

# NEXT STEPS TO COMPATIBILITY PLANNING STUDY MONMOUTH COUNTY, NEW JERSEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JUNE 2022

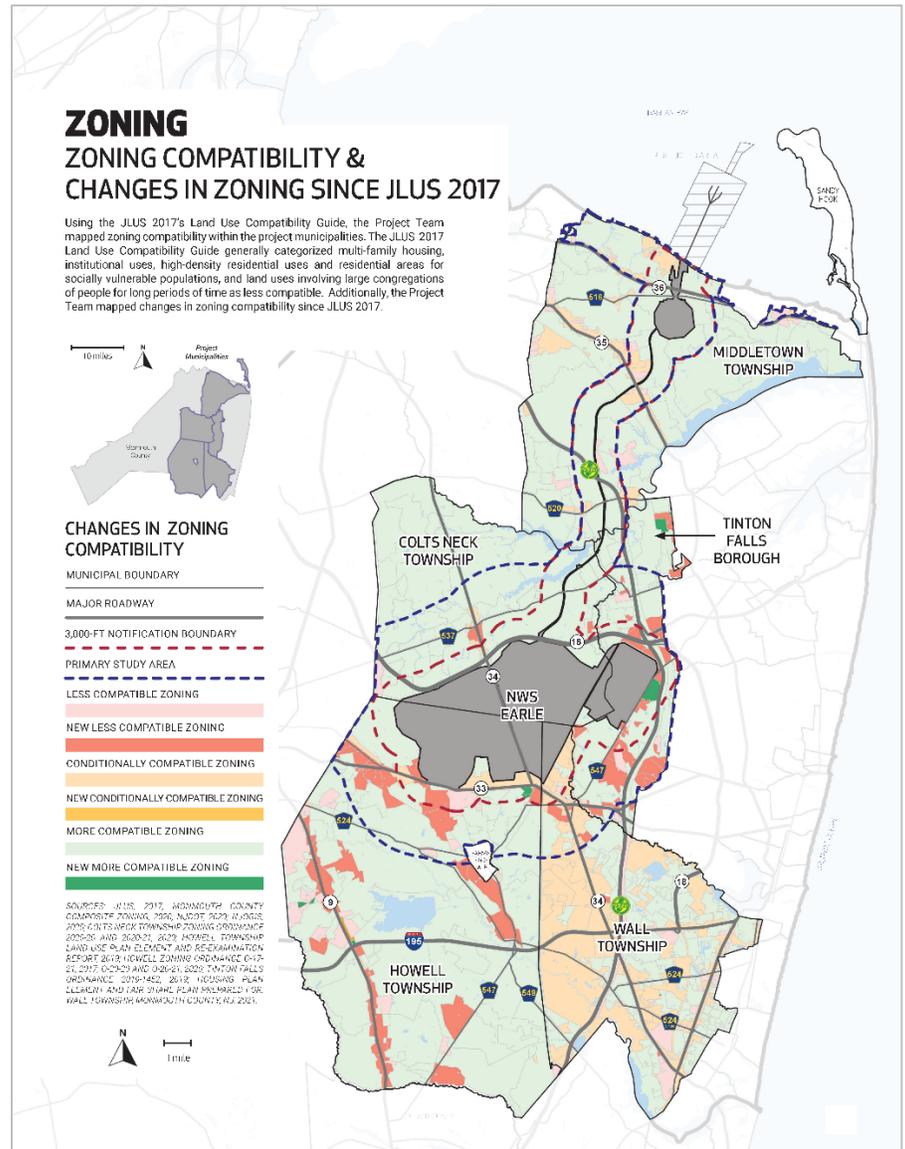


## Planning for Land Use Compatibility in the NWS Earle Community

The [Next Steps to Planning Compatibility Study, Monmouth County](#) (Next Steps Study) is a follow up to the [2017 Naval Weapons Station \(NWS\) Earle Joint Land Use Study, Monmouth County, New Jersey](#) (JLUS 2017). JLUS 2017 aimed to encourage compatible land use surrounding the military base and improve resiliency to impacts from storms and sea level rise on the base and in nearby civilian communities.

Since 1943, NWS Earle's mission has been to provide ordnance for all Atlantic Fleet Carrier and Expeditionary Strike Groups and support strategic Department of Defense ordnance requirements. It is the largest weapons station on the East Coast and supplied most of the ammunition for the Normandy Invasion as well as 90 percent of all ammunition used for Operation Desert Storm. The facility also encompasses a total of 11,851 acres in three major land parcels, a 17-mile Normandy Road/Rail Ammunition Transportation Corridor, and a 2.9-mile-long Pier Complex in Raritan/Sandy Hook Bay.

The Next Steps study supports the mission of NWS Earle. It includes land use and zoning strategies drawn from around the country to guide land use decisions that may impact the military base and its surrounding towns. The planning recommendations, policies, and regulations within the report will help sustain NWS Earle, as well as the public's health, safety and welfare. The study team consisted of staff from the Monmouth County Division of Planning and the consulting firm of Michael Baker International, Inc. The study team worked with representatives from the five municipalities that are immediately adjacent to NWS Earle: Colts Neck, Howell, Middletown, Tinton Falls, and Wall as well as other relevant stakeholders for the best possible outcome.



### Toolbox of Land Use Solutions

One of the main components of the study is Section 4's Toolbox of Land Use Solutions. To prepare the toolbox, the project team first conducted a land use compatibility analysis to explore land uses that best align with NWS Earle's mission. The land use compatibility analysis is presented in Section 3 through a series of diagrams and organized into the following themes: zoning, land use, housing and redevelopment, environmental constraints and opportunities, and mobility and connectivity.

The toolbox focuses on land use tools and solutions for areas where development and redevelopment are most likely to occur and where less compatible uses are already permitted, as identified in Section 3. There are three categories of recommendations: Policy and Planning, Regulatory, and Outreach, Coordination, and Technical Assistance. Table 4.4-1 Summary of Land Use Solutions at the back of this Executive Summary is excerpted from the study.

### Other Features

Aside from the toolbox, the study includes a Land Use Solutions Matrix in Section 5.0 that weighs in on feasibility of implementation, responsible parties and potential partners. It also has an extensive Appendices section covering the following: a sample solution implementation tracking sheet, model ordinances and resolutions, a sample Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program deed of easement, sample local regulations, municipal zoning maps, meeting materials, and references & data sources.

The consultant for this project was Michael Baker International, Inc.

The NWS Earle JLUS website can be accessed at: <https://co.monmouth.nj.us/page.aspx?ID=4782>

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**Table 4.1-1 Summary of Land Use Solutions**

Planning and Policy	
Master Plan integration	Municipalities and Monmouth County should consider integrating findings from JLUS 2017 and this Next Steps Study into master plans and reexamination reports, including the creation of specific goals and objectives to recognize NWS Earle’s mission readiness activities. Integrating land use compatibility surrounding NWS Earle into master plans lays the policy groundwork to support zoning changes that encourage land use compatibility.
Wildfire and resilience integration	Recent updates to New Jersey’s MLUL require municipalities to include a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment in their land use plan elements to analyze current and future threats associated with climate change-related natural hazards. While the law does not specifically mention wildfire risk, municipalities should consider incorporating the wildfire risk and vulnerability from the <i>Monmouth County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020)</i> or the <i>2019 New Jersey State Hazard Mitigation Plan</i> when developing their climate change-related vulnerability assessments due to the high risk of wildfire near NWS Earle (according to New Jersey DEP’s Wildfire Fuel Hazard Areas) and NWS Earle’s storage and transfer of ammunition.
Open space and farmland preservation integration	Municipalities should consider integrating their open space and farmland preservation plans with land use compatibility studies, including the creation of specific objectives to support NWS Earle’s mission readiness activities. Integrating open space and farmland preservation with land use compatibility helps create a buffer surrounding NWS Earle to further mission sustainment and maintain public health, safety, and welfare.
Partner with Monmouth County, Monmouth Conservation Foundation, and the DoD on land preservation projects	Municipalities should pursue the purchase of conservation/agricultural easements and open space in order to help further mission sustainment goals identified in the JLUS 2017 and Next Steps Study. This can be accomplished through programs such as the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Program, the State Agriculture Development Committee’s Farmland Preservation Program, and the New Jersey DEP’s Green Acres Program.
Develop a corridor safety plan	Municipalities should consider partnering with Monmouth County and other regional stakeholders to develop a Corridor Safety Plan along DoD’s Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) to mitigate human-based hazards along highway networks that NWS Earle uses to transport munitions.
Adopt policies that support sound attenuation	JLUS 2017 recommends conducting a noise study documenting sound levels and potential areas of impact from NWS Earle’s Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) range to identify areas and municipalities that should be affected by higher and more disruptive noise levels. Municipalities should consider adopting policies supporting sound attenuation in all development in proximity to NWS Earle’s EOD range.
Expand the analysis in this study to the other municipalities in JLUS 2017’s delineated Military Influence Area	Review changes in zoning compatibility (as identified in JLUS 2017) and share this toolbox of land use solutions with municipalities located within JLUS 2017’s delineated Military Influence Area to increase regional land use compatibility with NWS Earle. Those municipalities include Atlantic Highlands Borough, Eatontown Borough, Farmingdale Borough, Freehold Township, Highlands Borough, Keansburg Borough, Neptune Township, and Ocean Township.
Regulatory	
Update municipal zoning to ensure compatibility with NWS Earle’s mission and JLUS 2017	Municipalities should consider updating municipal zoning within NWS Earle’s 3,000-foot notification boundary to remove uses that are “less compatible” (as identified in JLUS 2017) from being permitted as of right. Zoning updates should be accomplished through the creation of new overlay zones or by amending existing zoning regulations.
Update local subdivision regulations to enhance disclosure	Municipalities should consider requiring major subdivision applications to indicate distance from NWS Earle, its rail corridor, and its pier to ensure that applicants are aware of the potential hazards and associated risks surrounding NWS Earle.
Update site plan review checklist	Municipalities should consider updating their site plan review checklists to note if “less compatible” uses (as defined by JLUS 2017) are being proposed in the application for sites within NWS Earle’s 3,000-foot notification boundary. This requirement will encourage municipalities to consider land use compatibility with NWS Earle in their decisions to approve or deny a site plan application near the base.

<b>Regulatory (Cont.)</b>	
Adopt policies that require notification to NWS Earle past the 3,000-foot requirement	New Jersey’s MLUL requires municipalities to provide notice to NWS Earle personnel for any development application within 3,000 feet of the base. Municipalities should consider expanding the notification requirement to include the Primary Study Area.
Review building permit applications to ensure new structures do not encroach on NWS Earle or impede the base’s mission	Municipalities should consider reviewing building permit applications to ensure new structures do not encroach on NWS Earle or impede the base’s mission. Land use officials should then be encouraged to verify compliance through site inspections prior to signing off on the permits and certificates of occupancy.
Coordinate with NWS Earle on civilian encroachment	Municipalities should consider coordinating with NWS Earle on documenting where civilian encroachment is occurring on government-owned lands and addressing compliance with local regulations.
<b>Outreach, Coordination, and Technical Assistance</b>	
Develop an implementation tracking sheet of land use compatibility solutions	Municipalities should consider establishing an implementation tracking sheet of solutions and mitigation measures from both the JLUS 2017, this Next Steps Study, and any land use solutions that come from future coordination to communicate positive changes that have taken place surrounding a DoD facility.
Establish a voluntary committee and/or working group to advance land use compatibility	Municipalities should consider establishing a voluntary committee and/or a working group to advocate and pursue implementation of the land use solutions from JLUS 2017, this Next Steps Study, and other land use compatibility studies as appropriate. Activities should include meeting annually with conservation partners to identify potential overlap between their areas of interest/preservation goals.
Strengthen open lines of communication with NWS Earle	New Jersey’s MLUL requires municipalities to provide notice to NWS Earle personnel for any development application within 3,000-foot of NWS Earle. However, due to the lengthy hard copy notification process, NWS Earle is often not notified of an application until after it is approved by the town. Municipalities should consider expanding this requirement to provide an electronic notice to NWS Earle on any hearing of a major subdivision or site plan application within the 3,000-foot notification boundary to better engage NWS Earle in the review process, thereby more closely meeting the intent and spirit of the MLUL requirement.
Include NWS Earle as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the local planning board, zoning board, and/or environmental commission board	Municipalities should consider including a representative from NWS Earle as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the local planning board, zoning board, and/or environmental commission board to better engage NWS Earle in the review process.
Increase public awareness of land use compatibility by providing information on municipal websites	Municipalities should consider providing information on their municipal websites on land use compatibility with NWS Earle to increase public awareness of the JLUS 2017 and this study. Information should include municipality-specific plans, policies, and coordination with NWS Earle.
Enhance the Monmouth County JLUS webpage	Expand upon and revise the Monmouth County Division of Planning JLUS webpage to include documents and resources related to this toolbox and study. Include links to other similar efforts across the country such as the work of the Maryland Department of Planning.
Enhance the Monmouth County GIS self-service mapping application	Add NWS Earle-related GIS layers to the county’s self-service mapping application such as the 3,000-foot notification boundary and the Military Influence Area delineated in JLUS 2017.
Coordinate military boundaries with New Jersey Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA)	Coordinate with New Jersey DCA to incorporate the 3,000-foot notification boundary and Primary Study Area when calculating future affordable housing obligations. Currently, affordable housing obligations do not take into consideration NWS Earle and the risk of significant increase in residential and commercial development abutting the safety arcs of the base.
Strengthen partnerships with NWS Earle and Monmouth County	Municipalities should consider partnering with NWS Earle and Monmouth County to create a one-stop online portal for information related to land use compatibility with NWS Earle’s mission readiness activities. This would include ongoing agreements, plans, tools, and resources to advance local partnerships and plan integration.