

Downtown Woodbridge, Area 4 Redevelopment Plan

Township of Woodbridge
Middlesex County,
New Jersey



June 2020

ENDORSED 6/24/2020 by Township of Woodbridge Planning Board

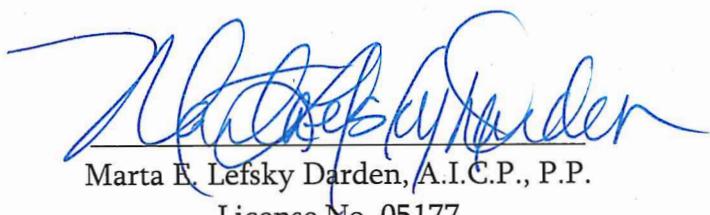
ADOPTED 7/06/2020 by Township of Woodbridge Council

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Township of Woodbridge

Prepared by

Township of Woodbridge Department of Planning & Development



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Wayfinding Sign on Main Street



Decorative Clock at Train Station

INTRODUCTION

The Woodbridge proper section of Woodbridge Township has a traditional central business district with stores, restaurants, professional offices, a train station, parks, and a municipal complex. The Township desires to revitalize “the downtown” with new mixed-use buildings and increased residential density in order to sustain, promote, and grow the downtown into the next century. This redevelopment plan is one of several anticipated redevelopment plans for the redevelopment of Downtown Woodbridge.

The North James Street and Ross Street Area near Amboy Avenue represents an extraordinary opportunity to develop a modern transit-oriented development. The redevelopment area is located in downtown Woodbridge proper at the corner of Amboy Avenue at North James Street and extending west along North James Street and north to Ross Street. This plan will foster the transformation of these properties into a productive high density development. Due to its advantageous location within downtown Woodbridge and near the train station, this redevelopment area should be a highly desirable location for people to live.

The redevelopment of these properties present unique challenges. In an effort to improve the area, the Township Council requested that the Planning Board evaluate certain properties as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment” on July 10, 2018. Following the Planning Board’s evaluation, the Township Council designated the area as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment” on December 18, 2018.

Township Council also requested that the Planning Board evaluate certain properties on January 21, 2020. Following the Planning Board’s evaluation, the Township Council designated the area as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment” and designated one other additional parcel as a “condemnation area in need of redevelopment” on June 9, 2020. In total six (6) parcels comprise the Redevelopment Area:
Block: 545; Lot 40.02, 46.02, 48, 53, 54, & 55.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

According to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A: 12A-1, et. seq.) the Redevelopment Plan shall include an outline for the planning, development, redevelopment or rehabilitation of the project area sufficient to indicate:

- Its relationship to definitive local objectives as to appropriate land uses, density of population and improved traffic and public transportation, public utilities, recreational and community facilities and other public improvements;
- Proposed land uses and building requirements in the project area;
- Adequate provision for the temporary and permanent relocation as necessary of residents in the project area, including an estimate of the extent to which decent, safe, and sanitary dwelling units, affordable to displaced residents will be available in the existing local housing market;
- An identification of any property within the Redevelopment Area proposed to be acquired in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan;
- Any significant relationship of the Redevelopment Plan to:
 - A) The Master Plans of contiguous municipalities;
 - B) The Master Plan of the County in which the municipality is located; and;
 - C) The State Development and Redevelopment Plan adopted pursuant to the "State Planning Act."

PLANNING CONTEXT

The Township of Woodbridge is 24.2 square miles in size and located in northeastern Middlesex County. The Township of Woodbridge is bordered by Clark Township, the City of Rahway, the City of Linden, and Union County to the north; the Borough of Carteret, the Arthur Kill and the City of Perth Amboy to the east; the Raritan River to the south; and Edison Township to the west.

The Woodbridge proper section of the Township is generally bound by the Garden State

Parkway to the west, a freight rail line to the north, the City of Perth Amboy to the south, and the New Jersey Turnpike to the east. The Woodbridge section of the Township consists of mostly residential neighborhoods, commercial uses along Route 9 and Route 35. The Woodbridge proper central business district is located along Main Street. The central business district includes the Woodbridge Train Station, public parks, a college and the Township Municipal Complex.

The redevelopment area contains six (6) parcels: Block: 545; Lots 40.02, 46.02, 48, 53, 54, & 55. The area is located in Downtown Woodbridge proper at the corner of Amboy Avenue at North James Street and extending west along North James Street and north to Ross Street. The area is surrounded by commercial properties along Amboy Avenue; educational use to the north; commercial uses to the south; and residential uses to the east. .

Downtown Woodbridge is a gathering place for the community and where civic events take place. Main Street hosts multiple parades and the annual the St. James Street Fair. The Municipal Complex hosts public outdoor ceremonies.

The Woodbridge Train Station is located approximately 0.25 miles away from the redevelopment area. The Woodbridge Train Station provides NJ Transit train service to Newark, New York City, and shore points. Bus service is also available near the train station to Newark, New York City, New Brunswick, and Metropark Station.

Figure 1: Downtown Woodbridge, Area 4 Parcel Map



Figure 2: Downtown Woodbridge Area 4 Aerial Map



HISTORY OF WOODBRIDGE

The Township of Woodbridge is the first incorporated township in the state of New Jersey. The Woodbridge proper section of Woodbridge Township is one of the earliest settled sections of the Township. Woodbridge proper has been the location of the downtown central business district and is where some of the first community facilities were built, such as townhall, schools, fire houses, libraries, and churches. Woodbridge was known for clay mining in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Woodbridge Center Mall opened in 1971 on the site of a former clay pit.



Window Etchings at the Woodbridge Train Station Illustrating the Township's Industrial Past

MASTER PLANNING & ZONING DESIGNATION HISTORY

The Township Master Plan identifies that the current land use for this area as commercial. The redevelopment area is in the Main Street Rehabilitation and Transit Village Plan. It is in the retail/mixed use district. The Master Plan proposes designation of the majority of this area as a rehabilitation area. In 2008, the Main Street Rehabilitation and Transit Village Area was created.

PLAN GOALS

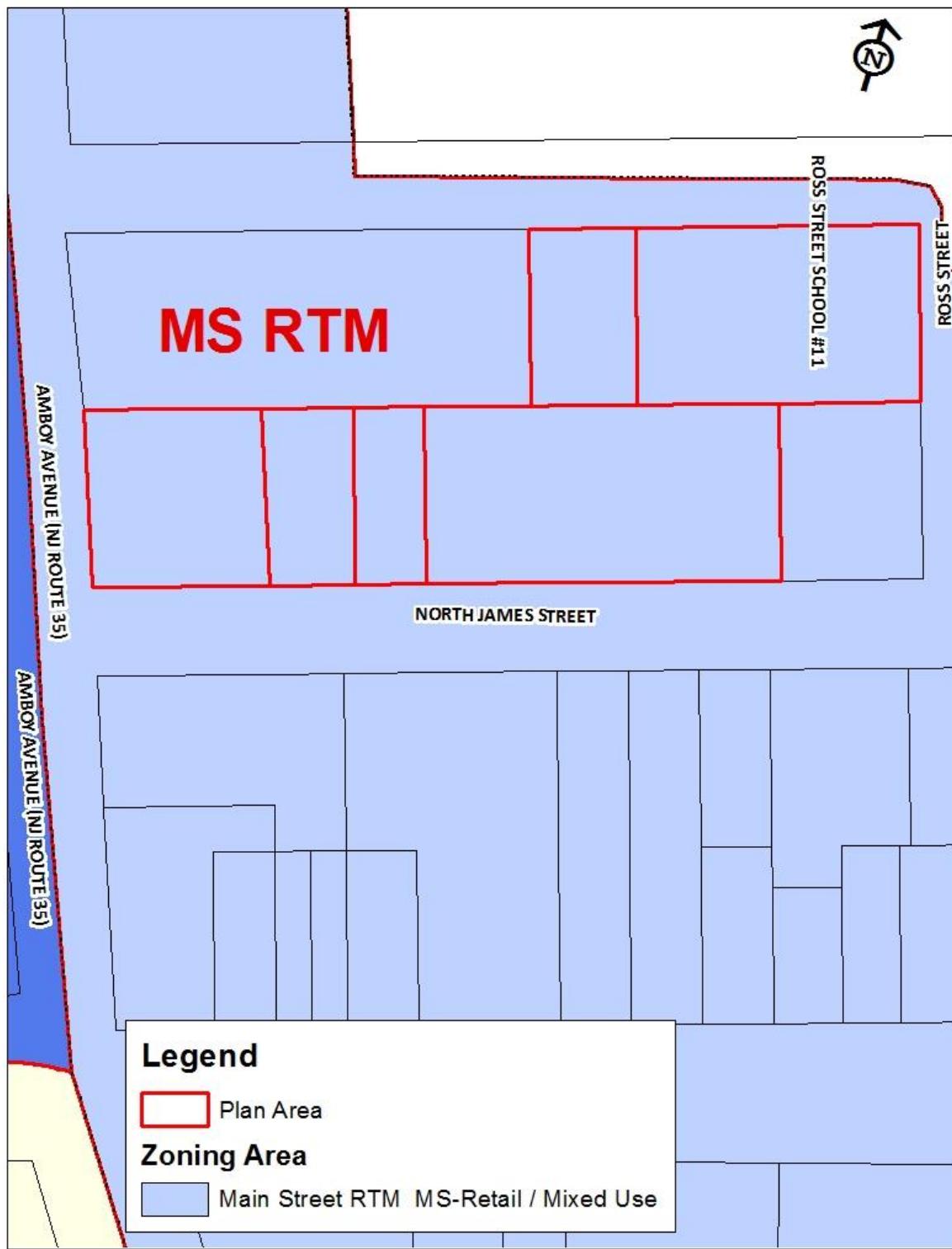
The overall goal of this Redevelopment Plan is to address the existing conditions that have negatively impacted the Area and comprehensively upgrade the area for redevelopment. The Township aims to reach the following goals:

- To promote transit-oriented development at an appropriate scale
- To stimulate economic investment in the Area
- To promote the effective use of all the Redevelopment Area properties and to increase property tax base
- To promote further new development in downtown Woodbridge
- To improve the physical appearance of the Area
- To promote mass transit opportunities
- To provide a wide range of housing opportunities for all socio-economic strata
- To promote and sustain the downtown business community
- To enhance the pedestrian experience with streetscape improvements

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Any construction of new housing units presents an opportunity to contribute to the Township's affordable housing stock and must be provided in accordance with the relevant case law, statutes and the Township's Land Use and Development Ordinance in effect at the time of an approval for development of the property. Any proposed development must follow regulations found in §150-83.

Figure 4: Existing Zoning



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

The Redevelopment Area shall be redeveloped in accordance with the standards detailed in this Redevelopment Plan. This Plan supersedes the use and bulk provisions of the Township Land Use and Development Ordinance (Chapter 150) for the Redevelopment Area unless specifically referenced. Other Township regulations affecting developments that are in conflict are superseded by this Plan; however, existing engineering standards, performance standards and definitions shall apply.

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

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

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

Planning Board and shall be submitted through the normal site plan and subdivision procedures as identified as N.J.S.A. 40:55D, et seq.

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

DOWNTOWN WOODBRIDGE, AREA 4 REDEVELOPMENT AREA ZONING STANDARDS

The following standards contain information pertaining to the purpose of the zone; the permitted and accessory uses; bulk standards; and other district-specific standards. The evaluation of any proposal submitted under the Redevelopment Plan shall be based upon sections of this Redevelopment Plan entitled Relationship of Plan to the Township Land Development Regulations including District and Design Standards.

The purpose of this Redevelopment Zone is to provide a transit-oriented development in close proximity to the Woodbridge Train Station, which is compatible with the surrounding land uses, and provides efficient and safe traffic and pedestrian circulation.

Permitted Uses:

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

- Multifamily Residential
- Parking Decks or Structures

Accessory Uses:

- Parking, Amenities and any other uses customarily incidental to multifamily residential use

Bulk Standards:

- Minimum lot size: 10,000 square feet
- Minimum lot frontage: 50 feet
- Minimum lot depth: 100 feet
- Minimum front setback: 0 feet
- Minimum side setback: 0 feet
- Minimum rear setback: 0 feet
- Maximum building coverage (including principal and accessory buildings) : 100%
- Maximum impervious lot coverage: 100%

- Maximum building height: Four (4) stories or 60 feet for multifamily residential; Six (6) stories or 100 feet for parking garage (including parapets/stairwell).

Residential Amenities:

- Resident amenities may be provided, including but not limited to: Luxury interior lobby; Fitness center; Community room/lounge, porches and balconies, rooftop decks, bicycle parking/storage, outdoor public space both passive and active, and other associated improvements to be considered amenities.

Accessory Buildings:

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

Parking:

Parking may be provided in the North James Street Parking Garage as may be approved by the municipal agency

Residential Parking Requirement:

- Minimum of 1.25 spaces per unit

Circulation:

- Curbs cuts and site driveways shall be sized to accommodate the safe access and egress of emergency services equipment.
- Sidewalks shall be provided along Amboy Avenue, North James Street and Ross Street.
- Proper signage shall be provided.

Loading and Outside Storage:

- Loading and delivery around the exterior/perimeter of the site shall be separated from residential parking areas
- No outside storage of materials, raw or finished, shall be stored in any yard or open area

Landscaping:

- All setback areas fronting public roadways shall be defined by a combination of decorative fencing, hardscape and/or landscaping. The landscaped area within should contain a variety of flowering trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals and bulbs to complement the architecture and provide seasonal interest.
- Landscape design should be integrated into overall site design and plans should include a watering and maintenance schedule for each area.
- All trees to be removed shall be done in accordance with the Township Tree Replacement Ordinance.

Buffering and Screening:

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

Lighting:

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

- Lighting shall be shielded to prevent glare on adjacent properties.
- Exterior light fixtures shall be compatible and relate to the architectural character of the buildings on a site. Site lighting shall be provided at the minimum level to accommodate safe pedestrian and vehicular movements without causing any off-site glare.
- Parking lot lights shall not exceed 20 feet in height and shall contain decorative fixtures.

Utilities:

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

Signage:

- Signs shall be in harmony and consistent with the architecture of the building and relate to the features of the building in terms of location, scale, color, lettering, materials, texture and depth.
- Wayfinding signage to direct visitors toward parking areas, building identification, building entrances and activity centers is permitted as appropriate. Wayfinding signage shall be no greater than ten (10) square feet per sign.

Streetscape:

- This Plan envisions streetscape improvements along the frontage of Amboy Avenue, North James Street and Ross Street. Streetscape improvements may include: sidewalk pavers, benches, decorative pedestrian-scale lighting, benches, sitting areas, landscaping utilizing hanging flower pots.

Sustainability:

- All development is encouraged to incorporate green building practices.
- Solar Panels are permitted on buildings and on the top level of parking structures.
- Microgrids are encouraged.
- Electric vehicle charging stations, bike share programs, and car share programs are all encouraged.

PLAN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS

RELATIONSHIP TO THE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

The Township of Woodbridge's last comprehensive Master Plan was prepared in February 2009 and reexamined in 2017. The Master Plan recommended this area be a rehabilitation area.

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

- To permit residential uses at appropriate densities in locations accessible to major roadways, commercial services, public facilities and traditional downtown areas;
- To preserve the existing character consistent to existing development patterns:
 - Zoning standards that correspond to existing development patterns;
- To provide sufficient residential opportunities, in locations with access to facilities and services, to help the Township's senior residents age in place;
- To strengthen downtown commercial shopping areas through:
 - Expanded retail offerings;
 - Improved facades and streetscapes;
 - Adequate parking;
 - Improved pedestrian and bike connections with adjacent neighborhoods;

MASTER PLANS OF ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES

The Downtown Woodbridge, Area 4 Redevelopment Area is located in the Woodbridge proper section of the Township. The closest adjacent municipality to the area is the City of Perth Amboy to the south. The redevelopment plan is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on the City of Perth Amboy.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY PLANS

Middlesex County Growth Management Strategy

Between 1990 and 1995, Middlesex County prepared phased Growth Management Strategy to address infrastructure need, regional design and growth management strategies. The County was subdivided into four regions. Woodbridge Township is located in the northeast region, as were all neighboring municipalities.

Phase I of the plan found that large levels of public & private investment were necessary to maintain infrastructure with the highest cost items being maintenance and improvement to sewers, parks and roads.

Phase II of the plan focused on managing actual growth pertaining to five specific case studies. None of the case studies focused on areas of Woodbridge.

Phase III of the study, three primary recommendations were made as part of the Metropark Case Study:

- Traffic congestion inhibits growth in the area. Access to Metropark is limited by the narrow rail underpasses and New Jersey Transit's parking expansion will place an even greater burden on local roads. Transportation management measures should be implemented intensively for this area;
- The NJ Transit parking deck project includes the construction of space for retail facilities to better serve commuter needs. Additional retail development to serve nearby office workers should be evaluated;
- Growth in this study area is limited by increasingly scarce buildable land and the need for increased sewage capacity in the Township. A stormwater management plan

should be developed for the entire South Branch of the Rahway River drainage area in order to determine the most effective stormwater control measures.

This Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the recommendations discussed in the Middlesex County Growth Management Strategy and will serve to offer some of “the retail development” contemplated for neighboring office workers.

Consistency with Middlesex County Master Plan

The Downtown Woodbridge, Area 4 Redevelopment Plan is generally consistent with the elements of the Middlesex County Master Plan, a document that addresses sprawl and sustainability in the region. This Redevelopment Plan adheres directly to the goals, values and objectives of the Middlesex County Master Plan which aims to:

- Make fuller use of existing transportation lines and facilities. The County Plan anticipated that public transportation would achieve greater significance as a necessary alternative to the private automobile, with its attendant problems of pollution, energy availability, and congestion;
- Find a more feasible alternative to the present situation of “strip” commercial development found on major roads, and single-family homes on unnecessarily large lots;
- “Cluster” future growth around definable town centers and transportation facilities to include commercial and office employment as well as residential, with land use intensity decreasing as distance from the town center increases.

New Jersey State Development & Redevelopment Plan (2001)

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

- Revitalize the State’s cities and towns;
- Promote beneficial economic growth, development and renewal for all residents of

New Jersey;

- Protect the environment, prevent and clean up pollution;
- Provide adequate public facilities and services at a reasonable cost;
- Preserve and enhance areas with historic, cultural, scenic, open space, and recreational value;
- Ensure sound and integrated planning and implementation statewide.

This Plan follows the principles of smart growth described in the SDRP. The SDRP describes smart growth as

“...well-planned, well-managed growth that adds new homes and creates new jobs, while preserving open space, farmland, and environmental resources. Smart Growth supports livable neighborhoods with a variety of housing types, price ranges and multi-modal forms of transportation. Smart Growth is an approach to land-use planning that targets the State’s resources and funding in ways that enhance the quality of life for residents in New Jersey. Smart Growth principles include mixed-use development, walkable town centers and neighborhoods, mass transit accessibility, sustainable economic and social development and preserved green space.”

This plan area is located in traditional downtown with robust existing resources and infrastructure. Downtown Woodbridge has utility services, public transportation facilities, sidewalks, schools, stores, offices, and civic buildings. This plan envisions a mixed-use building where residents can utilize public transportation and walk to local businesses.

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

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

- Providing for much of the state’s future redevelopment;

- Revitalizing cities and towns;
- Redesigning areas of sprawl;
- Protecting the character of existing stable communities.

This Plan will serve to meet each of these goals for the designated area.

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

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

REDEVELOPMENT ENTITY

The Woodbridge Township Redevelopment Agency will serve as the Redevelopment Entity.

PHASING:

- Projects may be developed in phases;
- The phasing may include phased start and completion dates among the various land use components, as well as internal phasing schedules within sections, subject to specific provisions in the redevelopment agreement.

APPOINTMENT OF A DESIGNATED REDEVELOPER

The Redevelopment Entity may select one or more redevelopers to participate in the implementation of the Redevelopment Plan.

As part of the process to be designated a redeveloper, the Redevelopment Entity will negotiate a formal Redevelopment Agreement.

Designation of a Redeveloper(s) by the Redevelopment Entity shall be subject to the execution of an appropriate Redevelopment Agreement.

CONDITIONS IN REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT(S)

Each Redevelopment Agreement will be contingent upon the following conditions, restrictions, and/or requirements.

1. Each Redevelopment Agreement will incorporate the pertinent aspects of the selected redeveloper's proposal and will address financial considerations, planning, phasing, development and such other issues as deemed appropriate and/or as required according to state law in order to implement the Redevelopment Plan.

2. A designated redeveloper will be obligated to complete on-site improvements as approved, together with any specified off-site improvements, as may be required in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan and the Redevelopment Agreement.
3. No designated redeveloper will be permitted to dispose of property until the issuance of the Certificate of Completion, unless the prior written consent of the Redevelopment Agency has been obtained, subject to the terms and conditions of the Redevelopment Agreement.
4. The Redeveloper(s) shall pay to the Redevelopment Entity an application fee for consideration of redeveloper as a designated redeveloper and will fund an escrow for the Agency's costs in implementing redevelopment.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

No application for development or redevelopment in the area may be filed with the Planning Board until such time as the applicant has applied for and received a designation as redeveloper from the Redevelopment Entity and has executed a Redevelopment Agreement with the Redevelopment Entity providing for the proposed application. In addition to any requirements of the Agency, major preliminary and/or Final Site Plans and/or subdivisions, with details sufficient to comply with the Municipal Land Use Law and Local Ordinance, shall be submitted for Planning Board review and approval for each development parcel, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq.

The Planning Board shall require the developer to provide a bond or bonds in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law.

DURATION OF REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

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

AMENDING THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

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