

CA - Jamesburg

1974-1975

Updated Housing Element

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UPDATED HOUSING ELEMENT
1974-1975 PLANNING YEAR

Prepared for the
BOROUGH OF JAMESBURG PLANNING BOARD
by
E. EUGENE OROSS ASSOCIATES
PROFESSIONAL PLANNING
and
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

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Borough of Jamesburg
1974-1975 Updated Housing Element

INTRODUCTION

This report will indicate major changes since the last Housing Element was submitted. Also, it will spell out the proposed objectives for improving the housing conditions in Jamesburg during this coming year.

The report is prepared as part of the contract for continuing planning services by and between the Planning Board of the Borough of Jamesburg and E. Eugene Oross Associates. The Board has engaged the firm to render technical advice and assistance in the execution of the Master Plan for the Borough and in the providing of general advisory services in connection with the business of the Board.

In addition, the report will describe the existing residential development and related problems and spell out in some detail planning objectives and accomplishments. Information in the report is based upon available 1970 U. S. Bureau of the Census data, New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry data, and continuing study accomplished under the Master Plan Updating Program.

EXISTING HOUSING RESOURCES

The Borough of Jamesburg is a highly developed community situated in a predominantly rural area. The town is completely surrounded by Monroe Township. In most cases, the physiographic barriers prevent expansion of existing residential areas. The most salient physical characteristic is the railroad which goes through the center of town. According to 1970 Bureau of the Census estimates, 1,400 occupied dwelling units exist in the Borough. Sixty-one percent (61%) of these are single-family structures. There were nearly 600 rental units and almost 75 percent of these units are contained in garden apartment developments. These are mainly one and two bedroom units. All other rental units are contained in duplex three-family structures.

Roughly 8 percent of all 1970 owner occupied housing was black owned. Approximately 12 percent of all 1970 rental housing is black occupied. These black ownership and rental occupied housing characteristics are significantly higher than surrounding townships.

Ninety percent (90%) of all occupied dwellings have an average of less than one person per room. The Federal Housing Administration characterizes dwelling units with more than one person per room as overcrowded. Owner and rental occupied housing in the Borough has quite similar persons per room occupancy characteristics.

Data obtained from the New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry indicates that there are 49 more dwelling units in the Borough since the 1970 Census. A detailed breakdown is given in Table I below. However, in 1974 only six housing units were constructed, two single-family and four two-family units. Apparently, the Borough is also feeling the general housing slump.

TABLE I
Residential Construction Authorized by Building Permits
1970-1974

Year	Total	Single Family	2 Family	3 or 4 Family	5 or more Family	Public
1970	15	7	—	—	8	—
1971	4	4	—	—	—	—
1972	14	14	—	—	—	—
1973	10	8	2	—	—	—
1974	6	2	4	—	—	—
Total	49	35	6	—	8	—

Source: New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry, Division of Planning and Research, 1970-1974.

HOUSING AND HOUSING RELATED PROBLEMS

The bulk of the housing stock is in sound condition. Ninety-nine percent (99%) of all units are served with public sewer and water.

Basic problems facing this community with regard to housing are:

1. An aged housing resource; and,
2. Adverse environmental factors in various neighborhood areas; more specifically, mixed land use, flooding, and very limited vacant land available for new housing construction.

On the positive side, the Borough is predominantly a community of owner-occupied structures or rental units (garden apartments) constructed in the past 10 years. Sixty percent (60%) of all units are owner occupied. Reconnaissance field surveys conducted in the spring of 1973 indicate that during the past six years, the condition of the overall housing stock has improved. In 1967, Master Plan surveys showed approximately 20 percent of all units and associated property were rated as exhibiting at least one building deficiency. In 1973, it is estimated that less than 15 percent of all units exhibited minor building deficiencies.

The two principal reasons for housing resource improvements are: (1) improved code enforcement of updated codes, and (2) the mid and late 1960's housing shortage which effectively pumped private investment money back into existing housing.

Looking at the basic problems facing the Borough (regarding housing), the physical age of buildings is the principal consideration. There is a point whereby maintenance and repair of old housing becomes just too costly and the problem thereafter is deterioration and abandonment. At this point in time, such a condition is isolated. However, the problem is potential.

Environmental problems represent another major planning concern. Mixed land use development along Railroad Avenue has promoted, in some instances, deterioration of residential uses located therein. Traffic and its associate noise, light, and air pollution is unquestionably a major blighting influence upon residential buildings facing major streets. The activity "overspill" from adjacent businesses is another blighting influence. The residential lots in business areas are generally small and replacement through new business development is limited.

The extremely limited vacant land suitable for new residential development is another basic obstacle to providing additional housing in the community. Single 40 and 50 foot wide lots do exist, but these land areas cannot be considered the solution to providing additional new housing.

Higher density is one simple way to get more units onto limited space. The problem is that few sites are readily available and suited to the development of higher density development.

The question of whether or not there is a demand for additional housing is academic. Of the total units in the community, less than 1.5 percent were vacant. A vacancy rate of less than three percent merely allows for normal occupancy change. The low vacancy rate illustrates: (1) a strong demand for housing, and (2) a real shortage of living units. Finally, the land development policy of the surrounding township is such that normal expansion of neighborhoods from Jamesburg is restricted.

As stated above, the basic obstacle to providing additional housing is a shortage of land. Also, because few areas exist which may be considered deteriorated and, therefore, potentially new housing areas, the potential for redevelopment of existing residential areas for high density use is also very limited.

OBSTACLES TO SOLUTION OF HOUSING PROBLEMS

The basic problem facing the Borough is the lack of State and Federal programs to effectively renovate old sections of the community. The Borough applied for urban renewal assistance in the late 1960's. The application was not accepted.

Since that date, the Federal freeze on housing funds has further restricted alternative local public rehabilitation strategy.

HOUSING OBJECTIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A principal planning objective is to direct the maintenance of housing and improve neighborhood quality. To help achieve this Jamesburg has updated its building and housing code

and it has also adopted a new zoning ordinance this past year. This ordinance should help preserve residential areas by eliminating future land use conflicts and protect residential neighborhoods from encroachment of undesirable uses. The Borough has also programmed basic street, drainage, and sidewalk improvements in older neighborhoods in order to encourage private improvements of the benefited areas.

The zoning ordinance also provides for the construction of a range of housing units rather than just single-family homes.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

For this coming year, the Planning Board has proposed to undertake a detailed land use and housing survey. The objective of this study will be to "zero in" on substandard housing areas and propose possible solutions including State and Federal aid programs.

SUMMARY

The community does recognize that: (1) age along is a deteriorating agent to residential areas; (2) a need for new housing exists and such need can only be met through higher density housing; and (3) residential areas do exist that exhibit signs of neglect and deterioration. In order to reverse such trends, (1) practical zoning standards must be established, (2) public improvements made to encourage private investment in older areas, and (3) increased code enforcement accomplished.