

ML

Cranbury

30-Oct. 1984

Response to the Suitability evaluation  
analysis for low cost housing prepared  
by Raymond, Parish, Pine & Weiner, Inc.,  
Oct. 25, 1984 ("the Cranbury Study")

pgs = 8

UML 000843 E

CDC

RIEDER LAND TECHNOLOGY, INC.

ML000843E

*Builders • Developers*

GEORGES ROAD • P.O. BOX 28  
MONMOUTH JUNCTION, N.J. 08852  
(201) 329-6886

RESPONSE TO THE SUITABILITY EVALUATION ANALYSIS FOR LOW COST  
HOUSING PREPARED BY RAYMOND, PARISH, PINE & WEINER, INC.  
OCTOBER 25, 1984

Prepared by,



David H. Engel, P.P., AICP  
Director of Planning and Development  
October 30, 1984

## INTRODUCTION

This report is a response paper to the October 25, 1984 Cranbury Township study, "Suitability Evaluation Analysis For Low Cost Housing: Mount Laurel II", prepared by Raymond, Parish, Pine & Weiner, Inc. The township analysis evaluated nine (9) tracts of land as it related to ten (10) planning criteria to determine which areas of the municipality are best suited to accomodate "Mount Laurel" generating residential development. The following information is designed to supplement and react to the Cranbury study for all ten (10) planning areas reviewed by the municipal planning consultant.

## STATE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE PLAN

One of the principal objectives of the 1982 Cranbury Township Master Plan is to channel development into the area located east of Route 130 consistent with the 1980 State Development Guide Plan (SDGP) "growth area". Rezoning the Cranbury Development Corporation property complies with the SDGP since the entire 394.5 acre parcel is located east of Route 130 and is entirely within the SDGP "growth area" and is not located in transitional "fringe" sections of the township. Further, the development of the Cranbury Development property would not jeopardize the integrity of preserving farmland in Cranbury since the property is not under cultivation nor do any related agricultural industries occupy the subject tract. The October, 1984 Cranbury report indicates that the property in question is "located next to existing and potential employment centers" and "development of site 4 (PQ) would result in no direct loss of farmland".

It should be pointed out that the high intensity residential development of sites 1-3, adjacent to Half Acre Road, even though in the "growth area", would generate its east/west traffic through the agricultural and historic preservation areas along Plainsboro and Dey Roads both of which traverse rural retention zones. The upgrading of Dey Road would not only put growth presure on rural areas of Cranbury, but would also adversely affect the master plan and zoning objectives of South Brunsick Township.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The recent township study indicates that "traffic flow, visual impact, and physical proximity of new residential development should not threaten the Cranbury Village National and State Historic District or the significant cluster of 18th and 19th Century houses and barns grouped along Cranbury Neck Road in the agricultural zone." The October, 1984 municipal planning

to the flood plain nor to environmentally sensitive corridor of the Millstone River.

According to the Cranbury planning consultant's report, the county plan shows the property in question as "undeveloped". First, as stated previously, there is no formal policy position by the county relative to the Cranbury Development Corporation property. Secondly, the draft county land use plan is designed to address regional-macro planning objectives and does not evaluate specific properties. Lastly, and most important, the proposed 1979 plan was a direct reflection of municipal input. The county staff expanded its "undeveloped" classification of lands in the southeasterly portion of the township to comply with municipal "cross-acceptance". There has never been a county staff evaluation of the developability of the Cranbury Development Corporation property.

In conclusion, the rezoning proposal submitted on behalf of the Cranbury Development Corporation is consistent with the general objectives of the draft Middlesex County Year 2000 Land Use Plan since it fronts on the easterly side of Route 130, is consistent with the SDGP, does not encroach on the Millstone River corridor, and is incorporated in the Route 130 development area.

#### TOWNSHIP LAND USE PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE MAP

The rezoning of the Cranbury Development Corporation property to allow residential planned unit development, as formally proposed, is consistent with the overall objectives of the township land use plan and zoning ordinance. As stated previously, the subject property is located in the "growth area" on the easterly side of Route 130 and development of the 395 acre parcel will have no adverse impacts on the preservation of the historic village or on active farming in the community.

The 1982 municipal land use plan designates most of the Cranbury Development property as light-impact residential only permitting single-family homes on three (3) acre minimum lots. The township master plan justified this zoning on the basis that the property was characterized by environmentally sensitive features including wetlands, flood plains and mature woodlands. In various professional technical reports submitted by the developer in pending legal action against the township, for which the developer contends is arbitrary, capricious and unreasonable zoning of the subject property, evidence has been submitted indicating that the municipal master plan exaggerated the environmental sensitivities of the property in question on the basis of exclusionary zoning. A detailed development master plan has been prepared by the Martin Group in Philadelphia demonstrating that the stream corridors and the treed areas on the property in question can be preserved with clustered residential development of this property. The developer of the Cranbury Development Corporation property has requested time before the Cranbury Township Committee and Planning Board to

demonstrate the developability of the property in question. However, the township has denied the Rieder request to make a presentation even though other developers have made presentations before the municipal governing body. Following in this report, the alleged environmental sensitive issues will be addressed in detail.

Lastly, the Cranbury Township Committee has already demonstrated that the light-impact residential zoning of the Cranbury Development property is inappropriate since it has rezoned approximately 76 acres of the subject parcel to industrial to accomodate objections to the 1982 municipal zone plan by other adjacent property owners. This rezoning is contradictory to sound planning and community development principles since industrial development allows the least flexibility in dealing with environmental site constraints.

#### ADJACENT LAND USE PATTERNS

The rezoning of the Cranbury Development property to allow seven unit per acre residential and support shopping facilities is compatible with existing or proposed adjacent land use patterns, density and character and will not adversely impact existing residential neighborhoods. As the October, 1984 township planning consultant has indicated, "present zoning around Site 4 (PQ) is compatible with high density residential development given the fact that natural buffers exist on-site to separate dwelling units from existing and/or proposed industrial uses and the New Jersey Turnpike". The aforementioned township report further mentions that the area just south of the property in question is occupied by high intensity residential including the 172 unit condominium development, Georgetowne; the 566 unit garden apartment complexes, Hampton Arms and Windsor Arms; the Twin Rivers PUD; and 110 senior citizen units being built along North Main Street adjacent to the Millstone River.

In previous reports submitted to the court and township, it has been pointed out that high intensity residential development of the Cranbury Development Corporation parcel compliments the future development of the area since it is directly adjacent to the high employment generating office-research and industrial zones in Cranbury providing residential opportunities for the people who will be working in the township.

#### PROXIMITY TO COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Any future large scale residential development in Cranbury will create the need for new infrastructure and community facilities in the municipality. The township planning consultant has concluded that, "any major new residential development next to the Village would probably overwhelm the present scale and require more facilities and services to satisfy the present scale and require more facilities and services to satisfy increased demand at the expense of quiet tree-lined streets, historic structures, and a small town atmosphere". As was mentioned

previously, the recent planning report by the township consultant concluded that the development of the subject parcel will have the "least" adverse impacts on the existing village. Further, Rieder Land Technology is prepared to offer the community a park and ride, active recreational amenities and a retail and service shopping center to support the residential development of the Cranbury Development parcel. Also, as the township planner points out, directly south of the property in question along Route 130 are major commercial amenities including the East Windsor Associates and Jamesway shopping centers totalling over "230,000" square feet.. Lastly, the Cranbury Development parcel is directly contiguous to the highway commercial zoned area at the Cranbury Circle.

#### ACCESSIBILITY

The high intensity development of the Cranbury Development property will have no adverse impact on local roads and can be predominately served by Route 130 due to over 1,860 feet of frontage on that state highway. Further, east/west traffic generated from the site will be oriented to Rt. 571, Princeton-Hightstown Road rather than Plainsboro or Dey Roads which traverse both the historic district and the rural retention areas of the township. As was discussed in this office's October 5, 1984 report submitted to Philip Caton, Michael Mueller and the Township Committee, the proposed on-site park and ride, and Route 92 will even improve already excellent accessibility to the property in question. Lastly, east/west circulation from the property in question will be enhanced further with the completion of the Old Trenton Road extension which will intersect Rt. 130 in an area adjacent to the subject parcel.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUITABILITY

The Cranbury Development Corporation tract is located in the Inner Coastal Plain physiographic province and is covered by Coastal Sandy Loams. The only poorly drained area exhibiting severe development constraints are adjacent to two stream corridors which traverse portions of the subject property.

Over seventy percent of the tract is covered by soil types which do not significantly inhibit planned community development. The most predominate soil types found on the property in question, Woodstown soils, have been already successfully developed in other portions of the township including substantial portions of Cranbury village and the IBM Biomedical facility on Brick Yard Road. The stream corridors can be protected and preserved utilizing proper cluster-development techniques. In fact, the October, 1984 township planning study concludes that, "many of the site limitations noted above (e.g. high water table, poorly drained soils, and construction limitations) can be successfully overcome by preserving the 100 year floodplain and adjacent treed areas, spending more developer dollars during construction to overcome poor soil conditions, and sensitively clustering homes while increasing net residential densities on

good developable land". Further, other areas of the township favored for high intensity residential zoning, sites 1-3, have a major treed area and floodplain corridor for which the township planner as indicated, "these areas can be permanently protected from development encroaching during the site plan review process". The same criteria should be applied to the Cranbury Development parcel.

The submitted Rieder Land Technology site master plan proposes to retain 72 acres representing over eighteen (18) percent of the site as open space, protect the stream corridors and establish the least intensive development, single-family homes, in the major treed sections of the property to preserve site woodlands.

On April 11, 1984, the consulting engineering firm of French and Parrello conducted soil borings during the seasonal high water table period to determine site soil conditions. This study concluded that, "poorly drained areas on the site can be improved by ordinary surface and subsurface drainage systems designed to intercept and lower seasonal high water levels". Further, the technical site engineering report indicates that the techniques used to lower the water table on portions of the property "are routinely employed on most construction sites, are similar to those employed on ther sites presently under development in the area, and would not be extradordinary in our opinion".

In conclusion, on-site investigations both conducted by planners and soils engineers have concluded that the property in question can successfully be developed without posing adverse impacts on the environment and that all township concerns regarding the preservation of physical features e.g. stream corridors and treed areas, can be fully addressed. The submitted development master plan for the Cranbury Development Corporation property employes "state of the art" clustering and environmental preservation techniques which transform the existing treed areas and stream corridors into major site amenities. Development will be concentrated on upland portions of the property, lower density building will take place in wooded areas to retain trees, and all stream corridors will be left as open space integrating with pathways and passive recreational areas.

#### SITE ASSEMBLAGE, SHAPE, AND SIZE

The Cranbury Development parcel is of optimal size, shape, and location when considering residential development and providing a substantial amount of low/moderate income housing. The Cranbury October, 1984 township planning consultant report establishes that, " Site 4 (PQ) best satisfies the above criteria (site Assemblage, shape, and size) because it has the largest single development area--over 300 acres of open land located between Route 130, Brick Yard Road/Indian Run Creek, the Hightstown-Cranbury Station Road, and Block 10 Lots 1 and 19 to the north. Site 4 is owned entirely by the Cranbury Development Corporation." Other sites in the "growth area", east of Route

130 do not have as large a tract under common ownership with an active developer with the locational characteristics of the property in question.

#### CONCLUSION

After reviewing the submitted development plan by Rieder Land Technology Inc. and the criteria set forth in the report submitted by the Cranbury planning consultant dated October 25, 1984, the rezoning of the Cranbury Development Corporation property to planned residential development will have the least adverse impacts on planning and zoning objectives of the township, will not generate traffic into rural areas such as Dey Road and will not take active farmland out of active cultivation. The Cranbury Development Corporation property is the only assembled tract, almost 400 contiguous acres, in the "growth area", east of Route 130 with an active developer willing to participate in the construction of low and moderate income housing.