

Hess-Woodbridge Redevelopment Plan

Township of Woodbridge
Middlesex County, New Jersey



Prepared by:
Township of Woodbridge
Department of Planning & Development

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ADOPTED _____ by Township of Woodbridge Planning Board

ADOPTED _____ by Township of Woodbridge Council

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Redevelopment Plan represents an opportunity for redevelopment of an area located in the heart of the Woodbridge Proper section Woodbridge Township. This plan will foster the transformation of properties into a mix of productive uses in the Hess-Woodbridge area. This area deserves and requires a comprehensive development scheme. The development which ensues from adoption of this plan should be a Planned Development. The Redevelopment Area is a highly desirable location for people to reside and businesses to thrive.

The redevelopment of these properties presents unique challenges. In response to the physical and economic conditions in this area, the Township Council requested that the Planning Board evaluate the properties in this Woodbridge Proper location as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment” on October 7, 2014. The Council concluded that the area did meet the criteria to be designated as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment” on November 10, 2014.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

According to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40:A 12A-1, et. seq.) the Redevelopment Plan shall include an outline for the planning, development, redevelopment or rehabilitation of the project area sufficient to indicate:

- Its relationship to definitive local objectives as to appropriate land uses, density of population and improved traffic and public transportation, public utilities, recreational and community facilities and other public improvements;
- Proposed land uses and building requirements in the project area;
- Adequate provision for the temporary and permanent relocation as necessary of residents in the project area, including an estimate of the extent to which decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling units, affordable to displaced residents will be available in the existing local housing market;
- An identification of any property within the Redevelopment Area proposed to be acquired in accordance with Redevelopment Plan;
- Any significant relationship of the Redevelopment Plans to:

- A) The Master Plans of contiguous municipalities;
- B) The Master Plan of the County in which the municipality is located;
and;
- C) The State Development and Redevelopment Plans adopted pursuant to the “State Planning Act.”

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Any construction of new housing units presents an opportunity to contribute to the Township’s affordable housing stock in accordance with the relevant case law, statutes and regulations in effect at the time of an approval for development of the property.

PLANNING CONTEXT

The Township of Woodbridge is 24.2 square miles in size and has a population of approximately 100,000 people. Located in northeastern Middlesex County, Woodbridge is known for its central location in the state and accessibility from numerous state highways, including the Garden State Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike. The Township contains 10 sections: Avenel, Colonia, Fords, Hopelawn, Iselin, Keasbey, Menlo Park Terrace, Port Reading, Sewaren and the Woodbridge Proper section of the Township. The Township of Woodbridge is bordered by Clark Township, the City of Rahway, the City of Linden, and Union County to the north; the Borough of Carteret, the Arthur Kill and the City of Perth Amboy to the east; the Raritan River to the south; and Edison Township to the west.

II. HESS-WOODBRIDGE REDEVELOPMENT AREA

The Hess-Woodbridge Redevelopment Area is located on the Woodbridge Proper section of the Township. The Woodbridge section of the Township is generally bound by the city of Perth Amboy to the south, Fords to the west, Iselin and Avenel to the north, and Sewaren to the east. The Woodbridge section of the Township consists of the central business district, mostly residential neighborhoods, and commercial uses along Route 1, Route 9, and Route 35. There are some industrial uses in the section, as well. The subject property is located in a commercial area along Route 9 and Main Street.

The Hess-Woodridge Redevelopment Area is located on the southbound side of Route 9 and eastbound side of Main Street. The New Jersey Turnpike is located immediately south of the property. The total acreage of the redevelopment area is approximately 57 acres. The following seven properties comprise the Hess-Woodbridge Redevelopment Area.

| Block | Lot | Address |
|--------------|------------|---------------------|
| 196.01 | 10.01 | Main Street |
| 196.02 | 10 | Mutton Hollow Road |
| 235 | 4.034 | 1051 US Highway 9S |
| 235.01 | 1.01 | 1 Hess Plaza |
| 237 | 2.03 | 447-459 Main Street |
| 238 | 1 | 425 Main Street |
| 238 | 3.04 | 401 Main Street |

A creek and wetlands exist on the site. Beginning in the northeastern corner of the site, the creek and wetlands traverse the site to the NJ Turnpike.

The Woodbridge Redevelopment Area is accessible from Main Street (CR 514) and Route 9. Two interior roads exist in the redevelopment area: Mutton Hollow Road and Antares Drive. Mutton Hollow Road cuts through the middle of the property. It is accessible by Route 9 and connects to Woodbridge Center Drive. Antares Drive is an offshoot of Mutton Hollow Road and connects to Main Street.

The Redevelopment Area is located across from Crosspointe Center which has 400,000 square feet of retail space and includes a Wegmans supermarket, bank, Panera Bread café, Lowe's Home Improvement store, and smaller stores. The Woodbridge Community Center is located just on the other side of Main Street. The Community Center features an indoor pool, roller rink, ice skating rink, fitness room, outdoor miniature golf, game

rooms, and year-round youth activities. Woodbridge Center Mall is $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away from the site on Woodbridge Center Drive. Downtown Woodbridge is located less than a mile east of the redevelopment area along Main Street. Downtown Woodbridge features fine dining, a micro-brewery, shops, banks, and the Township Municipal Complex. The Woodbridge Train Station is also located downtown with service to Newark, New York City and shore points. Community events take place downtown, such as annual parades, concerts, farmers' market, and street fairs.

Figure 1: Redevelopment Area Map

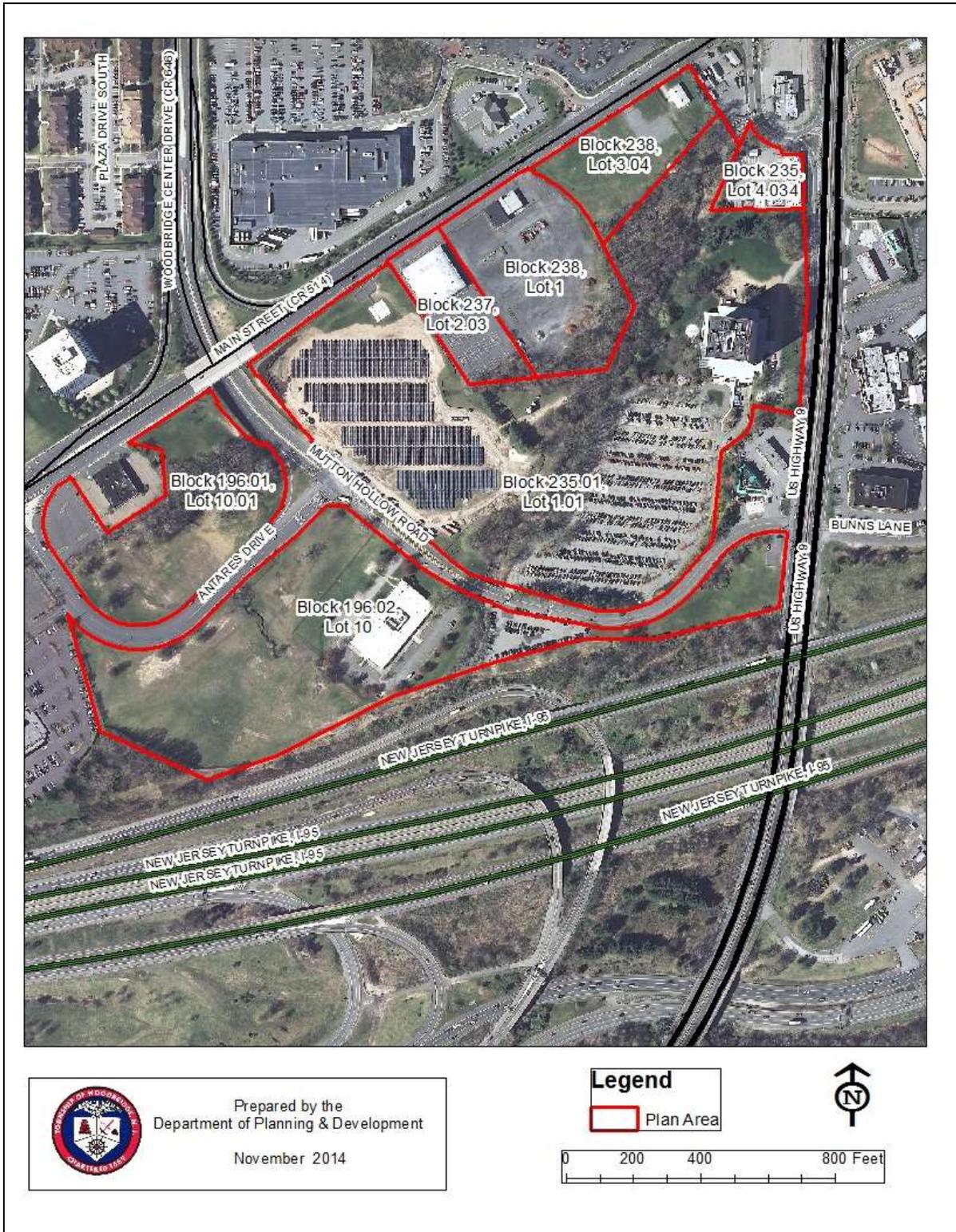


Figure 2: Surrounding Area

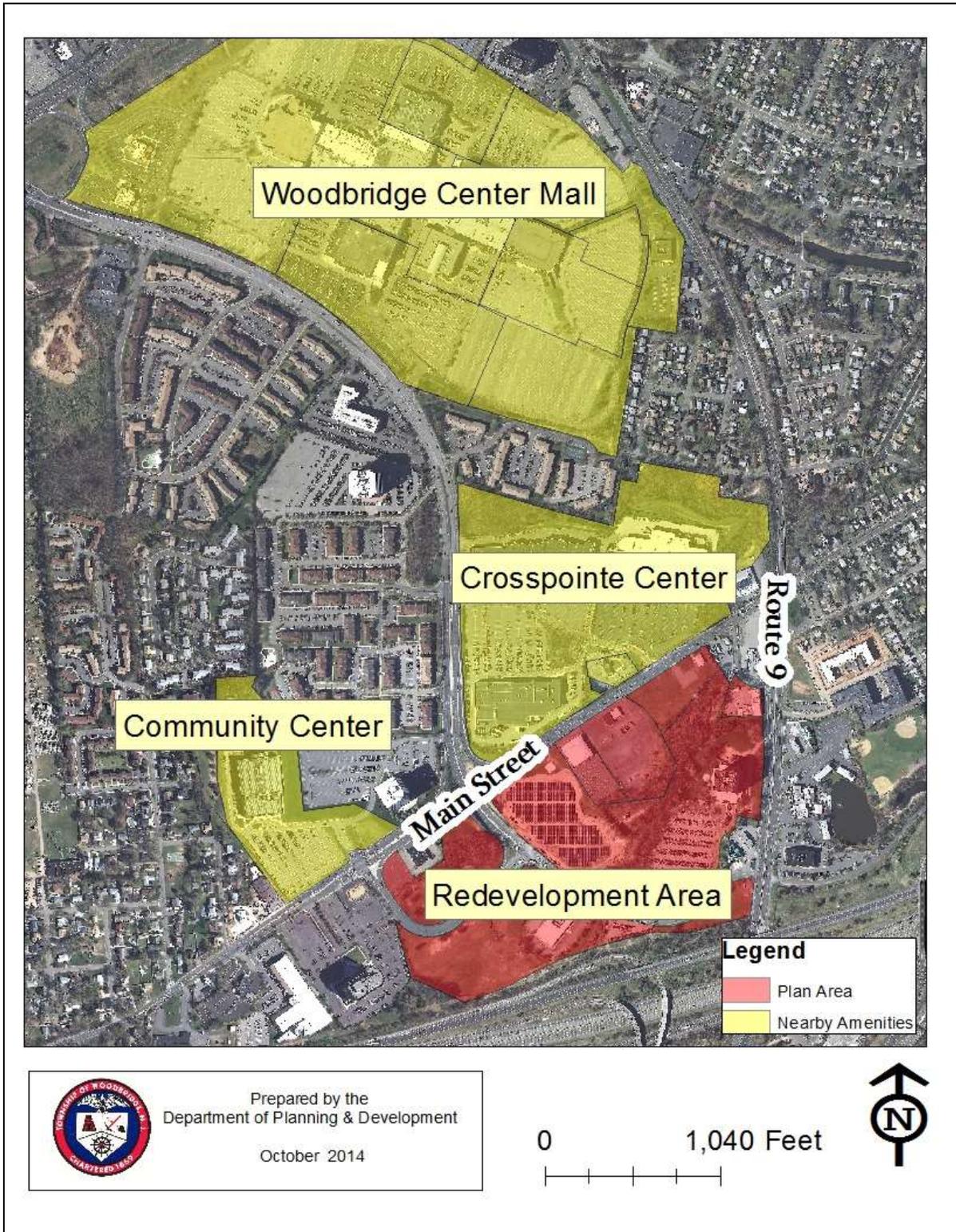
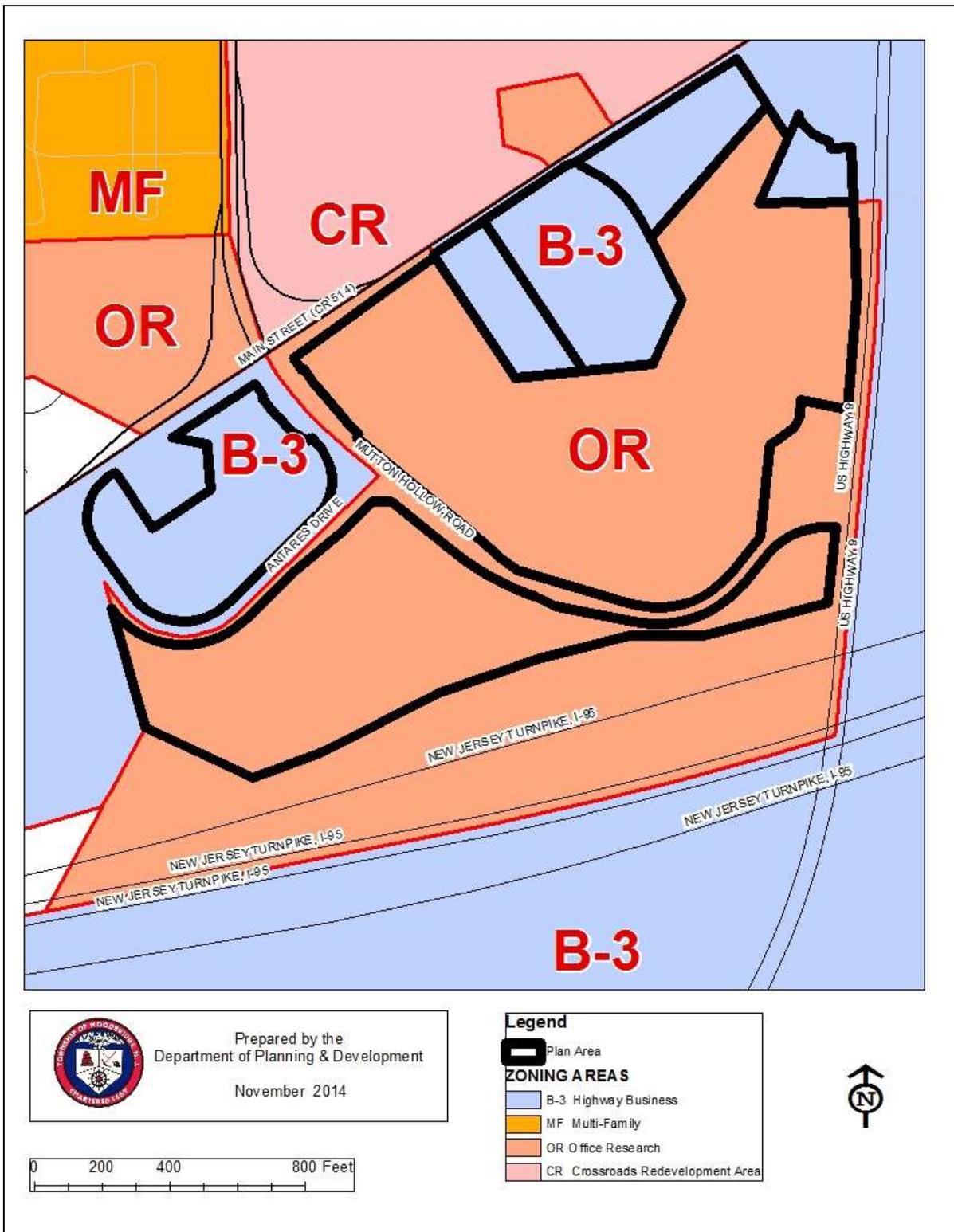


Figure 3: Current Zoning



HISTORY OF WOODBRIDGE PROPER

The Township of Woodbridge is the first incorporated township in the state of New Jersey. The Woodbridge Proper section of Woodbridge Township is one of the earliest settled sections of the Township. Woodbridge Proper has been the location of the downtown central business district and is where some of the first community facilities were built, such as townhall, schools, fire houses, libraries, and churches. Woodbridge was known for clay mining in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Woodbridge Center Mall opened in 1971 on the site of a former clay pit.

Woodbridge Proper has one of the three New Jersey Transit train stations.

MASTER PLANNING AND ZONING DESIGNATION HISTORY

The 2009 Township Master Plan recognizes that the current land use for this area as commercial and industrial. The current zoning for this area is OR: Office Research and B-3: Highway Business Zone. The land use and zoning have not changed since the 1990 Master Plan. The current Master Plan recommends this area continue to be utilized as an Office Research and Highway Business area.

PLAN GOALS

The overall goal of this Redevelopment Plan is to address the existing conditions that have negatively impacted the Area and comprehensively upgrade the area for redevelopment. The Township aims to reach the following goals:

- To stimulate economic investment in the Area;
- To promote the effective use of all the Redevelopment Area properties and to increase property tax base;
- To provide for additional housing opportunities to residents;
- To redevelop the area into a vibrant mixed use area, including offices, retail and residential uses;
- To promote environmental sustainability and the use of energy-efficient buildings.

HESS – WOODBRIDGE REDEVELOPMENT AREA ZONING STANDARDS

The purpose of this Redevelopment Area is to enhance current opportunities for this commercial area; to promote compatible land use development of attractive building groups; and to improve and provide for the efficient and safe traffic flow within.

Permitted Uses:

A mix of diverse, compatible uses is encouraged:

Permitted principal uses shall include, at a minimum:

- Offices, including buildings for administrative, business, educational, medical and/or professional purposes;
- Medical care facilities;
- Research and development, including activities of an engineering, medical or scientific nature;
- Data processing and computer operations;
- Governmental, educational or cultural facilities;
- Hotels and conference centers, which may include food service, cafés or restaurants with provisions for serving alcohol and other related commercial/convenience uses;
- Retail sales and service establishments, including big box retail, financial institutions, banks (including drive-through banks), pharmacies and dry cleaning facilities;
- Restaurants (including drive-in and fast food);
- Taverns and bars;
- Multi-family residential, including apartment buildings, condominiums and townhomes;
- Family oriented entertainment opportunities;
- Lifestyle Centers featuring shopping, pedestrian circulation, entertaining attractions in concert with the downtown business district;
- Solar field (limited to existing site).

The Township will consider amendment to this plan for other compatible activities.

Permitted accessory uses shall include, at a minimum:

- Parking structures for storage of vehicles operated as part of a permitted use; and

- Other customary accessory uses and structures which are incidental to the principal structure or use.

Bulk Standards:

Principal Building:

- Minimum lot size: 1 acre;
- Minimum front yard setback: 30 feet;
- Minimum side-yard setback: 20 feet;
- Minimum rear-yard setback: 30 feet;
- Maximum building height: 13 stories, excluding mechanical and/or electrical equipment and penthouses, and excluding stories devoted in whole or in part to structured parking, cellars, and/or basements;
- Maximum Lot Coverage (including principal and accessory buildings): 50%;
- Maximum Impervious Surface Cover age: 75%; provided, however, that the square footage of any green roof permanently affixed to the roof structure on a property shall be excluded from the total square footage of impervious surface coverage on such property.

Accessory Buildings:

Accessory Buildings shall conform to the same height and setback requirements as the principal building, except as set forth below:

- Minimum front-yard, side yard, and rear-yard setback: 10 feet.

Green Buildings:

- All buildings are encouraged to be LEED-certified or equivalent buildings;
- Proposed energy saving techniques shall be considered as part of architectural plans and renderings;
- New development or rehabilitation of existing buildings should employ green building practices (refer to the Township's Green Building Checklist).

Additional Standards:

Shared Parking:

Shared parking spaces shall be permitted to promote efficiency. Where a shared parking analysis is submitted to the Planning Board, as part of a land use approval application, that demonstrates multiple uses may share parking spaces, which will effectively serve such uses, the total number of required space may accordingly be reduced from the total that would otherwise be required for each individual use.

Parking & Loading Spaces:

The required size of parking spaces in the Redevelopment Area shall be as follows:

- At grade, perpendicular parking spaces: 9 feet wide x 18 feet long;
- Structured/garage parking: 8.5 feet wide x 18 feet long;
- Parallel parking spaces: 7 feet wide x 22 feet long;
- Compact parking spaces in structured/garage parking: 8 feet x 16 feet, provided that compact spaces shall not exceed 10% of the total number of spaces provided.

The required number of residential parking spaces:

- Minimum number of spaces shall comply with Residential Site Improvement Standards.

The required number of non-residential parking spaces:

- Minimum number of spaces shall be as set forth in the Land Use and Development Ordinance of the Township of Woodbridge.

The required number of loading spaces in the Redevelopment Area shall be as follows:

- 1 minimum loading space required for each office building;
- 1 minimum loading space required for each hotel building;
- 1 minimum common loading space for each retail structure, the adequacy of which will be reviewed by the Planning Board as part of a development application.

Lighting and Signage:

- Lighting and Signage shall be in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Land Use and Development Ordinance.

Circulation:

- Bike lanes and walkways should be considered at appropriate locations.

Street Vacation:

- Upon application by the redeveloper, where appropriate in order to create the most effective development parcels, the Town is willing to consider and take appropriate action, pursuant to State statute, to vacate streets in the Area; especially to alleviate existing traffic concerns.

Landscaping and Replacement of Trees:

- Minimum landscape coverage limits for Redevelopment Zone sites shall be: twenty percent (20%);
- Landscaped area required: In calculating the landscaped areas, the areas of plazas, open pedestrian shopping malls, sitting areas, green roofs, pools and fountains shall be included. For purposes of this subsection, the landscaping in areas of a paved parking lot shall not be included for purposes of determining the percentage of the site that shall be devoted to landscaped areas. There shall be no landscaping required within the paved parking areas of a parking lot containing one hundred fifty (150) spaces or less. In parking lots containing more than one hundred fifty (150) spaces, landscaping may be allowed within the paved parking areas of the parking lot;
- Any trees removed shall be in accordance with the tree replacement ordinance of the Land Use and Development Ordinance.

Multiple Buildings and Uses:

A lot in the Redevelopment Area may contain multiple principal buildings and uses, and multiple accessory buildings and uses.

III. RELATIONSHIP OF PLAN TO THE TOWNSHIP LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE (APPLICATION & PROCESS)

The Redevelopment Areas shall be redeveloped in accordance with the standards detailed in this Redevelopment Plan. This Plan supersedes the use and bulk provisions of the Township Land Use and Development Ordinance (Chapter 150) for the Redevelopment Area unless specifically referenced. Other Township regulations affecting developments that are in conflict are superseded by this Plan; however, existing engineering standards, performance standards and definitions shall apply.

In connection with site plan or subdivision applications, the Planning Board may grant deviations from the regulations contained within this Redevelopment Plan where by reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific piece of property or by reason of exceptional topographic conditions, pre-existing structures or physical features uniquely affecting a specific piece of property, or by reason of an extraordinary and exceptional situation uniquely affecting a specific piece of property or the structures lawfully existing thereon, the strict application of any provision of, or regulation adopted pursuant to this Redevelopment Plan would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to, or exceptional or undue hardship upon, the developer or redeveloper of such property. The Planning Board may also grant a deviation from the regulations contained within this Redevelopment Plan related to a specific piece of property where the purposes of this Redevelopment Plan would be advanced by such deviation from the strict application of the requirements of this Plan and the benefits of granting the deviation would outweigh any detriments. In connection with site plan or subdivision applications, the Planning Board may grant deviations from the regulations contained within this Redevelopment Plan, pursuant to the criteria of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70c(1) and (2) for bulk variances, and such deviations shall not be considered an amendment to this Redevelopment Plan. No deviations may be granted under the terms of this section unless such deviations can be granted without resulting in substantial detriment to the public good and will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the Redevelopment Plan.

The Planning Board may grant exceptions or waivers of design standards from the requirements for site plan or subdivision approval as may be reasonable and within the general purpose and intent of the provisions for site plan review and/or subdivision approval within the Plan, if the literal enforcement of one or more provisions of the Plan

is impracticable or would exact undue hardship because of peculiar conditions pertaining to this site. No deviations may be granted which will result in permitting a use that is not a permitted use within this Redevelopment Plan. Any deviations from standards of this Plan that results in a “d” variance pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70d shall be addressed as an amendment to the Plan rather than via variance relief through the Township’s Zoning Board of Adjustment. An application requesting a deviation from the requirements of this Redevelopment Plan shall provide public notice of such application in accordance with the public notice requirement set forth in N.J.S.A. 40:55D-12. All development must be approved by the Planning Board and shall be submitted through the normal site plan and subdivision procedures as identified as N.J.S.A. 40:55D, et seq.

Final adoption of this Redevelopment Plan by the Township Council shall be considered an amendment to the Township of Woodbridge Land Use and Development Ordinance and Zoning Map. Unless otherwise defined in the Plan, terms used in this Plan shall have the same meaning as defined in the Township’s Land Use and Development Ordinance.

IV. HESS-WOODBRIDGE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS

RELATIONSHIP TO THE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

The Township of Woodbridge's last comprehensive Master Plan was prepared in February 2009. The Master Plan recommended this area be devoted to Office Research and Highway Business uses.

The Master Plan adopted the following goals that are relevant to this Plan:

- To ensure the integrity of existing residential areas preventing intrusion of nonresidential uses into residential neighborhoods;
- To preserve the existing character consistent with current development patterns through zoning standards that correspond to existing development patterns;
- To permit residential uses at appropriate densities in locations accessible to major roadways, commercial services, public facilities and traditional downtown areas;
- To encourage and control commercial development by limiting regional commercial and office development to major highway corridors;
- To expand retail and service activities in appropriate locations to meet the future shopping needs of Township residents;
- To minimize conflicts between residential and non-residential development through appropriate lighting, buffering/landscaping, loading, parking and storage standards;
- To continue attracting premier Retail, Industrial and Office end users to the Township;
- To expand and protect the Township's ratable base through the attraction and retention of nationally known and respected companies;
- To encourage the provision of convenient well-located community facilities for all residents of the Township;

- To plan for community facilities that will accommodate anticipated future population trends;
- To provide a network of recreation areas, both public and private, and permanently preserved open space;
- To provide a full range of recreational facilities, both active and passive, to meet the needs of all age groups;
- To continue increasing active recreational opportunities available within the Township.

For all these aforementioned reasons, this redevelopment plan is consistent with the Township Master Plan.

MASTER PLANS OF ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES

The Hess-Woodbridge Redevelopment Area is located along Route 9 and Main Street. It is not near any neighboring municipality. This plan is not expected to have any adverse impact on adjacent municipalities.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY PLANS

Middlesex County Growth Management Strategy

Between 1990 and 1995, Middlesex County prepared phased Growth Management Strategy to address infrastructure need, regional design and growth management strategies. The County was subdivided into four regions. Woodbridge Township is located in the northeast region, as were all neighboring municipalities.

Phase I of the plan found that large levels of public & private investment were necessary to maintain infrastructure with the highest cost items being maintenance and improvement to sewers, parks and roads.

Phase II of the plan focused on managing actual growth pertaining to five specific case studies. None of the case studies focused on areas of Woodbridge.

In Phase III of the study, three primary recommendations were made as part of the Metropark Case Study:

- Traffic congestion inhibits growth in the area. Access to Metropark is limited by the narrow rail underpasses and New Jersey Transit’s parking expansion will place an even greater burden on local roads. Transportation management measures should be implemented intensively for this area;
- The NJ Transit parking deck project includes the construction of space for retail facilities to better serve commuter needs. Additional retail development to serve nearby office workers should be evaluated;
- Growth in this study area is limited by increasingly scarce buildable land and the need for increased sewage capacity in the Township. A stormwater management plan should be developed for the entire South Branch of the Rahway River drainage area in order to determine the most effective stormwater control measures.

This Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the recommendations discussed in the Middlesex County Growth Management Strategy and will serve to offer some of “the retail development” contemplated for neighboring office workers.

Consistency with Middlesex County Master Plan

The Hess-Woodbridge Redevelopment Area is generally consistent with the elements of the Middlesex County Master Plan, a document that addresses sprawl and sustainability in the region. The Hess-Woodbridge Redevelopment Plan relates directly to the goals, values and objectives of the Middlesex County Master Plan which aims to:

- Make fuller use of existing transportation lines and facilities. The County Plan anticipated that public transportation would achieve greater significance as a necessary alternative to the private automobile, with its attendant problems of pollution, energy availability, and congestion;
- Find a more feasible alternative to the present situation of “strip” commercial development found on major roads, and single-family homes on unnecessarily large lots;
- “Cluster” future growth around definable town centers and transportation facilities to include commercial and office employment as well as residential, with land use intensity decreasing as distance from the town center increases.

New Jersey State Development & Redevelopment Plan

The Hess-Woodbridge Redevelopment Plan is consistent and would effectuate the plans and policies of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP), adopted in 2001. The SDRP is a unique document that guides State-level development and redevelopment policy as well as local and regional planning efforts. This Plan is consistent with the following statewide goals in the SDRP.

- Revitalize the State’s cities and towns;
- Promote beneficial economic growth, development and renewal for all residents of New Jersey;
- Protect the environment, prevent and clean up pollution;
- Provide adequate public facilities and services at a reasonable cost;
- Preserve and enhance areas with historic, cultural, scenic, open space, and recreational value;
- Ensure sound and integrated planning and implementation statewide.

The SDRP also includes a State Plan Policy Map, which divides the state into regions, known as Planning Areas, and includes specific goals for each area.

The Policy Map also identifies “Centers”, locations into which development is to be directed, “Environs,” areas to be protected from future growth. The Township of Woodbridge falls in the ‘Metropolitan Planning Area’ (PA1). The State Plan recognizes that all communities in this planning area are essentially fully developed; hence much of the change in land uses will occur as redevelopment.

The State Plan’s planning objectives for the ‘Metropolitan Planning Area’ includes:

- Providing for much of the state’s future redevelopment;
- Revitalizing cities and towns;
- Redesigning areas of sprawl;
- Protecting the character of existing stable communities.

As of the writing of this Plan, a new State Plan is being developed, called “The State Strategic Plan: New Jersey’s State Development and Redevelopment Plan.”

This Plan will serve to meet each of these goals for the designated area.

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

REDEVELOPMENT ENTITY

The Woodbridge Township Redevelopment Agency will serve as the Redevelopment Entity.

Phasing:

- Projects may be developed in phases;
- The phasing may include phased start and completion dates among the various land use components, as well as internal phasing schedules within sections, subject to specific provisions in the redevelopment agreement.

Relocation:

- There is no relocation that will be required to implement this plan.

SELECTION OF DESIGNATED DEVELOPERS

Potential redevelopers will be required to submit to the Redevelopment Entity for review and approval prior to the designation of a redeveloper(s) at a minimum:

- Financial responsibility and capability;
- Estimated development cost;
- Estimated time schedule;
- Conceptual site plans including elevations;
- Fiscal impact analysis.

APPOINTMENT OF A DESIGNATED REDEVELOPER

The Redevelopment Entity may select one or more redevelopers to participate in the implementation of the Redevelopment Plan.

As part of the process to be designated a redeveloper, the Redevelopment Entity will negotiate a formal Redevelopment Agreement.

Designation of a Redeveloper(s) by the Redevelopment Entity shall be subject to the execution of an appropriate Redevelopment Agreement.

A person or entity that owns or controls the parcels within the Redevelopment Area shall be given priority in the designation of Redeveloper, provided such person or entity has appropriate development experience and financial resources, as this would minimize acquisition costs and delay.

CONDITIONS IN REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT(S)

Each Redevelopment Agreement will be contingent upon the following conditions, restrictions, and/or requirements.

1. Each Redevelopment Agreement will incorporate the pertinent aspects of the selected redeveloper's proposal and will address financial considerations, planning, phasing, development and such other issues as deemed appropriate and/or as required according to state law in order to implement the Redevelopment Plan.
2. A designated redeveloper will be obligated to complete on-site improvements as approved, together with any specified off-site improvements, as may be required in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan and the Redevelopment Agreement.
3. Any necessary deed of conveyance shall include a restriction that the designated redeveloper and his successors or assigns shall devote land to the uses specified in the Redevelopment Plan and shall not devote such land to any other uses.
4. No designated redeveloper will be permitted to dispose of property until the issuance of the Certificate of Completion, unless the prior written consent of the Redevelopment Agency has been obtained other than as may be provided in the Redevelopment Agreement.
5. No covenant, agreement, lease, conveyance, or other instrument shall be effective or executed by the Township of Woodbridge and the Redevelopment Entity or by the purchasers or lessees from them, or by any successors in interest of such purchasers or lessees, by which land in the Redevelopment Area is restricted as to sale, lease, or occupancy upon the basis of race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, or marital status.

6. The Redeveloper(s) shall pay to the Redevelopment Entity an application fee for consideration of redeveloper as a designated redeveloper and will fund an escrow for the Agency's costs in implementing redevelopment.
7. The Redevelopment Entity and the Township of Woodbridge reserve the right to terminate any Redevelopment Agreement with a designated redeveloper subject to the terms and conditions of the Redevelopment Agreement.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

An application for preliminary and/or final site plan approval for uses authorized in this Plan may be filed by: (i) a redeveloper designated by the Redevelopment Entity; or (ii) an assignee of the redeveloper as approved by the Redevelopment Entity. In addition to any requirements of the Redevelopment Entity, preliminary and/or final site plans and/or subdivisions, with details sufficient to comply with the Municipal Land Use Law and Local Ordinance, shall be submitted for Planning Board review and approval for each development parcel, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq.

AMENDING THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

This Redevelopment Plan may be amended from time to time in compliance with the requirements of law, and subject to the terms of any Redevelopment Agreement.