

ROUTE 27 AREA 7 REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Prepared for Township of Woodbridge Planning Board

Prepared By:

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Redevelopment Plan for Route 27, Area 7 represents an opportunity to reinvent and reinvigorate the northernmost section of one of Woodbridge's oldest and widely used arterial roadways. The primary purpose of this redevelopment effort is to comprehensively replan this area of the Route 27 Corridor as a restaurant and open space corridor, attracting Metro Park, mass transit riders, and motorists who utilize this State Road as a pass through on their daily routes: Transforming the corridor into a highly desirable location for eateries; national, franchised or independently operated to thrive, along with a higher quality recreational and open space, improved pedestrian environment.

The redevelopment of the Route 27 Corridor presents unique challenges.

In response to the physical and economic conditions along the Corridor, the Township Council requested on February 20, 2007 that the Planning Board evaluate the Area as an "area in need of redevelopment."

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 the 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”.

PLANNING CONTEXT

Route 27 Corridor –“Area 7” Redevelopment Area and Location

The Township of Woodbridge is 24.2 square miles in size and located in northeastern Middlesex County. 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.

The Route 27 Corridor “Area 7” consists of one (1) tract in Woodbridge. The Redevelopment Area which is approximately 4.64 acres, is generally defined by the Northeast Corridor Line to the south, single family neighborhood to the north, Dow Avenue to the west, and a single family neighborhood to the east.

HISTORY OF ROUTE 27

Route 27 is a New Jersey State Highway and runs along the original alignment of U.S. Route 1. It runs from U.S. Route 206 in Princeton at its southern most point and ends at Broad Street/McCarter Highway in Newark at its northern most point. The road passes through (from south to north) Princeton, Kendall Park, South Brunswick, Franklin Township, New Brunswick, Highland Park, Edison, Metuchen, Woodbridge, Rahway, Linden, Roselle, and Elizabeth. In many municipalities Route 27 has a local name as Nassau Street in Princeton; Albany Street in New Brunswick, St. Georges Avenue in Rahway, Linden and Roselle. In Woodbridge and Edison it is referred to as Lincoln Highway.

MASTER PLANNING AND ZONING DESIGNATION HISTORY

For almost a century Route 27 has coexisted in support of the rail system which it abuts. The Master Plan of 1970 designated this site for Medium Density Single Family Use. The recommended density was approximately four (4) units per acre. The site is currently zoned R-10 for Medium Density Single Family Use and also zoned MF for Multi-Family Use.

PLAN GOALS

The overall goal of this Redevelopment Plan is to comprehensively upgrade the Area as a restaurant and a national brand/"chain" chain corridor, and develop a public park, while protecting the established residential neighborhoods bordering the arterial roadway.

- To stimulate economic investment in the Area.
- To promote the effective use of all the Redevelopment Area property and to increase property tax base.
- To attract national "chains" to the area that will serve as an anchor pulling Metropark visitors to the area.
- To develop new economic activities that benefit the Township.
- To redevelop land occupied by obsolete structures and uses.
- To improve property values within the Area, to increase local revenues.
- To maximize access points from Route 27 by coordinating on site circulation with adjacent properties.
- To provide adequate parking, through shared parking where feasible.
- To create circulation patterns that minimize commercial traffic on local residential streets to the extent feasible.
- To protect adjacent residential neighborhoods from the impacts of distinctly separate and dissimilar uses and link these opportunities to the Corridor.
- To promote mass transit opportunities.
- To improve the physical appearance of the Area.

- To create a public park.
- To create public recreation and entertainment opportunities.
- To eliminate dangerous traffic movements requiring motor vehicle turnarounds in the right-of-way of Route 27.
- To create a corridor and attract to the corridor, a diversity of uses to serve the residential community and the Metropark area.

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

The Redevelopment Area 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 and physical features uniquely affecting a specific piece of property, the strict application of any area, yard, bulk or design objective 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.

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 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.

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- 12a.&b. 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.

II. ROUTE 27 CORRIDOR: AREA 7 STANDARDS

The standards of the “Area” contain information pertaining to the purpose of the redevelopment of the “Area”; the permitted and accessory uses; bulk standards; and other Area specific standards. The general design standards apply to all proposed uses. The evaluation of any proposal submitted under the Redevelopment Plan shall be based upon sections of this Redevelopment Plan entitled “Relationship of Plan”.

Purpose: To comprehensively plan for a mix of uses along Route 27. New uses may include restaurants, fast food establishments, entertainment uses. Curb cuts onto Route 27 shall be limited. Appropriate screening shall be provided to the adjacent residential lots.

Permitted Uses: Park: both passive and active recreation, municipal uses.

Accessory Uses and Structures: Uses and structures customary and incidental to the principal use.

Bulk Standards:

- Minimum lot size: 4 acres.

Additional Standards:

- A minimum 10 foot landscaped buffer shall be provided along residential uses.
- A ten foot wide rear buffer shall be provided adjacent to the residential lots. The buffer shall include a combination of fencing and landscaping.

Affordable Housing:

- At a minimum, any developer shall be responsible for any affordable housing obligation generated by the development.

General Design Standards:

These design standards shall be applied with the use and bulk requirements detailed in this Plan. The design standards are intended to reinforce the physical and visual amenities of the Redevelopment Area. The following standards shall apply:

- All facades visible from adjoining properties or public streets shall include pleasing scale features of the building and encourage community integration by featuring characteristics similar to a front façade.
- Entranceways shall be in keeping with the architectural character of the structure, and shall be clearly marked and framed architecturally. Entranceways are encouraged to receive design emphasis including marquees, awnings, decorative lighting, and signage.
- Buildings shall be designed so as to prevent exterior elevations from containing large expanses of blank or featureless walls. Artistic wall treatments are encouraged.
- The type, shape, pitch, feature and color of a roof shall be architecturally compatible with the building style, material, colors and details.
- All building facades are encouraged to have a brickface.

Parking:

- Off-Street parking and loading areas should be coordinated with the public street system serving the area to reduce conflicts with through traffic, obstruction or prohibition of pedestrian movement, and vehicular thoroughfares.

Circulation:

- It is recommended that, to the extent feasible, driveway access points to Route 27 be eliminated and access or shared access and parking should be provided where feasible between adjacent parcels.
- There shall be a continuous 6 foot wide sidewalk with curb along all right of way of Route 27 (with proposed accompanying trees and lighting.)
- Pedestrian activity shall be provided from the perimeter of the site to all buildings and all sidewalk areas should be designed to accommodate pedestrian activity.
- Internal pedestrian walkways within a parking lot shall be distinguished from the driving surface by use of either pavers, brick, or concrete.

Signage:

- Signs shall be in harmony and consistent with the architecture of the building and relate to the features of the building in terms of location, scale, color, lettering, materials, texture and depth.
- No sign shall extend or project above the highest elevation of the wall to which it is attached or above the lowest part of the roofline of the building, whichever is less.
- Wayfinding signage to direct visitors toward parking areas and activity centers is encouraged.

Lighting:

- Pedestrian-level, ballard lighting, ground-material lighting, other low, glare-controlled fixtures mounted on building or landscaping walls shall be used to light pedestrian walkways.
- Accent lighting on buildings is encouraged.
- Lighting shall be shielded to prevent glare on adjacent properties and from residential uses.
- Exterior light fixtures shall be compatible and relate to the architectural character of the buildings on a site. Site lighting shall be provided at the minimum level to accommodate safe pedestrian and vehicular movements, without causing any off-site glare.
- Parking lot lights shall not exceed 20 feet in height and shall contain decorative fixtures.

Landscaping:

- All setback areas fronting public roadways should be defined by a combination of low walls, decorative fencing and/or landscaping. The landscape area within should contain a variety of flowering trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals, and bulbs to complement the architecture and provide seasonal interest.
- Landscape areas may also contain decorative lighting, and signage, which should be designed to complement the overall buffer design.
- Landscape design should be integrated into overall site design and

plans should include a watering and maintenance schedule for each area.

Plantings:

- All plantings should be installed free from disease in a manner that ensures the availability of sufficient soil and water for healthy growth and which is not intrusive to underground utilities.

Street Trees:

- Street trees and tree well grates shall be installed in the public right-of-way of all streets within the entire Redevelopment Area.
- Street trees shall not block curb cuts or driveways.
- Street tree spacing shall be determined by species type. Large maturing trees shall be planted a minimum of 40 feet and a maximum of 50 feet on center. Small and medium maturing trees shall be planted a minimum of 20 feet and a maximum of 40 feet on center.
- Street trees shall be a minimum of 2.5 inches in caliper at the time of planting. All street tree types and sizes shall be recommended by a local arborist, nurseman, or landscape architect designated by the Planning Board.

Other Landscaping:

- Plants in boxed, clay or wood containers should be used for enhancement of plazas, courtyards, parking areas where appropriate and practical.

Street Lighting:

- A unified design family of lighting standards shall be used for posts and fixtures throughout the Redevelopment Area.
- One lighting standard shall be placed approximately every 25 linear feet of sidewalk on average.
- The standard shall not exceed 20 feet in height.
- The Planning Board shall give final approval of the fixture pole type

and location.

- Adjustments to these requirements may be made relative to one another in response to the photometric specifications of the chosen light standards.

Street Furniture:

- Street furniture shall be selected to complement the design theme of the Area and shall be integrated into the overall streetscape and landscape plans.
- Trash receptacles shall include provisions for glass and paper recycling throughout the Area.

Bicycle Parking:

- Secure, locked bicycle shall be provided within the corridor for use of the public.

Green Buildings:

- All buildings are encouraged to be LEED-qualified buildings, and/or employ energy saving construction and utility techniques.
- Proposed energy saving techniques shall be provided as part of architectural plans and renderings.

Utilities:

- Wherever possible, all above-ground utilities shall be located underground.

III. ACQUISITION

PROPERTY TO BE ACQUIRED

This Redevelopment Plan authorizes the Township to exercise its condemnation powers on all properties in the Redevelopment Area, to acquire property or to eliminate any restrictive covenants, easements, or similar property interests which may undermine the implementation of the Plan.

The Township plans, however, to assist the designated redevelopers in working with affected property owners and businesses to promote private redevelopment, where appropriate, of the parcels within the Redevelopment Area.

Factors to be considered by the Township mitigating against the use of eminent domain will include the length of time a property owner has been in business and the characteristic pattern of upgrades and improvements the owner has made to the property during that tenure of ownership.

RELOCATION PLAN

It is anticipated that the designated redevelopers will address any relocation needs through acquisition of parcels. The Township of Woodbridge, however, will provide all displaced tenants and landowners with the appropriate relocation assistance, pursuant to applicable State and Federal law should relocation be necessary. Such assistance will be provided through an appropriately designated office which will assist in any relocation of persons, businesses or other entities. Further, the Township of Woodbridge and the surrounding area contains sufficient land and buildings which would be appropriate for relocation of existing businesses from the Redevelopment Area. If relocation is not directly caused by the Redevelopment Plan, the Township assumes no responsibility for relocation of businesses.

IV. PLAN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS

Relationship to the Township Master Plan

The Township of Woodbridge's last comprehensive Master Plan was prepared in 1990. The 1990 Master Plan recommended this area be devoted to medium density single family residential and high density single family residential.

Subsequently, the Master Plan was revised in January 1994 and a Master Plan Reexamination Report was adopted in July 1994. The purpose of the Reexamination Report is to review and evaluate the local Master Plan and Development Regulations on a periodic basis in order to determine the need for update and revisions. The last Master Plan Reexamination Report is from 2003.

The 2003 Master Plan Reexamination Report adopted the following relevant goals for the Township:

- To encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in this State, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare.
- To promote desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangements.
- To permit mutli-family residential use in locations accessible to major roadways, commercial services, and public facilities.
- To study changes in market conditions, relating to all non-residential property, to ensure the matching to those designations with supply and demand.

Recommended additional goals include:

- To be vigilant in the Town's efforts to protect the residentially zoned areas and all residents from intrusion by commercial and industrial uses into these areas.
- To implement/undertake traffic solutions from a regional, broader perspective from the Township.

The Township is currently preparing a new comprehensive Master Plan.
MASTER PLANS OF ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES

The Route 27, Area 7 Redevelopment Area is located in the northern section of Iselin close to the municipal border of Edison Township and the City of Rahway. This Redevelopment Plan is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on development within the Township of Edison or the City of Rahway.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY PLANS

Middlesex County Growth Management Strategy

Between 1990 and 1995, Middlesex County prepared phased Growth Management Plan 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.

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 Route 27 Redevelopment Plan is generally consistent with the elements of the Middlesex County Master Plan, a document that addresses sprawl and sustainability in the region. The Route 27 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 Route 27, Area 1 Development 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’ include:

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

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.

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.

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 user(s) specified in the designated redeveloper's final plan and shall not devote such land to any other uses.
4. No designated redeveloper will be permitted to dispose of property until all required improvements are completed, unless the prior written consent of the Redevelopment Entity has been obtained.
5. The consent of the Township of Woodbridge and Redevelopment Entity shall be required prior to the disposition of all or any of the designated redeveloper's interest in the Redevelopment Area.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. The Redevelopment Entity and the Township of Woodbridge reserve the the right to terminate any Redevelopment Agreement with a designated redeveloper subject to the terms and conditions of the Redevelopment Agreement.

Development Review

No application for development or redevelopment in the area may be filed with the Planning Board until such time as the applicant has applied for and received a designation as redeveloper from the Redevelopment Entity and has executed a Redevelopment Agreement with the Redevelopment Entity providing for the proposed application. In addition to any requirements of the Agency, major 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.

The Planning Board shall require the developer to provide a bond or bonds of sufficient size and duration to guarantee the completion of the various phases of the project in compliance with the requirements of law and planning approvals.

Duration of Redevelopment Plan

During the time that the Redevelopment Plan is in effect, any party acting as a redeveloper, (as defined in the LRHL) must obtain the approval of the Redevelopment Entity. The Redevelopment Plan will remain in effect for 30 years.

Amending the Redevelopment Plan

This Redevelopment Plan may be amended from time to time in compliance with the requirements of law, provided that the respect to any land in the project area previously disposed of by the Redevelopment Entity for use in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan, the Entity will notice the owner of such land whose interests may be materially affected by such amendment.



Township of Woodbridge
Route 27 Redevelopment - Area 7





Township of Woodbridge Route 27 Redevelopment - Area 7

March 19, 2008
Route27NewArea7-aerial.mxd
Unofficial map