

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Set forth below are certain terms used at Planning Board meetings. The list is not intended to be exhaustive nor are the terms intended to be legally binding definitions. Rather, the terms are intended to be helpful to the general public to better understand and participate in the Planning Board meetings. [Click here to Township Ordinances On-line.](#)

“Applicant” means the person or entity filing an application with the Planning Board.

“Aquifer” means a water-bearing geologic formation, sometimes confined between clay layers and sometimes on the surface; the source of ground water for drinking and irrigation.

“Bank” means the inclined sides of the stream channel.

“Bed” means the floor of the stream channel.

“Berm” means a low earthen ridge constructed as a landscaping feature or to direct runoff or deflect noise.

“Buffer Area” means a strip of land of specified width containing natural woodlands, earth mounds or other planted screening material and separating one kind of land use from another or separating a planned development from any other form of development.

“Conservation Easement” means an easement that is designed to preserve the property from disturbance.

“Coverage” means the portion of the lot covered by impervious surfaces and expressed as a percentage in which the numerator is the area of the lot covered by impervious surfaces, and the denominator is the gross area of the lot.

“Cross-Acceptance” or Cross-acceptance Process” means the process of comparing the provisions and maps of municipal, county, and regional plans and regulations with the State Plan and the dialogue which occurs among participants during and after this process to achieve consistency among the plans. The three phases of cross-acceptance are comparison, negotiation, and final review. Cross acceptance is required by the [State Planning Act](#) and described further in the [State Planning Rules](#).

“C” Variances – see “Variances”

“Deed Restriction” means a limitation that is recorded with the county and to which subsequent owners are bound, on development, maintenance, or use of a property.

“Development Rights” means the nature and extent to which land, including air space above and subsurface resources, may be developed under applicable zoning and other land use planning regulations.

“Down Zoning” means a change in zoning classification that permits development that is less dense or intense.

“D” Variance – see “Variances”

“Easement” means written and recorded authorization by a property owner for the use of a designated part of the property by others for a specified purpose. Easements may be purchased from the property owner or donated by the owner to the municipality or other public agency.

“Eminent Domain” means the right of the government to take private property for public use with appropriate compensation for the owner.

“Erosion” means the detachment and movement of soil or rock fragments by water, wind, ice and gravity.

“Eutrophication” means a process affecting waters that are rich in mineral and organic nutrients, whereby plant life (especially algae) proliferates, eventually reducing the dissolved oxygen content and often killing off other organisms.

“Exception” means certain types of relief that an applicant may request in conjunction with a development application before the Planning Board. [Click here for more information on Exceptions.](#)

“Exceptional Resource Value Wetlands” – See Wetlands

“Final Approval” means a final, official approval of the Planning Board of development applications after all conditions, engineering plans and other requirements have been completed or fulfilled and the required improvements have been installed or guarantees properly posted for their completion, or approval conditioned upon the posting of such guarantees. Final Approval also grants the Applicant rights against changes in zoning requirements for two years after the Planning Board’s adoption of a resolution of final approval.

“Flood Plain” means nearly level area adjacent to a stream, river or other water body, subject to flooding or inundation under heavy rain or blockage conditions. A “100-year floodplain” would include the area or flooding from a storm that has a one percent chance of occurring.

“Floor Area” means the area of all floors computed by using the dimensions of the outside walls of each floor of a building. Only those areas having five feet or more of clear headroom with completed floors, ceilings and partitions may be considered in

computing the second floor area of a one-and-one-half-story house and at least ½ of the included second floor area shall have a minimum ceiling height of seven feet six inches. Cellars (but not basements), porches, balconies, patios, terraces, breezeways, enclosed pedestrian walkways, carports, verandas and garages are excluded, as is enclosed parking for nonresidential use except that enclosed porches and patios which are heated and used year-round shall be counted in computing the floor area.

“Floor Area Ratio” (FAR) means the sum of the area of all floors of buildings or structures compared to the total area of the site.

“Front Lot Line” means the lot line separating a lot from the street.

“Greenway” means a corridor of permanently preserved public and/or private land linking or connected with various parts of a municipality or between municipalities that may be established as scenic and recreational open space or set aside for non-recreational uses.

“Groundwater” means all water below the surface of the land in an aquifer or geologic formation that forms the natural reservoir for potable water.

“Impervious Surface” means an artificial surface (such as pavement, concrete, or buildings) that prevents or essentially prevents the infiltration of water from the land surface into the soil and subsurface layers.

“Impoundment” means a body of water confined by a dam, dike, floodgate or other barrier.

“Infill” means the development of the last remaining lots in an existing developed area, the new development within an area already served by existing infrastructure and services, or the reuse of already developed, but unused properties.

“Infrastructure” means public utilities, facilities, and delivery systems such as storm sewers, sanitary sewers, streets, curbing, sidewalks and other public utilities and services.

“Intermediate Resource Value Wetlands” – see “Wetlands”

“Landfill” means a disposal facility for solid waste, which is compacted and covered in accordance with an approved plan.

“Lot” means a designated parcel, tract or area of land to be used, developed or built upon as a unit.

“Lot Coverage” – see “Coverage”

“Lot Lines” means the property lines at the perimeter of a lot.

“Lot Width” means the distance between the side lot lines measured at the front yard setback line.

“Major Subdivision” means the division of a lot, tract or parcel of land into more than one lot, tracts, parcels or other divisions of land for sale or development. One of the major responsibilities of the Planning Board is the review of subdivisions.

“Master Plan” means a report or statement of land use and development proposals with maps, diagrams and text that serves as the basic guide for community development. It projects the municipality’s long-range development goals and policies. The Planning Board prepares the Master Plan and is responsible for its content. [Click here for a copy of the current Master Plan.](#) The Master Plan is required to be reexamined by the Planning Board at least every six years and recommendations are made to the Township Committee for appropriate ordinance changes.

“Minor Subdivision” means the division of a lot or lots, tracts or parcels of land, in which the number of proposed new lots will be a net gain of no more than one new lot.

“Mitigation” means the process or method used to alleviate or lessen impacts of a development.

“MLUL” means the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law under which municipalities are enabled to enact a Master Plan and land use ordinances.

“Modification” means certain types of relief that an applicant may request in conjunction with a development application before the Planning Board. [Click here for more information on Modifications.](#)

“Natural Resource Inventory” means a survey, description and analysis of natural resources and general environmental characteristics usually including but not limited to data on soils, geology, topography and vegetation for a given geographic area that is useful in land use planning and to aid in review of development applications.

“Negative Criteria” means proof required in every variance application that there is no substantial negative impact on the zone plan, zoning ordinance, or public good as a result of any variances approved.

“NJDCA” means the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, a state agency charged with overseeing local government services, housing, finances, etc. in New Jersey.

“NJDEP” means the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, a state agency charged with protection and preservation of natural resources and control of toxins in the natural environment in New Jersey

“NJDOT” means the New Jersey Department of Transportation, a state agency charged with development and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in New Jersey.

“Nonconforming Use” means a use or activity that lawfully existed prior to the adoption, revision or amendment of an ordinance but that fails to conform to the current requirements of the ordinance.

“Nonconforming Lot” means a lot, the area, dimension or location of which was lawful prior to the adoption, revision or amendment of an ordinance but that fails to conform to the current requirements of the ordinance.

“Nonpoint Source Pollution” means pollution that results from storm water runoff over different land uses, roads and parking lots to receiving waters.

“Ordinance” means a local law; a legislative enactment by a local governing body.

“Ordinary Resource Value Wetlands” – see “Wetlands”

“Point Source Pollution” means pollution that is derived from a localized, single source and is discharged from a pipe or other distinct source.

“Preliminary Approval” means the conferral of certain development rights granted to an applicant by the Planning Board prior to Final Approval after specific elements of a development plan have been agreed upon by the Planning Board and the Applicant. Generally, a Preliminary Approval protects the development application against changes in zoning for a period of three years.

“Rear Lot Line” means a lot line, generally opposite the front lot line.

“Right of Way” means a strip of land occupied by or intended to be occupied by a street, cross-walk, walkway, utility line, or other access.

“Runoff” means the water that flows off the surface of the land, ultimately into our streams and water bodies, without being absorbed into the soil.

“Scenic Corridor” means a publicly accessible Right of Way and the views of expanses of water, land or other scenic vistas that can be seen from the Right of Way.

“Side Lot Line” means a lot line that is neither a front lot line nor a rear lot line.

“Site Plan” means a development plan on which it is shown certain information and data required by the MLUL and the Township’s zoning ordinance and rules.

“Spot Zoning” means a change in the zoning that provides a benefit to a property which is not available to others similarly situated; which is generally regarded as undesirable or illegal because it violates equal treatment and sound planning principles.

“Stormwater Management” means the control of the quantity of runoff, which affects flooding, and of pollutants generated at a development site and carried in storm water.

“Stream Corridor” means the area (containing Wetlands, Flood Plains, woodlands, unique habitats and steep slopes) which lies between relatively level uplands and stream banks and through which water, draining from the uplands, flows and is naturally cleansed and stored.

“Up Zoning” means a change in zoning classification that permits development that is more dense or intensive.

“Variance” means certain types of relief that an applicant may request in conjunction with a development application before the Planning Board. [Click here for more information on Variances.](#)

- “C(1)” Variance refers to MLUL Section 40:55D-70.c(1) where the applicant is required to demonstrate peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties or exceptional and undue hardship due to (a) the exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific piece of property, (b) exceptional topographic conditions or physical features uniquely affecting a specific piece of property, or (c) an extraordinary and exceptional situation uniquely affecting a specific piece of property.

- “C(2)” Variance refers to MLUL Section 40:55D-70.c(2) which allows the granting of a variance where the purposes of the MLUL would be advanced by a deviation from the zoning ordinance requirements and the benefits would outweigh any detriment to the public good.

- “D” Variance refers to MLUL Section 40:55D-70.d which allows the granting of use variances, nonconforming use variances, conditional use variances, and floor area ratio, density and height variances. Applications for “D” variances can only be reviewed by the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

“Watershed” means the areas where precipitation drains to a single body of water such as a river, wetland or lake.

“Wetlands” means an area having specific hydric soils, water table characteristics and supporting or capable of supporting wetlands vegetation.

- “Exceptional Resource Value Wetlands” means freshwater wetlands exhibiting any of the following characteristics: those which discharge into certain specified waters or their tributaries; or those on which are present habitats for threatened or endangered species, or those which are documented habitats for threatened or endangered species, and which remain suitable for breeding, resting, or feeding by those species during the normal periods these species would use the habitat. These wetlands have a 150-ft wide uplands buffer called a transition area.

- “Ordinary Resource Value Wetlands” means freshwater wetlands which are isolated wetlands which are more than fifty percent surrounded by development and less than 5, 000 square feet in size. These wetlands have no buffer transition area.

“Zone” means an area designated by an ordinance where specified uses are permitted.

References and Other Resources:

Cox, William M. with Donald M. Ross, New Jersey Zoning and Land Use Administration (Gann Law Books, Newark, NJ), published annually

Kienz, Glenn C., The New Millennium Guide to Planning Boards & Zoning Boards of Adjustment (New Jersey Planning Officials, 2000)

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey, “Local Planning and Zoning & How to Get Involved” with accompanying Land Use Glossary [www.lwvnj.org](http://www.lwvnj.org)

Moskowitz, H. and Lindbloom, C., The New Illustrated Book of Development Definitions, 1993

Municipal Land Use Law, Chapter 291, Laws of New Jersey, 1975, as amended.

Raritan Basin Watershed Management Plan, Acronyms and Glossary, [www.raritanbasin.org](http://www.raritanbasin.org)

Residential Site Improvement Standards, NJAC 5:21-1

State Planning Commission, State Development and Redevelopment Plan, 2001

Wisconsin Department of Environmental Resources, Land-Use Lingo: A Glossary of Land-Use Terms, 2001.