

Hopelawn Redevelopment Plan

Township of Woodbridge
Middlesex County, New Jersey



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I. INTRODUCTION

This Redevelopment Plan represents an opportunity to reinvent and better utilize industrial and vacant space in the Hopelawn and Keasbey sections of Woodbridge Township. This plan will transform properties into productive light industrial uses for properties setback from New Brunswick Avenue in between Route 440 and the Garden State Parkway. This Redevelopment Area should be a highly desirable location for businesses to thrive.

The redevelopment of Hopelawn presents unique challenges.

In response to the physical and economic conditions in Hopelawn , the Township Council requested that the Planning Board evaluate the Area as an “area in need of redevelopment” on March 4, 2008 and April 1, 2008.

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”.

PLANNING CONTEXT

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 Hopelawn Redevelopment Area consists of three (3) tracts: a tract located in the Hopelawn section of Woodbridge Township, a second parcel located in the Keasbey section of the Township, and a third tract primarily consisting of a railroad right of way which coincides with the section boundary separating Hopelawn and Keasbey. Because access to all of these properties is obtained through Hopelawn only, Hopelawn is the focus of this Plan. The parcels in this Plan were studied in the Hopelawn North and Hopelawn South Redevelopment Studies. The Redevelopment Area, which is approximately 13 acres, is generally defined by commercial uses along New Brunswick Avenue to the north and west, and Route 440 to the east and south.

Figure 1: Redevelopment Area Parcel Map

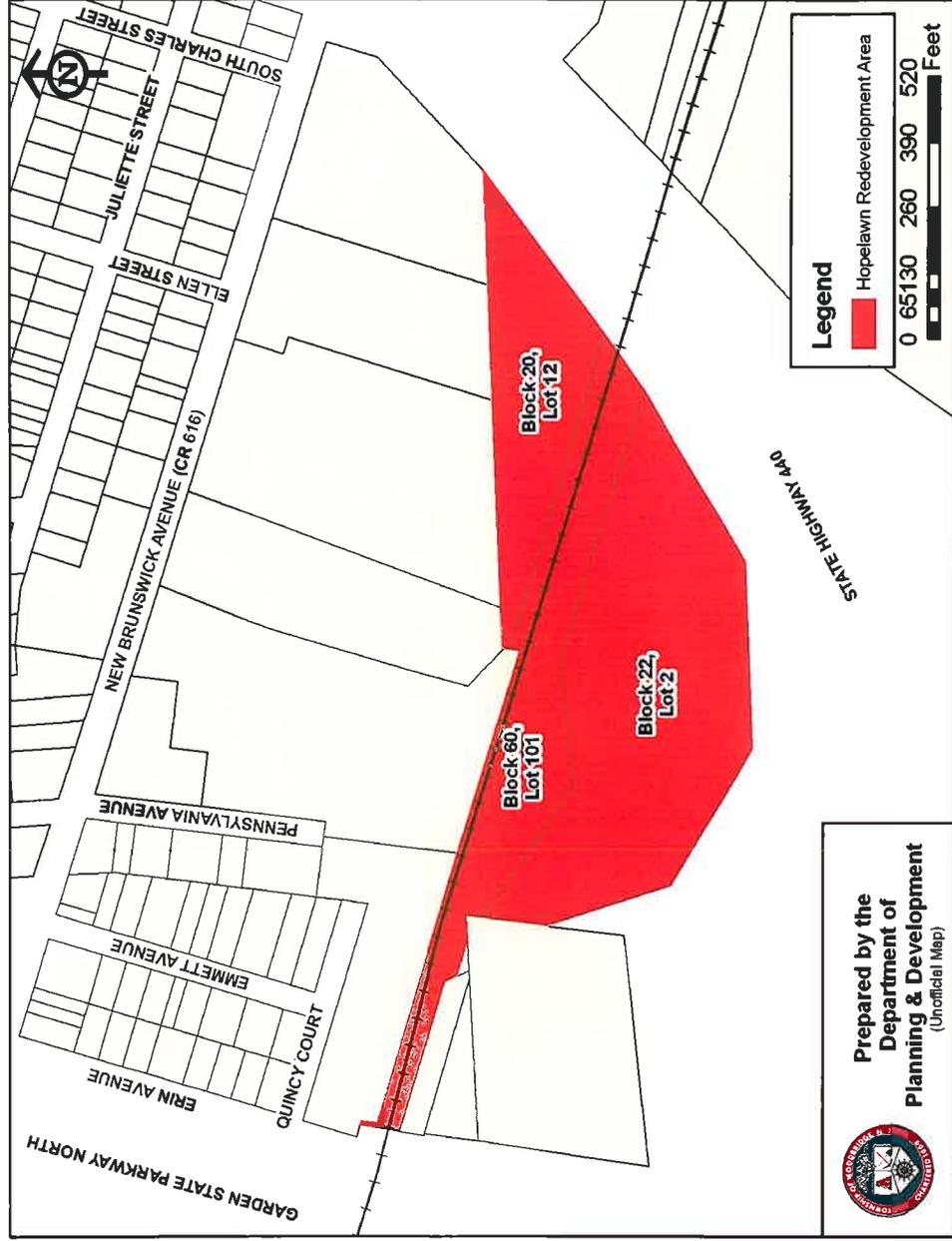
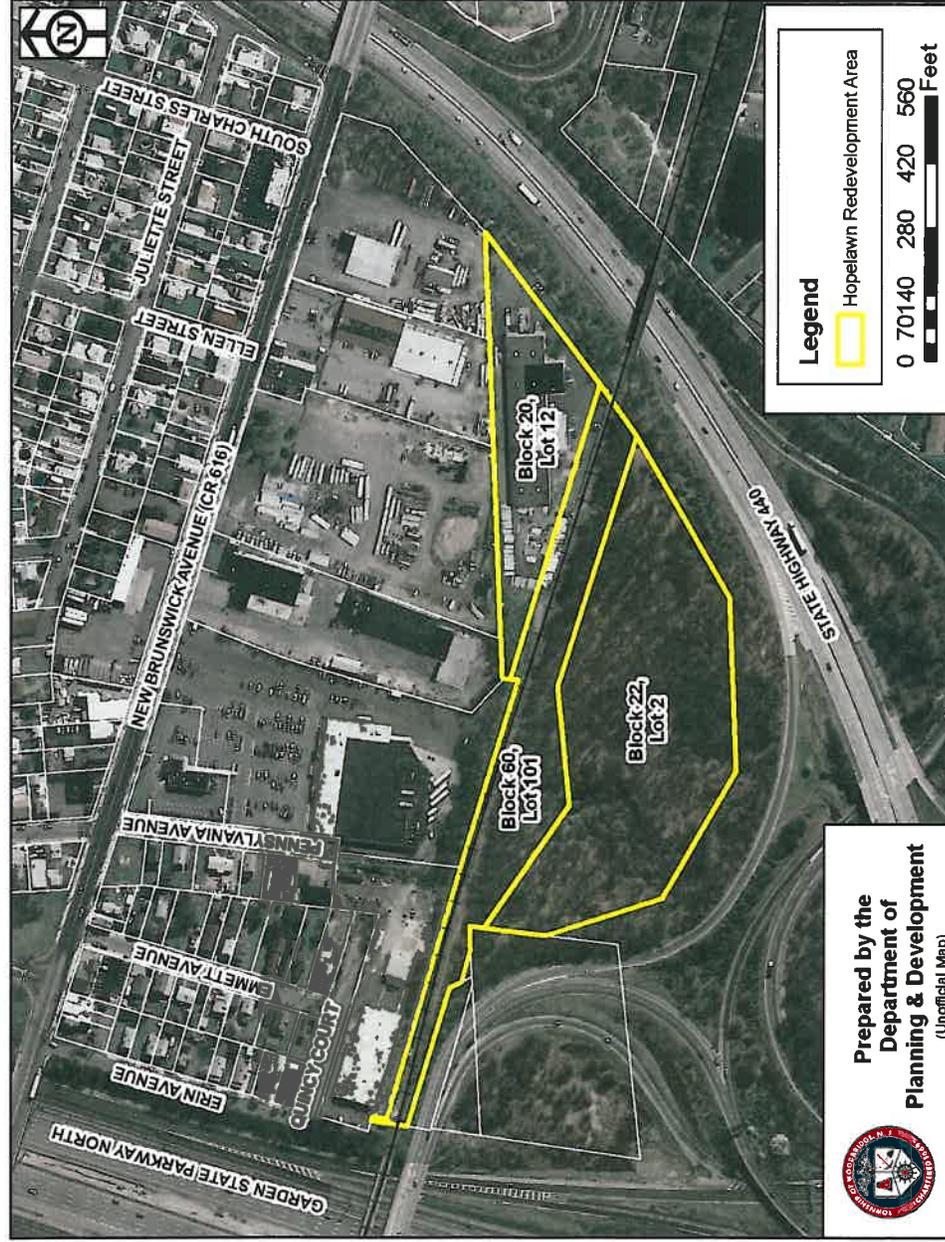


Figure 2: Redevelopment Area Aerial Map



HISTORY OF HOPELAWN

Hopelawn is a 0.4 square mile community located in the southeastern portion of the Township. It is bordered to the west by Fords, to the south by Keasbey, and to the east by the City of Perth Amboy. Hopelawn began as a farming community settled by the Luther Hope family and was originally referred to as “Hope’s Lawn”. The name was shortened to Hopelawn in the 1800s. Hopelawn has remained primarily a residential community with commercial uses along West Pond Road and New Brunswick Avenue. A large portion of land in Hopelawn is occupied by cemetery uses.

MASTER PLANNING AND ZONING DESIGNATION HISTORY

The Township Master Plan recognizes that this area has been historically zoned for commercial and industrial uses and the official zoning has been the B-3 Highway Business Zone and the M-1 Light Industrial Zone. The Master Plan recommends the area be designated for redevelopment in its Land Use Plan.

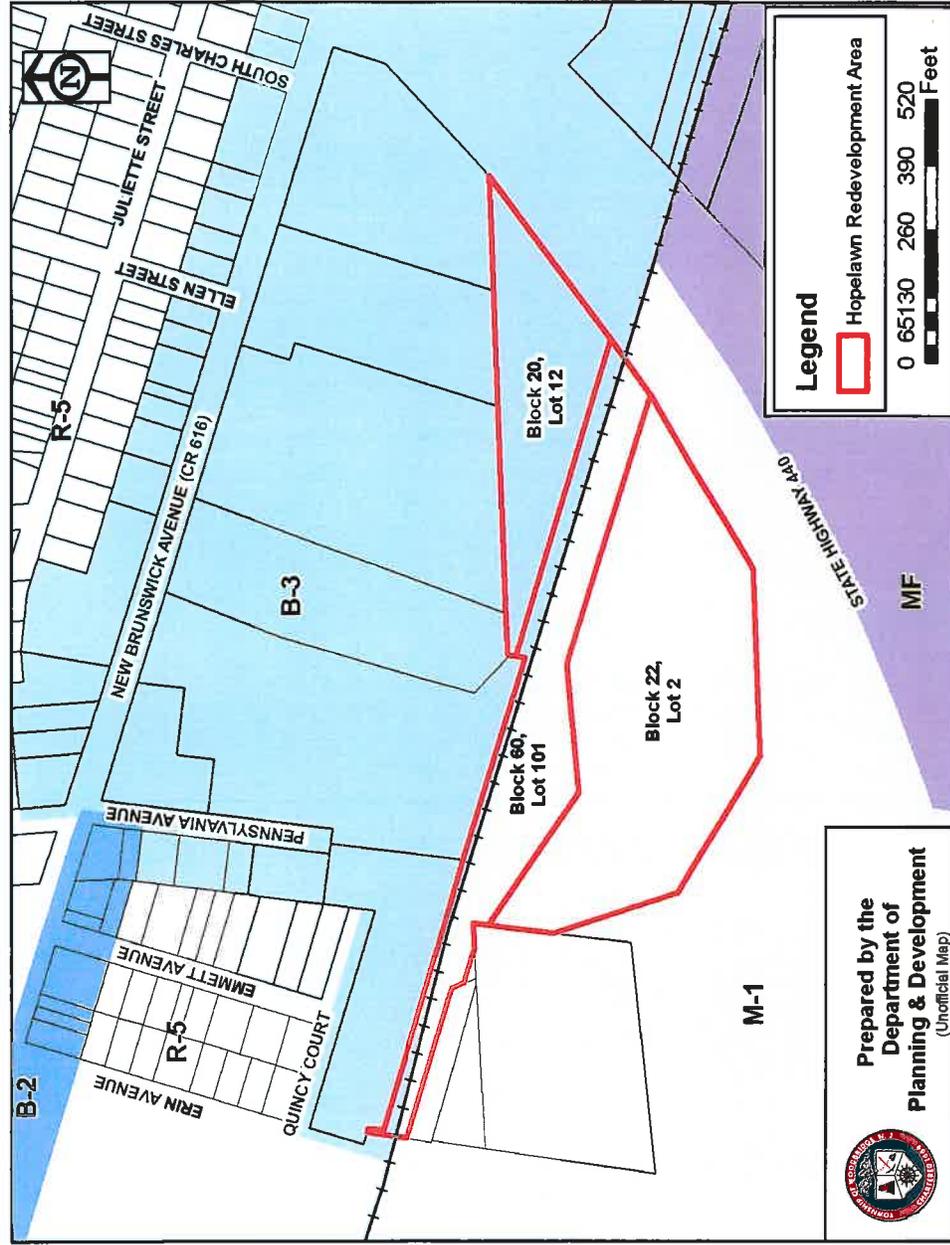
PLAN GOALS

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 property and to increase property tax base
- To promote the conservation of energy resources and promote the utilization of renewable energy sources
- To redevelop land occupied by obsolete structures and uses
- To minimize access points from New Brunswick Avenue 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
- To exclude residential uses from commercial and industrial areas
- To improve the physical appearance of the Area

Figure 3: Current Zoning



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. HOPELAWN REDEVELOPMENT AREA ZONING

A review of the existing conditions in the Redevelopment Area, together with an assessment of the current zoning, reveals that a new zoning district can be created. This new zoning scheme will provide expanded opportunities for redevelopment.

This area covers the vicinity setback from New Brunswick Avenue between Route 440 and the Garden State Parkway. The following properties are included: Block 20, Lot 12, Block 60, Lot 101; Block 22, Lot 2. This area is currently zoned B-3 Highway Business Zone and M-1 Light Industrial Zone.

HOPELAWN REDEVELOPMENT ZONING STANDARDS

These district standards will develop industrial use in an underutilized area in Hopelawn and Keasbey. The following standards apply:

Permitted Uses:

A building may be erected, altered or used and a lot or premises may be occupied and used for any of the following purposes:

- Manufacturing and assembly
- Fabrication and assembly of products
- Warehouses, wholesale sales, storage and distribution
- General office buildings
- Green energy producing entities and their structures
- Green technology and laboratory or utility buildings
- In addition to the above, any industry not inconsistent with the above that is totally similar in purpose, function, character and effort

Accessory Buildings and Uses:

- Private garage space for the storage of vehicles operated exclusively as part of a permitted use

Bulk Standards:

Principal Building:

- Minimum lot size: one acre
- Minimum lot width: 50 feet
- Minimum lot depth: 100 feet
- Minimum front yard setback (measured from the future street right-of-way): 20 feet
- Minimum rear yard setback: 20 feet. Where an industrial zone abuts a lot in a residential zone, a rear yard of 100 feet shall be required
- Minimum each side yard setback: 15 feet
- Side and rear yard setbacks may be reduced as follows: No side or rear yard shall be required where the boundary line is a railroad right-of-way line providing direct access to that property
- Maximum lot coverage: 45%
- Minimum gross floor area: 8,000 square feet
- Maximum building height: 40 feet
- Maximum distance between buildings: More than one principal building on a lot shall provide a minimum open unoccupied area between buildings equal to the height of the adjoining building or buildings, but not less than 15 feet.
- Maximum floor area ratio: 1.50:1

Accessory buildings:

- Accessory buildings shall be set back one foot for each one foot of building height, but not less than 15 feet from a property line, except where the yard abuts a residential zone, where the accessory building shall meet all the setback requirements of a principal building. Accessory buildings are not permitted in the required front yard
- All accessory structures shall not exceed the height requirements applicable to the principal structure

Green Buildings:

- All buildings are encouraged to be LEED-qualified buildings
- Proposed energy saving techniques shall be provided 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:

Access:

- Access shall continue to be provided through Block 20, Lot 11 in accordance with already existing property configuration. Said access is afforded by deed or easement

Parking:

- Off-street parking and loading areas shall be coordinated with the public street system serving the Area to reduce conflicts with through traffic, obstruction with pedestrian circulation, and vehicle thoroughfares
- Aisles accommodating two-way traffic shall be a minimum of twenty four (24) feet in width

Circulation:

- Parking areas should be interconnected with adjacent properties, and utilize common entrances and exits, to minimize the number of vehicular access points wherever possible
- There is a comprehensive network of sidewalks and pedestrian passageways that connect the parking lots with the front, side and rear of the buildings

Loading:

- Loading docks, truck parking, outdoor storage, utility meters, HVAC equipment, trash dumpsters, trash compaction, and other service functions shall be incorporated into the overall design of the building and the landscaping so that the visual and acoustic impacts of these functions are fully contained and out of view from adjacent properties and public streets. Screening materials must be the same as, or of equal quality to, the materials used for the primary building and landscaping. All service areas must be screened with a combination of low walls, decorative fencing and/or landscaping
- Loading and delivery facilities must be separate from customer parking and pedestrian areas
- Loading areas and service areas shall be located in areas of low visibility such as at the side or rear (non-street side) of buildings

Lighting:

- Pedestrian-level, bollard lighting, ground-mounted lighting, or other low, glare-controlled fixtures mounted on building or landscape walls shall be used to light pedestrian walkways
- Accent lighting on buildings is encouraged
- Lighting shall be shielded to prevent glare on adjacent properties
- 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

Utilities:

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

Facade Standards:

These façade 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. This plan hereby adopts the “Downtown Façade Improvement Manual” by reference.

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 February 2009. The Master Plan recommended this area be devoted to redevelopment.

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

- To encourage and control commercial development by limiting regional commercial and office development to major highway corridors
- To expand retail services in appropriate locations to meet the future shopping needs of Township residents
- To discourage strip commercial development through stringent site planning standards, including the use of common rear yard parking areas and unified sign plans
- 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
- By limiting industrial development to land suitable

MASTER PLANS OF ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES

The Hopelawn Redevelopment Area is located close to the municipal border, though not adjacent to the City of Perth Amboy. This Redevelopment Plan is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on development within the City of Perth Amboy.

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.

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 Hopelawn 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 Hopelawn 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 Hopelawn 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

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.

VI. EXISTING CONDITIONS



Entrance to Block 20, Lot 12 from New Brunswick Ave



Entrance to Block 20, Lot 12 from adjacent lot



Building located on Block 20, Lot 12



Rear view of building located on Block 20, Lot 12



Fenced off rear of Block 20, Lot 12



Entrance to Block 60, Lot 101 through Block 20, Lot 12



View of Block 60, Lot 101 looking south



View of Block 60, Lot 101 looking southeast



View of Block 22, Lot 2 looking southeast