

Rahway Avenue-Nielson Street Redevelopment Plan

Township of Woodbridge
Middlesex County, New Jersey



Prepared by:
Township of Woodbridge
Department of Planning & Development

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Marta E. Lefsky, A.I.C.P., P.P.
License No. 05177

Eric Griffith, A.I.C.P., P.P.
License No. 33LI00622200

Chris Kesici, A.I.C.P., P.P.
License No. 33LI00618600

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Redevelopment Plan represents an opportunity to improve and better utilize the northwest corner of the intersection at Rahway Avenue and Green Street in the Woodbridge section of Woodbridge Township. This plan will foster the transformation of the property into a productive mix of residential and commercial uses near the Woodbridge Train Station. Due to its advantageous location adjacent to the train station, this Redevelopment Area will have a transit oriented focus and should be a highly desirable location for people to live and work.

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 certain properties along Rahway Avenue and Nielson Street as an “area in need of redevelopment” on July 1, 2008. The Council concluded that the area did meet the criteria to be designated as an “area in need of redevelopment” on December 2, 2008. On April 7, 2015, the Township Council requested the Planning Board to evaluate additional properties along Nielson Street as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment.” The Council concluded that the area did meet the criteria to be designated as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment” on July 21, 2015.

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 Plan 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 with a population of approximately 100,000 people. 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 Woodbridge Proper section of the Township is generally bound by the Garden State Parkway to the west, a freight rail line to the north, the City of Perth Amboy to the south, and the New Jersey Turnpike to the east. The Woodbridge section of the Township consists of mostly residential neighborhoods, commercial uses along Route 9 and Route 35. The Woodbridge Proper central business district is located on Main Street. The central business district includes the Woodbridge Train Station and the Township Municipal Complex.

The redevelopment area is located in the Woodbridge Proper central business district at the intersection of Rahway Avenue and Green Street and includes Nielson Street, a dead-end street accessible from Rahway Avenue. Rahway Avenue and Green Street are each busy county roads. As such, the intersection is heavily traveled. The area is also directly across from the Woodbridge Train Station. The Woodbridge Train Station is on the New Jersey Transit North Jersey Coast Line with service to New York City and southern shore points. The station has frequent peak hour service and moderate mid-day, night, and weekend service.

The redevelopment area is bound by Rahway Avenue to the east, Green Street to the south, Conrail right-of-way to the west, and single-family houses to the north. The area consists of nine (9) parcels: Block 552, Lots 1 and 2, and Block 552.09, Lots 1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, and 13.02 and the Nielson Street right-of-way. This plan contemplates and assumes the vacation of Nielson Street to effectuate the effective redevelopment of the area. This assemblage of property in the downtown, steps away from the train station, represents the Township’s first and best opportunity to date, to provide upscale residential development in the downtown environment.

Figure 1: Redevelopment Area Parcel Map



Figure 2: Redevelopment Area Aerial Map



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 one of the earliest Township downtown central business districts 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 is one of three sections in the Township with a New Jersey Transit train station.

MASTER PLANNING AND ZONING DESIGNATION HISTORY

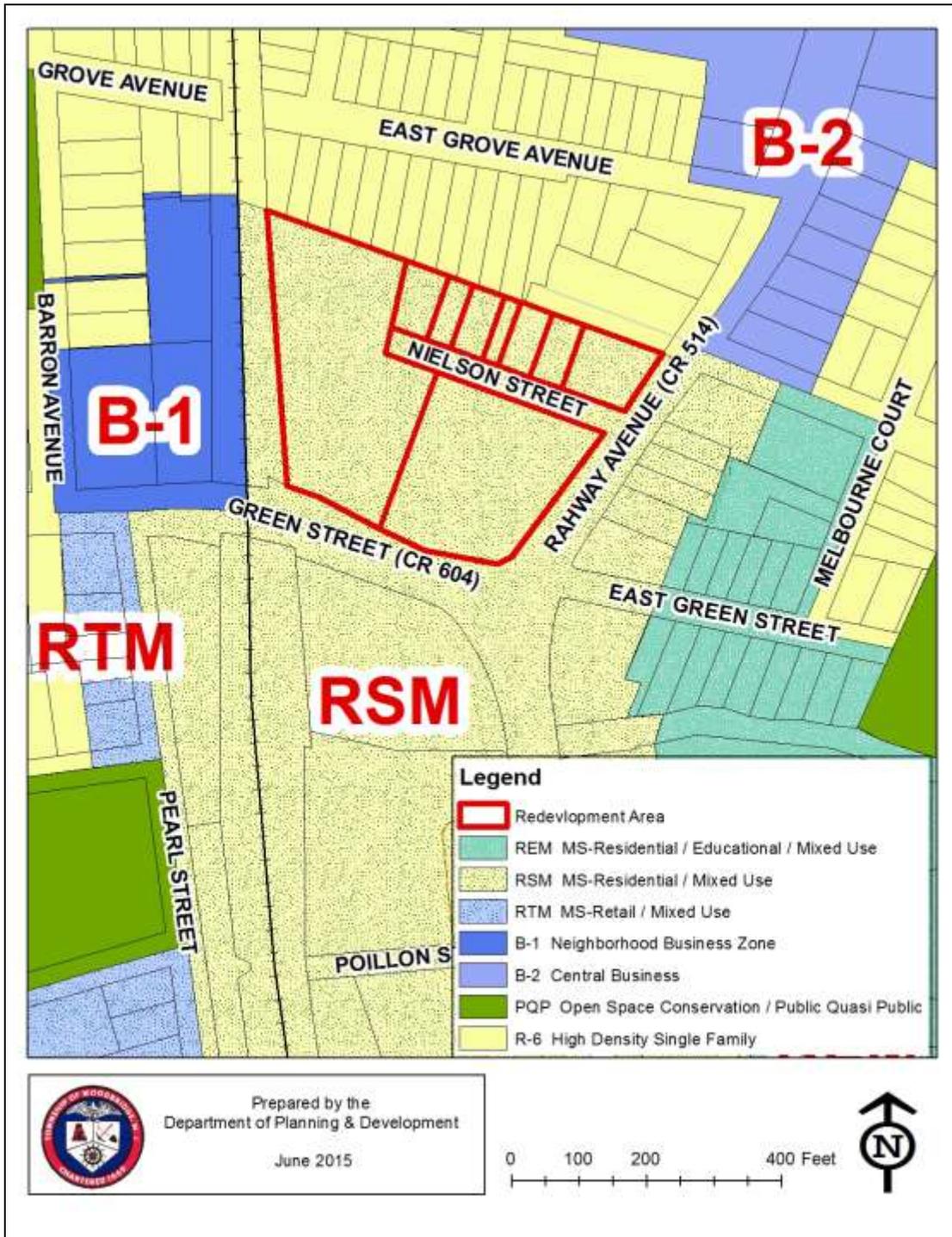
The 2009 Township Master Plan recognizes the current land use for this area as commercial, residential and apartment. The Master Plan recommends rehabilitation for the area. The current zoning for this area is Main Street Rehabilitation and Transit Village, specifically RSM, the Residential-Mixed-Use district. The land use and zoning have not changed since the 2009 Master Plan. Prior to the Main Street Rehabilitation and Transit Village Plan, the area was zoned as B-2 Central Business Zone.

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 promote transit-oriented development at an appropriate scale
- 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 promote further new development in downtown Woodbridge
- To improve the physical appearance of the Area
- To promote mass transit opportunities

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. RAHWAY AVENUE-NIELSON STREET REDEVELOPMENT AREA ZONING STANDARDS

The purpose of this Redevelopment Zone is to enhance current opportunities for this property; 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 building may be erected, altered or used and a lot or premises may be occupied and used for any of the following purposes:

- Mid-rise multi-family residential development as a principal use that may include associated neighborhood commercial uses, including small-scale retail, restaurants/cafes, and service uses such as remote dry cleaning establishments

Bulk Standards:

Principal Buildings:

- Minimum lot size: 3.5 acres
- Minimum lot width: 100 feet
- Minimum lot depth: 300 feet
- Minimum front yard setback: 40 feet
- Minimum rear yard setback from northern property line: 75 feet *
- Minimum side yard setback: 25 feet
- Maximum building lot coverage: 35%
- Maximum impervious coverage by all buildings and pavement: 85%
- Maximum building height: five stories or 65 feet (not including mechanical equipment, screening and signage)

**Architectural Building Design:*

- At the northeast and northwest corners of the building for a length not greater than 25 feet, the setback may be reduced by not more than 10% or 7.5 feet in order to offset the building face and offer architectural distinction.

Residential Amenities:

- Resident amenities shall be provided, including but not limited to: Luxury interior lobby; Outdoor pool and patio; Fitness center; Community room/lounge, bicycle parking/storage.

Accessory Buildings:

- Accessory buildings for tools and equipment used for maintenance of the grounds which are not attached to the principal building shall not exceed 10 feet in height as measured from the grade to the ridge at the peak of the roof. No side wall of such accessory buildings may exceed eight feet above grade in height. No such shed shall exceed 150 square feet in area. All such accessory buildings shall conform to at least the front setback requirement of the principal building. The minimum side and rear yard setbacks shall be four feet. All other accessory buildings not attached to the principal building shall not exceed 15 feet in height and shall conform to at least the front setback requirement of the principal building. The minimum side and rear yard setbacks shall be four feet
- Those outdoor swimming pools less than four feet high shall be enclosed by a permanent fence not less than four feet high with a locked gate. Building permits will be required for all swimming pools, above or below ground, with a water surface area of 250 square feet or over

Green Buildings:

- All buildings are encouraged to be LEED-certified buildings
- Green Roofs and landscaped terraces are encouraged
- 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)

Parking:

Residential Parking Requirement

- 1.4 spaces per residential unit

Commercial Parking Requirement

- Four (4) parking spaces for each one thousand (1,000) square feet of gross floor area for commercial uses

Shared Parking:

Off-street parking facilities for one (1) use shall not be considered as providing the required facilities for any other use. However, the ancillary retail uses proposed for this site may share spaces of up to 10% of the total proposed parking for the residential development to satisfy its parking requirement.

Circulation:

- Curbs cuts and site driveways shall be sized to accommodate the safe access and egress of emergency services equipment
- Sidewalks shall be provided along Green Street and Rahway Avenue
- Commercial units shall be directly accessible from either Green Street or Rahway Avenue

Loading and Outside Storage:

- Loading spaces shall be at least 12-feet in width and 50-feet in length
- One (1) loading space required for every 5,000-20,000 square feet of retail structure
- Loading and delivery areas shall be separated from residential parking areas.
- No outside storage of materials, raw or finished, shall be stored in any yard or open area

Landscaping:

- Minimum landscaped area required to be 15 percent and may include all required buffers. In calculating the landscaped areas, the areas of plazas, open pedestrian shopping malls, sitting areas, pools and fountains shall be included. Landscaping shall be required within paved parking areas.
- All setback areas fronting public roadways shall be defined by a combination of decorative fencing and/or landscaping. The landscaped area within should contain a variety of flowering trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals and bulbs to complement the architecture and provide seasonal interest.

- Landscape design should be integrated into overall site design and plans should include a watering and maintenance schedule for each area.
- All trees to be removed shall be done in accordance with the Township Tree Replacement Ordinance.

Buffering and Screening:

- Any dumpster shall be screened from public view with fencing and landscaping

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 practical, consideration should be given to relocating above ground utilities to underground.
- Wherever practical, utility meters should not be located in front yards.

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.

The following will be permitted:

- Two (2) freestanding signs are permitted. Such signs shall not exceed eight (8) feet in height and shall not exceed a total of 75 square feet per side. Such signage shall be

located no closer than 4 feet to any property line, and shall not be located within the sight triangle of any intersection or access drive with a public street. The sign shall incorporate the design and materials that match the architecture of the development.

- Wayfinding signage to direct visitors toward parking areas, building identification, building entrances and activity centers is permitted as appropriate. Wayfinding signage shall be no greater than ten (10) square feet per sign.
- Wall mounted façade signs for commercial and residential uses are permitted. The total area of all façade signs shall not exceed 10% of the total façade square footage.

III. 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 preserve the existing residential character consistent with current development patterns through zoning standards that correspond to existing development patterns.
- To permit residential densities in locations to accessible major roadways, commercial services, public facilities and traditional downtown areas.
- 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 expand retail and service activities in appropriate locations to meet the future shopping needs of Township residents.

MASTER PLANS OF ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES

The Rahway Avenue-Nielson Street Redevelopment Area is located in Woodbridge Proper and is not near any adjacent municipalities. This Redevelopment Plan is not expected to have an adverse impact on any 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.

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 Rahway Avenue-Nielson Street Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the recommendations discussed in the Middlesex County Growth Management Strategy.

Consistency with Middlesex County Master Plan

The Rahway Avenue-Nielson Street 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 Rahway Avenue-Nielson Street Area 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 New Jersey Department of State has been preparing a new State Strategic Plan since 2012. The proposed plan has not been adopted by the State Planning Commission.

The Rahway Avenue-Nielson Street 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.

IV. 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.

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 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 the issuance of the Certificate of Completion, unless the prior written consent of the Redevelopment Agency has been obtained.
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.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable housing shall be provided in accordance with the mechanism set forth in the Township's Draft Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. The mechanism, and any implementing ordinance or agreement, is currently pending review by the court as part of the Township's action seeking a determination it is in compliance with its Mount Laurel affordable housing obligation: In re Petition of the Township of Woodbridge for a Declaratory Judgment, Docket No.: MID-L-3862-15. The Township is currently seeking court approval of this mechanism but will utilize it pending final court review and approval. Any modification of the mechanism resulting from court review and approval, prior to site plan approval, shall be a requirement under this plan.(It is anticipated that residential development at this site would necessitate a 15% set aside on-site.)

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.

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 with 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.