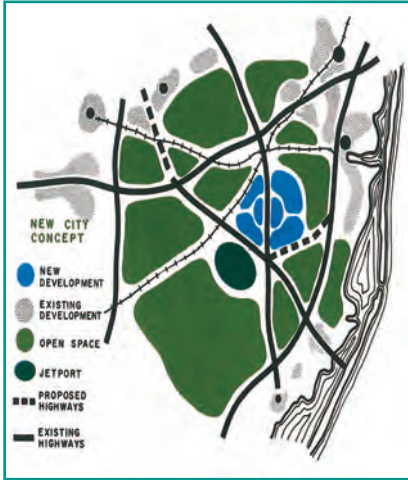


Pinelands Jetport

By: C & H Staff



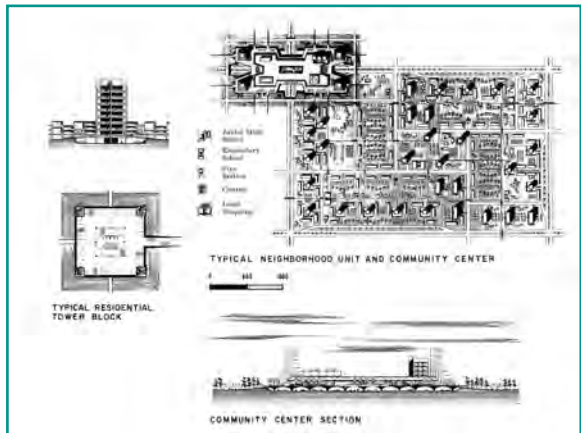
In many ways, the 1964 proposed Pinelands Jetport was at the same time the greatest historical threat to the New Jersey Pinelands and ironically the very real catalyst that brought oversight to control of development in the 1.1 million acre post-industrial forest that has been designated as the first United States National Reserve (1978) and a United Nations Biosphere Reserve.

Fifty years ago, the Pinelands Planning Board, the first government planning entity attempting to balance development and environmental impact in the NJ Pinelands,

proposed a massive (51 square mile) international “Jetport” to handle the yet to be operational Super Sonic Transports (SST). Twice the size of Kennedy (Idlewild), Newark and LaGuardia combined, this state of the art transportation hub would be constructed south of Route 72 approximately at the site of the Warren Grove Bombing Range destroying some of the most environmentally important resources such as the Pygmy forests and the vast stands of Atlantic White Cedar. The total anticipated cost including construction and land acquisition was estimated at \$106.5 million. Each of eight runways would be 16,000 feet long with another 12,000 feet on each end for buffer. The first runways at the Jetport were planned to have been operational as soon as 1976.

Passengers and an anticipated 123,000 workers would park an estimated 45,000 cars at the Jetport each day and use modern monorail, conventional trains, and vertical take off and landing vehicles (helicopters). Existing highways would be upgraded and a new 26 mile spur of the Garden State Parkway from Toms River to New Gretna around the Forked River Mountains through the center of the Jetport and under the New City that would be built and was envisioned to grow to over 250,000 thousand people by 2010.

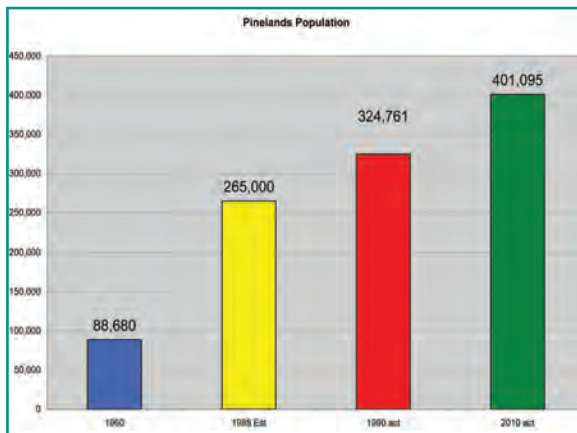
The Jetport would be complemented by this planned “New City” that would take the economic and demographic impact of the Jetport. The report seems to hint that development might be best channeled into one location instead of throughout the region. This was to be no ordinary development, but a city on the hill combining the best thoughts on human habitability and plenty of open space and amenities



New City Plan.
Photo credit: Ocean County Collection

Continued on page 6

like churches, colleges, people movers, hotels, convention centers and pedestrian only shopping. The virgin ground would allow the planners “to build a modern major city from a unified plan in a relatively brief period.” The use of condominiums was to be only one of the new concepts used for the proposed New City. Steam and power were proposed from the recently operational Oyster Creek Nuclear Power Station.



Comparative Demographics.

Photo credit: C & H Staff

Today, few residents of the region have ever heard of the “Jetport” or the “New City” and many fewer still have ever seen a detail presentation of that 1964 plan. The multiple reports commissioned over four years (1960-1964) were among boxes of papers graciously donated to the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission by the daughter of the late Jack Lamping, longtime advocate of Ocean County, affectionately known as Mr. Ocean County. The C

& H Staff office has compiled a Power Point presentation based on these reports, actual census data and a thoughtful book Contested Lands, Robert J. Mason. The Power Point attempts to explain this proposal and put the whole in some kind of perspective. C & H Staff has made a number of presentations of this power point including the March 2015 Pinelands Short Course at Stockton University.

People have asked me how leaders in Burlington and Ocean County could be involved in what now seems like such a destructive enterprise. Like most questions worth considering, the Jetport/New City proposal is complex. Today, we have a hard time comprehending just how poor and economically disadvantaged the Pinelands region was in 1960-1964. On the one hand, the plan would have destroyed hundreds of square miles of Pinelands to create jobs and much needed economic growth. On the other hand, the plan was the first serious effort to actually control the “scatteration” growth that was eroding the forests one small, individual project at a time. Today, transfer of development credits and cluster developments are similar kinds of planning tools. In fact, the planners saw themselves as visionaries protecting a then underappreciated natural asset.

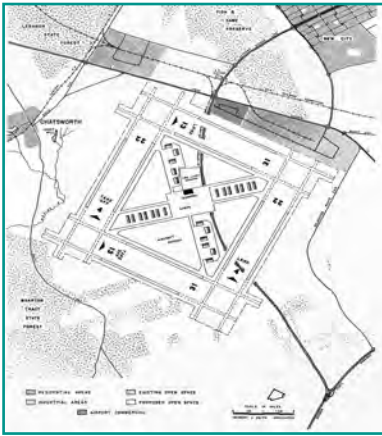
The Pinelands under consideration in these reports is 950 square miles situated in 25 municipalities, but only in Burlington and Ocean counties. At the time of this report, 23 of the 25 towns had active planning boards, but only 11 had master plans. A great deal of the report is spent arguing for the need and value of planning on a regional basis.

To quote from the report:

The Pinelands Region has not yet been caught up in this nightmare of the development cycle. It has been spared, for the most part, the chaotic effects of un-planned growth. Yet...the time is fast approaching when this day will come. Therefore, the Region must plan now, not as individual communities alone, but together, to meet these needs... The purpose, then, of the project is to analyze, before the fact, development possibilities in the Pinelands and to propose methods whereby problems can be prevented. To accomplish this goal will require not just

a good plan, but the hard work and assistance of all the civic leaders in the respective communities. (Page 1 – Problem & Program)

1964 Projected Jetport.
Photo credit: Ocean County Collection



The report then looks to compare and contrast five scenarios for future Pinelands development: Low Growth – Corridor; High Growth – Scatteration; Restricted Growth – Scatteration; Jetport – New Towns; and Jetport – New City. In the end, the report finally recommends the Jetport/New City with the understanding that the remainder of the Pinelands will formally and permanently be preserved. Therefore, the most drastic proposal also includes the most legally preserved open space. Neither the Jetport nor the New City was ever built and one

may speculate on the reasons and outcomes.

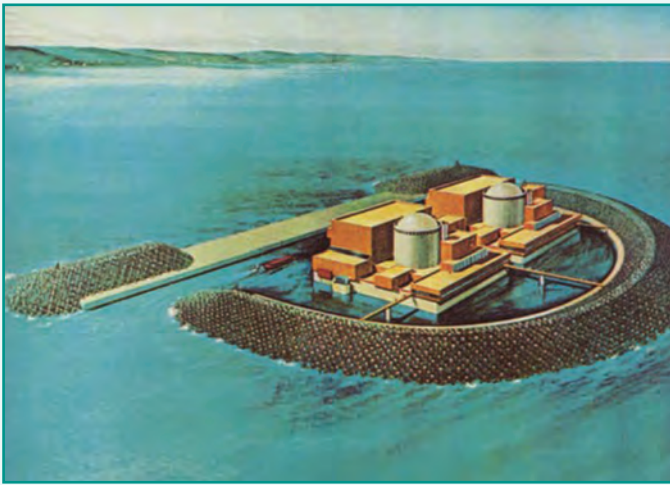
However, a number of observations are worth noting:

- 1) The report predicted that the Pinelands population of 1960 of 88,680 (only parts of some towns within the Pinelands are counted) would mushroom to 265,000 by 1985 if the recommendations are fulfilled. In fact, without either the Jetport or the New City, the population of the 25 Pinelands towns reached 324,761 by the 1990 census and 401,095 by the 2010 census.
- 2) One major flaw in the reports is that the ecological quality of land is not considered as much as quantity of open space and environmental protection.
- 3) The report sounds like a fantastic Jules Verne dream. But contemporary planned communities (Reston, Virginia and Columbia, Maryland) and public airports (Dulles and Everglades) are built at the same time period and occupy similar footprints. The New City is striking like the Disney World that arose from the Florida forests on 43 square miles and opened in 1971.
- 4) Less than 10 years before this study, the Garden State Parkway had been constructed through the Pinelands of Ocean, Atlantic and Cape May counties resulting in widespread growth and development.
- 5) Robert Moses built large scale projects including highways, housing and two world's fairs in the New York Metropolitan region at roughly the same time as this proposal.
- 6) For both technical and political reasons, the SST never materialized into a viable form of transportation (the Concorde was marginally operational from 1976 to 2003).
- 7) Other proposals for a regional airport were later proposed for repurposing McGuire Air Force base but did not involve this regional planning.

Ocean County Historian Timothy Hart believes that the 1964 Jetport with a New City never stood much of a chance of actually being constructed. By 1967 and the book, the Pine Barrens by John McPhee, the Jetport had become the straw dog that motivated opposition to development and crystallized support for preserving the New Jersey Pinelands. Therefore the ultimate irony may be that the 1964 Jetport proposal may have done more than any other “environmental” factor in bringing about the preservation and planning of the New Jersey Pinelands.

Other Plans for the Post Industrial Pinelands

The New Jersey Pinelands is a post industrial forest. Most of the undeveloped land has been cut or harvested three to five times since European contact. With a touch of hyperbole, experts have claimed that by the mid-nineteenth century, there were no trees standing between the Delaware River and the Atlantic Ocean due to the widespread exploitation of the Pine Barrens forests. In the lifetime of many residents, they can bear witness to the greening of the Pinelands. With the control of the forest fire cycle and limits on development, fields and sugar sand have grown dense with undergrowth and transitional forests.



Proposed Floating Nuclear Power Plant.
Photo credit: Wikipedia

For some largely unexplained reason, perhaps because so much “undeveloped” land exists next to major cities such as Philadelphia and New York City, grandiose plans have emerged for the New Jersey Pinelands. In the 19th century, Joseph Wharton purchased large tracts of land to provide water to Philadelphia. In the 1830’s before railroads made most canals obsolete, a serious proposal was under development to build a canal from the Delaware River to Barnegat Bay. Around the turn of the last century, a plan was in progress to build dual heavy duty rail lines and turn Tuckerton into an ocean port for the loading of coal from Pennsylvania. Before the Three Mile Island disaster in the 1970’s, planners at Princeton University proposed constructing a farm of nearly 40 nuclear power plants in the Pinelands. Before that, serious steps were taken to float a nuclear power plant in the Little Egg Harbor Inlet. Pinelands township tax maps show evidence of countless speculative housing projects throughout the region. But of all these proposals, the largest and most ambitious was the location of the Pinelands Jetport and companion New City right in the middle of the Pygmy forests and the Forked River Mountains.