

# Olsen Towers Rehabilitation Plan



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ENDORSED 6/22/2016 by Township of Woodbridge Planning Board

ADOPTED 6/28/2016 by Township of Woodbridge Council

# **Olsen Towers**

## **Rehabilitation Plan**

Township of Woodbridge

Prepared by  
Township of Woodbridge Department of Planning & Development

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Olsen Towers Rehabilitation Plan presents an opportunity to comprehensively reconstruct an existing publicly owned and affordability controlled senior housing structure along the New Brunswick Avenue corridor in the Fords section of Woodbridge Township. The rehabilitation site is bordered by New Brunswick Avenue to the north, single-family houses to the south, Raymond Street to the west and commercial uses to the east.

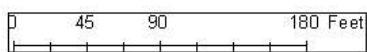
The Rehabilitation site is comprised of the six-story 75-unit Olsen Towers senior housing residential building along New Brunswick Avenue.

On September 21, 2010 the Municipal Council designated the Township of Woodbridge as an “area in need of Rehabilitation” under the New Jersey Redevelopment and Housing Law (NJSA 40A:12A-1 et seq.). Under the statute, Rehabilitation is defined under New Jersey’s Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (C. 40A:12A-3) as “an undertaking, by means of extensive repair, reconstruction or renovation of existing structures with or without the introduction of new construction or the enlargement of existing structures, in any area that has been determined to be in need of rehabilitation or redevelopment, to eliminate substandard structural or housing conditions and arrest the deterioration of that area.” This Rehabilitation Plan constitutes a redevelopment plan by statute and is prepared in accordance with NJSA 40A:12A-7 which states that “no redevelopment projects shall be undertaken or carried out except in accordance with a Redevelopment Plan adopted by ordinance of the municipal governing body.”

## OLSEN TOWERS REHABILITATION SITE MAP



## OLSEN TOWERS REHABILITATION SITE AERIAL MAP



Prepared by the  
Department of Planning & Development  
December 2012



### Legend

- Olsen Towers
- Tax Parcels

## **PLANNING CONTEXT**

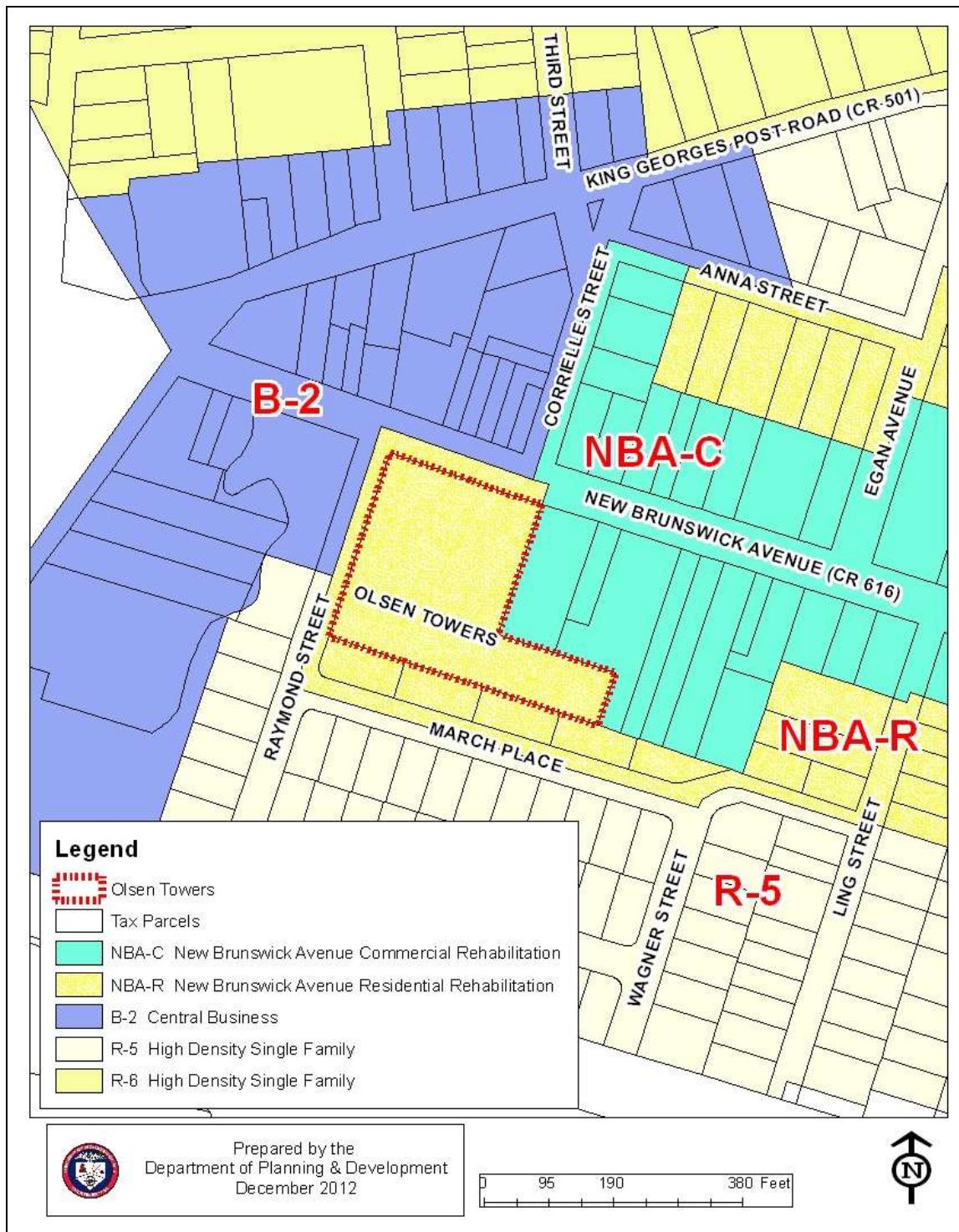
### *Olsen Towers Rehabilitation Site and Location*

The rehabilitation plan site as a whole consists of one tax lot on one tax block. The following property comprises the Rehabilitation Site: Block 59.08, Lot 6.02. The current land use in the Rehabilitation Site is a publicly owned senior housing structure. The building sits on 1.87 acres and is owned and operated by the affordability controlled Woodbridge Township Housing Authority. The surrounding area along New Brunswick Avenue to the north, east and west is comprised mostly of commercial uses. The area to the south of the Rehabilitation Site is a residential neighborhood with the predominant use being single-family residential dwellings.

The Rehabilitation Site is currently in the New Brunswick Avenue Residential District Rehabilitation Zone. The purpose of the New Brunswick Avenue Residential District Rehabilitation Zone is to provide and preserve the existing single-family residential site located in close proximity to the downtown commercial district. Permitted principal uses in the zone are existing senior citizen residential buildings, detached one-family dwellings, and home occupations/home office. Government buildings and services which are necessary to the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of inhabitants including volunteer fire companies and first-aid squads and public utility installations are also permitted conditional uses.

The adjacent area to the north and west of the Rehabilitation Site is zoned B-2 Central Business Zone. The purpose of the B-2 Central Business Zone is to provide uses devoted to retail sales and service, professional services and related uses which include activities servicing a larger segment of the population than the average neighborhood. The adjacent area to the east of the Rehabilitation Site is the NBA-C New Brunswick Avenue Commercial District Rehabilitation Zone. The purpose of the NBA-C New Brunswick Avenue Commercial District Rehabilitation Zone is to promote the revitalization of New Brunswick Avenue and provide for an array of retail sales and services containing uses primarily serving the Fords community as well as upgrade the physical appearance of the area through the implementation of design standards for commercial and mixed-use properties. The area to the south is the R-5 Single-Family Residential Zone. The purpose of the R-5 Single-Family Residential Zone is to provide and protect the character of the existing high-density single-family dwellings.

## OLSEN TOWERS REHABILITATION SITE CURRENT AREA ZONING



## **PLAN PRINCIPLES/STRATEGIES**

The Township of Woodbridge is in a position to rehabilitate the Olsen Towers complex. The Township's Housing Element and Fair Share Plan of the Master Plan, adopted in April 2016 and scheduled for re-adoption in June 2016, is drawn to achieve the goal of meeting the municipal obligation to provide for a fair share of the regional need for affordable housing. The Housing Element and Fair Share Plan lists Olsen Towers as one of the existing age-restricted public housing developments that the Township plans to reconstruct in order to meet a portion of its unmet need obligation. The reconstruction of this site will improve the quality of life for residents and provide greater energy efficiency in the building.

The reconstruction of Olsen Towers will provide perpetual affordable housing opportunities in the region. At the same time, the reconstruction of these units will contribute to the residential opportunities necessary to ensure an active and vibrant commercial corridor along New Brunswick Avenue.

## **PLAN GOALS**

The overall goal of this Rehabilitation Plan is to comprehensively upgrade the Olsen Towers complex as a vibrant, publicly owned and operated senior housing complex for Township residents and to improve the physical environment, energy efficiency and accessibility inside the building. This will provide a better living experience for residents of Olsen Towers and also outfit the building with modern amenities and improve its overall energy efficiency. Specific goals are as follows:

- To rehabilitate the Olsen Towers complex to provide better living conditions for all current and future residents.
- To improve the aesthetics of the building for a more visually appealing experience.
- To improve the energy efficiency of the building to limit heating and cooling costs.
- To rehabilitate affordable housing units consistent with the Township's Housing Element and Fair Share Plan pursuant to COAH's regulations and applicable state statute.
- To provide for the rehabilitation of floors, cabinets, bathrooms and other areas throughout the building, improving handicap accessibility.
- To extend the building's usable, productive lifetime.

- To provide area and regional senior residents an updated, affordable housing opportunity.

## **RELATIONSHIP OF PLAN TO THE TOWNSHIP LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE**

This Rehabilitation Plan supersedes the use and bulk provisions of the Township Land Use and Development Regulations (Chapter 150) for the Rehabilitation Site unless specifically referenced. Other Township regulations affecting developments that are in conflict are superseded by this Plan; however, existing engineering standards, performance standards and definitions shall apply.

In connection with site plan or subdivision applications, the Planning Board may grant deviations from the regulations contained within this Rehabilitation Plan where by reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific piece of property or by reason of exceptional topographic conditions, pre-existing structures and physical features uniquely affecting a specific piece of property, the strict application of any area, yard, bulk or design objective or regulation adopted pursuant to this Rehabilitation Plan would result in peculiar and exceptional practical difficulties to, or exceptional or undue hardship upon, the developer or redeveloper of such property. The Planning Board may also grant a deviation from the regulations contained within this Plan related to a specific piece of property where the purposes of this Plan would be advanced by such deviation from the strict application of the requirements of this Plan and the benefits of granting the deviation would outweigh any detriments.

The Planning Board may grant exceptions or waivers from design standards from the requirements for site plan or subdivision approval as may be reasonable and within the general purpose and intent of the provisions for site plan review and/or subdivision approval within the Plan, if the literal enforcement of one or more provisions of the Plan is impracticable or would exact undue hardship because of peculiar conditions pertaining to this site. No deviations may be granted under the terms of this section unless such deviations can be granted without resulting in substantial detriment to the public good and will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the Rehabilitation Plan.

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

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

## **SITE STANDARDS**

A review of the existing conditions in the Rehabilitation Site, together with an assessment of the current zoning, reveals that creation of a new zone could be fruitful in facilitating and expediting reconstruction to the site.

**Purpose:** To extend the productive life of an existing senior housing building and provide updated, energy efficient, handicap accessible, affordable housing opportunities for the region.

Permitted Uses:

- Publicly operated housing.
- Government buildings and services which are necessary to the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the inhabitants.

Permitted Accessory Uses: Uses which are customarily incidental to the principal use such as shelters, storage buildings, signage and parking.

Prohibited Uses: All uses unable to be classified as those specifically permitted.

Bulk Standards:

- Minimum lot size: 10,000 square feet.
- Minimum lot width 100 feet.
- Minimum lot depth 100 feet.
- Minimum front yard setback (measured from the future street right-of-way): 25 feet or prevailing.
- Minimum each side setback: 10 feet.
- Minimum total side setback: 20 feet.
- Minimum rear setback: 25 feet.
- Minimum gross floor area: 20,000 square feet.
- Maximum lot coverage: 30%.
- Maximum building height: 6 Stories.
- Maximum floor area ratio: 1.25:1.
- Parking Spaces: Minimum 25 parking spaces required.

#### Accessory buildings and uses:

Accessory buildings not attached to a principal building shall not exceed 15 feet in height and shall conform to at least the front setback requirement of the principal building. Buildings for tools and equipment used for the maintenance of the grounds are not to exceed 150 square feet in area.

#### Lighting:

- Pedestrian-level, bollard lighting, ground-mounted lighting, or other low, glare-controlled fixtures mounted on building or landscape walls shall be used to light pedestrian walkways.
- Accent lighting on buildings is encouraged.
- Lighting shall be shielded to prevent glare on adjacent properties.
- Exterior light fixtures shall be compatible and relate to the architectural character of the buildings on a site. Site lighting shall be provided at the minimum level to accommodate safe pedestrian and vehicular movements without causing any off-site glare.

#### Landscaping:

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

#### Green Buildings:

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

#### Outside Storage:

- Loading and delivery areas shall be separated from residential parking areas.
- Loading areas, and outside storage shall be located at the side or rear of buildings and shall be properly screened from residential uses.

## **PLAN RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS**

### **Relationship to the Township Master Plan**

The Township of Woodbridge's last comprehensive Master Plan was prepared in 2009. Relevant goals and objectives from the Master Plan include:

- To encourage the rehabilitation of substandard residential units.
- To ensure the integrity of existing residential areas:
  - By preventing intrusion of nonresidential uses into residential neighborhoods.
  - By maintaining the existing development intensity and population density.
- To minimize conflicts between residential and non-residential development through appropriate lighting, buffering/landscaping, loading, parking and storage standards.
- To provide sufficient residential opportunities, in locations with access to facilities and services, to help the Township's senior residents age in place.
- To preserve the existing character consistent with current development patterns through:
  - Zoning standards that correspond to existing development patterns.
- To increase the use of renewable energy sources in all municipal facilities.
- To encourage the construction of environmentally friendly buildings by applying design standards from the U.S. Green Building Council.

This Rehabilitation Plan advances the goals and objectives of the Township Master Plan.

### **Master Plans of Adjacent Municipalities**

The Olsen Towers Rehabilitation Site is located in the southwestern portion of Fords. The closest adjacent municipality to the rehabilitation site is the Township of Edison. This rehabilitation site is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on the Township of Edison or any other adjacent municipality.

## **Plans of the Region/State**

### Middlesex County Growth Management Strategy (GMS)

Between 1990 and 1995, Middlesex County prepared a three-phase Growth Management Plan to address infrastructure need, regional design system and growth management strategies. The County was subdivided into four regions. Woodbridge Township is located in the northeast region along with the municipalities of Edison Township, the Borough of Metuchen, the Borough of Carteret, the Township of Perth Amboy and the Borough of Highland Park.

Phase I of this Strategy found that large public & private investments would be required towards maintaining a significant level of service for projected growth in the County. The report estimates that the highest infrastructure costs facing the County are for maintaining and improving existing sewerage systems, parks and roads. The report determined that this investment could be significantly reduced for utility systems (water & sewer) if growth occurred in areas where utilities are already in place.

The next phase in the County's Growth Management Strategy was a Phase II Report which focused on alternative approaches to managing actual growth in Middlesex County. In order to analyze the approaches, five specific case studies were conducted in the report. None of these five areas are located in Woodbridge Township.

The last phase of Middlesex County's Growth Management Strategy was the Phase III Report, which examined four additional case study areas; thereby analyzing nearly all of the potential growth areas in the County. In this Phase, additional techniques by which the County may assist and further coordinate with municipalities in planning and development review were also identified. The Township of Woodbridge was included in three study areas. The Metropark Case Study Area includes portions of Iselin, Menlo Park Terrace, Fords, and Woodbridge Proper. The Raritan Center Case Study Area includes portions of Keasbey and Fords. The Arthur Kill/Raritan Bay Case Study Area includes portions of Keasbey, Fords, Hopelawn, Woodbridge Proper, Sewaren, and Port Reading.

Where relevant, this Rehabilitation Plan is consistent with the recommendations discussed in the Middlesex County Growth Management Strategy.

## New Jersey State Development & Redevelopment Plan

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

- Revitalize the State's cities and towns.
- Promote beneficial economic growth, development and renewal for all residents of New Jersey.
- Provide adequate public facilities and services at a reasonable cost.
- Ensure sound and integrated planning and implementation statewide.

The SDRP also includes a State Plan Policy Map, which divides the state into regions, known as Planning Areas, and includes specific goals for each area. The Policy Map also identifies "Centers," locations into which development is to be directed, and "Environs," areas to be protected from future growth. The Township of Woodbridge falls within the 'Metropolitan Planning Area' (PA1). The State Plan recognizes that all communities in this planning area are essentially fully developed; hence much of the change in land uses will occur as redevelopment.

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

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

The Rehabilitation Site, by virtue of its location within a part of New Jersey that has extensive existing infrastructure and a long history of development, is by all measures an appropriate location for growth. The Rehabilitation Plan will facilitate growth in the Plan Site and contribute to the economic revitalization of the State overall. The objectives of the Rehabilitation Plan are consistent with the goals, strategies and policies of the State Plan. The Rehabilitation Plan will address the needs of existing and future residents of the Township of Woodbridge and Olsen Towers.

## **OTHER PROVISIONS**

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq., known as The Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, the following statements are made:

- The Rehabilitation Plan herein has delineated a definite relationship to local objectives as to appropriate land uses, density of population, and improved traffic and public transportation, public utilities, recreation and community facilities and other public improvements. The Plan has laid out various programs and strategies needed to be implemented in order to carry out the objectives of this Plan.
- The Rehabilitation Plan lays out the proposed land uses and building requirements for the Rehabilitation Site subject to the new zoning described herein.
- The Rehabilitation Plan is substantially consistent with the Master Plan for the Township of Woodbridge. The Plan also complies with the goals and objectives of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan.
- If any section, paragraph, division, subdivision, clause or provision of this Rehabilitation Plan shall be adjudged by the courts to be invalid, such adjudication shall only apply to the section, paragraph, division, subdivision, clause or provision so judged, and the remainder of this Rehabilitation Plan shall be deemed valid and effective.

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**



**View of west side of Olsen Towers**



**View of rear of Olsen Towers**



**View of Olsen Towers along New Brunswick Avenue**



**View of front of Olsen Towers looking west**



**View of custom engraved ‘Olsen Towers’ bench in front of building**



**View of Olsen Towers looking west along New Brunswick Avenue**



**View of side yard of Olsen Towers along western property line.**



**View of Olsen Towers Identification Sign**