

Millville Planning Board

Dear Mrs. Ayres, Mr. Shewlakow and Board

Millville City plan for Union Lake embraces public input and sound planning

The 17 nonprofit conservation organizations that make up the South Jersey Bayshore Coalition (SJBC) would like to commend the Millville City Planning Board on its draft land use plan for the 395-acre area along the east side of Union Lake. Not only does the city deserve credit for devising a plan that strikes a sufficient balance between development and protecting Union Lake, but did so after taking extra care to engage all interested stakeholders in a highly transparent input gathering process.

The resulting plan clearly addresses many concerns raised by the public, which urged the city to reduce traffic congestion and development densities while increasing open space for wildlife conservation, public recreation, and increased access to the gem that is Union Lake. The plan is a fine example of how development and nature protection goals do not needlessly need to compete; and how with thoughtful planning can be united as part of an overall economic strategy. It doesn't work with every parcel of land, and we advocated having the entire tract preserved, but in this instance the city's plan strikes a commendable balance that deserves residents' support and final approval by the planning board.

By contrast, representatives of the Wawa Corporation have re-submitted the very same plan they presented to the city back in 2009, which calls for far greater commercial and residential development near the lake; where the city alternatively proposes open space. The city should soundly reject it. The very impetus for the city's comprehensive planning study was to avoid the very impacts Wawa's plan would revive. It would mean congested traffic circulation and even less open space than that proposed in the former massive residential development plan by Matzel and Mumford – a plan, which residents soundly rejected for the very same reasons the city should reject the Wawa plan now.

The purpose section of the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (40:55D-2), obliges towns to develop land use plans and zoning, which “guides the appropriate use or development in a manner, which will promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare”. These goals include:

- ✓ To promote the establishment of appropriate population densities and concentrations that will contribute to the well-being of persons, neighborhoods, communities and regions and preservation of the environment;
- ✓ To provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses and open space;
- ✓ To promote the conservation of historic sites and districts, open space, energy resources and valuable natural resources in the State and to prevent urban sprawl and degradation of the environment through improper use of the land;

- ✓ To encourage the location and design of transportation routes which will promote the free flow of traffic while discouraging location of such facilities and routes which result in congestion or blight;

The city's plan accomplishes this, and Millville officials should adopt it as proposed now.

To learn more about the South Jersey Bayshore Coalition visit:

<http://sjbayshore.org/index.htm>

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