TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN
Planning Board
Agenda
Wednesday, February 4, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

SUNSHINE LAW

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

OATH OF OFFICE

Councilman Ram Anbarasan

ROLL CALL

MINUTES

RESOLUTION

Baldwas Realty, LLC / PLN-22-00009

APPROVED
RESOLUTION ext of time.docx

NPH Real Estate, LLC / PLN-24-00005

APPROVED
RESOLUTION.docx

DISCUSSION

Open Space Plan Steering Committee

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HEARING

BOARD COMMENTS

WORK SESSION / NEW BUSINESS

Master Plan re-exam

2026 reexamination report_revised (second) draft.pdf

ADJOURNMENT

RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING BOARD OF THE TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN, SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, GRANTING AN EXTENSION OF PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE PLAN APPROVAL AND ASSOCIATED VARIANCE RELIEF, TO BALDWAS REALTY, LLC, CONCERNING PROPERTY LOCATED AT 545 AND 549 WESTON CANAL ROAD, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY AND DESIGNATED AS BLOCK 516.01, LOTS 4.03 AND 5

Docket No. PLN-22-00009

WHEREAS, BALDWAS REALTY, LLC (hereinafter referred to as "Applicant"), applied to the Franklin Township Planning Board (hereinafter referred to as "Board") for preliminary and final site plan approval and associated variance relief, for the premises currently designated on the Tax Map of the Township of Franklin as Block 516.01, Lots 4.03 and 5 and located on what is commonly known as 545 and 549 Weston Canal Road, Somerset, New Jersey (hereinafter referred to as the "Subject Property"), and as located within a Business and Industry (B-I) zone district; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant was granted preliminary and final site plan approval and associated variance relief (hereinafter the "Approvals") on August 2, 2023; and memorialized by written resolution on January 3, 2024; and

WHEREAS, at the Board's meeting of January 7, 2026, the Applicant was represented by Matthew R. Flynn, Esq., who requested an extension of the Approvals until January 3, 2027; and

WHEREAS, the zoning of the Subject Property has not changed since the date of the original approval, nor have any other Township Ordinances been adopted which would affect the development of the Subject Property as approved;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the Township of Franklin, that it does grant the extension of preliminary and final site plan approval and associated variance relief, for a period ending on January 3, 2027.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Planning Board of the Township of Franklin as follows:

1. All conditions contained in this Resolution and in the record of the proceedings in this matter, including any agreements made by the Applicant, were essential to the Board's decision to grant the approvals set forth herein. A breach of any such condition or a failure by the Applicant to adhere to the terms of any agreement within the time required may result in appropriate action by the Township; including, but not limited to, the revocation of the within approval and termination of the right of the Applicant to obtain or continue work or occupancy under any construction

permits, Certificates of Occupancy or any other governmental authorizations necessary in order to continue development and use of the project.

2. The development of this property shall be implemented in accordance with the plans submitted and as approved. In the event that the Applicant shall make or propose any changes to the project or structures on the property from those shown on the revised and approved plans and exhibits approved for this Application, whether such changes in voluntarily undertaken or required by any other regulatory agency, Applicant shall resubmit any such changes to this Board for review and determination.

Christine Woodbury, Planning Board Secretary

VOTE ON MOTION: 01/07/2026
FOR:
Dr. Theodore Chase
Robert Thomas
Robert LaCorte
Meher Rafiq
Chairman Michael Orsini

AGAINST:

ABSTAINS:

VOTE OF RESOLUTION: 02/04/2026
FOR:

AGAINST:

ABSTAINS:

RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING BOARD OF THE TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN, SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY, GRANTING PRELIMINARY AND FINAL MAJOR SITE PLAN APPROVAL WITH VARIANCES TO NPH REAL ESTATE, LLC, CONCERNING PROPERTY LOCATED AT 390 DAVIDSON AVENUE, SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY AND DESIGNATED AS BLOCK 502.01, LOT 57.01

Docket No. PLN-24-00005

WHEREAS, NPH REAL ESTATE, LLC (hereinafter referred to as "Applicant"), has applied to the Franklin Township Planning Board (hereinafter referred to as "Board") for preliminary and final major site plan approval with variances, for the premises currently designated on the Tax Map of the Township of Franklin as Block 502.01, Lot 57.01 and located on what is commonly known as 390 Davidson Avenue, Somerset, New Jersey (hereinafter referred to as the "Subject Property"), and is located within the Business and Industry ("B-I") zone and Retail District Overlay ("RDO") zone; and

WHEREAS, this application falls under the jurisdiction of the Board for approval pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant was represented by Matthew R. Flynn, Esq.; and

WHEREAS, public hearings were held on the application on May 21, 2025, September 3, 2025 and December 3, 2025, during which time the Applicant presented testimony, witnesses, reviewed the site plan and the case was opened for public comment; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant provided proof of service and publication of all proper notices and advertisements as required pursuant to the Municipal Land Use Law ("MLUL"), N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1, et seq.; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant is seeking preliminary and final major site plan approval with variances to construct 24,670 square feet ("SF") shopping center consisting of a one-story 4,690 SF building and a two-story 19,980 SF building; access driveways on both Davidson Avenue and New Brunswick Road; an 83-space parking lot; and associated site improvements on the Subject Property; and

WHEREAS, the Board heard testimony, reviewed exhibits and reports, and established a record that may be characterized as follows:

1. The following reports and/or correspondence were received and reviewed by the Board:

   A. Application for preliminary and final major site plan approval dated July 29, 2024;
   B. Variance application dated July 29, 2024;
   C. Site Plan entitled "Preliminary and Final Site Plan for an Mixed Office/Retail and Retail Building at 390 Davidson Avenue in Township of Franklin, Somerset County, NJ," prepared by Kashi Consulting Company, Inc., under the signature of Shrinath J. Kotdawala, P.E., dated February 1, 2024, last revised on October 18, 2025, consisting of twelve (12) sheets;

D. Architectural Plans entitled "Preliminary Drawings For: 390 Davidson Avenue, Block: 502.01, Lot: 57.01, Franklin Township, New Jersey," prepared by Feldman & Feldman Architects, dated February 7, 2024, last revised October 14, 2025, consisting of four (4) sheets;
E. Boundary & Topographic Survey, prepared by Amertech Engineering, Inc., dated February 12, 2023, last revised September 21, 2023, consisting of one (1) sheet;
F. Stormwater Management Report, prepared by Kashi Consulting Company, Inc., dated February 22, 2024, last revised October 21, 2025
G. Operation and Maintenance Manual for the Stormwater Management System, prepared by Kashi Consulting Company, Inc., dated January 15, 2025, last revised August 5, 2025;
H. Environmental Assessment Report, prepared by Kashi Consulting Company, Inc., dated February 22, 2024, last revised January 13, 2025;
I. Traffic Impact Analysis prepared by Dolan & Dean Consulting Engineers, LLC dated February 27, 2024, containing no revisions;
J. Memorandum of Ofc. Ryan Ellington of the Franklin Township Police Department dated August 19, 2025;
K. Memorandum of Franklin Township Environmental Commission dated October 8, 2025;
L. Memorandum of Rashida Boima, REHS, MPH, of the Somerset County Health Department dated November 10, 2025;
M. Memorandum of Darren Mazzei, P.E., C.M.E., Franklin Township Engineer's Office dated November 11, 2025;
N. Memorandum of John Hauss, Director of the Franklin Township Office of Fire Prevention dated November 13, 2025;
O. Memorandum of Mark Healey, P.P., A.I.C.P., Franklin Township Planner dated November 13, 2025; and
P. Memorandum of the Franklin Township Sewerage Authority dated November 19, 2025.

2. The following exhibits were marked into evidence:

Exhibit A-1 Color site plan for the Applicant's Initial Project.
Exhibit A-2 Color site plan for the Applicant's Amended Project.
Exhibit A-3 Color 2020 NJGIN Aerial Photograph of the Subject Property
Exhibit A-4 Color site plan for Applicant's Final Project superimposed on a 2020 NJGIN Aerial Photograph of the Subject Property
Exhibit A-5 Color rendering of the Applicant's Final Project viewed from westbound New Brunswick Road.
Exhibit A-6 Color rendering of the Applicant's Final Project viewed from Davidson Avenue.
Exhibit A-7 Color rendering of the Applicant's Final Project viewed from eastbound New Brunswick Road,

3. At the hearing on May 21, 2025, the following testimony was introduced:

A. Mr. Matthew R. Flynn, Esq., Attorney, appeared before the Board on behalf of the Applicant. He indicated that the Applicant was seeking preliminary and final major

site plan approval with variances to construct a 26,064 SF shopping center consisting of two (2) buildings: a one-story, 4,690 SF building closer to Davidson Avenue and a two-story building totaling 21,374 SF (10,687 SF on each floor) to the rear on the Subject Property located in the B-I zone and RDO zone (hereinafter the "Applicant's Initial Project"). Mr. Flynn advised that the building would be partially occupied by the owner of the Applicant for one of its principal offices for his accounting firm (hereinafter the "Owner's Office").

Mr. Flynn indicated that other site improvements were proposed; including landscaping, lighting and parking. He indicated that the Subject Property is a corner lot with frontage on both New Brunswick Road and Davidson Avenue. Mr. Flynn advised that driveways are proposed along both street frontages. He confirmed that the Subject Property is located in the B-I zone and RDO zone and that the Applicant's shopping center use is permitted under the Land Development Ordinance (hereinafter the "LDO").

Mr. Flynn stated that the Applicant required three (3) bulk variances in addition to preliminary and final major site plan approval for the Applicant's Initial Project. He advised that one of the bulk variances sought was for drive aisle width; where an internal drive aisle width of 26 feet was required and a width of 25 feet was proposed. Mr. Flynn further noted the need for an off-street parking variance where 116 spaces were required and 91 spaces provided. Finally, he indicated that a variance was required for the setback of the proposed signage where a 20-foot setback was required and 10-foot setback was proposed.

B. Mr. Shrinath Kotdawala, P.E., the Applicant's Site Engineer, appeared in support of the Applicant's Initial Project. The Board accepted his qualifications. Initially, he proffered Exhibit A-1, a color site plan for the Applicant's Initial Project which was entered into the record by the Board. Referring to Exhibit A-1, Mr. Kotdawala described the existing conditions on the Subject Property indicating that the site is currently vacant but was formerly improved with a single-family dwelling. He stated that the dwelling was previously demolished but that remnants of the foundation and driveway remain on the Subject Property. Mr. Kotdawala testified that the Subject Property is rectangular in shape and located on the northwestern corner of the intersection of New Brunswick Road and Davidson Avenue.

Mr. Kotdawala stated that the Subject Property was not forested but that it contained a large knoll of trees between a stream on the westerly property line and the proposed improvements on the easterly portion of the site. He advised that the presence of the stream on the site creates four (4) different flood area constraints including, a riparian zone, a Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission zone B and the Township of Franklin Stream Corridor. Mr. Kotdawala indicated that the green area in the western portion of the site was not developable resulting in all of the proposed development being pushed towards Davidson Avenue. Mr. Kotdawala testified that the Applicant's Initial Project proposed two (2) separate buildings; a two-story building containing the Owner's Office on the second floor and retail space on the first floor and a smaller, single-story building containing only retail space.

Mr. Kotdawala reviewed the lighting plan; advising that the Applicant proposed 16-foot-high pole lighting to keep lighting low to prevent light spillage onto surrounding properties. He stated that the lighting facing property lines would include back-shielding. Mr. Kotdawala reviewed the site landscaping; noting that trees were located in the available spaces. He confirmed that the Applicant would make payment to the Township Tree fund for any trees which could not be replaced on the Subject Property.

Mr. Kotdawala next provided testimony concerning the parking variance required for the Applicant's Initial Project. He advised that the building sizes totaled about 26,200 SF; and noted that any structure over 25,000 SF must meet the higher parking demand requirement of the shopping center criteria. Mr. Kotdawala indicated that the Applicant is required to provide 116 parking spaces under the LDO; while the Applicant's Initial Project only provides 91 parking spaces. He further reviewed the other variances required for the Applicant's Initial Project; including minimum drive aisle width (26 feet required and 25 feet proposed); and loading area (none proposed). Mr. Kotdawala acknowledged that the Township Engineer questioned how deliveries would be made to the shopping center. He identified box vans as the primary delivery vehicle; indicating that they would park in the aisle to load and unload during off-peak hours and would then leave the site within 10-15 minutes.

Mr. Kotdawala advised that the Applicant required sign variances for the Applicant's Initial Project. He testified that because the site has two frontages, the Applicant was seeking a ground-mounted sign on both roadways. Mr. Kotdawala stated that a variance for minimum setback was requested for each sign to permit a 10-foot setback; where a 20-foot setback was required by the LDO. He indicated that the variance was requested because the trees proposed by the Applicant's Initial Project might obscure the view of signs in a conforming location.

Mr. Kotdawala confirmed that the Applicant would comply with the comments contained in the February 14, 2025 memorandum of the Township Engineer pertaining to storm water management and other design standards.

Mr. Kotdawala provided testimony responding to several items raised in the February 6, 2025 memorandum of the Township Planner, Mr. Healey. He reviewed comments related to parking, screening, etc. and confirmed that the Applicant would satisfy those requirements with the exception of the loading area. Mr. Kotdawala reiterated that no loading area was proposed; as the Applicant did not believe that a loading area would be necessary for the Applicant's Initial Project.

C. Mr. Healey expressed concern and confusion in response to Mr. Kotdawala assertion that the Applicant would comply with the comments in his memorandum. He advised that compliance with the comments in his report would require potentially significant changes to the site layout. He identified the first comment in his memorandum related to the location of the larger building. Mr. Healey

acknowledged that even though the location of the building complied with the minimum front yard setback, its placement in relation to the road would result in the building appearing very prominent to motorists traveling eastbound on New Brunswick Road. He opined that the Applicant should explore changes to the site layout to make the rear of that building less prominent; perhaps flipping the parking lot from the north to the south and moving the building further to the north.

Mr. Healey then reviewed other comments in his memorandum related to commercial design standards which would similarly require significant changes to the Site Plan. He noted that the nearby shopping centers on Elizabeth Avenue have much wider landscaped areas along their frontages of 20 feet or more; while the Applicant's Initial Plan only proposed a 10-foot-wide landscaped area. Mr. Healey stated that the larger areas allow for a lot more landscaping. He added that one of the major themes of the design standards concerned locating parking lots out of sight behind buildings; and the Applicant's Initial Project proposes parking along both frontages. Mr. Healey noted that the previously referenced shopping centers with parking in the front yard have much wider landscaped areas along their frontages. He questioned how the Applicant could agree to comply with the comments in his review memorandum without supplying plans demonstrating how compliance could be accomplished.

D. Mr. Flynn stated that the Applicant was willing to revise the design of the project to address and incorporate Mr. Healey's suggestions to his satisfaction.

E. Mr. Kotdawala identified 20 to 30 feet of vegetation (evergreens) along New Brunswick Road which he stated would screen the building. As a result, he asserted that the building would not appear as significant to motorists.

F. Mr. Healey recommended that a three-dimensional rendering of the view at that corner of the Property from New Brunswick Road be supplied by the Applicant; so that the Board could get a better understanding of the proposed screening.

G. The Board expressed doubt that the Applicant's Initial Project complied with the design standards, as well as concern over the ability of the Applicant to meet the recommendations of the Mr. Healey's memorandum in light of the two-building design of the project. It was suggested that the Applicant explore the connection of the buildings in an L-shape; as this would create addition space to supply the modifications recommended in Mr. Healey's memorandum. The Applicant was recommended to emulate the overall design standards and precedent set by the similar shopping centers on the corners of Elizabeth Avenue and Schoolhouse Road, as well as Elizabeth Avenue and Old New Brunswick Road on a smaller scale.

H. Mr. Healey noted that the comments in his memorandum are designed to make the Applicant's Initial Project consistent with the commercial design standards contained in the LDO. He identified the retail developments along Elizabeth Avenue as examples of how the commercial design standards could be implemented.

I. The Board reiterated its desire that the Applicant explore the connection of the buildings; the relocation of the parking to the rear of the buildings; and the provision of a buffer area containing landscaping along both roadway frontages. The Board identified a residential development across New Brunswick Road; and noted that the Applicant's Initial Project needed to be sensitive to that development.

J. Mr. Flynn acknowledged that the Board supplied its feedback regarding the Applicant's Initial Project; and suggested that the Applicant revisit the design of the project and return to the Board at a later date. He acknowledged that several members had supplied their comments concerning the Applicant's Initial Project; and requested that any remaining Board members supply their input.

K. Chairman Orsini reviewed the parking variance; noting that the Board was always in favor of as little parking as the Applicant could reasonably justify to allow the site to function. He acknowledged that 95 parking spaces were proposed; while 116 parking spaces were required. Chairman Orsini indicated that if the Applicant could not demonstrate that the proposed parking was sufficient, it might be necessary to adjust the sizes of one or both of the buildings.

L. Mr. Keller indicated that the detention basin was proposed in the area of concern where a passing motorist might see the building. He questioned if the detention basin could be relocated and landscaping be supplied in its place.

M. Mr. LaCorte expressed a desire for more landscaping along the frontages to shield the buildings from view.

N. Dr. Chase noted that the Applicant was working with much less buildable land than the referenced sites on Elizabeth Avenue which constrains what can be done on the Subject Property. He suggested placing an evergreen buffer along the side of the property adjacent to the residential site to the north. Dr. Chase suggested that the trees in the easterly corner of the property on Davidson Avenue could be preserved; rather than removed and new trees planted in their place. He suggested that the stairway planned on the end of the two-story building include an emergency exit in case of a fire. Dr. Chase questioned the placement of trees on the stream corridor side of the building; asserting that the trees were wasted in that location. He then discussed tree and plant types and where they should be planted to help shield the structures. Finally, Dr. Chase suggested the relocation of the EV charging stations away from the front of the parking lot; where parking was going to be at a premium.

O. In response to an inquiry concerning the overall ratio of office space versus retail space, Mr. Kotdawala stated that the Applicant wanted to separate the office space from the retail space. He reiterated that the owner of the Applicant intended to occupy the office space with the Owner's Office.

P. Mr. Healey noted the location of the Subject Property within the RDO zone; and indicated that any permitted shopping center use would be capable of occupying

the space within the buildings. Specifically, he opined that, absent condition from the Board, a pizza parlor could occupy the office space in the future.

Q. In response to a Board inquiry, Mr. Kotdawala confirmed that sidewalks were proposed along both roadway frontages.

R. Ms. Rafiq asked if there were trees on the property that have not yet been removed. Mr. Kotdawala then detailed the areas where there were existing trees and trying to save as many as we can.

S. Mr. Flynn confirmed that the Applicant would attempt to save as many trees as possible on the Subject Property.

T. Mr. LaCorte suggested placing a berm in which to plant trees to block a little bit of the parking area.

U. Dr. Chairman Orsini indicated that they would much prefer planting trees on-site than accepting payment in lieu to the Township's Shade Tree Fund.

V. Dr. Chase asked if there were any trees large enough in the area marked "woodland" that had to be taken into account in the calculation of trees to be planted.

W. Mr. Kotdawala indicated that the Applicant would seek a meeting with the Township to discuss the tree survey and replacement calculation.

4. At the hearing on May 21, 2025, the application was not opened by the Board for public comment; as the Applicant would be revising the plans and the public would have an opportunity to comment on the revised plans at a future meeting of the Board.

5. At the hearing on September 3, 2025, the following testimony was introduced:

A. Initially, Mr. Flynn reminded the Board that the Applicant was previously before the Board on May 21, 2025. He noted that at the May 21, 2025 hearing, the Applicant received feedback from the Board and Board Professionals concerning the Applicant's Initial Project. As a result, Mr. Flynn stated that the Applicant modified the project to reduce the size of the proposed buildings. He noted that the Applicant still required Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan approval, with associated bulk variances to construct a shopping center; containing two (2) buildings totaling just under 25,000 SF. Specifically, Mr. Flynn stated that the project would contain a one-story retail structure containing approximately 4,700 SF; and a two-story mixed-use structure with retail on the first floor and office use on the second floor containing approximately 20,000 SF together with associated site improvements (parking, stormwater management, lighting landscaping, etc.) (hereinafter the "Applicant's Amended Project"). He reiterated that the owner of the Applicant intended to occupy the second floor of the mixed-use building with the Owner's Office.

Mr. Flynn advised that the plans for the Applicant's Amended Project attempted to incorporate some of comments from the Board and Board Professionals and comply with the Township staff's review memoranda. He indicated that the Applicant's Professionals met with Mr. Healey and Mr. Mazzei, the Township's Consulting Engineer, twice since the May 21, 2025 hearing; but understand some additional feedback might be warranted at this time. Mr. Flynn confirmed that if the Board desired a design change, the combining the two (2) buildings or changing the site layout, the Applicant would entertain such requests.

Mr. Flynn stated that the relief required by the Applicant was not related to the layout of the site; but that the Applicant was willing to work with the Board to accommodate its requests. He indicated that the Applicant required a parking variance; where 90 spaces are required and 86 spaces are proposed by the Applicant's Amended Project. Mr. Flynn further stated that a variance was required for minimum drive aisle width; where a width of 26 feet is required and a width of 25 is proposed. Finally, he noted that a variance for minimum sign setback was required; where a setback of 20 feet is required and a setback of 10 feet is proposed for both signs.

Mr. Flynn advised that the Applicant would present the testimony of Mr. Kotdawala to review the modifications contained in the Applicant's Amended Project; noting that the Applicant has re-shaped and repositioned the amenity areas, reduced the square footage of the buildings, added some landscaping and incorporated a turn restriction at the New Brunswick Road driveway. Mr. Flynn proffered Exhibit A-2, a colorized Site Plan for the Applicant's Amended Project; which was entered into the record by the Board.

B. The Board requested that the Applicant highlight the changes from the Applicant's Initial Project to the Applicant's Amended Project; so the Board could provide feedback to the Applicant.

C. Initially, Mr. Kotdawala provided an overview of the Applicant's Amended Project; focusing on the changes made to the plans since the May 21, 2025 hearing. He indicated that the primary changes consisted of the shortening of the two-story building and moving it further from New Brunswick Road; noting that current setback of 32 feet was greater than the 20 feet proposed in the Applicant's Initial Project. Mr. Kotdawala stated that the modifications increased the landscaping area in between the building and the road to screen the building. He advised that by reducing the square footage below 25,000 SF, the project was no longer considered a shopping center as defined in the township ordinance. As a result, Mr. Kotdawala stated that the parking requirement and the variance relief requested by the Applicant was reduced (from a 21-space deficiency in the Applicant's Initial Project to an 8-space deficiency in the Applicant's Amended Project). Finally, he stated that the Applicant initially intended to preserve the trees along Davidson Avenue; but, after speaking to Township Professionals concerning the condition of the trees, the Applicant shifted the amenity area to an area adjacent to Davidson Avenue.

D. Mr. Kotdawala confirmed receipt of Mr. Healey's August 25, 2025 memorandum, as well as the August 26, 2025 memorandum of Mr. Mazzei, the Township's Consulting Engineer. He advised that the Applicant could comply with the technical comments contained in the memoranda; and supply the testimony requested in the memoranda.

E. Mr. Flynn reiterated that the two (2) building design proposed in the Applicant's Amended Project was chosen by the Applicant to permit the owner of the Applicant to occupy the site with the Owner's Office. He stated that the mix of office and retail was designed to provide flexibility for occupancy by any tenant meeting the definition of a shopping center in the LDO. Mr. Flynn advised that the Applicant's goal was not to maximize the development of the site; but rather to create a site for the Applicant's use. He confirmed that the Applicant was willing to discuss any site design issues of concern to the Board.

F. Chairman Orsini questioned the ability of the Applicant to provide a sufficient buffer along the New Brunswick Road frontage using the layout proposed in the Applicant's Amended Project. He reminded the Applicant of the Board's suggestions at the May 21, 2025 hearing which recommended creating a single, L-shaped building by flipping the single-story building to be perpendicular to Davidson Avenue and relocating the parking towards the interior of the site. Chairman Orsini stated that these modifications would provide ample space for a strong buffer to be provided along New Brunswick Road.

Chairman Orsini confirmed the acceptability of the egress limitation to a right-out only driveway on New Brunswick Road (with no imitation on ingress) and full movement driveway on Davidson Avenue proposed in the Applicant's Amended Project. He indicated that the Board had never had an issue with less parking and less impervious coverage; and always encouraged the banking of parking when appropriate. Chairman Orsini indicated that he was not concerned with the 25-foot-wide drive aisles; nor did he take issue with the setbacks of the proposed signs. He noted that a conforming 20-foot setback would not be appropriate given the smaller size of the Subject Property. Chairman Orsini concluded that the Board's concern was primarily making sure that sufficient screening was supplied; and noted that the proposed site movements were acceptable.

G. At the request of Chairman Orsini, Mr. Healey then reviewed shopping centers within the vicinity of the Subject Property on Elizabeth Avenue; focusing on the compliance with the design requirements of the LDO (buffering and amenity areas) on those properties. He noted that the analysis and applicability to the Applicant's Amended Project is impacted by the small size of the Subject Property and the square footage of the proposed structures. Mr. Healey indicated visually comparing the Applicant's Amended Property to the other shopping centers on Elizabeth Avenue developed under the LDO design standards, the landscaped area along the frontages proposed by the Applicant's Amended Project is not nearly as deep. He added that because the other shopping centers were on larger properties, they had more opportunity to provide deeper landscaped frontages. Mr. Healey acknowledged that there would be a push and pull between the square

footage of the buildings and the need to supply adequate parking. He asserted that simple solution would be to eliminate the parking facing Davidson Avenue and New Brunswick Road; and replace it with a landscaped area. Unfortunately, Mr. Healey indicated, such a solution would result in a shortage of parking. He stated that if the Applicant were to reduce the square footage of the buildings; there would be a corresponding reduction in the parking demand.

H. Chairman Orsini asserted that many of the issues of concern to the Board could be remedied if the Applicant modified the orientation of the single-story building and connected it to the two-story building to make a single L-shaped structure.

I. Mr. Healey questioned whether the Board believed that one frontage might be more important than the other; and, as a result, whether that frontage should be the focus of the emphasis for landscape buffering and screening. In response, Mr. Thomas stated that that New Brunswick Road was more aesthetically valuable due to the large residential development across the street.

J. The Board thereafter examined the need to relocate the single-story retail structure closer to Davidson Avenue to supply greater visibility for the retail tenants. The Board noted that the surrounding residential uses, high school traffic and proposed signage would alleviate the need to relocate the structure.

K. The Board recommended that the town square amenity be relocated to the center of the site where it would supply a place to eat/drink for the customers of the retail spaces, as well as a sitting area/dining area for the employees of the office space.

L. In response to a Board inquiry concerning the preservation of the mature trees along Davidson Avenue, Mr. Kotdawala indicated that the trees are non-native locust trees and have been cut on one side to accommodate power lines. However, he confirmed that the Applicant would save as many trees as possible if directed to so by the Board.

M. The Board noted that half the mature trees along Davidson Avenue were dead or dying; but the other half were in pretty good shape and should be preserved.

N. At the conclusion of the hearing, Mr. Healey suggested that the Board Chairman meet with him and Mr. Mazzei, the Township's Consulting Engineer, to provide recommendations to the Applicant concerning the relocation of the structures.

6. At the hearing on September 3, 2025, the application was opened by the Board for public comment and the following public comment was received:

A. Ms. Carol Schmidt, 395 Windfall Lane, Somerset Run, Somerset, NJ, came forward. Ms. Schmidt asserted that the Subject Property was not suited for retail; and that there were plenty of openings for retail in the shopping center along Old New Brunswick Road. She further stated that the traffic in the vicinity of the Subject Property was pretty significant; and that it would be exacerbated by a separate application on a neighboring property.

7. At the hearing on December 3, 2025, the following testimony was introduced:

A. Initially, Mr. Flynn confirmed that the Applicant previously appeared before the Board on May 21, 2025 and September 3, 2025 and presented testimony from its engineer; and responded to certain comments raised by the Board relating to a two-building site layout, landscaping, etc. He indicated that the Applicant agreed to carry the Application to better respond to the Board's concerns and present a revised plan addressing same. Mr. Flynn advised that the Applicant and its Professionals had met with the Township staff multiple times to craft a revised plan which not only addressed the concerns raised by the Board; but also made the project consistent with other retail and office mixed-use developments in the Township. He indicated that providing consistency with other similar developments was the intent of Mr. Healey's review memorandum; and the reason for the inclusion of photographs of those existing sites and their operation in his memorandum.

Mr. Flynn indicated that the Applicant hoped to convince the Board that the two-building layout worked; as the Applicant's owner intended to occupy the second story of the mixed-use building with the Owner's Office and because the two-building design remained a feasible design for the project. He also advised that the modifications to the plans intended to address some of the Board's overarching concerns; such as better landscaping/buffering, additional screening, increased setback of the building and parking from New Brunswick Road, safer pedestrian access, improved site circulation and safer driveway access. Mr. Flynn then noted that the pedestrian amenities had been revised to be more consistent with what the intention of the LDO. He stated that the Application now included many additional plantings along both street frontages to address the Board's concern that the development be appropriately landscaped and buffered.

B. The Board acknowledged that the revised plans submitted in advance of the December 3, 2025 meeting depict a development consisting of a 24,670 SF shopping center containing of a one-story 4,690 SF building, a two-story 19,980 SF building, access driveways on both Davidson Avenue and New Brunswick Road; an 83-space parking lot and associated site improvements on the Subject Property (hereinafter the "Applicant's Final Project").

C. Mr. Kotdawala appeared and proffered Exhibit A-3, a Color 2020 NJGIN Aerial Photograph of the Subject Property; which was entered into the record by the Board. He further proffered Exhibit A-4; a Color site plan for Applicant's Final Project superimposed on a 2020 NJGIN Aerial Photograph of the Subject Property; which was entered into by the Board. Referring to Exhibits A-3 and A-4, Mr. Kotdawala confirmed that the Subject Property contained 2.5 acres; and that the project provides access on both streets. He indicated both buildings are rectangularly shaped; and the Applicant's intent, based on meetings with Township staff, was to provide more green area and screening along New Brunswick Road. Mr. Kotdawala advised that the most recent plan revisions removed a two-sided parking lot along New Brunswick Road to create additional green space in order

to supply additional buffering and landscape screening along New Brunswick Road.

Mr. Kotdawala explained that, due to changes made to the layout, the Applicant will now provide had to create three (3) stormwater management systems instead of the two (2) proposed by the prior site design. He indicated that the revised three (3) system design had been reviewed by the Township Engineer, Mr. Darren Mazzei; who indicated the basin proposed under the buffer area along New Brunswick Road should be moved under the parking lot. Mr. Kotdawala stated that the relocation of the basin was necessary in order to permit shade trees to be planted in the buffer area (as shade trees cannot be planted on top of the basin). He advised that the relocation of the basin was not depicted on the plans being considered by the Board; but confirmed that it could be incorporated into any plan revisions necessary as a condition of Board approval.

D. Mr. Healey then clarified and identified the nature of the increased buffer along New Brunswick Avenue contained in the plan revisions for the Applicant's Final Project. He confirmed that the parking area along New Brunswick Road had been reduced in width by approximately one-half. Mr. Healey stated that by reconfiguring the building layout, the Applicant doubled the area of the buffering and landscaping along New Brunswick Road.

E. Mr. Kotdawala concurred with Mr. Healey's description of the revisions; and reiterated that the relocation of the basin to beneath the parking lot created a larger buffer area and provided space for more landscaping along New Brunswick Road. He also added that it allowed for a larger green area in front of the entrance to the office building on the site.

Mr. Kotdawala testified that the Applicant still required a parking variance; where required are 89 parking spaces and 83 parking spaces are proposed (including 4 ADA spaces and 4 EV spaces). He further confirmed that the Applicant still required a variance for minimum drive aisle width; where a width of 26 feet is required and a width of 25 feet is proposed. Mr. Kotdawala reviewed the absence of a loading area; indicating that the Applicant anticipated instant drop off and take off (so there would not be any overnight parking of trucks). Specifically, he stated that the Applicant would seek tenants which do not require a designated loading area.

Mr. Kotdawala reiterated that the two (2) separate buildings were proposed in order to separate the office component of the larger building form the retail uses in the smaller building. He indicated that it was the Applicant's intent to predominantly secure office tenants for the larger building.

Mr. Kotdawala reviewed the proposed lighting for the site; noting that it met typical requirements and that the height of the poles was not more than 16 feet. He confirmed that the height of the poles was designed to prevent the spillage of light onto adjacent parcels. Mr. Kotdawala stated that, once construction commenced,

the Applicant would ensure that the site lighting complied with all State and Township lighting requirements.

Mr. Kotdawala confirmed receipt of the November 11, 2025 memorandum of the Township's Consulting Engineer, Mr. Mazzei, and that the Applicant could comply with all terms and conditions contained therein as a condition of any Board approval. He similarly confirmed receipt of the November 13, 2025 memorandum of the Township Planner, Mr. Healey; and that the Applicant could comply with all terms and conditions contained therein as a condition of any Board approval. Mr. Kotdawala noted that additional testimony was required from the Applicant to address several items in the November 13, 2025 memorandum of Mr. Healey. He added that the Applicant would work to preserve trees within the landscape areas to the satisfaction of Mr. Healey.

Mr. Kotdawala then addressed the variance for the signage, noting that the Applicant initially proposed two (2) 20-foot-high signs set back 10 feet from the property line. He advised that, at the suggestion of Mr. Healey, the Applicant decreased both sign heights to 10 feet instead of the permit height of 20 feet; as the signs were closer to the property line. Mr. Kotdawala confirmed that the Applicant still required a variance for the setback of each sign; but that the signs were now one-half as tall as previously proposed.

Mr. Kotdawala proffered Exhibit A-5, a color rendering of the Applicant's Final Project viewed from westbound New Brunswick Road, as well as Exhibit A-6, a color rendering of the Applicant's Final Project viewed from Davidson Avenue; each of which was entered into the record by the Board. Referring to Exhibits A-5 and A-6, he identified the location of the proposed signage and the need for a reduced setback for visibility.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Healey concerning the design of the signs, Mr. Kotdawala confirmed that the proposed signage incorporated both the features of the overall sight design and the building materials. He stated that the Applicant would accept, as a voluntary condition of any Board approval, that the both the signs and the buildings be constructed as depicted on the exhibits.

In response to a Board inquiry concerning the use of LED lighting, Mr. Kotdawala confirmed that LED lighting would be used at the site. He further that larger back shields would be used to diminish the light spillage onto adjoining properties.

F. In response to a further inquiry concerning the reduction in light during overnight hours, Mr. Flynn advised that the Applicant did not anticipate any late-night operations and the lighting would be diminished at 10:00 p.m.

G. In response to an inquiry from Mr. Healey regarding a Board desire for landscape screening of the residential properties to the north, Mr. Kotdawala confirmed that the plan revisions for the Applicant's Final Plan include evergreen screening along the northerly property line. He indicated that the landscape screening of the northerly residential properties is included on the site plan; but that he did not have

a separate exhibit depicting same. Mr. Kotdawala further reviewed the modifications to the landscaping plan along the northerly property line. He noted that half of the parking area was screened with evergreen trees and the rest was planted with shade trees; including 32 evergreen trees and two (2) deciduous trees.

H. In response to an inquiry from Mr. Healey concerning the paver area to the northeast of the two-story building and what he perceived was excessive, unnecessary impervious surface, Mr. Kotdawala indicated that a portion of the paver area could be converted to green space and improved with flower beds, etc. He noted that the modifications could be provided to the satisfaction of Mr. Healey on any revised plans submitted as a condition of any Board approval.

I. Mr. Healey reiterated that the Applicant still had to perform the tree replacement calculations required by the Chapter 222.

J. In response to a Board inquiry, Mr. Flynn advised that the rear of the Subject Property (the westerly portion) was a regulated area and subject to environmental constraints. As a result, he confirmed that the Applicant did not propose any development in that portion of the site.

K. Mr. David H. Feldman, R.A., A.I.A., the Applicant's Architect, came forward and was sworn in. The Board accepted his qualifications. Initially, Mr. Feldman described the proposed building materials and reviewed the architecture-related comments in Mr. Healey's memorandum. He confirmed that the architectural plans were prepared in his office, under his supervision.

Mr. Feldman thereafter reviewed the architectural plans for the Applicant's Final Project; initially focusing on the two-story building. He testified that the two-story building would contain approximately 20,000 SF with equal space on each floor. Mr. Feldman stated that the two-story building would be primarily used as office space. He noted that the building materials would consist of a mixture of glass, stucco, and faux wood. Mr. Feldman opined that the building design and materials not only met but exceeded the design standards of the LDO. He asserted that this was accomplished by breaking up the boxiness of the structure through the variation of the height of the roof line, the walls and the type and color of the materials that incorporate into the structure. In addition, Mr. Feldman advised that the design emphasized the main entrance to the two-story building which was set off on a 45-degree angle and accentuated with a landscaped, green open area.

Mr. Feldman advised that the architectural plans addressed concerns previously raised by the Board and its Professionals concerning the rear of the building. He indicated that prior submissions did not include the glazing and fenestration depicted on the current set of architectural plans. Mr. Feldman thereafter reviewed the floor plan of the two-story, mixed-use building.

In response to a Board inquiry concerning the need for screening of rooftop HVAC equipment on the two-story, mixed-use building, Mr. Feldman opined that

screening was not necessary as the equipment would be located at the center of the roof and not readily visible from ground level. He advised that if the HVAC equipment was visible, the Applicant would supply screening for same.

Mr. Feldman thereafter reviewed the design of the one-story retail building; which he advised contained approximately 5,000 SF. He expressed concern over the ability to screen the mechanicals on this smaller building; and advised that the mechanicals would be located in the center of the roof and screened as necessary.

In response to a Board inquiry concerning the lack of secondary egress from the second floor of the two-story building, Mr. Feldman indicated that the lack of egress was an oversight. He confirmed that a door would be provided in the secondary staircase; as required by the building code.

Mr. Feldman proffered Exhibit A-7, color rendering of the Applicant's Final Project viewed from eastbound New Brunswick Road; which was entered into the record by the Board.

L. Ms. Elizabeth Dolan, P.E., the Applicant's Traffic Engineer, came forward and was sworn in. The Board accepted her qualifications. Ms. Dolan indicated that her office prepared a Traffic Impact Analysis (hereinafter the "TIA") dated February 27, 2024 in support of the application. She thereafter provided an overview of the conclusions of the TIA; and noted that the plan for the Applicant's project had evolved over time. Ms. Dolan specifically testified that the size of the two (2) buildings proposed had been reduced.

Ms. Dolan indicates that the TIA demonstrated 57 morning peak hour trips (inbound and outbound), as well as 90 evening peak hour trips (inbound and outbound) for the Applicant's Initial Project. She then stated that adjusting the TIA for the new building areas and the 12th edition of the Trip General Manual, the morning peak hour trips increased by 13 and the evening peak hour trips increased by 6. Ms. Dolan opined that this increase was not sufficient enough to materially change the results of the TIA.

Ms. Dolan then acknowledged that the TIA examined the impact of a full movement driveway on New Brunswick Road. She advised that she revisited the analysis in light of the egress restriction; and advised that it showed that both driveways would continue to operate at acceptable levels of service. She noted that during off-peak hours, the driveways would operate similar to the peak hour analysis; or better. Mr. Dolan testified that there were no changes to the intersection levels of service with the addition of site traffic; concluding that there would be no negative impact associated with the site development. Ms. Dolan indicated that, with respect to the retail component, some of the traffic was already on the road and would be diverted into the site in the form of a pass-by trip.

Ms. Dolan then reviewed the parking variance requested by the Applicant. She noted that the required number of spaces would be 73 (35 spaces for the office use and 38 spaces for the retail use) based upon the Institute of Transportation

Engineers (hereinafter "ITE") manual, 6th edition. She noted that that the 73-parking space number was below the proposed parking supply of 83-parking spaces; and thought the variance could be granted based on the ITE data. Ms. Dolan noted that the parking variance was only a slight deviation from the requirements of the LDO. She further indicated that 24-foot-wide drive aisles were the recommendation of the ITE. In light of this fact, she opined that the variance could be granted from the 26-foot-wide requirement of the LDO. Finally, Ms. Dolan asserted that the site could be safely circulated by incoming vehicles and pedestrians.

M. In response to a Board inquiry concerning compliance with comment 11 from Mr. Mazzei's memorandum (recommending the addition of an ADA ramp for Davidson Avenue and alignment of the crossing), Mr. Flynn confirmed that Mr. Kotdawala already stated that the Applicant would comply with all the Township Engineer's comments and addressing comment 11 would only require a minor change to grade.

N. In response to an inquiry from the Board concerning the location of a particular EV charging station near Davidson Road, Mr. Flynn acknowledged that the label for the charging station is upside down and the plans would be revised to address same.

O. In response to an inquiry from Mr. Healey concerning the egress movement onto New Brunswick Road, Ms. Dolan confirmed that the exit movement would be left turn only and that a curbed island would be used to direct vehicles to make the right turn movement. In response to a further inquiry concerning the signage at the New Brunswick Road exit driveway, Ms. Dolan stated that a right arrow and the word "only" would be painted on the pavement and there would be a "no left turn" sign.

P. Mr. Creigh Rahenkamp, P.P., A.I.C.P., the Applicant's Professionals Planner, came forward and was sworn in. The Board accepted his qualifications. Mr. Rahenkamp indicated that the Applicant was seeking (c)(2) variances; as the Applicant would balance the benefits of granting the variances against detriments. He asserted that the primary benefit from the granting of the parking and drive aisle variances was the creation of the space to allow the additional landscaping and additional amenity area sought by the Board. Mr. Rahenkamp asserted that the 25-foot-wide drive aisle were sufficient from a planning perspective; as the 26-foot-wide drive aisle required by the LDO is typically supplied in shopping centers requiring pedestrians to walk down long aisles to get to and from stores with shopping carts and other goods. He stated that such pedestrian access will not be needed in the Applicant's Final Project due to its small scale. Mr. Rahenkamp indicated that pedestrians in the Applicant's Final Project would walk across the aisles rather than down the aisles; alleviating the need for the additional aisle width. He acknowledged Ms. Dolan's prior testimony to the Board concerning traffic and parking from an engineering perspective; and he agreed that from a planning perspective the Applicant's Final Project would fit the Subject Property.

Q. Focusing on the parking variance, Mr. Rahenkamp reiterated Ms. Dolan's testimony that the current ITE standards would require less parking than the Applicant was providing. Also, he noted that Applicant already knew the identity of the office tenant; permitting the Applicant to carefully curate who is brough in as retail tenants. Mr. Rahenkamp further asserted that the Applicant understood the available number of parking spaces; and would need to allocate the parking spaces carefully to ensure that the site remained operational. He noted that there was not available parking within walking distance to the Subject Property; so, the parking variance would create a self-enforcing parking limitation. Mr. Rahenkamp opined that the Applicant's Final Project proposed sufficient parking; and that the variance would not create any issues.

R. Referring to Exhibits A-5 and A-6, Mr. Rahenkamp advised that if the proposed signs were moved back 10 feet further from the property line, the signs would be hidden by the landscaping and the additional height would be necessary. He asserted that the proposed sign location and height was a reasonable design compromise to bring the sign closer to the property line to be more easily viewable to the motoring public. Mr. Rahenkamp added that the signage promote communication at the site and support overall circulation safety. He stated that, while the 10-foot taller signage setback located 10 feet further from the property line worked as effectively as the proposed signage, the proposed signage was aesthetically preferable. For those reasons, Mr. Rahenkamp opined that the benefits from the granting of the variances outweigh any detriments; as he didn't identify any measurable detriments that would weigh against the proposal. Mr. Rahenkamp concluded that the benefits from the granting of the variances substantially outweighed any benefits.

S. In response to a Board inquiry concerning the preservation of mature trees along Davidson Avenue, Mr. Flynn stated that the Applicant's engineer would work with Mr. Healey to preserve those trees to the greatest extent possible.

8. At the hearing on December 3, 2025, the application was opened by the Board for public comment the application was opened by the Board for public comment and the following public comment was received:

A. Ms. Carla Bisser, 1107 Conrad Way, Somerset Run, Somerset, NJ, came forward and was sworn in. She noted that many people living in the Somerset Run community (across New Brunswick Road) walk to the existing strip malls nearby; including handicapped people using walkers and individuals shopping with some kind of a cart. She noted the fact that seniors use their errands as a way to get their exercise; and expressed her concern for the safety of individuals navigating to the Subject Property.

B. Mr. Flynn reviewed the elements proposed by the Applicant's Final Project for pedestrian's safe access. He acknowledged that the pedestrian safe access was particularly necessary in light of the fact that there would be retail establishments at the site that residents of Somerset Run might wish to patronize.

C. The Board acknowledged that the approval of Applicant's Final Project would include the provision of sidewalks along both frontages; and that residents of Somerset Run might wish to utilize the crosswalk at the signalized intersection to use the new sidewalk to get to Shop Rite. However, the Board acknowledged that there is a portion of the path which does not have sidewalk (adjacent to Somerset Woods) which would prevent the residents from Somerset Run to have safe sidewalk access along the entire route. The Board authorized Chairman Orsini to forward a letter to the Township Council requesting that monies from the sidewalk fund be used to install the missing sidewalk.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the Township of Franklin, that it does hereby make the following findings of fact and conclusions of law based upon the testimony given in the matter, and reports, documents and materials provided to the Board:

1. Applicant, **NPH REAL ESTATE, LLC**, is the owner of real property located at 390 Davidson Avenue, Somerset, New Jersey, and currently designated on the Tax Map of the Township of Franklin as Block 502.01, Lot 57.01, same being located within the B-I zone and RDO zone. The Subject Property is 2.46 acres in size and is currently undeveloped.

2. The Applicant is proposing to construct 24,670 square feet ("SF") shopping center consisting of a one-story 4,690 SF building, a two-story 19,980 SF building, access driveways on both Davidson Avenue and New Brunswick Road; an 83-space parking lot; and associated site improvements (curb, sidewalk, utilities, grading, lighting and landscaping) on the Subject Property; as depicted on the Applicant's site plan. The Board notes that the Subject Property is compliant as to the bulk requirements of the B-I zone and RDO zone with the exception of minimum number of off-street parking spaces, minimum parking drive aisle width and minimum sign setback.

3. Specifically, the Applicant requires the following variance relief:

   A. Minimum Number of Off-Street Parking Spaces – 89 parking spaces required and 83 parking spaces proposed;
   B. Minimum Parking Drive Aisle Width – 26 feet required and 25 feet proposed; and
   C. Minimum Sign Setback (two signs) - 20 feet required and 10 feet proposed.

4. The Board is satisfied that pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70(c)(2) that the Applicant is entitled to the aforementioned variance relief. The benefit to the Township is the provision of greater buffering and screening from New Brunswick Avenue, the provision of additional open space and greater site visibility and identification; as outlined by the Applicant's Planner. The Board perceives little, if any, detriment from the granting of the variances. Based upon the foregoing, the Board concludes that the benefits from the granting of the variances substantially outweigh any detriments.

5. Provided all of the conditions of the approval are met, the variances can be granted without substantial impairment to the intent and purpose of the LDO of the Township of Franklin.

The Board also finds that granting the variances will not be inconsistent with the character of the surrounding area.

6. The variances can also be granted without substantial detriment to the public good, as the traditional Municipal Land Use Law goals of light, air and open space will not be compromised by the granting of the variances. The proposed improvements, including stormwater management, landscaping and sidewalks, will benefit the public.

7. The Board is satisfied that the Applicant has provided sufficient evidence and testimony and has met the requirements for preliminary and final site plan approval. In this regard, the Board is satisfied that the Applicant has made adequate provision for ingress and egress from the site, has accounted for appropriate landscaping on the Subject Property as testified and presented to the Board.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Planning Board of the Township of Franklin as follows:

1. Preliminary and final major site plan approval, as well as bulk variance approval is hereby granted to the Applicant to construct the Applicant's Final Project consisting of construct 24,670 square feet ("SF") shopping center consisting of a one-story 4,690 SF building, a two-story 19,980 SF building, access driveways on both Davidson Avenue and New Brunswick Road; an 83-space parking lot; and associated site improvements (curb, sidewalk, utilities, grading, lighting and landscaping) on the Subject Property; as presented to the Board and detailed on the preliminary and final site plan drawings which the Applicant will revise in accordance with the requirements of this resolution.

2. Variance relief pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70(c)(2) is hereby granted to Applicant so as to permit the following:

    A. Minimum Number of Off-Street Parking Spaces – 89 parking spaces required and 83 parking spaces approved;
    B. Minimum Parking Drive Aisle Width – 26 feet required and 25 feet approved; and
    C. Minimum Sign Setback (two signs) - 20 feet required and 10 feet approved.

3. The within preliminary and final major site plan approval; associated variance relief and design waivers granted herein are expressly based upon the plans, reports and testimony submitted to the Planning Board. These approvals are subject to and upon the following conditions:

    A. The Applicant shall comply with any and all conditions, requirements, and agreements as set forth within this Resolution, as well as any and all representations made to the Board, both orally and in writing, whether contained in this Resolution or not including but not necessarily limited to (and revision of plans as applicable to reflect same):

        i. Completion of a tree inventory as required by Chapter 222 of the Township Code, including the preservation of any necessary trees, the installation of any necessary trees and the payment of a contribution to the tree fund for

any trees which cannot be replaced on the Subject Property; to the satisfaction of the Board Professionals.

ii. Relocation of the basin proposed under the buffer area along New Brunswick Road and installation of landscaping within the buffer area along New Brunswick Road to the satisfaction of the Board Professionals.

iii. Preservation of trees within the landscape areas and the mature trees along Davidson Avenue to the satisfaction of the Board Professionals.

iv. The freestanding signs shall incorporate the design features and building materials, consistent with the proposed buildings; as depicted on Exhibits A-5 and A-6.

v. Provision of LED site lighting in compliance with all State and Township lighting requirements; including larger back shields to prevent spillage onto adjoining properties.

vi. Diminished site lighting commencing at 10:00 p.m. daily.

vii. Conversion of a portion of the paver area at the entrance to the two-story, mixed-use building to green space; and improvement of the green space with flowers and plantings; to the satisfaction of the Boad Professionals.

viii. Provision of a door on the secondary staircase of the two-story, mixed-use building; as required by the building code.

ix. Revision of the plans as necessary to clarify that the right arrow and the word “only” would be painted on the pavement (with inclusion of necessary notes and details).

x. Revision of the plans to correct the label for the EV charging station near Davidson Road (to address the upside-down EV charging station label).

B. The Applicant shall comply with all comments and conditions as set forth within the reports of the Board professionals and Township staff as provided to the Applicant except as may have been specifically modified or waived by the Board as specifically addressed within this Resolution.

C. The Applicant shall satisfy and post any and all escrows and pay any taxes as required by law or by ordinance.

D. The Applicant shall obtain any and all approvals required by any other governmental agency having jurisdiction over the development.

E. The development shall be subject to the payment of applicable affordable housing development fees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, by the Township of Franklin Planning Board, that:

1. All conditions contained in this Resolution and in the record of the proceedings in this matter, including any agreements made by the Applicant, were essential to the Board's decision to grant the approvals set forth herein. A breach of any such condition or a failure by the Applicant to adhere to the terms of any agreement within the time required may result in appropriate action by the Township; including, but not limited to, the revocation of the within approval and termination of the right of the

Applicant to obtain or continue work or occupancy under any construction permits, Certificates of Occupancy or any other governmental authorizations necessary in order to continue development and use of the project.

2. The development of this property shall be implemented in accordance with the plans submitted and as approved. In the event that the Applicant shall make or propose any changes to the project or structures on the property from those shown on the revised and approved plans and exhibits approved for this Application, whether such changes in voluntarily undertaken or required by any other regulatory agency, Applicant shall resubmit any such changes to this Board for review and determination.

Christine Woodbury, Planning Board Secretary

VOTE ON MOTION 12/3/2025

FOR:
Dr. Theodore Chase
Robert LaCorte
Shaw Keller
Jennifer Rangnow
Maher Rafiq
Robert Thomas
Chairman Michael Orsini

AGAINST:
NONE

ABSTAIN:
NONE

VOTE OF RESOLUTION: 02/04/2026

FOR:

AGAINST:
NONE

ABSTAIN:
NONE

I. INTRODUCTION

The Municipal Law Use Law (MLUL) requires that municipalities conduct a general reexamination of its master plan and development regulations at least every 10 years. This review is conducted by the Planning Board. This reexamination is necessary to assure that the Master Plan and development regulations of the Township remain viable, current and capable of addressing the planning, zoning and development issues facing the municipality.

This Report constitutes the Master Plan Re-Examination Report of Franklin Township, Somerset County, per the MLUL (N.J.S.A 40:55D-89) and serves as a precursor to the comprehensive update of the Township's Master Plan.

Section II, Township Master Plan, summarizes the status of the Master Plan and the various documents that comprise the Township's Master Plan. In particular, this section demonstrates how the Township Master Plan is a dynamic document that has been updated in the form of three (3) updates to the Land Use Element of the Master Plan and the adoption of seven (7) additional elements of the Master Plan as the need has arisen over the last decade.

Section III comprises the Master Plan re-examination. It evaluates the Township's master plan and development regulations following the criteria required pursuant to N.J.S.A 40:55D-89:

a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the 2016 Master Plan Reexamination.

b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.

c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.

d. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.

e. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

revised draft

II. TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

The Planning Board last updated a comprehensive Master Plan on March 22, 2006. That plan consisted of the following elements:

- Land Use Plan
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space
- Conservation Plan
- Historic Preservation Plan
- Community Facilities Plan
- Circulation Plan
- Economic Plan
- Utility Plan
- Recycling Plan
- Plan Consistency

In 2016 the Planning Board conducted and adopted a comprehensive Master Plan Reexamination which evaluated the Township's master plan and development regulations following the criteria required pursuant to N.J.S.A 40:55D-89. The Master Plan Reexamination was adopted by the Planning Board on March 2, 2016.

Subsequent to the 2016 Master Plan Reexamination, the Planning Board has adopted three (3) updates to the Land Use Plan element and the following seven (7) additional elements of the Master Plan:

- *Housing Element and Fair Share Plan (Third Round)* – Adopted April 2018
- *Housing Element and Fair Share Plan (Fourth Round)* – Adopted ____2026
- *Historic Preservation Plan* – Adopted August 2019
- *Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan* – Adopted August 2019
- *Environmental Resources Inventory* – Adopted August 2019
- *Circulation Element – Adopted 2021*
- *Pathways and Trails Plan – Adopted June 2025*

revised draft

A. LAND USE PLAN UPDATES

Subsequent to the adoption of the 2016 Master Plan Reexamination, as issues have arisen, circumstances have changed and/or objectives have evolved, a number of issue-oriented and/or area-specific updates to the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan have been adopted by the Planning Board. Since 2016, a total of three (3) such amendments to the Master Plan have been adopted.

- ***Strategic Zoning and Economic Development Recommendations: Business and Industry Zone*** - September 2020[1]

  This update amended the Land Use Plan Element to address the long-term viability of the Corporate Business (C-B) zone as well as aspects of the Township's zoning ordinance (e.g., use and bulk requirements of the Corporate Business (C-B), and M-1 and M-2 (Light Manufacturing) zones. These aspects impede appropriate opportunities for economic development and job creation in the Township's corporate and industrial areas that take advantage of Franklin's centralized location in the Tri-State area with access to the regional transportation corridors including I-287 and the New Jersey Turnpike and public transportation.

  The amendment to the Land Use Plan Element recommended the consolidation of the C-B, M-1 and M-2 Zones into a new Business & Industry (B-I) Zone and was based on a consultant economic study entitled, "Strategic Zoning and Economic Development Recommendations", prepared by 4Ward Planning and dated August 7, 2017. The new B-I Zone: incorporated the permitted uses of the three prior zones; established one set of bulk standards (lot area, setbacks, building height, lot and impervious coverage, FAR) for the B-I Zone; and established one set of consistent buffer requirements with larger buffers adjoining a residential zone.

  After the adoption of the 2020 Master Plan Update, the Township Council adopted Ordinance 4333-20, which amended the Zoning Map to consolidate the C-B, M-1 and M-2 Zones into the new B-I Zone and incorporated one set of land use and development regulations for the new B-I Zone into the Land Development Ordinance.

- ***Master Plan Update: Warehouse Development*** – January 2023[2]

  Franklin Township has experienced exponential growth in the amount of development applications or warehouses in the form of more than two dozen such applications for the development of new or expanded warehouses since 2018 which total several million square feet. This exponential growth in warehouse development is anticipated to create significant impacts to the quality of life in Franklin Township including but not limited to traffic impacts related to the capacity of the Township's

[1] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/20567/637362925377300000
[2] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/27287/638163026385670000

revised draft

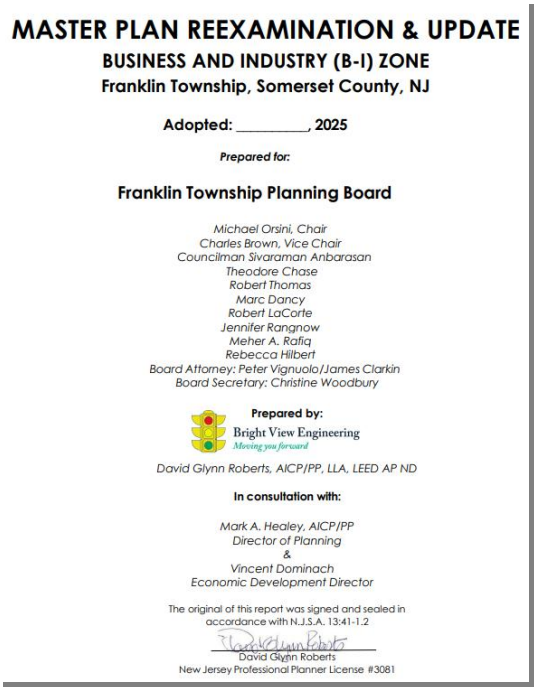
roadway network to handle the significant increase in truck traffic and additional negative impacts to sensitive land uses including noise and air pollution.

To address that issue the Township Council adopted Ordinance #4371-22 which made warehouses a permitted conditional use in the B-1 zone and which rezoned certain properties formerly in the B-I and R-O-L zones. Upon referral and prior to Council adoption, the Planning Board found that Ordinance #4371-22 was not inconsistent with the Master Plan.

The Planning Board subsequently adopted an update to the Land Use Plan which recommended that warehouses be eliminated all-together as a permitted use in the B-I zone. The Township Council adopted Ordinance #4391-22 implementing this change.

- ***Master Plan Reexamination & Update: Business and Industry (B-I) Zone*** - _____ 2026[3]

The Township continued its review of the B-I zone with the "Master Plan Reexamination & Update: Business and Industry (B-I) Zone." The Township hired Brightview Engineering to assist in this effort. This effort consisted of a comprehensive review of the B-I zone and a related evaluation of traffic issues resulting from recent and anticipated truck traffic from development in the B-I zone.


MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION & UPDATE
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY (B-I) ZONE
Franklin Township, Somerset County, NJ

Adopted: _____, 2025

Prepared for:

Franklin Township Planning Board

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Bright View Engineering
Moving you forward
David Glynn Roberts, AICP/PP, LLA, LEED AP ND

In consultation with:

Mark A. Healey, AICP/PP
Director of Planning
&
Vincent Dominach
Economic Development Director

The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 13:41-1.2
David Glynn Roberts
New Jersey Professional Planner License #3081

This Reexamination Report was created with and guided by an Ad-Hoc Steering Committee of volunteers representing the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, a member of the governing body, representatives of neighborhoods impacted by commercial and industrial development within the Business and Industry (B-I) Zone and other community leaders. The Steering Committee was established by Resolution of the Planning Board on March 20, 2024. The Committee held meetings with the consultant and Planning Director on June 6, August 29, October 9 and December 12, 2024.

Two advertised meetings were also held that were open to the public. The first, Community Meeting #1, was held on June 27, 2024. The focus of that meeting was to explain the scope of the planning and traffic study and review preliminary findings of traffic data gathering and analysis performed by the consultant in the Fall of 2023, including traffic counts taken between the start of the school year

[3] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/30749/638803296631700000

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in 2023 and completed prior to the start of the holiday season shopping period in 2023. Community Meeting #2 took place on January 30, 2025, and provided an overview of the land use and zoning recommendations that were proposed by the Steering Committee as an outcome of their meetings.

The Township created a dedicated webpage for the B-I Study on its website[4] and uploaded materials generated during the life of the project. The webpage provides all reports, presentations, meeting notes and links to the video recordings of the two Community Meetings. There was an opportunity for public comment on the webpage.

The Planning Board reviewed drafts of the document at a number of meetings including a public hearing held on _____. The Planning Board adopted the Reexamination Report at its meeting of _____.

The evaluation took into consideration the differing nature of warehouse development (e.g., distribution facilities, fulfillment centers and last mile fulfillment facilities) and evaluated whether the different types of warehouses could/ should be permitted/ regulated differently due to differences in their impacts (including but not necessarily limited to traffic, air quality, noise, proximity to the residential areas, and location within the Township/ proximity to I-287). It also evaluated other permitted uses in the zone (e.g., light manufacturing) and made recommendations regarding the extent that such uses could result in impacts similar to certain and/or all warehouse development.

In summary, the Report differentiated between "low intensity", "medium intensity" and "high intensity" light industry – defined based on the size of the facility and type/ ratio of loading docks. "Low intensity" and "medium intensity" were recommended to be permitted conditional uses in the B-1 subject to certain requirements intended to direct their placement on appropriate roadways and areas within the zone, to minimize impacts to residential areas and otherwise reduce potential impacts associated with such uses. "High intensity" light industrial uses, as defined in the Report and the draft zoning ordinance, would continue to be prohibited.

Other recommendations included a number of new and/or improved design standards including those related to buffering, architectural treatment, placement and screening of loading areas, sustainability-related measures, submittal of a noise study under certain circumstances, and traffic circulation-related standards. The Master Plan Reexamination considered the potential impacts related to noise and air quality and made recommendations related to the mitigation of such impacts, to the degree appropriate to address in a municipal zoning ordinance, including: permitting certain uses in certain areas but not in others (e.g., in proximity to residential zones); setbacks or buffering requirements; or design-related measures.

[4] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/committees-commissions/planning-board/b-i-study

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B. ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE MASTER PLAN

Since 2016, the Planning Board has subsequently adopted seven (7) additional elements of the Master Plan:

- ***Housing Element & Fair Share Plan*** – 2018[5] & 2026[6]

  Franklin Township has a long history of responsibly and comprehensively addressing its "Mt. Laurel" affordable housing obligation to meet the needs of its residents and its fair share of its region's need for affordable housing. The Township has received Substantive Certification of its prior round Fair Share Plans.



Housing Element & Fair Share Plan

TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN
Somerset County, New Jersey

Dated:
April 2018

Adopted by the
Township of Franklin Planning Board:

April 24, 2018

The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12.

Mark Healey, AICP/ PP
Professional Planner #5803
Director of Planning/ Municipal Housing Liaison

TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN
SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY
Housing Plan Element & Fair Share Plan
Fourth Round (2025-2035)
DATE: May 29, 2025

Prepared by:

Consulting & Municipal ENGINEERS
CME Associates
1460 Rt.9 South
Howell, NJ07731
732-462-7400

Malvika Apte, PP, AICP
NJ Professional Planner License # 6056

The original document was appropriately signed and sealed in accordance with the Chapter 41 Title 13 of the State Board of Professional Planners.

Subsequent to the 2016 Master Plan Reexamination the Township prepared affordable housing plans (i.e., "Housing Element & Fair Share Plan") addressing its Third and Fourth Round "Mount Laurel" obligations, respectively:

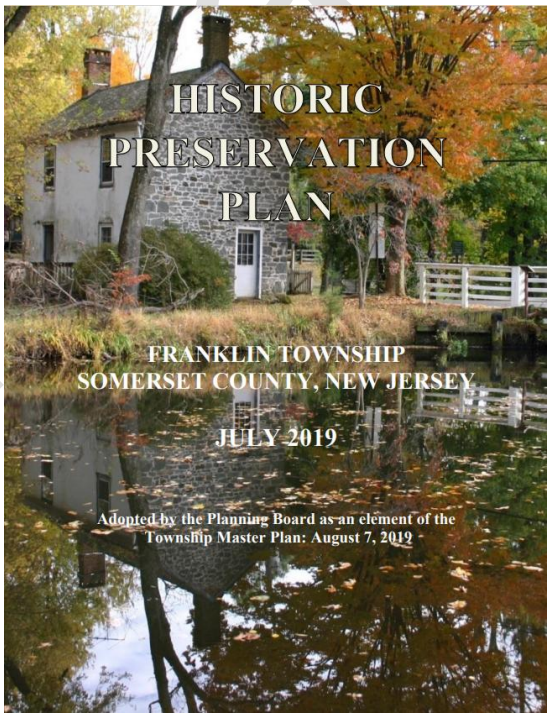
- Third Round plan – Adopted April 2018
- Fourth Round plan – Adopted ____ 2026

[5] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/31237/638918129285100000
[6] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/30943/638845570691770000

The soundness of the Township's Fair Share Plan has been conclusively demonstrated by the degree to which the developments proposed within it have been subsequently developed and occupied by low- and moderate-income households.

[NOTE: The Planning Board adopted its 4th Round Plan in 2025 – submitted it to the State "Program" – the Planning Board will need to re-adopt the 4th Round Plan in next month or so, incorporating changes required by the Program/ settlement agreement – will update this section accordingly]

- ***Historic Preservation Plan*** – 2019[7]



This plan was prepared by Township Staff and the Franklin Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission. It was adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Township Master Plan in August 2019.

This Historic Preservation Plan Element addresses each of the components of a Historic Preservation Plan Element as recommended by Sustainable Jersey:

- *Introduction*: defines "historic preservation," the basic values it provides to the community, and the elements of a historic preservation plan.
- *Historic Context*: contains a summary of Franklin's historical development to provide a better perspective on the significance of the Township's historic resources.
- *Significance*: outlines the standardized criteria that the National Park Service uses to determine historical significance and describes how a property's physical and historic "integrity" affects that significance.
- *Inventory*: describes the rather extensive inventory of historic resources within the Township including: a number of local, state and national districts; numerous historic sites (including a number of individual structures listed on the State/ National Register of Historic Places); a Township-wide inventory of historic structures; and scenic resources within the Township.
- *Historic Preservation Threats and Assets*: identifies threats to historic preservation in the Township as well as strengths or assets that should be capitalized upon to further historic preservation in Franklin.

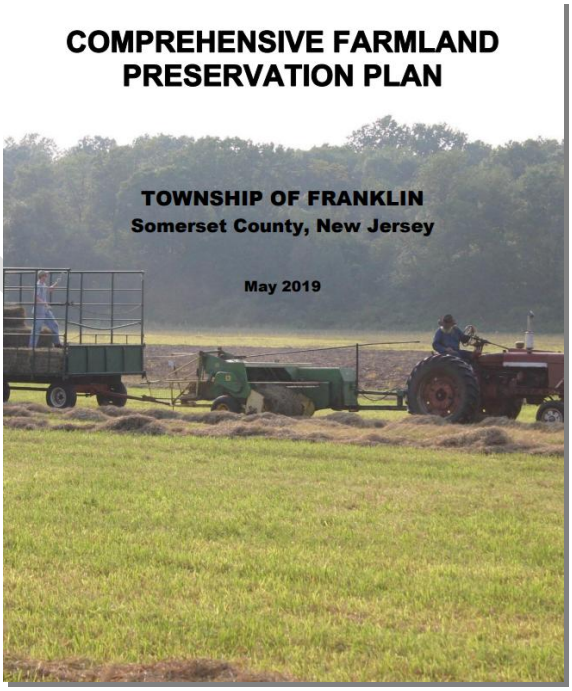
[7] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/16374/637036310586830000

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- *Historic Preservation Goals:* discusses and recommends municipal goals to protect Franklin's historic resources from these threats.
- *Public Policy Evaluation:* contains a review of the Township's master plan elements and development regulations for consistency with the historic preservation goals and objectives of this plan.
- *Choices*: addresses historic preservation related policy issues that the Township will need to address.
- *Action Plan/ Agenda*: historic preservation strategy
- *Appendices*: include copies of some of the materials mentioned in the element, as well as a collection of basic historic preservation reference materials.

➢ ***Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan*** – 2019[8]

The Township's Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) prepared the Township's Farmland Preservation Plan (dated May 2019) with the assistance of Township staff and Land Preservation Consultant. This plan follows the guidelines put forth by the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC), but most notably identifies "target farms" – i.e., farms identified for potential farmland preservation. This plan was adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Township Master Plan on August 7, 2019. The adopted plan incorporates the comments received by, and received approval from, the SADC.



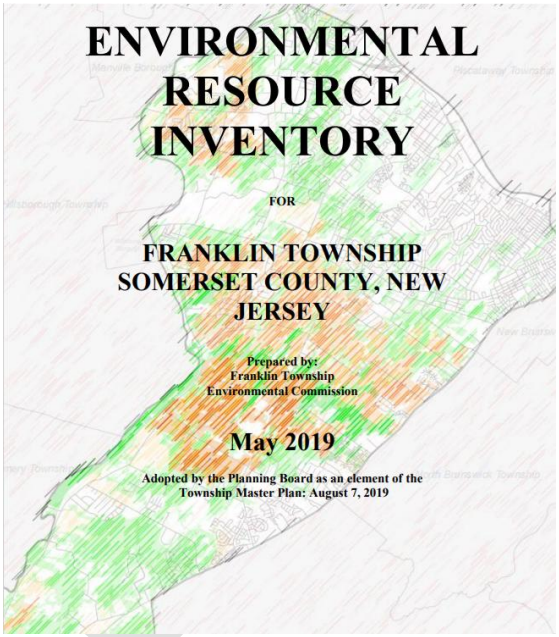
[8] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/16370/637013037093170000

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➢ ***Environmental Resource Inventory*** – 2019[9]

The Township's Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) was comprehensively updated in August 2019. This effort was led by the Township Environmental Commission with the assistance of Township Staff. It was adopted by the Township Planning Board as an element of the Township Master Plan. A summary of the ERI is provided above in Section II and a copy of it is available for review on the Township website.

The ERI serves as an outstanding resource in terms of both constraints and opportunities that might guide development and conservation decisions.

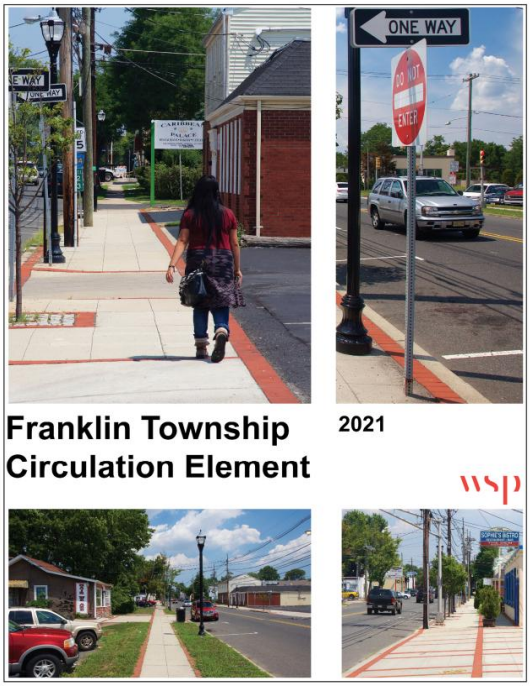


➢ ***Circulation Element*** – 2021[10]

The Township retained a consulting firm to prepare a comprehensive update to Circulation Element of the Master Plan. This was adopted in 2021. This plan replaced the 2006 Master Plan Circulation Element, examining and analyzing the Township's transportation resources, facilities and needs.

The included the following overall "Vision Statement" related to circulation:

Franklin Township seeks to preserve and enhance both its urban and rural qualities and provide multimodal transportation choices that improve safety, mobility, resilience, and access to opportunity. The Circulation Element promotes collaboration between the township, county, and state agencies to mitigate the impacts of traffic and land development, offer more mobility options, and create a more resilient future.



The plan provided the following updated circulation-related goals and objectives:

[9] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/16368/637013036518900000
[10] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/24377/637762013798870000

Establish a circulation system that recognizes the high level of through-Township traffic and minimizes its negative impact on Township residents

1. *Support improvement of county and state roadways with tactical measures to improve safety and traffic flow while limiting widening projects to critical areas to minimize induced demand and unsafe conditions for motorists, transit riders, cyclists and pedestrians*
2. *Minimize through-traffic in low-speed residential areas by improving traffic flow on major roads and implementing traffic calming measures in residential areas to divert and slow traffic*
3. *Discourage single-outlet design to enhance local circulation*
4. *Encourage multimodal connectivity (vehicular, transit, bicyclist and pedestrian) between developments*
5. *Plan connector roads in strategic locations to improve circulation throughout the Township, to preserve existing neighborhoods and improve safety*
6. *Improve traffic flow by limiting points of access on arterial roadways; explore the possibility of accessing existing and proposed commercial strip development via service roads and assure there is ample space for acceleration, deceleration, and merging, as appropriate from such points of access*
7. *Improve the resilience of Franklin Township's transportation infrastructure while minimizing stormwater impacts*

Provide a safe transportation network with several mobility options

8. *Support Complete Streets measures to improve the safety of all roadway users (motorists, transit riders, cyclists, pedestrians, and micro mobility users)*
9. *Encourage the use of non-motorized transportation such as transit, biking and walking by improving connections and facilities throughout the Township for and between these uses, including preserved open space and parks, for commuting, recreational, and shopping trips, consequently promoting the health of roadway users*
10. *Continue to implement the Bikeway Master Plan incorporating recommendations to the Township's bike network elaborated upon in this report, and consider developing school safety plans and a pedestrian network plan*

The plan included a detailed review of existing conditions and analysis including:

- *Review of previous studies*: summarized key findings of various findings and recommendations of various circulation-related affecting Franklin Township from 2005 forward
- *Evaluation of the roadway conditions per NJDOT data:* including evaluation of pavement conditions, congestion levels (identifying congestion conditions on Route 27 and Easton Avenue); traffic counts (provided for twenty locations in Franklin); crash data (including locations, type, severity, "hot spots", and lighting and roadway conditions)
- *Multimodal transportation network inventory and analysis*: including identification, discussion and mapping of: roadway jurisdiction (township, county, state); functional classifications (local roads, collectors, arterials, etc.); bicycle and pedestrian conditions including on- and off-road bicycle infrastructure and condition; and public transportation conditions (County, NJ Transit, other services).

The plan included various recommendations and strategies addressing the following areas:

- *Previous recommendations*: identified and discussed various recommendations made in prior circulation-related plans and studies and identified whether or not they have been implemented

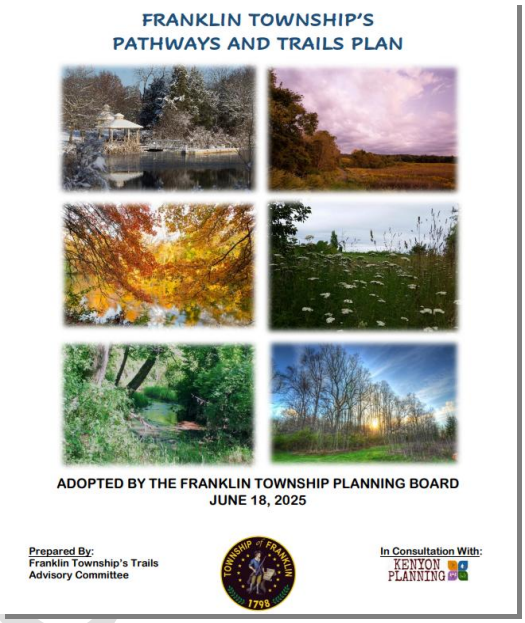
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- *Intersections*: assessment of intersections in Franklin Township was conducted for potential improvements to safety, efficiency, and mobility; several intersections were selected for further analysis and development of recommendations based on crash characteristics, traffic volumes, and roadway geometry; statewide averages for similar roadways (state vs. county, signalized vs. unsignalized) were used when comparing crash characteristics for the intersections.
- *Corridors*: several corridors were selected for review for recommendations based on connectivity, crash trends, and functional class; recommendations include corridor-wide recommendations as well as minor intersection improvements.
- *Bicycle facility recommendations*: recommendations aim to connect and expand existing facilities to create a broader and more comprehensive bike network layered with on and off-road facilities.
- *Freight and goods movement*: indicated that projected growth in key sectors within the township, including warehousing, reinforces need to evaluate the current performance of the freight transportation network in the township and to understand future needs as well; recommends that the Township explore freight-related concerns more fully
- *Focus areas Hamilton Street, I-287 commercial area)*: Based on stakeholder input, ongoing projects, previous studies, and data analysis, a series of priority multi-modal transportation improvements were developed for two focus areas to enhance multimodal mobility in Franklin Township: Hamilton Street and the I-287 commercial area.
- *Implementation matrix*: The plan concluded with a detailed implementation matrix intended to help the prioritize and track improvements. The table includes those improvements newly recommended in that document as well as those initially recommended in previous studies and reinforced in the document. As applicable, the “Location/Study” column provides either the location of improvements or the study in which the recommendation was previously made. “The “Type” column refers to the mode and location type of the improvement (e.g., roadway, traffic, transit, bicycle, pedestrian). The lead agency is determined by jurisdiction (state, county or township) and relative costs are identified as “low,” “medium,” and “high.”

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- ***Pathways & Trails Plan*** – 2025[11]

The 2025 Franklin Township Pathways and Trails Plan (herein, "PTP" or "Plan") is a comprehensive update and replacement of the 2008 Pathways and Trails Plan, including information about the existing trails system as well as recommendations to expand and enhance that system in a strategic and sustainable way. This Plan also incorporates the principles of equitable and sustainable planning for trail design and location, as well as stewardship and management. This Plan serves as a living document and work plan for the Township when expanding and modifying the trails network under the municipality's jurisdiction.



The 2025 PTP clearly identifies the vision for Franklin Township's trails system over the next ten years. Current strategies employed for management and stewardship are detailed and expanded upon for the near and long term. Lastly, this Plan contains site-specific recommendations for trails development, improvements, and enhancements to make these spaces usable, safe, and welcoming for Franklin's residents and visitors. The Plan was prepared by the Township's Trails Advisory Committee with the assistance of the Township's Land Preservation consultant. It was adopted as an element of the Township Master Plan in June 2025.

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[11] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/31283/638926085326130000

III. RE-EXAMINATION OF MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

This section evaluates the Township's master plan and development regulations following the criteria required pursuant to N.J.S.A 40:55D-89. This evaluation is organized by Master Plan Element (i.e., Land Use Plan, Historic Preservation Plan, Circulation Plan, etc.) and the particular issues identified in each Element. This evaluation is organized as follows:

- **Issue** – Summarizes the problem, issue or objectives ***as raised in the 2016 Master Plan Reexamination*** (40:55D-89.a)

- **Status** – Addresses the current status of this issue (e.g., extent to which has been reduced, increased or addressed (40:55D-89.b)

- **Change(s)** – Identifies any changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives affecting an issue from the 2016 Master Plan Reexamination (40:55D-89.c). When an issue starts with this heading it means that it is a new issue not addressed in the 2016 Master Plan Reexamination. If no "change(s)" are identified for a particular issue it means that no changes have occurred that would warrant further action on that issue.

- **Recommendation(s)** – Identifies specific changes recommended to the Master Plan or development regulations (40:55D-89.d) If no "recommendation(s)" are identified for a particular issue it means that the matter was resolved (e.g., implemented by ordinance) and that no changes have occurred that would warrant further action on that issue.

Where applicable, this evaluation addresses the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality (40:55D-89.e).

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A. LAND USE PLAN

➢ **Issue:** The goals and objectives of the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan are as follows:

Goal: Maintain the diversity of housing, but encourage infill and stabilization of current residential areas rather than continuing sprawl patterns of development.
- Encourage new construction and renovation, including accessory apartments, in revitalization and developed areas.
- Encourage the subdivision of larger lots into conforming lots in appropriate locations in developed areas.

Goal: Encourage commercial and industrial development in areas with access to major regional highways (I-287) and in established areas.
- Locate major employment and traffic-drawing uses in areas where they will least impact residential neighborhoods.
- Maintain size of industrial districts to ensure adequate space for light industry and warehousing.

Goal: Differentiate between neighborhood commercial nodes and regional commercial development.
- Locate regional shopping centers in nodes with regional access.
- Concentrate commercial development into nodes or districts in areas where residential densities can support commercial activities.
- Limit commercial activities in villages to neighborhood commercial uses, those which serve the adjacent residential community

Goal: Maintain the character of the existing villages of Kingston, Griggstown, Franklin Park, Middlebush and East Millstone.
- Develop special design standards for villages.
- Discourage the intrusion of incompatible uses.
- Maintain the hard edge between villages and environs to protect character.

Goal: Protect the Township's cultural heritage by encouraging the continuation of farming as a viable land use.
- Protect farmland by purchase of development rights, continued use of farmland assessment and other effective mechanisms
- Discourage the extension of utilities to large farms except where needed to service existing development and improve environmental conditions.

Goal: Support the redevelopment of declining areas within the Township.
- Periodically reexamine redevelopment plans to ensure viability.
- Continue to use the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law to identify additional areas "in need of redevelopment" in the Township.

Status: Generally, these goals and objectives remain valid.

Recommendation: While generally valid, the goals and objectives should be re-evaluated if a new Land Use Plan element is created. For example, revitalization of Hamilton Street should be

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identified as a major goal and more specific language should be added addressing the extension of public sewer and water.

- **Issue:**[12] The 2016 Reexamination Report identified a number of population, demographic, housing and other factors that may affect Franklin, including:
    - The Township has a varied housing stock (e.g., greater than 50% of the Township's housing stock consists of attached single-family units (i.e., townhomes) and multi-family units).
    - The Township's housing stock has become increasingly diverse with a sizeable increase in the number of dwelling units containing 10 or more units. The number of units in multi-family buildings (i.e., 2-4 unit, 5-9 unit and 10+ unit buildings) increased by 2,190 units (from 5,379 to 7,566 units) between 2000 and 2010.
    - The Township population increased by approximately 11,000 persons between 2000 and 2010. At the time of the 2010 Census the Township population was 62,300.
    - By far the largest age-group increases occurred in the 55-64 and 65+ age group categories. The 55-64 age group increased 75% from 4,261 in 2000 to 7,466 in 2010. Similarly, the 65 & over age group increased 47% from 5,805 in 2000 to 8,513 in 2010. Together these age groups accounted for 52% of the Township's population increase (i.e., of the new residents 1-out of-2 was 55 years of age or older) between 2000 and 2010.
    - The number of residents aged 25 to 44 remained virtually identical between 2000 and 2010 (18,790 and 18,926 respectively) with a very minor increase in the 25-34 age group and a very minor decrease in the 35-44 age group. These age groups declined in comparison to overall Township population (together, 36.9% in 2000 declined to 30.3% by 2010).
    - While the number of school-aged children (5-17) increased by roughly 1,200, the percentage of overall population represented by this age group decreased slightly to 15% (lower than the County-wide figure of 19%). School-aged children represented 11% of the Township's overall increase in population (in other words, of the new residents 1-in-10 was a school-aged child).
    - The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority forecasts a year 2040 population of 71,390 for Franklin Township, at an annualized percent population change of 0.5%. Similarly, they forecast an annualized percent household change of 0.5% resulting in a forecast of 26,930 households in Franklin by the year 2040. The Township's 2014 population was estimated at 65,938.
    - The average household size in Franklin Township is 2.63 persons. The household composition, in terms of household size, remained relatively constant in the Township between 2000 and 2010, with only a minor increase in the percentage of 2 person households and a minor decrease in the number of households with 5 or more persons.
    - In comparison to the County as a whole, the Township has a somewhat higher percentage of smaller households (i.e., 1 and 2 person households) and correspondingly lower percentage

[12] The discussion of population, demographic, housing and other factors in the 2016 Reexamination Report was not discussed as an "issue" but rather a discussion of the status and/or changes in population, demographics, housing and other factors that may be informative.

revised draft

of larger households (i.e., 4 and 5+ person households). The supply of housing in the Township is consistent with this in that the Township has a greater percentage of smaller units (1 and 2-bedroom units), while the County has a greater percentage of larger units (3 and 4-bedroom units)

- Franklin Township is a racially-diverse community and the Township became increasingly diverse between 2000 and 2010 with significant increases in the African-American, Asian--American and Hispanic populations.

Status: Below is an update with respect to population, demographic, housing and other factors that may affect Franklin, including:

- The Township continues to have a very varied housing stock (e.g., greater than 50% of the Township's housing stock consists of attached single-family units (i.e., townhomes) and multi-family units). In fact, the percentage of units in multi-family structures (2 units or more) increased from 30.0% to 34.4%. This percentage is higher than Somerset County as a whole (27.3%) and comparable to the State as a whole (36.5%).
- Between 2010 and 2020 the Township experienced a 9.7% population increase from 62,300 in 2010 to 68,362 in 2020 (or 6,062 persons). The Township's 2024 population was Census-estimated at 69,862.
- The 55-64 and 65+ age group categories continued to experience growth. The 55-64 age group increased from 7,466 in 2010 to 9,186 in 2020 (a 23% increase). The 65 & over age group increased 49% from 8,513 in 2010 to 12,663 in 2020. Together these age groups accounted for the vast majority (5,870) of the Township's 6,032 population increase between 2010 and 2020.
- The percentage of overall population represented by school-aged children (5-17 this age) has remained consistent, compared to the 2010 Census, remaining at around 15% of Township population.
- The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority forecasts a year 2050 population of 73,037 for Franklin Township, at an annualized percent population change of 0.2%. Similarly, they forecast an annualized percent household change of 0.3% resulting in a forecast of 28,586 households in Franklin by the year 2050.
- The average household size in Franklin Township has decreased slightly from 2.63 persons to 2.57 persons.
- Franklin Township continues to be an increasingly diverse community. Between the 2010 and 2020 Census the Asian population increased from 20% to 23% of the Township population while the Hispanic population increased from 13% to 18%. The White population decreased from 39% to 31% while the Black population remained relatively stable, increasing slightly in number, but decreasing slightly in percentage of Township population, remaining around 25%.

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- **Issue:** The 2016 Master Plan Reexamination Report anticipated that the significant increase in the older population would increase the demand and need for specialized housing geared towards aging seniors (e.g., residential health care, long-term care and assisted living facilities) and recommended the Township review its zoning and accommodate for such uses, particularly in the northwesterly portion of the Township (e.g., in the business and industry zoning districts).

  Status: As addressed above, the senior population continues to grow in the Township. The Township, however, has not experienced a significant level of interest in the development of such uses (e.g., application for use variances). Nonetheless, due to the continued increase in the senior population demand and need for specialized housing geared towards aging seniors remains possible.

  Recommendation: The Township may wish to proactively address this via ordinance amendments. Absent such amendments, it is possible that the Township will receive zoning amendment or use variance requests. Since such uses (e.g., residential health care, long-term care and assisted living facilities) generally serve a public purpose and are generally low-impact (e.g., low traffic) in nature, the Township should consider such requests with considerations including appropriate location (e.g., roadway and the nature of surrounding land uses) and the scale of the proposed development.

- **Issue:** *S-C-V Zone on Weston Canal Road*. Both the 2006 Master Plan and the 2016 Reexamination recommended that those lands that are not used for Senior Citizen Village development as part of Canal Walk should be returned to an Agricultural (A) zoning designation. The 2016 Reexamination Report indicated that the site is not large enough to accommodate permitted development in the SCV zone and further the lack of public water and sewer limit development potential. The 2016 Reexamination further recommended that the Township evaluate appropriate zoning for the residential properties along Weston Canal Road and Weston Road within the SCV which are not part of the Canal Walk Development (e.g., placement within the Agricultural (A) or one of the RR zones should be evaluated.

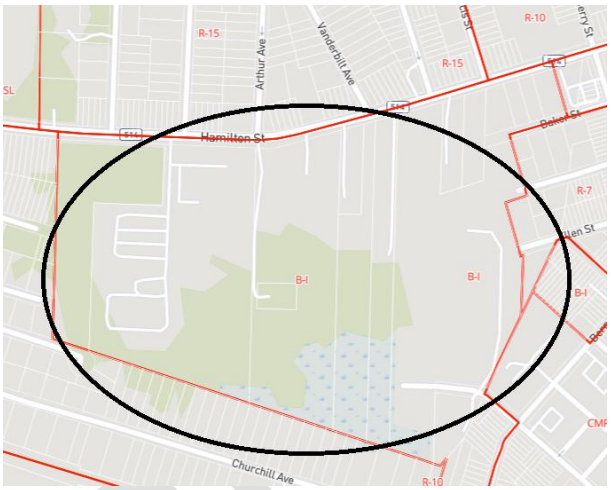


  Status: All recommendations accomplished via Ordinance #4271-19. As recommended, the larger properties in this area (including the one depicted above) were re-zoned to the A zone. A provision was added to the zoning ordinance (Section 112-159.1) indicating that several smaller residential properties in the SCV (that are not part of Canal Walk) should be subject to the bulk requirements of

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the R-40 zone. Unfortunately, one such property (Block 513.01 lot 6.03) was omitted, thus Section 112-159.1 should be revised to add that parcel.

- **Recommendation:** The Townshjp should review the zoning for the Business and Industry (B-I) zone along Hamilton Street (in the area of the armory). In addition to the armory, the area contains a few light industrial uses, as well as a number of residences. A large proportion of the area is undeveloped and forested. NJDEP mapping suggests that a large portion of the forested area is wetlands. Despite the few light industrial uses (including the one large such use which gains access via School Avenue – not Hamilton Street), the predominant character of this area is that of single-family residential uses (the area adjoins several such zones – R-7, R-10 and R-15).



- **Recommendation:** The Township should consider placing the Wendy's on Easton Avenue into the G-B zone (consistent with the rest of the surrounding area) rather its current Canal Preservation (C-P) zoning.

- **Issue:** The Master Plan should consider rezoning several large properties along the north side of Skillman's Lane to the A zone. Most of these properties are part of the State Six Mile Run site. Further, these properties are considerably larger than 1 acre, are located on a narrow rural road, are located in a rural area of the Township, and not served by public sewer. The smaller parcels to the east of South Middlebush Road, south of Skillman's Lane, should remain R-40 as this zone best matches the development pattern of that area.

  Status: All recommendations accomplished via ordinance.

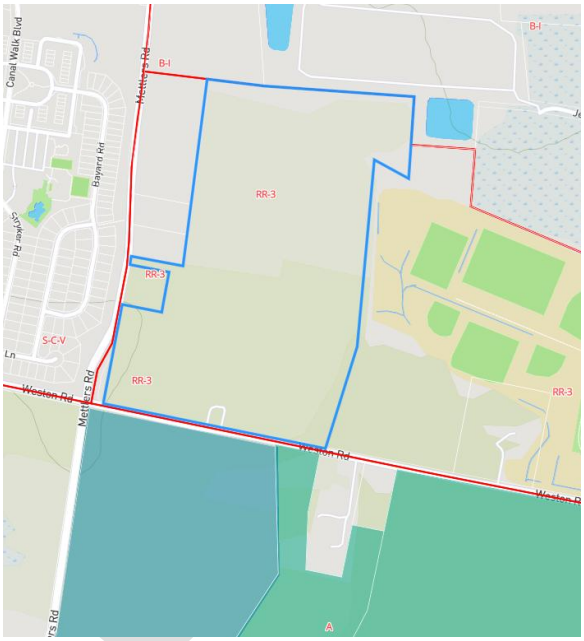
- **Issue:** Properties which have been farmland-preserved (e.g., Block 37.02, Lot 2; 61 Cortelyous Lane) should be rezoned to the Agricultural (A) zone reflective of their preserved status. The 2016 Reexamination similarly recommended that open space preserved properties be placed in an appropriate low intensity zone (A, CP, or RR).

  Status: While most open space and farmland-preserved properties are located in low-density zoning districts (Canal Preservation, Rural-Residential, Agricultural), a few such properties are not (e.g., 61 Cortelyous and 277 Bennetts Lane) have not been.

revised draft

Recommendation: Such properties should be re-zoned to the appropriate low-density residential zone.

- **Issue:** *R-O-L Zone on Northeastern Corner of Mettler's and Weston Roads* – The 2016 Master Plan Reexamination noted that potential development of the site in accordance with its R-O-L zoning may be limited due to potential for limited market demand for research and laboratory development at that location. It further noted that the adjoining roads (Mettlers and Weston Roads) are unsuited for traffic-intensive development. Further, while located within the Township's Sewer Service Area, the document noted that the nearest available public sewer is located a significant distance away in Schoolhouse Road (which significantly affects development potential). Thus, the Master Plan Reexamination recommended that the Township investigate alternative zoning for this property.



Status: The property was rezoned to the Rural Residential (RR-3) zone by Ordinance #4371-22.

- **Issue:** The property at the southeast corner of Metters Road/ Weston Road, which was recently been acquired by the County for open space purposes, should be rezoned the Agricultural (A) (consistent with the recommendation contained elsewhere herein to rezone preserved open space and preserved farmland to the appropriate low density zoning district).

Status: The property was rezoned to the Agricultural (A) zone by Ordinance #4371-22

- **Issue:** The Master Plan should also evaluate the appropriate zoning of the undeveloped portion of the Huntington Life Sciences property located at the southwest corner of Metters Road/ Weston Road which remains in the R-O-L zone. While located within the Township's Sewer Service Area, the nearest available public sewer is located a significant distance away in Schoolhouse Road (which significantly affects development potential). Further, the site's location on Mettlers Road and Weston Road (both very narrow roadways) render traffic-intensive use of the site inappropriate.

Status: The entire property was rezoned to the Agricultural (A) zone by Ordinance #4371-22

- **Issue:** *Office Vacancies.* Following the recent economic downturn and resulting from what appear to be permanent changes in the national economy (e.g., reduced need for office space due to

technology advances and other changes in business practice), office vacancy rates have increased significantly. This issue affects not only employment opportunities within the Township but has long-term potential to negatively affect the Township's non-residential tax base.

The 2016 Reexamination Report recommended that the Township proactively address this matter and identified potential efforts including: development of a comprehensive economic development strategy and evaluation of appropriate zoning changes to allow redevelopment in this area of the Township.

Status: As addressed above, since 2016 the Township has conducted a number of studies, Master Plan updates and zoning amendments addressing the Township corporate business and industrial zones.

The first master plan update (and corresponding zoning ordinance) was adopted in 2020. This update amended the Land Use Plan Element to address the long-term viability of the Corporate Business (C-B) zone as well as aspects of the Township's zoning ordinance (e.g., use and bulk requirements of the Corporate Business (C-B), and M-1 and M-2 (Light Manufacturing) zones. That update indicated that the purpose of the recommendations were intended to address aspects that impeded appropriate opportunities for economic development and to encourage job creation in the Township's corporate and industrial areas that take advantage of Franklin's centralized location in the Tri-State area with access to the regional transportation corridors including I-287 and the New Jersey Turnpike and public transportation.

The amendment to the Land Use Plan Element recommended the consolidation of the C-B, M-1 and M-2 Zones into a new Business & Industry (B-I) Zone and was based on a consultant economic study entitled, "Strategic Zoning and Economic Development Recommendations", prepared by 4Ward Planning and dated August 7, 2017. The new B-I Zone: incorporated the permitted uses of the three prior zones; established one set of bulk standards (lot area, setbacks, building height, lot and impervious coverage, FAR) for the B-I Zone; and established one set of consistent buffer requirements with larger buffers adjoining a residential zone. The recommendations of this Land Use Plan Element amendment were adopted by ordinance later that year.

With respect to the office vacancy issue in particular, one of the key changes implemented during this effort was the elimination of the Corporate Business (C-B) zone. While located in close proximity to I-287 (along Davidson Avenue and Atrium Drive), the uses permitted in the C-B zone were limited to professional offices, laboratories and hotels. The C-B zone did not permit light manufacturing, self-storage and warehousing as permitted in nearby M-1 and M-2. Due to the office vacancy issues in that area, this area was incorporated into the new B-I (which permitted such uses while retaining the uses permitted in the C-B such as offices, hotels and laboratories).

revised draft

[update as necessary depending on what happens with Planning Board's consideration of current B-I study]

Recommendation: [update as necessary depending on what happens with Planning board's consideration of current B-I study]

- **Issue:** The 2016 Reexamination Report discussed the recommendation in the 2006 Master Plan to "expand the list of permitted uses in industrial districts, recognizing new and emerging uses which should be directed to such districts." The 2016 Reexamination Report indicated that this was a valid planning objective and should be evaluated (e.g., specifically listing certain appropriate and sought-after uses (e.g., data centers).

  Status: As addressed above, the permitted uses in the Township's industrial zones has been evaluated a number of times since the 2016 Master Plan Reexamination. The changes made in 2020, in particular, expanded the range of permitted uses by merging the M-1, M-2 and C-B zones into a new B-I zone (certain uses where previously permitted in one zone but not the others) and by adding additional permitted uses including banquet facilities and data centers.

  [update as necessary depending on what happens with Planning Board's consideration of current B-I study]

  Recommendation: [update as necessary depending on what happens with Planning board's consideration of current B-I study]

- **Issue:** The 2016 Reexamination Report discussed the recommendation in the 2006 Master Plan to maintain sufficient areas of light industrial zoning to ensure a varied tax base and indicated that remains a valid planning objective.

  Status: As addressed above, Township's industrial zones has been evaluated a number of times since the 2016 Master Plan Reexamination. The amount of industrially-zoned land has remained stable since the 2006 Master Plan and 2016 Master Plan Reexamination. While a few industrially-zoned properties along Metters Road and Elizabeth Avenue (south of New Brunswick Road) were re-zoned to residential zones in 2022, the land area involved is a fraction of the overall amount of industrially-zoned in the Township.

  Recommendation: No further recommendations at this time.

- **Issue:** The Township should consider a comprehensive re-evaluation of the Township's clustering/ lot averaging regulations. Currently, clustering options are available in the Township's development regulations:

revised draft

- Lot size averaging in the C-P zone (*§112-142),*
- Lot size averaging in the *RR-3 zone (§112-145)*
- Lot size averaging in the *RR-5 zone (§112-146)*
- Natural Resource Cluster Option (*Article XXX*) which allows clustering in certain zones
- Agricultural Cluster Option (*Article XXXI*) which allows clustering in certain zones

However, there exist significant differences in the various cluster provisions with various inconsistencies. The various clustering provisions should be streamlined, simplified and made consistent (e.g., similar methodology for determining lot yield). Consideration should be given to combining and/or consolidating these various clustering/ lot averaging regulations into one chapter of the land development ordinance.

- The lot size averaging provisions in §112-142, §112-145 and §112-146 allow rather limited flexibility in lot size (e.g., in the RR-3 zone the 3 acre minimum is only to 2 acres), whereas the clustering provisions of Articles XXX and XXXI offer *significantly* more flexibility (e.g., down to 15,000 square feet).
- In the Agricultural Cluster Option it is difficult to discern the planning rationale for requiring that the tracts be located across several zoning districts and requiring a certain percentage of the tract in certain zones.
- The Agricultural Cluster Option offers a rather significant density bonus - in particular, lands in the A zone receive a nearly 3x bonus (i.e., nearly 3 times the number of homes result if clustered), where no other cluster requirements offer any bonus. The lot yield methodology in §112-142, §112-145 and §112-146 and Article XXX are logical and effectively offer no density bonus.
- The stated purpose of the Agricultural Cluster Option is to encourage continued practice of agriculture through retention of large contiguous farmland, however required "findings" also address preservation of natural resources and "active recreational or active public use" (which contradicts the purpose and the requirement that 50% of the preserved area be actively farmed).
- The Natural Resource Cluster Option and the Agricultural Cluster Option require unclear and unnecessary procedural requirements and steps (e.g., formal submittal of a "sketch plat").
- The Natural Resource Cluster Option allows non-contiguous clustering. However, this needs to be reviewed for consistency with new legislation.
- The legality of the financial commitment requirement in the Natural Resource Cluster Option needs to be reviewed.

It is noted that the 2013 OSRP recommends that the Township continue to encourage the use of clustering techniques when such techniques could serve to protect existing farmland, areas of scenic value and/or natural resource value. Further, it recommends that the Township re-evaluate the cluster provisions in order to:

revised draft

- identify ways to either increase the likelihood of their use (e.g., greater flexibility in minimum lot sizes and other standards and/or density bonuses if certain additional objectives are met); and
- consider the use of mandatory clustering in certain areas and/or circumstances.

Status: This recommendation has not been implemented.

Recommendation: This remains a valid recommendation.

- **Issue:** For ease of reference by potential applicants, the Township should consider consolidating the various design standards sections (i.e., general, HBD, various sections within the Redevelopment area) into one portion of the ordinance. Such review would eliminate any inconsistencies that may exist and should be supplemented with appropriate illustrations to better explain the standards.

  Status: This recommendation has not been implemented.

  Recommendation: This remains a valid recommendation.

- **Issue:** Implement the reclamation plan for Trap Rock Quarry which was presented and approved by Franklin Township. Plans for the conversion of Trap Rock Quarry to a public park after the closure of the quarry should continue to be supported.

  Status: Discussions with representatives of the Trap Rock Quarry over the last few years suggest that quarry operations are anticipated to continue for several more decades. This fact notwithstanding, it is important to note that State water supply plans have addressed potential use of the quarry for water storage when quarrying ceases. Such plans are incorporated into the reclamation plan for the quarry. The Township's Master Plan and zoning are consistent with the objective of maintaining the rural nature of the southerly portion of the Township while allowing the continuation of the mining and mining associated uses in the quarry zone.

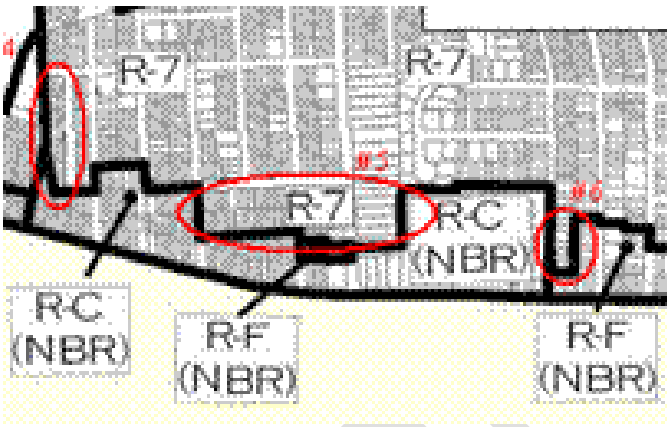
- **Issue:** *Renaissance 2000 Redevelopment Plan* – The relevant use and bulk standards of the districts should be compiled into a zoning schedule for ease of interpretation.

  Status: This recommendation has not been implemented.

  Recommendation: The zoning within the Renaissance Redevelopment Plan needs to be reviewed. Generally, it needs to be streamlined and simplified. For example, there exist three different sets of design standards (one each for the RPM and Leewood areas and another general section), different signage standards in the different zones, etc. Further, the applicability of the "underlay" vs. "base" zones needs to be clarified/ simplified.

revised draft

- **Issue:** *Renaissance 2000 Redevelopment Plan* – Per the June 2007 Master Plan Amendment, there are several areas currently designated General Business (G-B) within the Renaissance Redevelopment Area that should be in the R-7 residential zone. These changes are proposed since none of these areas actually front Route 27 (where general business use is appropriate), since these areas are currently occupied by residences and/or since they adjoin existing and/or future residential development. These are reflected as changes #4, #5 and #6 on the map below.



Status: Implemented by Ordinance #4474-25

- **Issue:** *Hamilton Street.* A renewed emphasis regarding the revitalization of Hamilton Street led the Township to form Township's Hamilton Street Advisory Board (HSAB) in 2014. Upon its formation, the HSAB identified a Vision for Hamilton Street and conducted an analysis of the weaknesses and threats that may negatively affect the Township's ability to revitalize Hamilton Street and identified the various opportunities and strengths that may be capitalized upon in these efforts. This analysis (see below) effectively serves as the HSAB's "strategic plan" for revitalize Hamilton Street.

  The 2016 Master Plan Reexamination recommended that the "strategic plan" outlined below continue to be implemented and indicated that the improvements to the design standards recommended in the April 2015 Master Plan Amendment[13] should be pursued.

VISION

- We envision a revitalized Hamilton Street with a unique and genuine sense of place which fosters economic opportunity and community vitality.
- We envision a Hamilton Street that enhances the quality of life for residents and visitors alike by offering a safe and clean setting and by providing a comfortable and attractive streetscape and storefronts, a pedestrian friendly street, and outstanding public spaces.
- We envision a Hamilton Street that is conducive to business enterprises, employment opportunities and stores that offer special and distinctive merchandise that creates a pleasant and varied shopping experience and which provides a wide variety of services.
- We envision a Hamilton Street that celebrates and shares its ever evolving ethnic and cultural diversity by providing a vibrant urban setting for cultural experiences, diverse dining, the arts,

[13] https://www.franklintwpnj.org/home/showpublisheddocument/5478/635677142481530000

revised dra

entertainment, community festivals, and quality residential living.

- Our vision is achieved and maintained through a strong public-private partnership among local government, businesses, educational institutions, non-profit community based organizations, and residents. This partnership is devoted to constantly working together to make Hamilton Street an attraction, an asset, and a success as both a business district and thriving neighborhood.

WEAKNESSES and THREATS

- Length of the corridor with scattered land use pattern (residential mixed with business along length of corridor)
  - results in there being no "place" along Hamilton Street
  - no significant concentration of retail, residential, government in a concentrated "center" or "place" along Hamilton Street

- Scattered ownership patterns along the corridor
  - numerous, small properties (along Hamilton Street and back streets)
  - impedes assembly of property into larger, profitable, redevelopment sites
  - entrenched residential uses amongst business uses

- Safety, crime and perception thereof
  - women afraid to walk along Hamilton Street
  - shootings have hurt perception of safety and turned customers away
  - perception of crime - how to turn that around?
  - drugs

- No community space/ park
  - No central community space/ no park for outdoor community events, etc.
  - No community room/ meeting space for indoor events

- No real "destination uses" with the possible exception of certain restaurants
  - no reason for people outside the immediate area to go to Hamilton Street
  - no destination retail uses or other such uses to attract those outside of immediate area

- Lack of business diversity (e.g., prevalence of beauty salons)
  - Need for more breakfast/ coffee places
  - No modern convenience stores

- Property maintenance issues - harms perception of the district
  - boarded up buildings
  - weeds/ lack of mowing
  - need for facade and sign improvements on various properties
  - graffiti

- Vacant, undeveloped and underdeveloped lots detract from perception of Hamilton Street

- Revitalization of Hamilton Street doesn't seem to be a priority to the Township

- Need a "Big Bang" to attract attention, interest and investment along Hamilton Street

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- Lack of public parking in certain areas
  - Particular areas of concern:
    - Along Hamilton Street between Norma and Pershing Avenues
    - Hamilton Street near Dewald Avenue (near SaveRite is worst)
    - Hamilton Street near Baier Avenue
    - South side of Hamilton Street between Lawrence Avenue and Henry Street
    - Hamilton Street between Kossuth Street and Meister Street
  - Merchants park along Hamilton Street all day blocking spaces for use by potential customers
  - Sight distance issue in certain areas caused by parked cars too near the intersection (e.g., Norma Avenue and Dewald Avenue accessing Hamilton Street)

- Hamilton Street is a County highway (arterial)
  - traffic can be significant at times
  - vehicular/ pedestrian/ bike conflicts
  - [this is an opportunity as well]

- Assessment levels/ taxes
  - Roughly $900k/ acre
  - assessment levels do not align with rents
  - significant disincentive to redevelopment, investment and tenants

- Homelessness and loitering

- Zoning
  - need to allow greater density/ intensity of use
  - alignment of the HB Business Improvement District (BID) and the Hamilton Street Business zoning district

- Inappropriate selection of street trees blocks visibility of stores

- DPW needs to empty trash cans more frequently

STRENGTHS and OPPORTUNITIES

- Proximity to Rutgers University, Robert Wood John and Saint Peters hospitals, theaters, etc. in New Brunswick

- Located in most populated area of Franklin (plus, population along Hamilton Street in New Brunswick) provides customer base
  - planned/ potential redev. along Hamilton Street
  - nearby apartment complexes (along Hamilton and Franklin Blvd)

- Recent streetscape improvements (lights, benches, sidewalks) improves appearance
  - need to continue

- Vacant, undeveloped and underdeveloped sites provide development/ redevelopment opportunities

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- Hamilton Street is a County highway (arterial) providing access to New Brunswick from Franklin and other communities

- 2 large sites along Hamilton Street (Johns Plaza and Nora Shopping Center) have significant redevelopment potential
  - Infill could provide both economic, community character and streetscape improvements.
  - potential parking enhancements including potential public/private partnerships including park-n-ride and/or public parking (which would benefit Hamilton Street as a whole).
  - pedestrian enhancements
  - if properly redeveloped, each site could act as an anchor for revitalization of the corridor and spur additional investment and revitalization along the corridor
  - redevelopment could involve complete redevelopment of the site (i.e., tear down of building) or redevelopment may involve retention of the existing building (e.g., pad sites along frontage along with parking, transportation and other site modifications)

- The existence of the HB Business Improvement District (BID) and the Hamilton Street Advisory Board (HSAB)

- Existence of continuous sidewalk system

- Detailed design standards in Zoning Ordinance encourage attractive development (both on-site and streetscape)

- CDBG funding
  - capitalize more?
  - other grant opportunities?

- Transit opportunities
  - bus stations
  - train
  - County potentially adding new bus stops with access to NB train stations

- Changes to the zoning plan could help encourage investment, revitalization and redevelopment

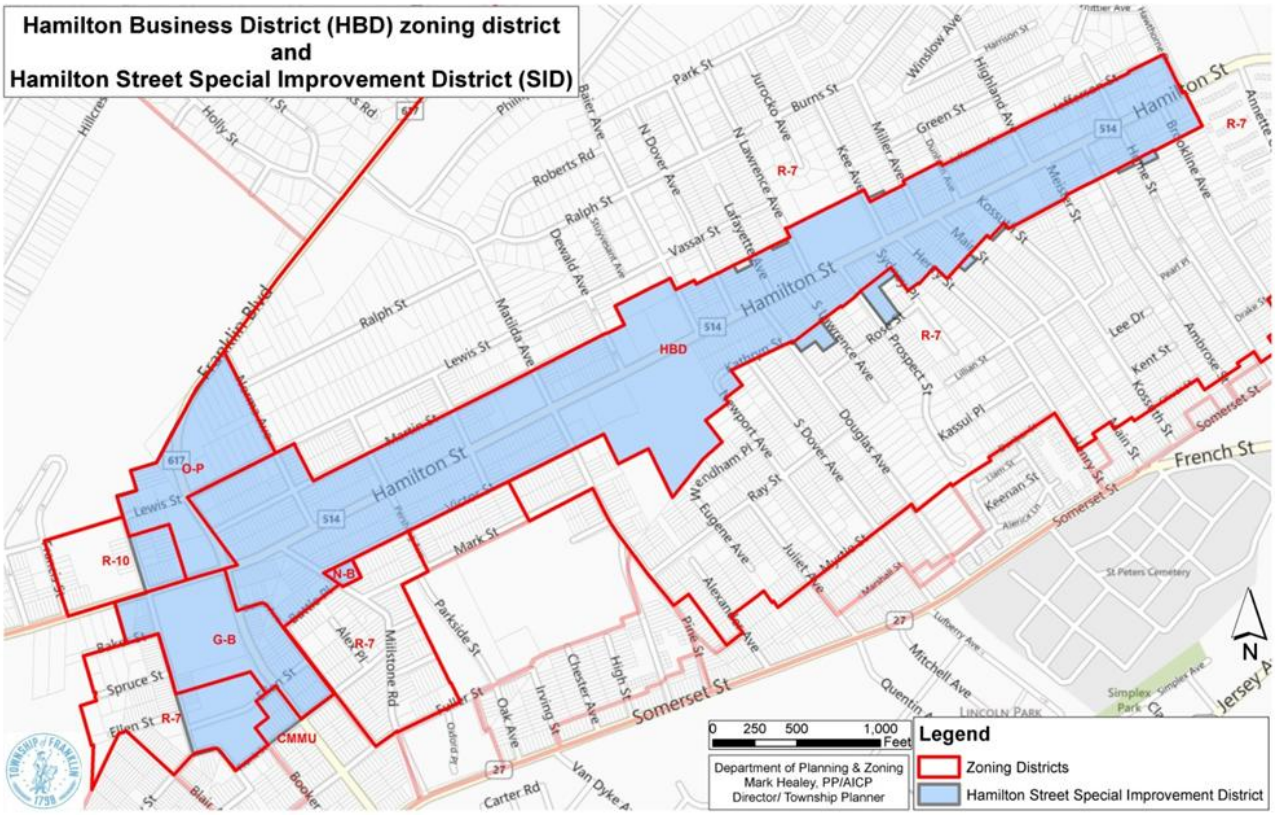
- Area in Need of Rehabilitation (eligible?)? Area in Need of Redevelopment (eligible?)?

- Opportunity to increase awareness and interest in Hamilton Street through marketing and dissemination of information

- Political will/ relationships

- Police substation would help with crime (both in real terms and perception)

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Recommendation: The issues identified in the "strategic plan" outlined above should continue to be implemented. The improvements to the design standards recommended in the April 2015 Master Plan Amendment should be pursued.

- **Issue:** *Cedar Grove Lane north of New Brunswick Road.* North of New Brunswick Road, and particularly north of Pierce Street, this corridor has been developed with a mixture of multi-family housing, some commercial uses and large-scale places of worship. The Master Plan should evaluate the zoning of the Cedar Grove Lane corridor north of New Brunswick Road with low-intensity non-residential uses.

  Status: This recommendation has not been pursued. However, since 2016, several previously-vacant or under-developed properties in this corridor have been developed with either townhouse development or expansions to places of worship resulting in reduced development potential. This issue was relatively low in priority and even lower in priority due to the developed nature of the area.

- **Issue:** *Cedar Grove Lane south of New Brunswick Road.* The R-40 zoning south of New Brunswick Road should be maintained. The character of the roadway and the surrounding area becomes decidedly less intense and decidedly single-family residential in nature southward from New Brunswick Road.

revised

Status: No changes have been made to the R-40 south of New Brunswick Road along Cedar Grove Lane.

Recommendation: This Master Plan Reexamination carries forward the recommendation that the single-family residential (R-40) nature of the Cedar Grove Lane corridor should be retained south of New Brunswick Road.

- **Issue:** Township Planning & Zoning staff have reviewed the Land Development Ordinance and identified a number of provisions that should be reviewed including:
  - Definitions - Some updated is needed (e.g., "Administrative Officer", subdivision committee, etc.).
  - Add prohibition of any accessory structure being in front of the principal structure (residential only)
  - Conditional use standards - Need to comprehensively review for internal consistency and consistency with law, update and delete accordingly.
  - Should put section in that when a use variance is requested that, at a minimum, the ordinance standards for said use must be complied with (e.g., conditional use standards for places of worship would apply in the case of a use variance for a place of worship in a zone were such use is not permitted)
  - Review and revise 112-67 Restoration - This section deals with non-conforming structures that are destroyed or altered. It also deals with existing undersized lots and certifications for preexisting nonconforming uses.
  - 112-72 (flag lots) - Clarify that minimum setbacks for front yards are only for principal structures and to decide what the setbacks would be for accessory structures
  - 112-74 affordable housing - Review and revise (e.g., eliminate bonus density, eliminate low/moderate split that is inconsistent with State UHAC rules)
  - Parking requirements - Review requirements (e.g., schools, retail) and update accordingly
  - 112-118 Noise - This section deals with the maximum decibel levels permitted. Should noise levels be in a development Ordinance? If not, this section should be deleted. If not deleted, they should be reviewed for consistency with current standards including the Township noise ordinance.
  - 112-180 D - This section deals with the makeup of the Minor Subdivision Committee. It needs to be clarified and consistent with subdivision committee definition and the current makeup of the Committee
  - 112-199 - This section deals with the requirements for an environmental assessment. This should be revised to reflect what is currently required.
  - 112-299 - This section allows for an appeal to the Township Council when a use variance is granted by the Zoning Board. This section should be deleted
  - 112-250 - This section deals with the process for informal reviews to the Planning Board. This section should be revised to reflect current practice.

revised draft

- Reconsider footnote which allows hotels to be 12 stories in height in situations where such zones adjoin lower density residential areas
- Temporary use permits - Clarify what is eligible or delete

Status: The majority of these recommendations have not been implemented, while the 12-story allowance for hotels was modified to limit addition hotels to the 5-story/ 50 foot height limit for the rest of the B-I zone.

Recommendations: The Township should pursue recommendations made in the 2016 Reexamination Report in order of importance (some of these recommendations are higher in priority than others).

The Township Planning & Zoning staff have identified a number of additional provisions that should be reviewed including:

- The zoning ordinance needs to be updated to update or provide definitions of all key terms used including but not limited to uses identified in Schedule 1, Permitted Uses, and Schedules 2 and 3. Other missing definitions include but are not limited to: half-story and average grade.

- The Township should evaluate whether revisions could be made to the ordinance to better address the issue of business uses being conducted in residences.

- The Township should evaluate whether revisions could be made to the ordinance to better address the issue of the creation in additional dwelling units in residences.

- The operation of landscaping businesses in a residential zones is a constant and growing problem. Unfortunately, the Township ordinance does not permit this use in any of the Township's zoning districts (neither residential or non-residential uses). It is recommended that the Township evaluate this issue. Landscaping businesses provide services to many Township residences and should be accommodated in some manner in the zoning ordinance.

- The Township should consider permitting indoor recreational uses in shopping centers of a certain size in NB and G-B zones and permitting as stand-alone uses with an parking requirement.

- The zoning ordinance should be revised to eliminate certain uses as permitted uses in the residential uses including: philanthropic or eleemosynary uses in the Rural Residential zones,

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hospitals in the Rural Residential zones, kennels in the Rural Residential zones, and "community residences" in the Rural Residential and Residential zones.

- The Township should consider allowing gas stations with convenience stores in the N-B and G-B zones as a permitted principal use or perhaps as a conditional use subject to certain standards (e.g., frontage on Route 27 or Easton Avenue and certain minimum lot size). Such use is not recommended in the HBD zone, nor in the RDO Overlay zone.

- As addressed above, the redevelopment ordinance needs to be reviewed – simplified, reviewed for internal inconsistencies and for consistency with zoning standards throughout the rest of the Township.

- The Township should review the applicability of front yard setbacks for accessory setbacks for small accessory structures (e.g., small sheds) and pools on reverse frontage lots (e.g., JFK Boulevard) and corner lots. The Township ordinance prohibits no such structures in any front yard (which applies along all road frontages), which in many cases creates unnecessary restrictions. However, many towns permit accessory structures in the "non front" front yard (e.g., rear yard adjoining JFK Boulevard) subject to the side or rear setback requirements for accessory structures, often with requirements for fencing.

- The Township should review its signage ordinance for consistency with applicable law and for internal consistency (e.g., do there need to be different standards in the redevelopment area versus the rest of the Town?). Further, the 30 square foot maximum for all retain uses should be evaluated. A review conducted in 2024 found that all other nearby towns evaluated based the permitted size of building-mounted retail signs on the size of the tenant space (calculated based on the square footage of the tenant's façade area or the linear feet of the tenant's façade width). Thus, as the store size increases (e.g., larger anchor uses) other towns permit the sign to increase in size (while Franklin's ordinance continues to limit the building-mounted sign to 30 square feet).

  The definition of "sign" should be revised to more specific address whether painted murals constitute a "sign" particularly if the mural contains no wording or imagery related to the business upon which the mural is painted.

- Article XXXIV, Parkland Dedication, should be eliminated as such ordinances were found to be invalid many years ago,

- The Cluster Residential (C-R) zone should be revised to eliminate "residential cluster developments" as a permitted principal use in the Cluster Residential (C-R) zone since there are no development standards pertaining to this use as are provided for single- and two-family homes, garden apartment and townhouse developments in the C-R zone which are

revised draft

provided bulk standards in Schedules 2 and 3 and additional development standards in Section 112-39 and 49.

- The Township should consider revising the loading depth requirement (currently 2x the length of the longest truck). The Township engineer should be consulted on wording of an appropriate standard.

- The Township should consider reducing the parking lot drive aisle requirement from 26 feet to 24 feet. Twenty-four feet is a typical standard in municipal ordinances and consistent with accepted engineering standards. Further, reducing the aisle width should result in a decrease in impervious coverage. If there are concerns about such a reduction, the Township may wish to consider lowering the aisle width standard for low turnover uses (e.g., workplaces, residential) but maintaining the wide width for higher turnover uses (e.g., retail).

- The Township should consider placing townhouse and garden apartment developments currently existing in the G-B zone into the C-R zone (e.g., JFK Boulevard, portion of Hempstead Gardens) since these developments were built using these standards. Existing sections 112-39.R and 112-49.N essentially "grandfather" existing garden apartment and townhouse developments in the G-B zone. However, making this change would make it more clear that such uses are conforming.

- Sections 112-39 (garden apartments) and 112-49 (townhouse development) should not be in Article V, Conditional Uses (as these are no conditional uses). These should be stand-alone sections in Article IV, Supplementary Zoning Regulations.

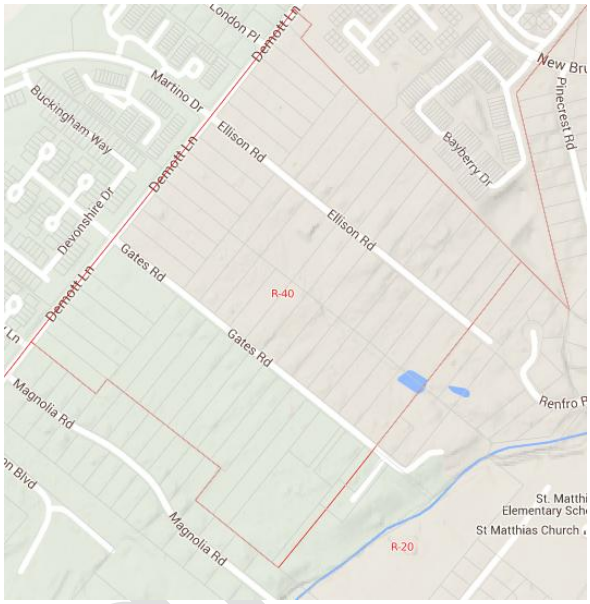
  Section 112-46, Professional office uses in the R-20-H should be similarly moved to Section IV as should Section 112-52, R-10A Zone Single-Family Development.

  Lastly, Section 112-53, Principal Uses in Neighborhood Business (NB) zone, should also be moved to Article IV. This section addresses the permitted commercial uses permitted in the two shopping centers developed in the Cluster Residential (C-R) zone along Cedar Grove Lane and DeMott Lane. The section prohibits certain uses (e.g., restaurants, health clubs). This should be reconsidered since these uses have historically been located in these shopping centers with no impact for decades. The prohibition against gas stations, however, should remain.

revised draft

- **Issue:** The zoning district boundary line near the termini of Gates and Ellison Roads should be changed to place the entirety of this neighborhood within the R-40 zone. There is no legitimate planning rationale for the last few properties at the end of these roads to be placed within the R-20 zone. An adjoining over-sized lot on Renfro Road should be reviewed for placement in this R-40 zone as well.

  Status: Township Council considered this matter and decided not to adopt an ordinance implementing this recommendation.

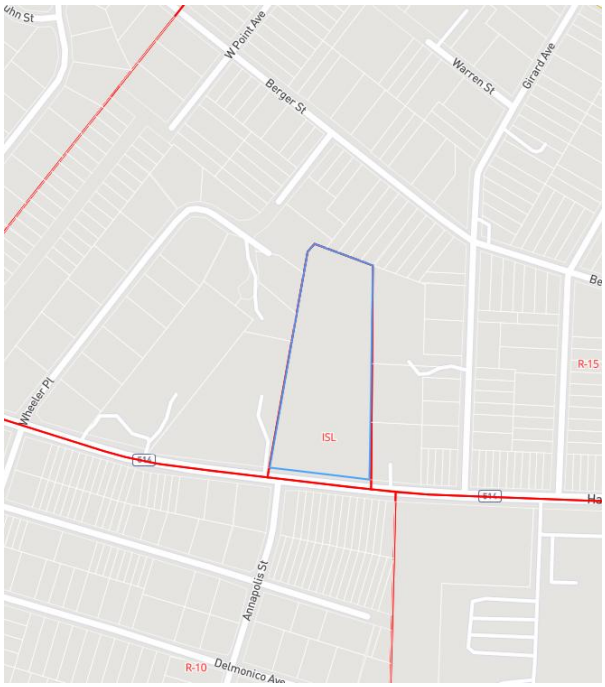


- **Issue:** Support the redevelopment of declining areas in the Township. Encourage the redevelopment of the "Renaissance 2000" redevelopment area. Use the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law to identify additional areas "in need of redevelopment."

  Status: These remain valid recommendations. The Township and the Franklin Township Redevelopment Agency continue to implement the Renaissance Redevelopment Plan. See recommendations above regarding necessary review of the redevelopment area zoning.

- **Change:** *Independent Senior Living (ISL) zone.* As part of its Third Round Fair Share Plan the Township re-zoned 1135 Hamilton Street (Block 347, Lot 7) from the R-15 zone to a new ISL zone which would permit development of age-restricted 3-story 127-unit apartment building subject to certain affordable housing requirements. However, this development was never pursued by the developer and the Township has since taken this development out of its affordable housing plan.

  Recommendation: This property should be re-zoned back to the R-15 zone.



revised draft

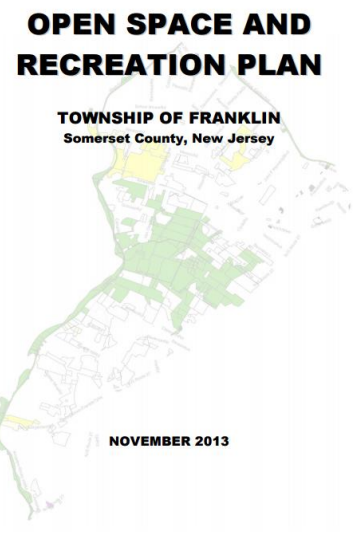
B. HOUSING PLAN

- **Status:** [NOTE: The Planning Board adopted its 4th Round Plan in 2025 – submitted it to the State "Program" – the Planning Board will need to re-adopt the 4th Round Plan in next month or so, incorporating changes required by the Program/ settlement agreement – **will update this section accordingly**]

  Recommendation(s): No further recommendations at this time.

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C. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN



- **Issue:** The Township's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) was adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Township Master Plan in December 2013. The 2013 OSRP is essentially a synthesis and update of the OSRP prepared in 2000 and the 2012 Preservation and Recreation Needs Assessment and Action Plan. It superseded the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan element in the 2006 Master Plan.

  The 2016 Reexamination Report recommended consideration of the "zoning techniques" and "infrastructure considerations" described in the OSRP as compatible with open space and farmland preservation and the retention of agriculture and rural character. These included:

  - *Rural Density Zoning* – retaining agriculture and rural character and maintaining the rural densities by maintaining the zoning of areas zoned A, CP, RR-5 and RR-3.

  - *Cluster Provisions* – when residential development does occur continue to use clustering provisions (e.g., lot size averaging, NRPC cluster option, NRPC R-40 cluster option,) in order to preserve agriculture and open space while managing growth. The OSRP also recommends that the Township identify ways to either increase the likelihood of their use and consider the use of mandatory clustering in certain areas and/or circumstances.

  - *Infrastructure Considerations* – Since the provision of sewer service significantly increases development pressure and significantly increases potential intensity of development, the OSRP indicates that it is critical that the Township carefully restrict the expansion of the sewer service area into areas of the Township that are inappropriate and/or unsuitable for more intensive development (i.e., those zones that permit less than 1 unit per acre). It also recommends that the Township carefully consider the expansion of public water service for similar reasons.

  Status: The OSRP has not been updated since 2013.

  Recommendation: The "zoning techniques" and "infrastructure considerations" recommendations described in the OSRP remain valid and should continue to be observed by the Township's land use boards and the Township Council when making applicable decisions on planning, zoning and land use.

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Nonetheless, the OSRP needs to be updated. As with the effort in 2013, the Open Space Advisory Committee (OPAC) should be involved. This can be done in various ways including: (1) the OSAC could take the lead and prepare a full draft new OSRP for the Planning Board's consideration (as was done in 2013) or (2) the OSAC could review the OSRP and provide a detailed evaluation of ways in which the OSRP should be updated.

In the meantime, the Township should seek to implement the recommendations in the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

D. FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN

- **Issue:** The Farmland Preservation Plan should be revised and submitted to the State Agricultural Development Committee (SADC) in order for the Township to remain eligible for certain farmland preservation funding.

  Status: The Township's Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) prepared the Township's Farmland Preservation Plan (dated May 2019). It was adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Township Master Plan on August 7, 2019. It was submitted to, and approved by, the SADC.

  Recommendation(s): SADC guidelines (NJAC 2:76-17A.4) indicate that the planning board, in consultation with the agricultural advisory committee, shall review and readopt the comprehensive farmland preservation plan at least every 10 years. The readopted plan shall, at a minimum, provide updates to the elements required in NJAC 2:76-17A.4(a) 2 (map and description of the municipality's agricultural resource base), 3 (description of the land use planning context for the municipality's farmland preservation), 4 (description of the municipality's past and future farmland preservation program activities, including program goals and objectives and anticipated funding), and 7 (description of the municipality's past and future farmland preservation program activities, including program goals and objectives) as well as the project area inventory described at N.J.A.C. 2:76-17A.5 (including identification of targeted farms).

  The Farmland Preservation Plan should therefore be reviewed for update in a few years (prior to the 10-year update period in 2029). Such an update will help assure that the plan appropriates Township farmland preservation objectives and will ensure that the Township remains eligible for SADC funding. This update would need to be adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Master Plan. As was done in prior versions of the Farmland Preservation Plan, this effort should involve the close involvement of, if not led by, the Township's Agricultural Advisory Committee.

  In the meantime, the Township should seek to implement the recommendations in the Farmland Preservation Plan.

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E. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

- **Issue:** The ERI should be updated as recommended by the Environmental Commission and adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the new Master Plan.

  Status: The Township's Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) was comprehensively updated in 2019. This effort was led by the Township Environmental Commission and was adopted by the Township Planning Board as an element of the Township Master Plan.

  Recommendation(s): The Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) recommends that ERI's be revised and re-adopted periodically to reflect new data and changed conditions. Sustainable Jersey criteria reflect an update period of 10 years.

  Therefore, the ERI should be reviewed for update in a few years (prior to the 10-year update period in 2029). Such an update will help assure that the ERI continues to serve as an outstanding resource guiding planning and conservation decisions. This revised document should be adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Master Plan. As was done in prior versions of the ERI, this effort should involve the close involvement of, if not led by, the Township Agricultural Advisory Committee.

  In the meantime, the Township should seek to implement recommendations in the ERI and use it as a resource to inform planning and conservation decisions.

F. CONSERVATION PLAN

- **Issue:** The 2016 Reexamination Report noted the following goal and objectives of the Conservation Plan Element of the 2006 Master Plan, indicating that they that remained valid goals and objectives, and noting that similar language is reflected in the 2013 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and the Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI).

  Goal: Conserve open space, rural character, scenic vistas, sensitive environmental areas and farmland:

  - Identify and protect such resources by continued use of the Open Space Trust Fund and non-contiguous parcel clustering;
  - Maintain open space and link to other open spaces and community resources;
  - Maintain clustering as a design technique which preserves open space and protects environmentally sensitive areas;
  - Limit the extension of utilities to currently approved service areas, unless otherwise indicated herein;
  - Promote retention of wildlife and species diversity by conserving contiguous tracts of differing vegetative types; and

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- Maintain design and siting standards to protect the Township's historic and rural character, particularly in villages and along scenic corridors;
- Continue to support the Right to Farm Ordinance;
- Strongly enforce limits on impervious coverage and encourage innovate water quality enhancement techniques in site design.

Goal: Protect water quality in Township streams, the Millstone and Raritan Rivers and the Delaware & Raritan Canal.

Status: These remain valid goals and objectives.

- **Issue:** The 2016 Reexamination Report noted the following goal and objectives of the Conservation Plan Element of the 2006 Master Plan:

> *Rezoning requests and other modifications to land use should continue to be based on capacity-based planning. It indicates that capacity based planning should be considered when creating standards for lands in the Township. Capacity-based planning relates to the carrying capacity of the land in terms of supporting utilities, not impacting sensitive environmental features such as wetlands, floodplain, groundwater recharge areas, forested areas and species habitat, not creating burdens upon the circulation system, and fitting in with the desired character of an area, as indicated in planning documents of applicable jurisdictions and as indicated by other relevant public policy.*

The 2016 Reexamination Report indicated that the above remained a valid and noted that similar language is reflected in the 2013 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and the Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI).

Status: These remain valid goals and objectives.

- **Issue:** The 2016 Reexamination Report included the following discussion:

> *Most of Franklin Township is relatively level in terms of topography, and possesses soils in the highest and second highest classifications for agricultural capability. Land in these categories that is currently farmed has been included in the Agricultural (A) zoning district, and is widely sought for development rights acquisition when funding is available. However, the majority of soils in the Township also exhibit relatively shallow depth to shale bedrock, as well, which results in relatively poor stormwater infiltration. The majority of land in the Township is underlain by the Passaic Formation (Brunswick shale). A small portion of the southern tip of the Township is underlain by diabase material. This material is igneous in origin, which means that it is very strong and impermeable. It is not suitable for septic fields, nor for potable water production. Zoning in the Township has taken these formations into consideration. The diabase areas that are not in the Canal Preservation (CP) area that are not sewered have been set at a density of 5 acres per unit. Shale formation areas that are not served by water and sewer and that are not located in the Canal Preservation (CP) areas are zoned at a density of 3 acres per unit.*

The 2016 Reexamination Report indicated that these factors, along with other factors including the Township's desire to retain the rural nature of these areas of the Township, support of the Township's desire to retain agriculture in these areas, and the lack of supporting infrastructure (e.g.,

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roadways, public water and/or public sewer), all support the retention of the Township's lower density zoning districts (CP, A, RR-3 and RR-5).

Status: This Reexamination again reiterates the objective of retaining the Township's lower density zoning districts (CP, A, RR-3 and RR-5) for the reasons described above, elsewhere in this Reexamination Report and as addressed in similar statements made in various other elements of the Township Master Plan including but not limited to the Farmland Preservation Plan, Open Space Preservation Plan, Historic Preservation Plan and the Environmental Resource Inventory.

- **Issue:** The 2016 Reexamination Report noted the recommendation in the 2006 Master Plan that Township land use planning should follow the key concepts and policies of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and the Planning Areas established through the Cross Acceptance process. In response the 2016 Reexamination Report indicated that the Township's Master Plan and development ordinance correlate highly with the State Plan Policy Map (SPPM). Areas on the SPPM within the "Metropolitan" and "Suburban" Planning Areas correspond to the Township's Township's non-residential, multi-family residential, higher- density single-family zones (1-acre per unit or denser) and certain cluster developments. Similarly, comparison of the sewer service area maps to the State Plan Policy Map reveals that the Township's sewer service areas correlate with the "Metropolitan" and "Suburban" Planning Areas. Conversely, the Township's less intensive residential zoning districts (i.e., those zones that permit less than 1 unit per acre) correlate with areas on the SPPM within the "Rural/ Environmentally Sensitive" Planning Area. Similarly, areas planned to remain less dense are not served by sewer. Comparison of the sewer service area maps to the State Plan Policy Map reveals that the sewer service areas correlate with the "Metropolitan" and "Suburban" Planning Areas, while areas not served by sewer correlate very highly with areas within the "Rural/ Environmentally Sensitive" Planning Area.

  Status: The Township's Master Plan and development ordinance correlate highly with the State Plan Policy Map (SPPM) in the same manner described above.

- **Issue:** The Township's Stream Corridor Protection Ordinance should be revised to eliminate loopholes and to reduce any conflicts with requirements of the NJDEP or D&R Canal Commission.

  Status: An updated ordinance was adopted later in 2016 via Ordinance No. 4157-16 addressing these recommendations.

- **Issue:** The Conservation Plan Element recommends that sewer service areas should be extended only in accordance with the Master Plan.

  Status: The Utilities Plan in the 2006 Master Plan identifies very limited extension of the sewer service areas within the Township – i.e., the School District owned property on Claremont Road, a few developed subdivisions along the north side of Bennett's Lane and the quail farm on Bunker Hill Road.

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Change: Adopted changes to the Township's Sewer Service Area as part of the County Wastewater Management Plan reflected the preservation of the Township Sewer Service Area recommended in the 2006 Master Plan. Changes to the Sewer Service Area in the County Wastewater Management Plan consisted of the very limited extension described above as well the addition of a shopping center located at the corner of Route 27/ 518 due to a failing septic system on that site. All changes to the Sewer Service Area were minor (i.e., no change would open up large, previously un-sewered areas of the Township to private development). Deletions from the Sewer Service Area primarily consisted of preserved lands, also consistent with the Utilities Plan from the 2006 Master Plan.

Recommendation: The existing sewer service area, approved in the County Wastewater Management Plan, should be maintained. Extensions of the sewer service area should only be made in order to address public health issues (e.g., extension for the quail farm and the Griggstown extension) and not to allow high density development in areas of the Township not currently served by sewer. Further discussion is provided under Utility Plan Element, as well as the Land Use Plan Element and the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

- **Issue:** Where appropriate and feasible, stands of significant trees or individual trees should be preserved.

  Status: This remains a valid objective. The Township implements it via its open space preservation program, in the review of development application and via enforcement of Chapter 222, Trees.

- **Issue:** Greenbelts should be planned and acquired to define a hard edge between centers and environs around historic villages. Open space acquisition should include lands that contain sensitive natural resources. Lands near the D&R Canal are recommended for acquisition.

  Status: These remain valid recommendations. The creation of "Village Greenbelts" around each of the Township's historic hamlets is one of the "Land Preservation Areas" identified in the 2013 OSRP to guide Township open space preservation decisions.

- **Issue:** The large, vacant New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) property, Block 5.02, Lot 119.03, north of Kingston, should be preserved for open space purposes.

  Status: The Township Open Space Map identifies this property as "Private, Non-profit preserved." [NOTE: will provide additional information in update – e.g., what entity preserved it]

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G. HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

- **Status:** A new Historic Preservation Plan was prepared by Township Staff and the Franklin Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission in 2019 and adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Township Master Plan in August 2019.

  Recommendation(s): Like most elements of a municipal master plan, the Historic Preservation Plan should reviewed for update every 10 years.

  Thus, the Historic Preservation Plan should be reviewed for update in a few years (prior to the 10-year update period in 2029). This revised document should be adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Master Plan. As was done in the current versions of the Historic Preservation Plan, this effort should involve the close involvement of, if not led by, the Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission.

  In the meantime, the Township should seek to implement the recommendations in the Historic Preservation Plan.

- **Issue:** The 2016 Reexamination Report described a recommendation made in the 2006 Historic Preservation Element which recommended that the Township prepare a comprehensive inventory of historic resources in the Township. The Report indicated that such an inventory had recently been prepared by Township staff and should be used to identify individual structures worthy of individual inclusion in the historic district overlay. It also recommended that the inventory be used to evaluate the delineation of local historic districts particularly the 1000-foot distance from the D&R Canal (i.e., do the boundaries of the local historic district appropriately correspond to the location of significant historic structures, should any district be enlarged or made smaller?).

  Status: The 2019 Historic Preservation Plan indicated that this inventory, while the most comprehensive Township-wide inventory of historic resources prepared to date, required further refinement. It recommended that this inventory be completed not only for informational purposes but also in the evaluation of: potential new districts and/or changes (expansion or contraction) to existing Township historic districts; potential addition of individual structures outside of a local historic district to the Township historic preservation ordinance; and as resource in the evaluation of applications before the HPAC (e.g., significance of the structures and/or proximity to significant structures). To date, these updates have not been made.

  Recommendation: It is recommended that the necessary updates be made to the inventory and that the Township evaluate historic district boundaries and consider designation of individual structures, as recommended in the 2019 Historic Preservation Plan.

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H. PATHWAYS AND TRAILS PLAN

- **Issue:** The Pathways and Trails Plan (prepared in 2008) should be distributed to the Trails Advisory Committee in order to identify any particular updates and modifications that may be appropriate. This revised document should be then by adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the new Master Plan.

  Status: The Planning Board recently adopted a new Pathways and Trails Plan in June 2025. It is a comprehensive update and replacement of the 2008 Pathways and Trails Plan. The Plan was prepared by the Township's Trails Advisory Committee with the assistance of the Township's Land Preservation consultant.

  Recommendation(s): The Township should seek to implement the recommendations in the new Pathways and Trails Plan.

I. COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN AND UTILITY PLAN

Sanitary Sewer Service

- **Issue:** The sewer service area boundaries are intended as a growth management tool to prevent sprawl in the southern portion of the Township. The sewer service areas for the most part follow the Planning Area 1 and 2 designations of the State Plan.

  Status: Status remains unchanged. This remains a critical Master Plan objective and is similarly addressed in the Conservation Plan Element, the Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Land Use Plan Element.

  The Sewer Service Area (SSA) associated with County Wastewater Management Plan maintained (with a few specific deletions and additions as explained herein) the sewer service area boundary recommended in the Utility Plan Element and the Utilities Plan map in the 2006 Master Plan.

  Comparison of the existing sewer service area to the Township Zoning Map (see Map 4, *Adopted Sewer Service Area Overlaid on Existing Zoning Map*) reveals that the sewer service area within the Township correlates *exactly* to the Township's non-residential, multi-family residential, higher-density single-family developments (lot 1-acre or smaller).

  Areas planned to remain less dense (i.e., residential zones that requires lots to be greater than 1 acre in size) are not served by sewer.

- **Issue:** The sewer service areas for the most part follow the Planning Area 1 and 2 designations of the State Plan, except in the vicinity of the Exxon and Huntingdon Life Science facilities on Mettler's

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Road, which are located in Planning Area 4, however have been served by their own private sewer system since the 1970s. These areas will remain both PA4 and within a sewer service area for this reason.

Status: No change. These properties remain in the SSA.

Public Water Service

- **Status:** The 2016 Reexamination Report offered the following recommendation:

> *After the interconnection to the New Brunswick water system comes on line the Water Distribution System Master Plan will be reviewed and updated/revised as necessary. Consistent with objectives and recommendations in the Land Use Plan Element, Conservation Plan Element and the OSRP, the update to the Water Distribution System Master Plan should affirmatively state, as a fundamental premise, that future system improvements should be limited to those that address deficiencies in areas of the Township currently served by public water and that future extension of public water into areas not currently served should be limited to those necessary to address critical environmental or public health (e.g., failing wells) – not to induce growth in currently unserved areas within the Township's lower density zoning districts (RR-3, RR-5, A and CP). The delineation of the "Franklin Township Water" service area depicted on the "Water Master Plan" map in the Water Distribution System Master Plan should reflect this as well.*

Status: [need to amend per input from the Township Water Department]

Recommendation: The above recommendation remains valid. Consistent with objectives and recommendations various elements of the Master Plan future system improvements should be limited to those that address deficiencies in areas of the Township currently served by public water; future extension of public water into areas not currently served should be limited to those necessary to address critical environmental or public health (e.g., failing wells) – not to induce growth in currently unserved areas within the Township's lower density zoning districts (RR-3, RR-5, A and CP).

J. CIRCULATION PLAN

- **Status.** The Township retained a consulting firm to prepare a comprehensive update to Circulation Element of the Master Plan. This was adopted in 2021. This plan replaced the 2006 Master Plan Circulation Element, examining and analyzing the Township's transportation resources, facilities and needs.

Recommendation(s): The Township should seek to implement the recommendations in the 2021 Circulation Plan.

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K. ECONOMIC PLAN

- **Issue:** Maintain sufficient areas of light industrial zoning to ensure a varied tax base. The area available for industrial development has been significantly reduced via the approval of several large-scale senior residential developments along New Brunswick Road, Schoolhouse Road and Randolph Road.

  Status: This remains a valid planning objective. This issue is addressed as well in the discussion of the Land Use Plan element.

- **Issue:** Encourage commercial and industrial development in areas with access to major regional highways and in established areas. Encourage infill within existing industrial districts to reduce sprawl by increasing density while minimizing environmental impact.

  Status: This remains a valid planning objective.

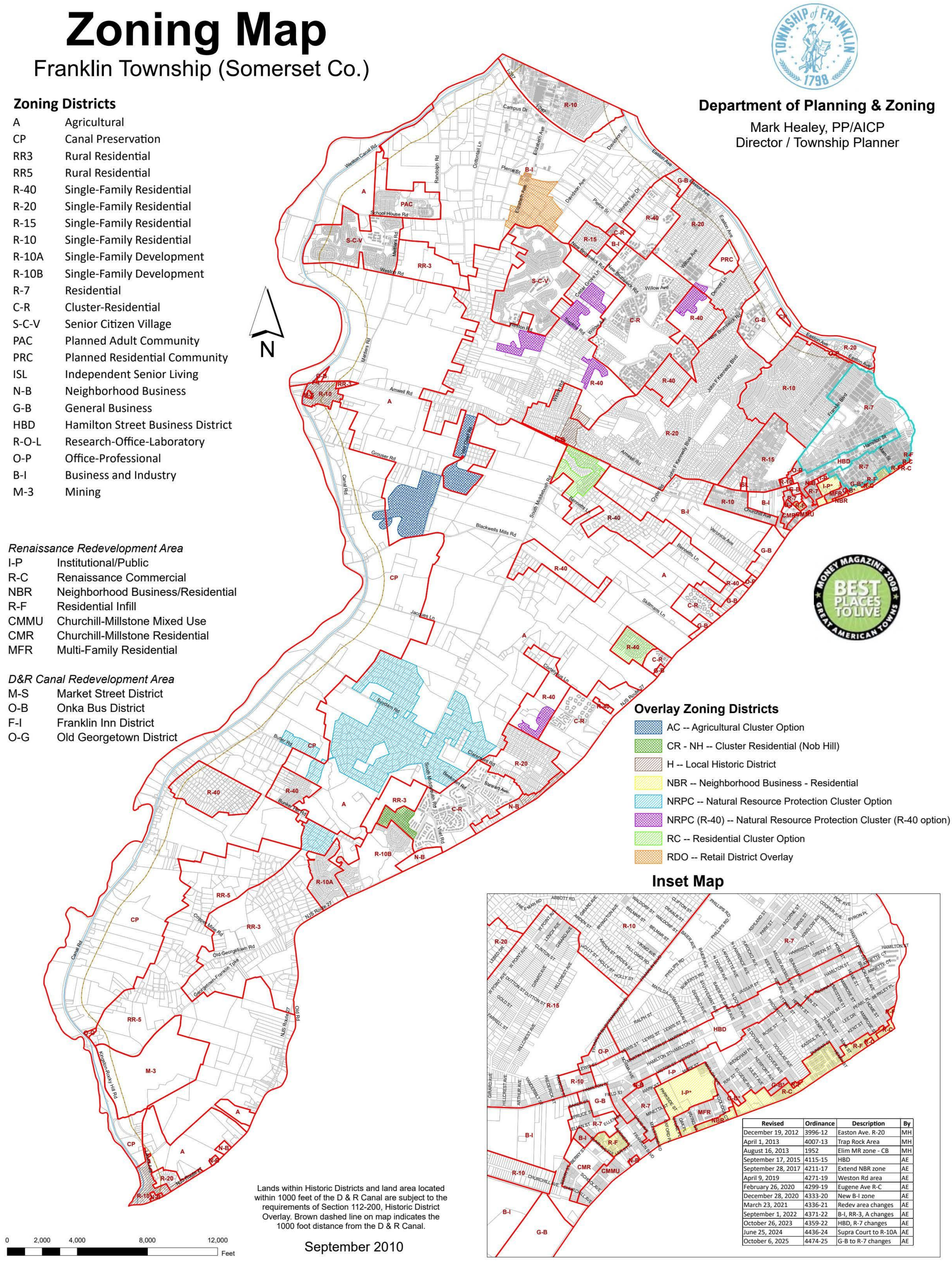
L. RECYCLING PLAN

- **Issue:** It is recommended that the municipal recycling ordinance be updated as the Municipal Land Use Law is amended and as additional recyclable materials are added to the municipal collection system.

  Status: This remains a valid recommendation.

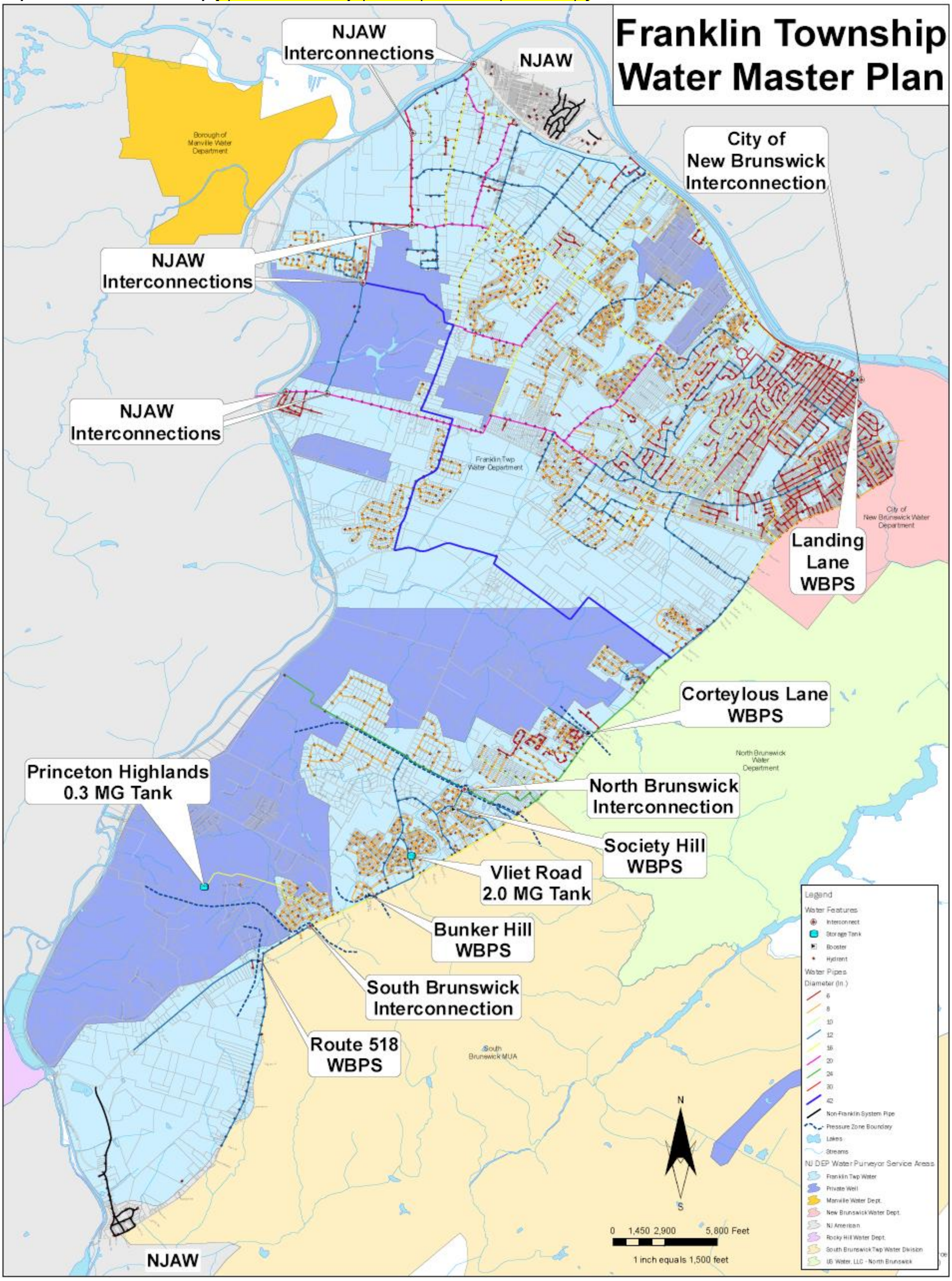
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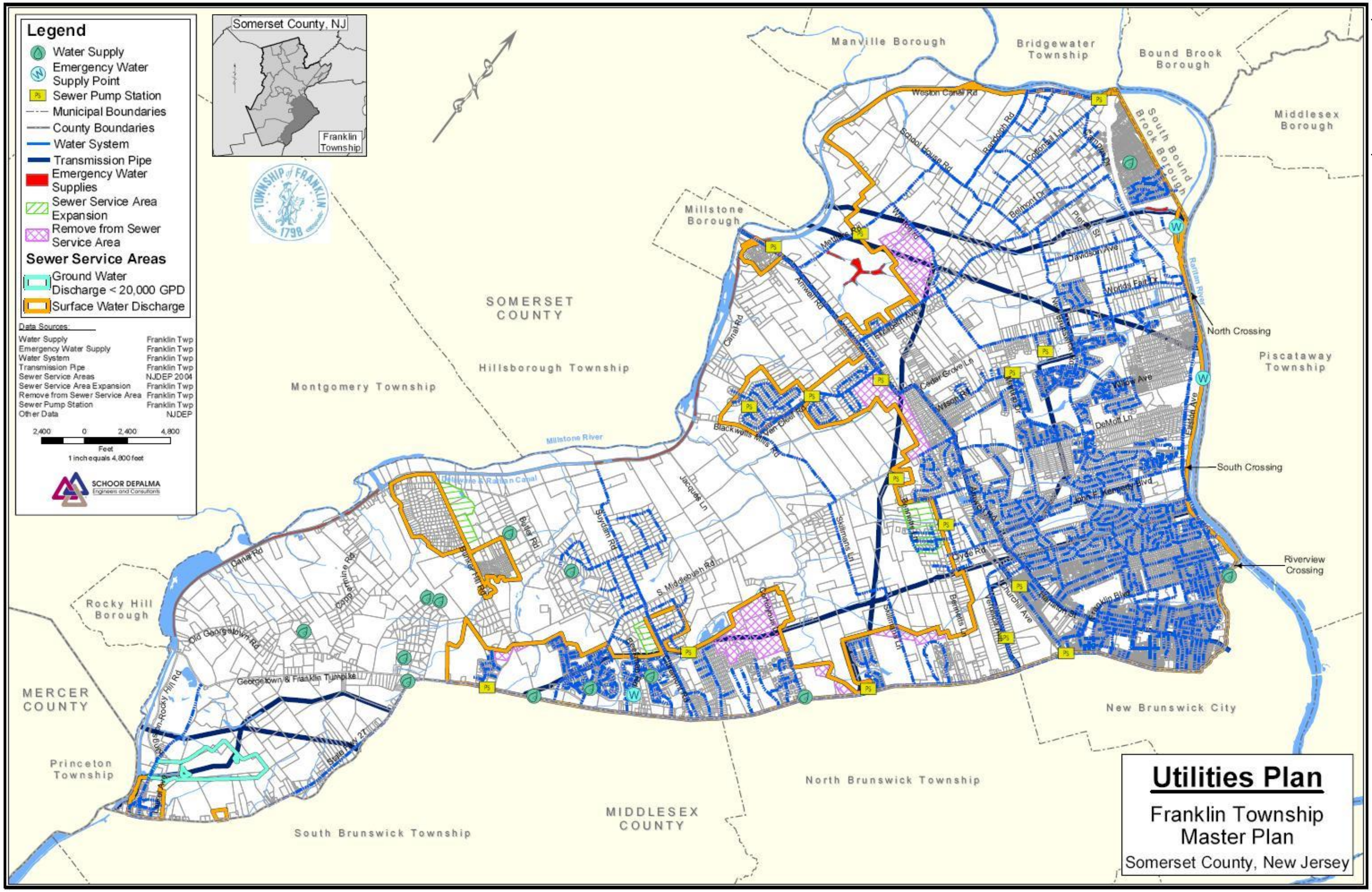
Map 1: Zoning Map



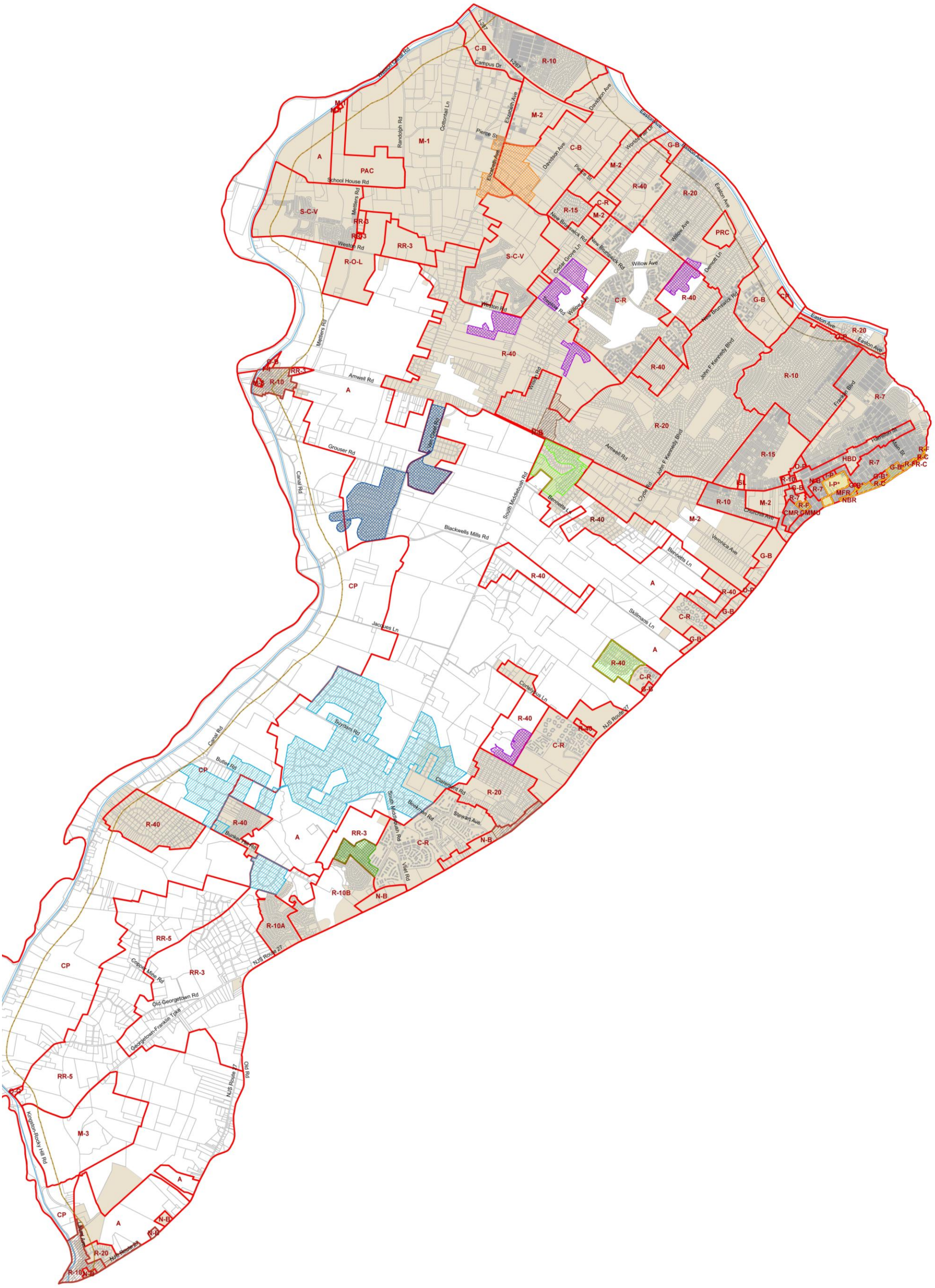
Revised	Ordinance	Description	By
December 19, 2012	3996-12	Easton Ave. R-20	MH
April 1, 2013	4007-13	Trap Rock Area	MH
August 16, 2013	1952	Elim MR zone - CB	MH
September 17, 2015	4115-15	HBD	AE
September 28, 2017	4211-17	Extend NBR zone	AE
April 9, 2019	4271-19	Weston Rd area	AE
February 26, 2020	4299-19	Eugene Ave R-C	AE
December 28, 2020	4333-20	New B-I zone	AE
March 23, 2021	4336-21	Redev area changes	AE
September 1, 2022	4371-22	B-I, RR-3, A changes	AE
October 26, 2023	4359-22	HBD, R-7 changes	AE
June 25, 2024	4436-24	Supra Court to R-10A	AE
October 6, 2025	4474-25	G-B to R-7 changes	AE

Map 2: Water Master Plan Map [update as necessary/ possible per Township Water Dept]




Legend
Water Supply
Emergency Water Supply Point
Sewer Pump Station
Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
Water System
Transmission Pipe
Emergency Water Supplies
Sewer Service Area Expansion
Remove from Sewer Service Area
Sewer Service Areas
Ground Water Discharge < 20,000 GPD
Surface Water Discharge
Data Sources:
Water Supply Franklin Twp
Emergency Water Supply Franklin Twp
Water System Franklin Twp
Transmission Pipe Franklin Twp
Sewer Service Areas NJDEP 2004
Sewer Service Area Expansion Franklin Twp
Remove from Sewer Service Area Franklin Twp
Sewer Pump Station Franklin Twp
Other Data NJDEP
2,400 0 2,400 4,800
Feet
1 inch equals 4,800 feet
SCHOOR DEPALMA
Engineers and Consultants
Somerset County, NJ
Franklin Township
TOWNSHIP of FRANKLIN 1798
Manville Borough
Bridgewater Township
Bound Brook Borough
Middlesex Borough
Millstone Borough
SOMERSET COUNTY
Hillsborough Township
Montgomery Township
Rocky Hill Borough
MERCER COUNTY
Princeton Township
South Brunswick Township
MIDDLESEX COUNTY
North Brunswick Township
New Brunswick City
Piscataway Township
Millstone River
Delaware & Raritan Canal
Weston Canal Rd
School House Rd
Redoubt Rd
Cottontail Ln
Belmont Dr
Meltzer Rd
Amwell Rd
Canal Rd
Elizabeth Ave
Davidson Ave
Noble Fair Dr
Cedar Grove Ln
Wilson Rd
Blackwells Mills Rd
Van Cleef Rd
Jacques Ln
Stryker Rd
Butler Rd
Bunker Hill Rd
Canal Rd
Cappoquemine Rd
Old Georgetown Rd
Georgetown-Rocky Hill Rd
Georgetown & Franklin Turnpike
State Hwy 27
S. Middlebush Rd
Georgetown Rd
Skillmans Ln
Bennetts Ln
Dyke Rd
Van Dyke Rd
Churchill Ave
Hamilton St
Franklin Blvd
John F. Kennedy Blvd
Easton Ave
Willow Ave
DeMott Ln
Raritan Rd
North Crossing
South Crossing
Riverview Crossing
Utilities Plan
Franklin Township
Master Plan
Somerset County, New Jersey

Map 4: Existing Zoning Overlaid on Adopted Sewer Service Area [will update in subsequent draft]



NOTE: Beige area represents the Sewer Service Area