

Red Oak Manor (Complex) Redevelopment Plan

Township of Woodbridge
Middlesex County, New Jersey



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Red Oak Manor Plan

Township of Woodbridge

Prepared by
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INTRODUCTION

This Redevelopment Plan represents an opportunity to improve Township-owned property and provide state-of-the-art, amenitized, senior, affordable housing units in the Port Reading section of Woodbridge Township, replacing the Stern Towers building located in Woodbridge Proper. The redevelopment area is home to the Port Reading Knights of Columbus and the Sycamore Senior Center in one building and also contains a vacant parcel, which abuts the New Jersey Turnpike. The properties are accessed from Old Road and Wesley Place. This plan will foster the transformation of the property into a multi-use site and will include a brand new affordable senior citizen housing building, and a fully upgraded and expanded parking lot. The synergy of the off-peak usage of the lot will afford each use much more parking than currently exists on the individual sites.

The redevelopment of the property presents unique challenges. In response to the physical challenges developing the site would present, the Township Council requested that the Planning Board evaluate certain properties as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment” on August 5, 2014. Following the Planning Board’s evaluation, the Township Council designated the area as a “non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment” on May 9, 2017.

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 Plans adopted pursuant to the “State Planning Act.”

PLANNING CONTEXT

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

The Port Reading section of the Township consists of residential neighborhoods, commercial uses along Port Reading Avenue, and industrial uses throughout the section. The Port Reading section is located in the northeastern portion of the Township and is adjacent to both the Arthur Kill and New Jersey Turnpike, which is a primary reason for the predominance of industrial uses found here.

The Redevelopment Area is located along Old Road and Wesley Place and abuts the New Jersey Turnpike and Port Reading Avenue. The area currently consists of a two parcels: Block 670, Lot 1 and Block 670, Lot 1.01. The area is located in a predominantly single-family residential neighborhood. This plan contemplates that the lots may be combined or the two lots may operate as one site.

Figure 1: Redevelopment Area Parcel Map

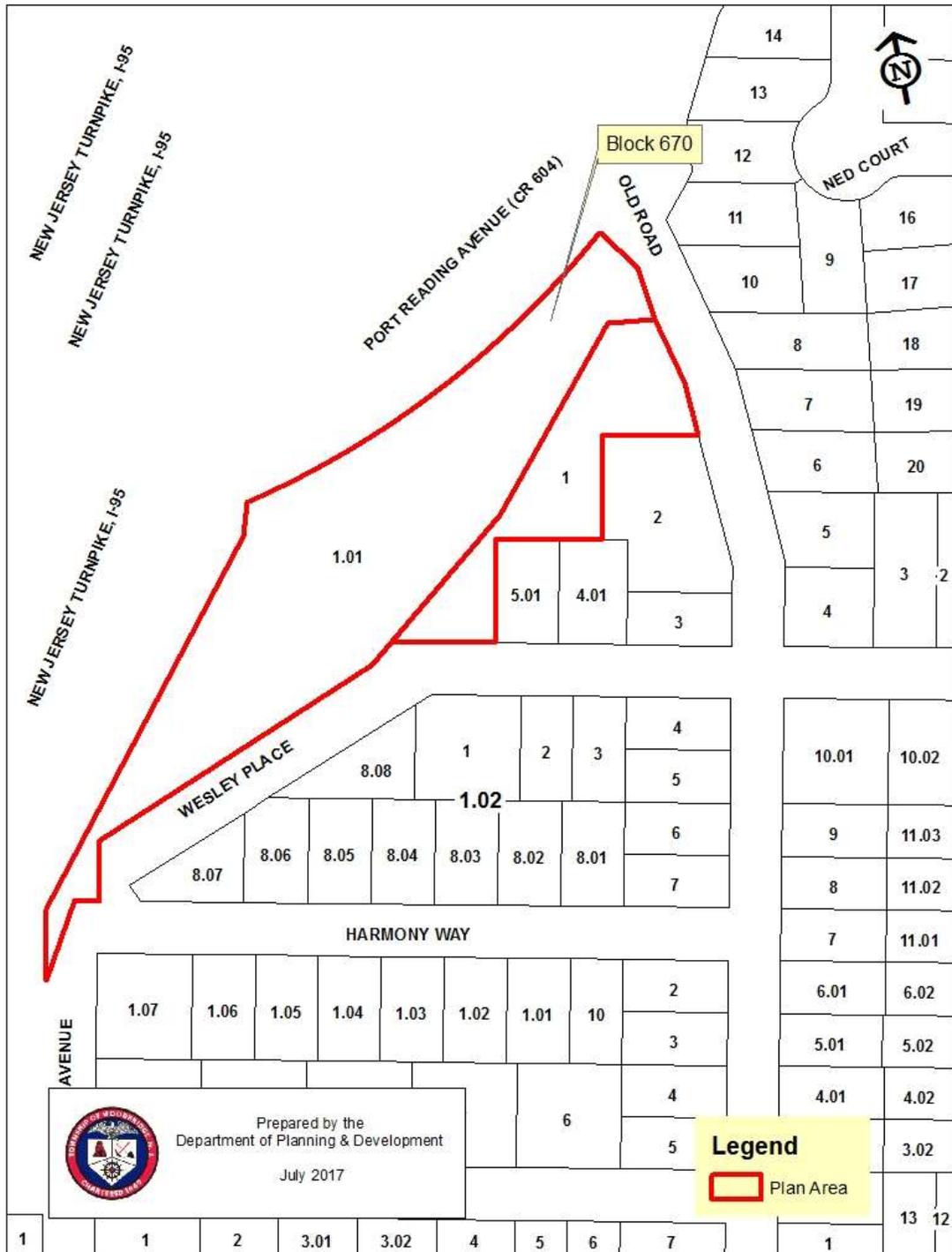


Figure 2: Redevelopment Area Aerial Map



HISTORY OF PORT READING

In 1890, the Reading Railroad established a terminal for shipping coal on the Arthur Kill. A community soon developed around the port and the area became known as “Port Reading.” Housing and community facilities, such as St. Anthony’s Roman Catholic Church and School # 9, were built for terminal workers and their families.

Port Reading underwent major redevelopment in the early 1960’s as Woodbridge Township implemented “Project Bowtie,” an urban renewal project. Completed in 1969, Project Bowtie resulted in the rehabilitation of 160 housing units; 34 new single family homes; new community facilities, such as a new public pool, post office, firehouse, library, parks, and a new School # 9. The project also included new infrastructure improvements, such as 4,435 lineal feet of new streets, 20,000 linear feet of new curbs, 18,000 linear feet of new sidewalks, 800 street trees, storm drainage relief and public utilities.

In 2003, the Prologis Corporation purchased a 235-acre brownfield site fronting Port Reading Avenue. The project, known as the Port Reading Business Park, is comprised of five warehouse buildings, consisting of over 2.3 million square feet of warehouse space.

MASTER PLANNING AND ZONING DESIGNATION HISTORY

The redevelopment area is in the B-3 Highway Business Zone and R-6 Single Family Residential Zone. The Master Plan proposes designation of the majority of this area as the existing zoning.

PLAN GOALS

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

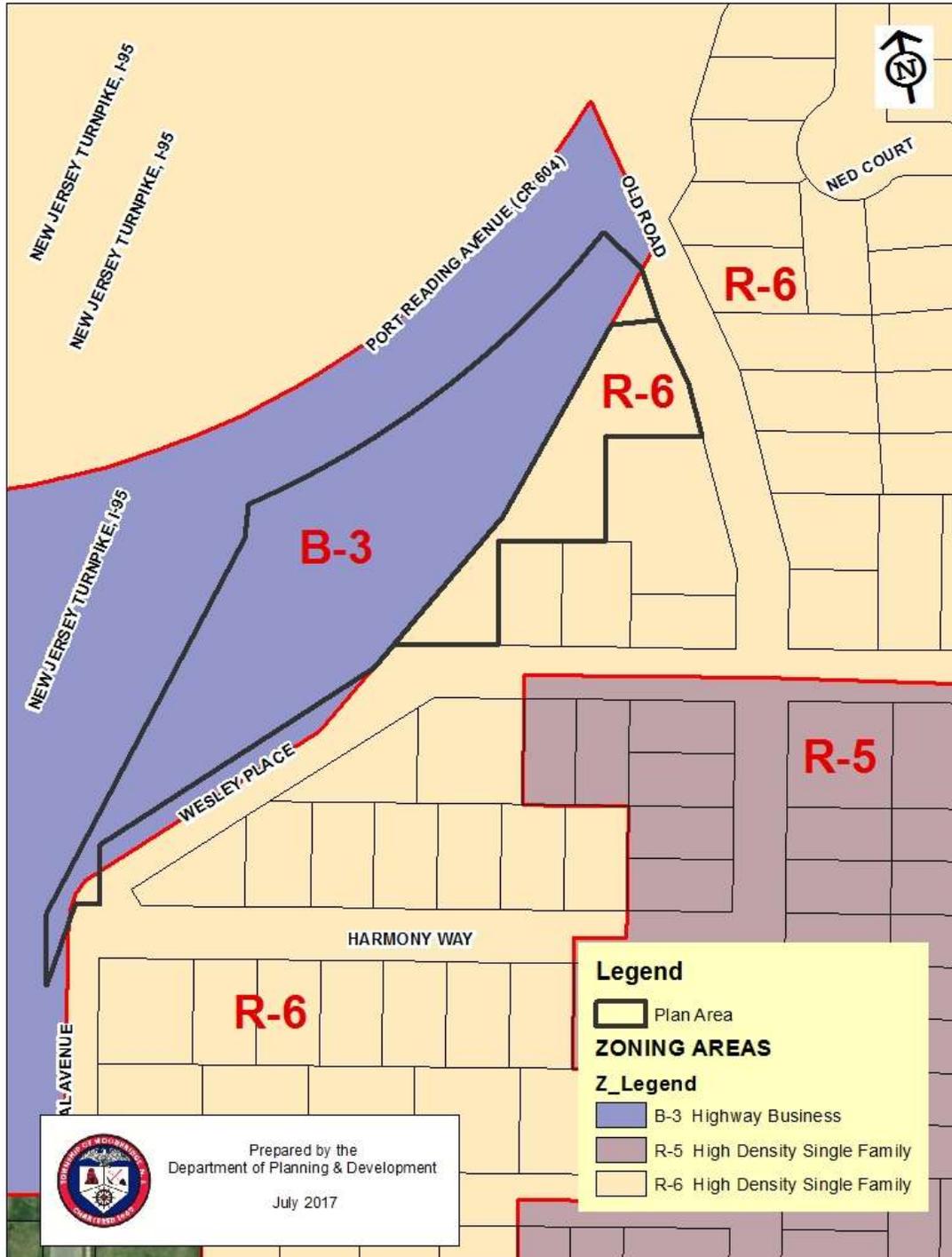
- To stimulate economic investment in the Area
- To revitalize the site
- To provide a variety of housing opportunities to all persons wanting to live in the community

- To provide an appropriate gathering and recreational facility for the township's senior residents and the surrounding area's senior residents
- To provide higher density housing in an appropriate place
- To continue the rehabilitation efforts throughout the Township
- To ensure the integrity of the existing adjacent residential area.
- To promote the conservation of energy resources and promote the utilization of renewable energy sources
- To improve the physical appearance of the Area
- To create compact multifamily development
- To provide state of the art affordable housing opportunities to the Township's senior residents

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 Township's Affordable Housing section of the Land Use and Development Ordinance.

Figure 3: 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.

AREA ZONING STANDARDS

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

For the purposes of this plan, lots owned by public and quasi-public entities and designated as a single redevelopment area may be considered as a single lot and are encouraged to be developed as a single entity, irrespective of lot lines and lot ownership: In this zone multiple principle buildings are encouraged to be located on a single lot and if independent lots are to remain, the lots and the buildings should be utilized as a single complex. Interior lot lines drawn for the purposes of financing or ownership/maintenance are exempt from setback standards.

Purpose:

To provide new, state-of-the-art, affordable, age-restricted housing units, a recreation center and fraternal club, operating as a single complex.

Permitted Uses:

- Age-Restricted Apartment Buildings
- Recreation/ Senior Citizen Center
- Fraternal Clubs or Organizations

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

Bulk Standards:

- Minimum lot size: 15,000 square feet
- Minimum lot width: 100 feet
- Minimum lot depth: 100 feet
- Minimum front setback: 10 feet
- Minimum each side setback: 5 feet
- Minimum both side setbacks: 20 feet
- Minimum rear setback: 25 feet
- Maximum building coverage (including principal and accessory buildings) : 45%
- Maximum impervious coverage by all buildings and pavement: 70%
- Minimum landscape coverage: 15%

- Maximum building height: 3 stories or 40 feet

Accessory buildings and structures:

- Accessory buildings, infrastructure and uses, shall meet the front setback requirement of a principal building and shall not exceed 15 feet in height or 150 square feet. The side and rear setbacks shall be four (4) feet.

Parking Standards:

Off-street parking is required subject to the following conditions:

- Senior apartment uses: 1 space per unit
- Recreation, senior citizen center and fraternal club uses: 37 spaces in accordance with existing parking located on site.
- Shared parking facilities: The off-street parking requirements for two (2) or more neighboring uses may be satisfied by the allocation of the required number of spaces for each use in a common parking facility.

Additional Standards:

Buffering and Landscaping:

- The Township-owned land adjacent to the New Jersey Turnpike and Port Reading Avenue shall provide a natural buffer to the redevelopment site.
- Landscaped area required: In calculating the landscaped areas, the areas of plazas, open pedestrian areas, sitting areas, green roofs, pools and fountains shall be included.
- All setback areas fronting public roadways shall be defined by a combination of decorative fencing and/or landscaping. The landscaped area within should contain a variety of flowering trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals and bulbs to complement the architecture and provide seasonal interest.
- All parking shall be buffered from the right-of-way by a decorative guiderail if decorative landscaping is not practical.
- Landscape design should be integrated into overall site design and plans should include a watering and maintenance schedule for each area.
- Any dumpster shall be screened from public view with fencing and landscaping.

- All trees to be removed shall be done in accordance with the Township Tree Ordinance.

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.

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 12 feet in height and shall contain decorative fixtures.

Site Signage:

- Two (2) monument signs permitted on site.
- Maximum sign area: 30 square feet per side, with a maximum of two sides allowed.
- Minimum setback: three (3) feet from the property line.
- Maximum sign height: five (5) feet.
- Way finding signage to direct visitors toward parking areas, building identification, and building entrances is permitted as appropriate.
- Façade signs may be permitted to identify the property and shall occupy no more than 10 percent of the front façade area of the building. Signs may be placed on all exposed sides of the buildings, provided that they do not total more than 10 percent maximum limitation of the front façade.

Sidewalks:

- Sidewalks shall be encouraged to the extent practical throughout the area.

Outside Storage and Loading:

- No outside storage of materials, raw or finished, shall be stored in any yard or open area.

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 was reexamined in 2016. The Master Plan recommended this area be devoted to commercial use.

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 provide sufficient residential opportunities, in locations with access to facilities and services, to help the Township's senior residents age in place.

MASTER PLANS OF ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES

The Red Oak Manor Area is located in the Port Reading section of the Township. The closest adjacent municipality to the area is the Borough of Carteret, which is approximately 1.5 miles east along Port Reading Avenue. The redevelopment plan is not anticipated to have an adverse impact on the Carteret.

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 Red Oak Manor 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.

The SDRP also includes a State Plan Policy Map, which divides the state into regions, known as Planning Areas, and includes specific goals for each area.

The Policy Map also identifies “Centers”, locations into which development is to be directed, “Environs,” areas to be protected from future growth. The Township of Woodbridge falls in the ‘Metropolitan Planning Area’ (PA1). The State Plan recognizes that all communities in this planning area are essentially fully developed; hence much of the change in land uses will occur as redevelopment.

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

- Providing for much of the state’s future redevelopment;
- Revitalizing cities and towns;

- Redesigning areas of sprawl;
- Protecting the character of existing stable communities.

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

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.

SELECTION OF DESIGNATED DEVELOPERS

Potential redevelopers will be required to submit to the Redevelopment Entity for review and approval prior to the designation of a redeveloper(s) at a minimum:

- Financial responsibility and capability;
- Estimated development cost;
- Estimated time schedule;
- Conceptual site plans including elevations;
- Fiscal impact analysis.

APPOINTMENT OF A DESIGNATED REDEVELOPER

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

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

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

CONDITIONS IN REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT(S)

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

1. Each Redevelopment Agreement will incorporate the pertinent aspects of the selected redeveloper's proposal and will address financial considerations, planning, phasing, development and such other issues as deemed appropriate and/or as required according to state law in order to implement the Redevelopment Plan.
2. A designated redeveloper will be obligated to complete on-site improvements as approved, together with any specified off-site improvements, as may be required in accordance with the Redevelopment Plan and the Redevelopment Agreement.
3. Any necessary deed of conveyance shall include a restriction that the designated redeveloper and his successors or assigns shall devote land to the uses specified in the designated redeveloper's final plan and shall not devote such land to any other uses.
4. No designated redeveloper will be permitted to dispose of property until the issuance of the Certificate of Completion, unless the prior written consent of the Redevelopment Agency has been obtained.
5. No covenant, agreement, lease, conveyance, or other instrument shall be effective or executed by the Township of Woodbridge and the Redevelopment Entity or by the purchasers or lessees from them, or by any successors in interest of such purchasers or lessees, by which land in the Redevelopment Area is restricted as to sale, lease, or occupancy upon the basis of race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, or marital status.
6. The Redeveloper(s) shall pay to the Redevelopment Entity an application fee for consideration of redeveloper as a designated redeveloper and will fund an escrow for the Agency's costs in implementing redevelopment.
7. The Redevelopment Entity and the Township of Woodbridge reserve the the right to terminate any Redevelopment Agreement with a designated redeveloper subject to the terms and conditions of the Redevelopment Agreement.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

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

The Planning Board shall require the developer to provide a bond or bonds of sufficient size and duration to guarantee the completion of the various phases of the project in compliance with the requirements of law and planning approvals.

DURATION OF REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

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

AMENDING THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

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