents, to identify and recommend any changes necessary to implement the Plan.
- Make other recommendations necessary to carry out the vision, which may include capital improvements, resource allocation, and participation in state and federal programs that are consistent with the Plan's vision.

The Master Plan document should be organized in a clear and logical format and be visually compelling to effectively communicate data, Master Plan objectives, and implementation concepts understandable to the casual reader.

Project Timeline

The project is expected to take approximately eighteen months from authorization to proceed until release of the final Master Plan document by the Willingboro Planning Board by February, 2025. We expect the project to commence in August 2023 and to initiate the public process in 2023, and we encourage respondents to incorporate a public engagement plan.

Proposed Timeline Elements:

- Project start date
- Kick-off meeting with Master Plan Committee
- Public event launching Master Plan process
- Alternatives presentations vetting proposed ideas for future visioning.
- Draft of Master Plan

- Community presentation and feedback gathering
- Final draft of master plan - Spring 2025

Time periods may be extended by the Township if, in the Township's opinion, circumstances warrant an extension. As part of the submittal requirements the consultant shall submit a detailed scope of services and schedule illustrating tasks and target dates, estimated duration of tasks, milestone dates, and public meetings. Evening meetings or workshops are expected.

Funding

The Willingboro Township Council has allocated \$60,000 for the 2023 year for the Master Plan project in Willingboro Township, NJ. The Township expects that a significant portion of the project funding will come from an emergency appropriation via NJS 40A:4-53, a municipality may adopt an ordinance authorizing special emergency appropriations for Preparation of master plan.

Team Management

The consultant will work under the advisory guidance of a designated planning board member in concert with a Master Plan Steering Committee to be established by the Planning Board. The Director of Community Development, planning board Clerk and the Chair of the Master Plan Subcommittee will serve as the day-to-day liaison throughout the Master Plan process. Other Township staff may facilitate and support the Consultant team. The Master Plan Steering Committee will be comprised of 10 to 12 members with a broad range of perspectives.

Project Overview & Scope of Services

This comprehensive master plan (CMP) is envisioned as an opportunity to engage the community in an open and public process to help define Willingboro's future and vision while taking existing information, demographic trends, and community constraints into consideration. It shall result in a comprehensive Master Plan that is informative, dynamic, and implementable to guide and inform the Township over the next decade. The Master Plan should also address, to some degree, the long-term outlook (10 to 15 years) and impact of decisions and strategies.

The last CMP of Willingboro was developed in 1997 with a general reexamination of the CMP in 2018. Therefore, Willingboro Planning Board is interested in the development of a new CMP, in accordance with the requirements of New Jersey statute: Rev N.J.S.A § 40:55D-28, Preparation; contents; modification. The overall goal of this plan is to develop a CMP that is consistent with the current and future needs of Willingboro in a systematic and controlled manner. The CMP shall comprise of a report with:

- a statement of existing conditions using the latest data to detail Willingboro's current state
- a statement of objectives, principles, assumptions, policies and standards upon which the constituent proposals for the physical, economic and social development of the municipality are based;

- a statement of the standards of population density and development intensity recommended for the municipality;
- a statement of emerging issues impacting the municipality;
- an outline of land use and development proposals, with maps, diagrams and text, presenting, at least the following elements:

- a land use plan
- a housing plan
- a circulation plan
- a utility service plan
- a community facilities plan
- an open space and recreation plan
- an economic development plan
- a historic preservation plan
- a waste management plan
- a green buildings and environmental sustainability plan
- a hazard mitigation plan
- a stormwater management plan
- an implementation plan

This proposal is looking for a consultant firm with documented experience in community planning, training in technical analysis, and advanced mapping capabilities; demonstrates the ability to bring fresh ideas and awareness of what other communities are doing; provides comprehensive access to data sources and maps; offers objectivity and political neutrality; and provides capacity, efficiency, specialized skills with the development and implementation of the CMP.

The Township of Willingboro encourages consultants to be creative and propose a scope of work they believe best serves the Township of Willingboro and our needs and objectives. However, the Consultant is expected to complete the following tasks, at a minimum:

- a) An introductory section to the plan to provide the context of the work, history and the community vision, including a goals and policies statement which identifies the goals and policies of the municipality for its future growth and development.
- b) A complete analysis of existing conditions for all Master Plan elements to depict baseline conditions, which may include synthesizing existing reports or generating new data. Master Plan elements include land use; housing; economic development; natural resources, cultural and historic resources; open space and recreation; community services and facilities; sustainability; diversity, equity and inclusion; and transportation, circulation and accessibility.
- c) Provide community outreach, engagement, and education throughout the project. We expect this may include a combination of workshops, meetings, focus groups, social media, community events, surveys, and online tools. The public participation component of this process is critical to the overall success of the Master Plan. Summary minutes of meetings should be provided as a deliverable with the final plan.

d) Action plan and implementation strategies for the Township to refer to moving forward that are cost-effective and realistic. Master Plan recommendations made within the various plan elements will likely overlap across elements or involve multiple elements and therefore should be organized logically in the implementation strategies.

Elements

The Master Plan shall include all relevant requirements set out in New Jersey § 40:55D-28. The process shall be summarized in a detailed report and land use and development proposals, with maps, diagrams and text. It is understood that this will be a multi-year project that may require phased efforts. Among the plan elements, Willingboro is particularly interested in:

1. A statement of objectives, principles, assumptions, policies and standards upon which the constituent proposals for the physical, economic and social development of the municipality are based;
2. A land use plan element taking into account
 - a. smart city elements which, in part, shall consider potential locations for the installation of electric vehicle charging stations,
 - b. storm resiliency with respect to energy supply, flood-prone areas, and environmental infrastructure
3. housing plan element including, but not limited to, residential standards and proposals for the construction and improvement of existing housing stock;
4. A circulation plan element showing the location and types of facilities for all modes of transportation required for the efficient movement of people and goods into, about, and through the municipality, taking into account truck traffic passing through the Township;
5. A recreation plan element showing a comprehensive system of areas and public sites for recreation;
6. An economic plan element considering all aspects of economic development and sustained economic vitality, including (a) a comparison of the types of employment expected to be provided by the economic development to be promoted with the characteristics of the labor pool resident in the municipality and nearby areas and (b) an analysis of the stability and diversity of the economic development to be promoted;
7. Appendices or separate reports containing the technical foundation for the master plan and its constituent elements;

Product Deliverables

The Consultant shall submit all interim and draft reports in electronic form (in an editable format if mark-ups are requested and/or in PDF). For final deliverables, the Consultant shall submit one electronic (in both an editable format and PDF), 6 bound copies, and one loose reproducible original of the final report, resident companion pocket guide, the executive summary and all other final printed materials including maps, charts, tables and photographs. All written materials shall be on 8 1/2" x 11" paper format, except for maps, which to the extent feasible shall be 11" x 17".

Copies of all presentation materials including displays and digital presentations used by the consultant at meetings shall be provided to the Community Development Department in reproducible form. In addition, all materials shall be submitted

in electronic format compatible with the Town's current and proposed computer hardware and software. Materials for presentations and public meetings shall be presented one week in advance of the subject meeting. All maps shall be compatible with ESRI ArcMap Software.

Additional Information Request

1. Approach to Plan Development: Describe in narrative form the Consultant's approach and technical plan for preparing the Master Plan. Please provide a summary of how the Project will be accomplished, including an overall approach to performing the work, how existing plans and data will be incorporated into the project, and how sustainability will be incorporated throughout the plan. The plan should include discussion of land use, housing; economic development; cultural and historic and natural resources; open space, recreation and landscaping; community services and facilities; transportation, circulation and accessibility, sustainability and climate change; and implementation.
2. Schedule: Provide a project schedule and identify key tasks and percent completion within each time frame as well as the corresponding billing schedule. Identify key junctures where meetings would occur and the purpose of the meetings. Any draft materials for review at a Master Plan Committee meeting or public meeting shall be provided not less than one week in advance of such meeting.
3. Deliverables: Identify specific products to be delivered and when to include
 - 6 copies of a full color bound final plan
 - 1 presentation deck detailing plan highlights
 - Trifold resident plan overview pocket guide
4. Approach to Public Outreach and Engagement: Describe approach to public outreach and community engagement. Discuss the types of workshops or public meetings in your proposal, as well as any other outreach techniques to be employed. A robust and comprehensive community engagement process is desired. There is an expectation that community outreach and engagement will need to make use of various online and social media tools and applications in addition to in-person events.
5. Approach for Working with the Town's Master Plan Steering Committee and Township Staff: Based on your experience, describe how you propose to interact with the Master Plan Committee throughout the process. Explain your expectations of Township staff and services to support your work.
6. Provide samples of at least three of the most recent Master Plans prepared for similar communities, or plans with similar themes, provided electronically via flash drive or dedicated web link. Include sample materials illustrating how planning efforts were communicated to the public including public surveys and their results
7. Cost proposal containing the following:
 - a. a detailed breakdown of the professional service fees by task and sub task and by team member;
 - b. the hourly rates to be charged by the consultant and its sub-consultants for services performed by each team member.

Firm Capacity

At a minimum, the principal and project manager to be assigned to this project must commit to be available for meetings with the Township on days or evenings, as

required. Key personnel specified in the project proposal are considered to be essential to the work's performance. Firms or teams must commit to at least a 30-day notification period prior to voluntarily diverting any of the specified individuals or resources to other programs or contracts and must mutually agree with the Township on a replacement so as not to impact the quality or timeline of deliverables

Existing Resources Available and On-Going Planning Activities

In addition to the Town's 1997 Master Plan, there are a number of other existing reevaluations, elements and on-going planning studies and activities that will be made available to the consultant for use in developing the Master Plan. In order to achieve a cost-effective product, the consultant is strongly encouraged to utilize all resources for existing data and studies and to avoid duplication of effort. Copies of these municipal and regional documents are available for review through the clerks office.