

RESOLUTION OF THE WEST ORANGE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
Opposing and Condemning the Proposed Development at West Essex Highlands, West
Orange, New Jersey

WHEREAS, the proposed development by West Essex Highlands Inc. seeks to construct 496 residential units on a 120-acre tract of undeveloped forested land located on the western ridgeline of the Watchung Mountains, bordering Essex Fells, Verona, and Roseland; and

WHEREAS, this area is heavily vegetated with mature trees, wetlands, steep slopes, and serves as a watershed for the Peckman River and Canoe Brook; and

WHEREAS, West Orange is a heavily forested, steeply sloped municipality in Essex County, which is the most densely populated county in New Jersey, the most densely populated state in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the environmental impacts of this development include deforestation, increased stormwater runoff, disruption of local ecosystems and watersheds, and potential harm to surrounding neighborhoods due to inadequate drainage systems; and

WHEREAS, the loss of thousands of trees will exacerbate flooding risks in nearby towns, including Verona and Essex Fells, and diminish air quality and biodiversity; and

WHEREAS, changes in weather patterns and climate, and warmer average temperature create circumstances for more frequent and stronger storms, which have not been adequately accounted for in the current proposal; and

WHEREAS, this development contradicts sustainable land-use practices outlined in West Orange's Master Plan, which emphasizes conservation, smart growth, and low-impact development; and

WHEREAS, neighboring municipalities such as Verona, Essex Fells, and Caldwell, as well as the Essex County Environmental Commission have all issued resolutions opposing this project due to the reasonably foreseeable environmental consequences and harm to neighboring communities; and

WHEREAS, public safety concerns related to steep slopes and traffic congestion remain unresolved despite the 2006 rejection of similar proposals by the West Orange Planning Board;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the West Orange Environmental Commission strongly opposes and condemns the proposed West Essex Highlands development;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission urges the West Orange Planning Board to deny approval for this application due to its severe environmental, safety, and community impacts;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Commission supports placing this land under permanent conservation easement to preserve its ecological value for future generations.

Adopted this 13th day of August, 2025.

Michael Birk, Chairman
WOEC 8/13/25