

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The natural features and physical characteristics that exist in a community influence the type, location and pattern of development that occurs. Although most of Westfield is not severely limited for development by natural conditions, three physical characteristics influence development in the community: topography, wetlands and flood hazard areas.

Topography

Westfield and several other communities in the area (i.e., Scotch Plains, Plainfield, Springfield) derived their names from the rolling fields that existed during Colonial times. Similarly, other nearby communities (i.e., Summit, Berkeley Heights, Mountainside) are associated with the Watchung Mountains located northwest of Town. Westfield's topography reflects this pattern. The TOPOGRAPHY maps show existing topographic contours for the Town. Although nowhere can Westfield be considered mountainous (the maximum elevation is less than 300 ft. above sea level), in the northwestern and northeastern sections of the municipality, the elevations are higher and the grades more steep. The central and southern portions of Town are lower in elevation and the slopes are more gradual.

On a broad basis, Westfield's topography is not a major factor influencing development. On a few tracts, however, the existence of steep slopes limits the amount and location of development that may reasonably occur.

Wetlands

The WETLANDS DELINEATIONS map indicates those areas which are determined to have wetlands in the community. In Westfield, wetlands are typically found along rivers and streams. For the most part, these wetlands are located on parklands owned by Union County or the Town of Westfield. In a few locations, wetlands are limiting factors for development of vacant or sparsely developed land. Four of these areas are shown in detail on the map.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has prepared new wetland maps, which are generally felt to be a better estimate of wetland locations than the former maps prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, upon which the WETLANDS DELINEATIONS map is based. While, there may be an important difference on an individual site, the difference overall in Westfield is not so substantial as to significantly affect development policies.

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Flood Hazard Areas

The 100 YEAR FLOOD BOUNDARY map shows those areas in Westfield which would be inundated in a 100-year storm. In Westfield, there are two primary flood areas and several lesser flood areas. The primary flood areas are located on Union County parklands and on lands in the southwest portion of the community. In the southwest, a narrow flood area exists in Tamaques Park and some residential neighborhoods north of the park. South of Tamaques Park, the flood hazard area widens out, and is a limiting factor for development on several properties. In addition to these primary flood hazard areas, several lesser areas of flood hazard exist. Four such areas are shown in detail on the map. For the most part, these areas are vacant or sparsely developed.