

Blair Road & Omar Avenue, Avenel Redevelopment Plan

Township of Woodbridge
Middlesex County, New Jersey



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I. INTRODUCTION

This Redevelopment Plan represents an opportunity to improve and better utilize industrial space in the Avenel section of Woodbridge Township. This plan will foster the transformation of properties into productive light industrial uses along Blair Road and Omar Avenue. This Redevelopment Area should be a highly desirable location for businesses to thrive.

The redevelopment of Blair Road and Omar Avenue presents unique challenges. In response to the physical and economic conditions at the intersection of Blair Road and Omar Avenue, the Township Council requested that the Planning Board evaluate that certain properties at that intersection as an “area in need of redevelopment” on March 6, 2012. The Council concluded that the Area did meet the criteria to be designated as “area in need of redevelopment” on March 19, 2013.

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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

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

B) The Master Plan of the County in which the municipality is located; and;

C) The State Development and Redevelopment 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 Avenel section of the Township is generally bound by the City of Rahway and the City of Linden to the north, the Borough of Carteret to the east, St. Georges Avenue to the west, and the Port Reading Railroad to the south. The Avenel section of the Township consists of residential neighborhoods, commercial uses along Route 1, and industrial uses concentrated in the north-eastern portion of this section of town.

The Blair Road and Omar Avenue Redevelopment Area is located on the west side of Blair Road at the intersection of Blair Road and Omar Avenue. The Area consists of two (2) parcels, each having frontage on both Blair Road and Omar Avenue. The total acreage of the redevelopment area is approximately 68.75 acres. The following properties comprise the redevelopment area: Block 1020.01, Lot 2, and Block 1020.02, Lot 4.

Figure 1: Redevelopment Area Parcel Map

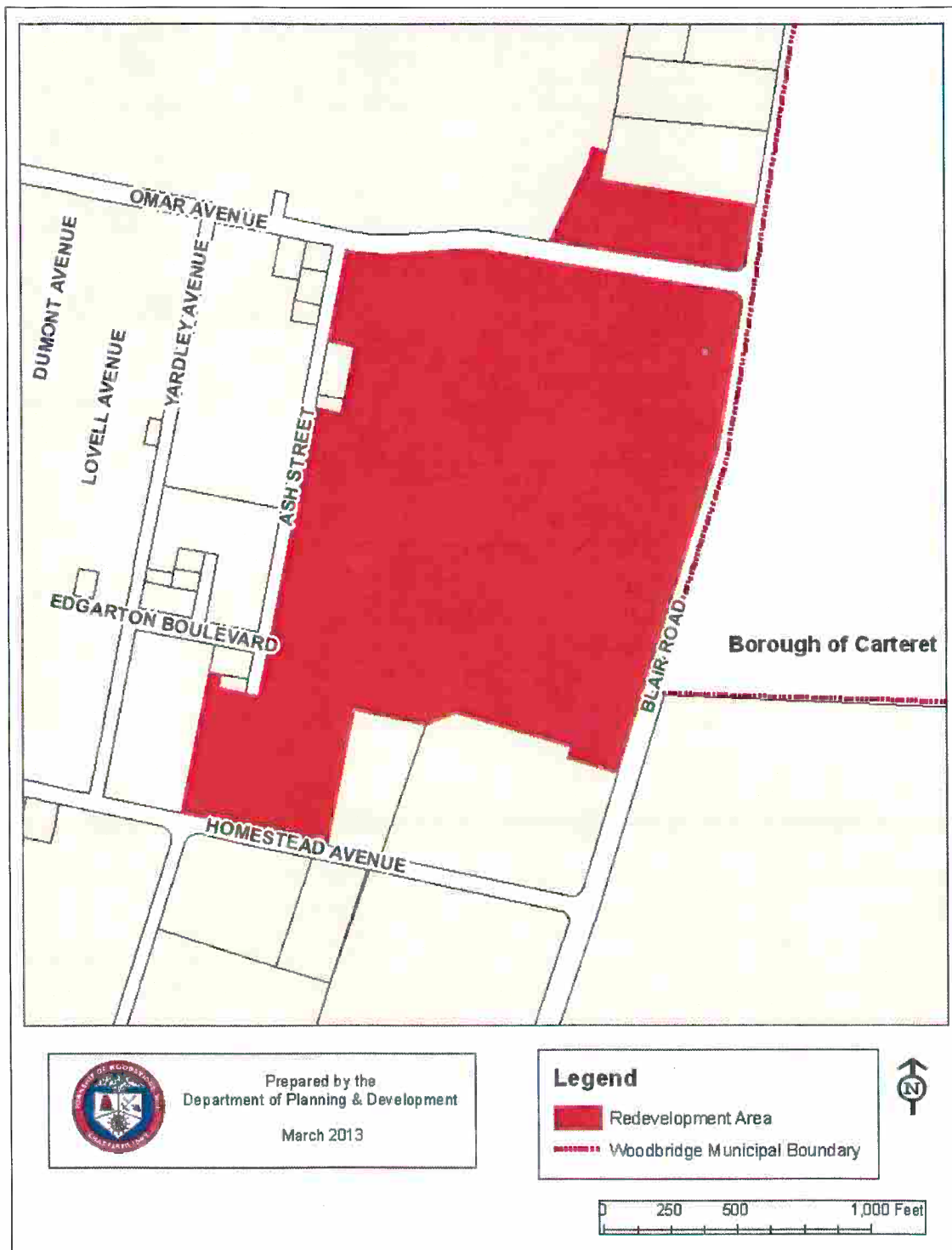


Figure 2: Redevelopment Area Aerial Map



HISTORY OF AVENEL

The Avenel section of Woodbridge Township was once known as “Demarest on the Hill” after the Demarest colonial family. Captain Demarest later founded the community of Avenel, which he named after his daughter. Avenel developed as an active residential community with its own schools, churches, and small businesses. Today, a large portion of Avenel remains residential, however, the northern portion of this section of the town exclusively contains light industrial uses and extensive commercial uses are located along Route 1.

Avenel is one of three sections in the Township with a New Jersey Transit train station.

MASTER PLANNING AND ZONING DESIGNATION HISTORY

The Township Master Plan recognizes that the current land use for this area is light industrial. The current zoning for this area is M-1: Light Industrial. The land use and zoning have not changed since the 1990 Master Plan. The current Master Plan recommends this area continue to be utilized as light industrial.

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 promote the effective use of all the Redevelopment Area properties and to increase property tax base;
- To promote the conservation of energy resources and promote the utilization of renewable energy sources;
- To redevelop land occupied by obsolete structures and uses;
- To provide for appropriate buffers and transitions from residential uses to commercial and industrial areas;
- To improve the physical appearance of the Area.

Figure 3: Current Zoning

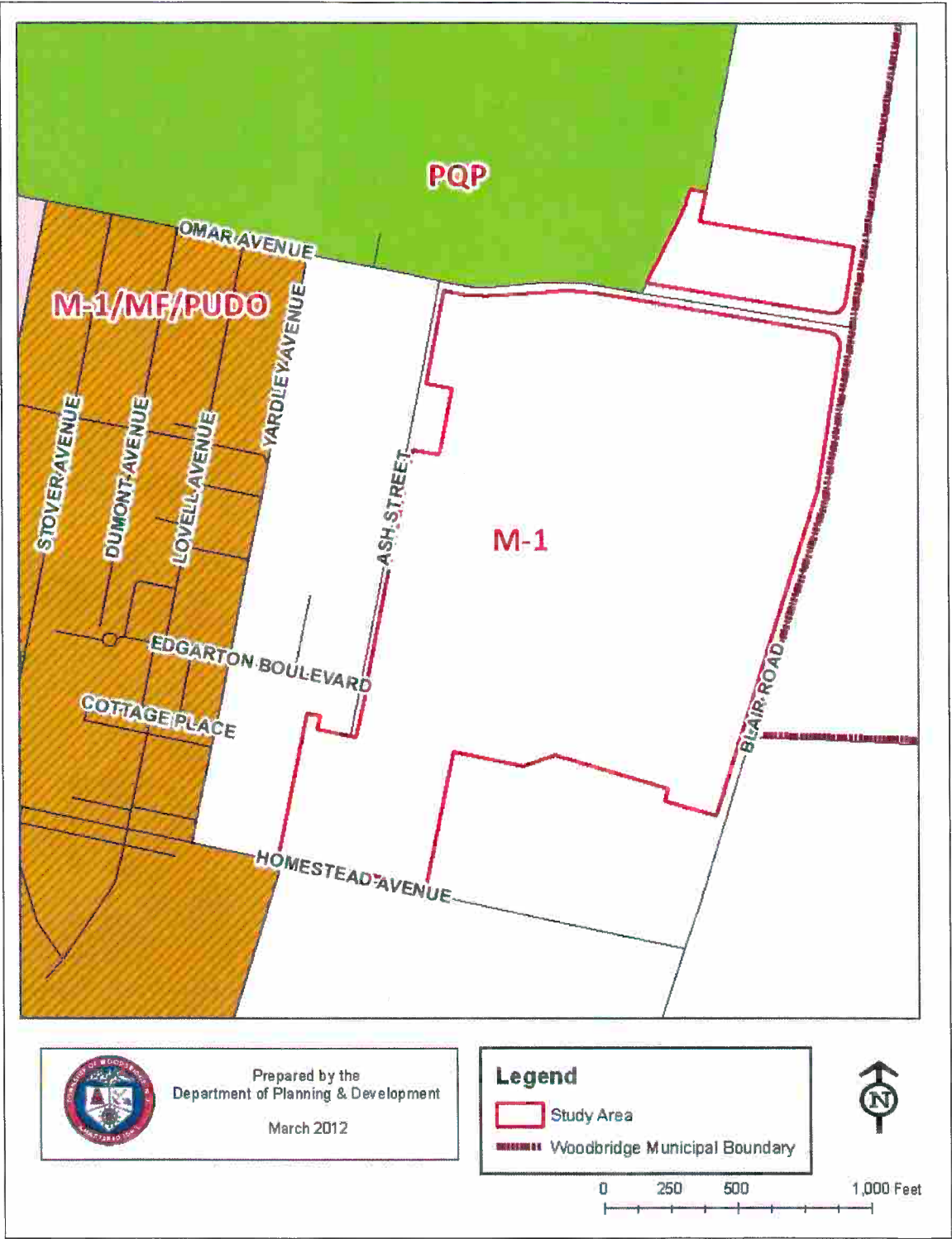
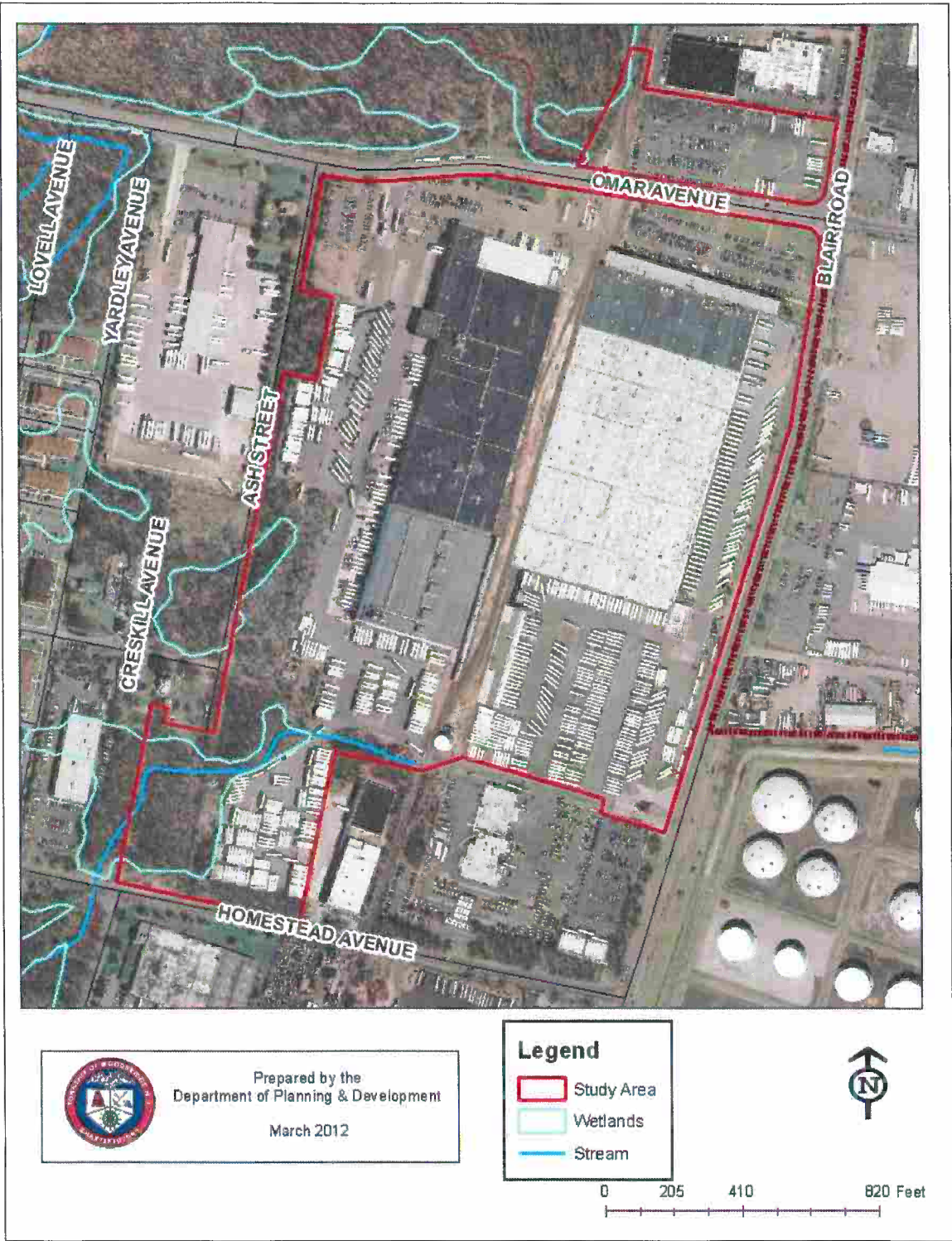


Figure 4: Environmental Constraints



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

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

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

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

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

40:55D- 12a.&b. All development must be approved by the Planning Board and shall be submitted through the normal site plan and subdivision procedures as identified as N.J.S.A. 40:55D, et seq.

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

II. BLAIR ROAD AND OMAR AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT AREA ZONING STANDARDS

The purpose of this Redevelopment Zone is to enhance current opportunities for this industrial property; to promote compatible land use development of attractive building groups; and to improve and provide for the efficient and safe traffic flow within.

Permitted Uses:

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

- Manufacturing and assembly
- Fabrication and assembly of products
- Warehouses, wholesale sales, storage and distribution
- General office and research buildings
- Green energy producing entities and their structures
- Green technology and laboratory or utility buildings
- Blending, mixing of product including chemicals
- Data Centers and Disaster Recovery Facilities
- In addition to the above, any industry not inconsistent with the above that is totally similar in purpose, function, character and effort
- Car and trailer parking lots, as accessory and supplemental to an enumerated permitted use

Bulk Standards:

Principal Building:

- Minimum lot size: one (1) acre
- Minimum lot width: 150 feet
- Minimum lot depth: 200 feet
- Minimum front yard setback (measured from the future street right-of-way): 50 feet for at least (1) front yard setback; minimum 20 feet for additional front yard setback
- Minimum rear yard setback: 50 feet.
- Minimum total side yard setback: 50 feet
- Maximum lot coverage: 60%

- Minimum gross floor area: 8,000 square feet
- Maximum building height: 60 feet
- Maximum distance between buildings: More than one principal building on a lot shall provide a minimum open unoccupied area between buildings equal to the height of the adjoining building or buildings, but not less than 8 feet.
- Maximum floor area ratio: 1.50:1

Accessory Buildings:

- Accessory buildings shall be set back one foot for each one foot of building height, but not less than 15 feet from a property line,
- All accessory structures shall not exceed the height requirements applicable to the principal structure
- Security and/or guards outposts are not considered accessory buildings

Green Buildings:

- All buildings are encouraged to be LEED-certified buildings
- Proposed energy saving techniques shall be considered as part of architectural plans and renderings
- New development or rehabilitation of existing buildings should employ green building practices (refer to the Township's Green Building Checklist)

Additional Standards:

Parking:

- Off-street parking and loading areas shall be coordinated with the public street system serving the Area to reduce conflicts with through traffic, obstruction with pedestrian circulation, and vehicle thoroughfares
- All car parking spaces shall be nine (9) feet in width and eighteen (18) feet in depth
- Aisles accommodating two-way traffic shall be a minimum of twenty four (24) feet in width
- Manufacturing, research, industrial, warehouses, wholesale or laboratories – 1 space per 3,000 sf of gross floor area. An office component is assumed to be a part of the primary building use.
- Offices, office buildings, office research buildings: one (1) parking space for each three hundred (300) square feet of net floor area (not including common areas)

- Visitor parking, if provided, shall be located adjacent to the tenant's primary entrance.
- Where existing paving for parking, loading or access thereto is within 5-feet of any property line, it may remain.

Circulation:

- Parking areas should be interconnected with adjacent properties, and utilize common entrances and exits, to minimize the number of vehicular access points wherever possible.
- An additional curb cut on Homestead Avenue is encouraged to improve access for life safety and to provide improved site circulation appropriate for modern warehouse distribution facilities.
- Curbs cuts and site driveways shall be sized to accommodate the safe access and egress of large tractor trailers and emergency services equipment.
- Existing curb cuts at the properties may remain as currently located and configured.

Loading:

- Loading and unloading shall be provided according to the following schedule:

GROSS FLOOR AREA	SPACES REQUIRED
4,000 to 25,000	1
25,001 to 50,000	2
50,001 to 75,000	3
75,001 to 100,000	4
Each Additional 50,000	1 Additional

- Loading spaces shall be at least 12-feet in width and 50-feet in length.
- Loading may be located within the front yards of Blair Road and Ash Street as well as side and rear yards.
- Loading need not be screened from public view

Buffering and Screening:

- Where not constrained by existing site improvements such as car parking, truck courts and buildings, a minimum 10-foot landscaped buffer shall be required along all public rights-of-way
- No parking shall be permitted in the buffer except where it already exists at the time of adoption of this plan
- Any industrial development that abuts any existing residential development or abuts any parcel planned or zoned for housing development shall be screened from view from the housing site using a combination of fencing, plantings and/or berming

Lighting:

- Accent lighting on buildings is encouraged
- Lighting shall be shielded to prevent glare on adjacent residential 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, truck parking and truck court lights shall not exceed 40 feet in height and shall contain decorative fixtures

Utilities:

- Wherever practical, consideration should be given to relocating above ground utilities to underground.

Signage:

The following signage requirements shall apply within the Redevelopment Area:

- Up to three (3) freestanding entrance/directory signs shall be permitted for each building. Said signs shall be sized to ensure safe truck access.
- Up to two (2) façade signs, at a maximum of 400 square feet each, shall be permitted for each tenant within a building. The aggregate signage per building shall not exceed 1,000 square feet.
- One (1) additional tenant directory sign shall be permitted at common entrance drives.

III. PLAN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS

RELATIONSHIP TO THE TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

The Township of Woodbridge's last comprehensive Master Plan was prepared in February 2009. The Master Plan recommended this area be devoted to industrial use.

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

- To expand and protect the Township's ratable base through the attraction and retention of nationally known and respected companies;
- To control industrial development by limiting industrial development to land suitable for industrial use.

MASTER PLANS OF ADJACENT MUNICIPALITIES

The Blair Road and Omar Avenue Redevelopment Area is located close to the municipal border of the Borough of Carteret. The land uses found across Blair Road in the Borough of Carteret are similar and compatible to the land uses proposed in this Plan. This Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Borough of Carteret Master Plan.

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 Blair Road and Omar Avenue Redevelopment Plan is generally consistent with the elements of the Middlesex County Master Plan, a document that addresses sprawl and sustainability in the region. The Blair Road and Omar Avenue Redevelopment Plan relates directly to the goals, values and objectives of the Middlesex County Master Plan which aims to:

- Make fuller use of existing transportation lines and facilities. The County Plan anticipated that public transportation would achieve greater significance as a necessary alternative to the private automobile, with its attendant problems of pollution, energy availability, and congestion;
- Find a more feasible alternative to the present situation of "strip" commercial development found on major roads, and single-family homes on unnecessarily large lots;

- “Cluster” future growth around definable town centers and transportation facilities to include commercial and office employment as well as residential, with land use intensity decreasing as distance from the town center increases.

New Jersey State Development & Redevelopment Plan

The Blair Road and Omar Avenue 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.

As of the writing of this Plan, a new State Plan is being developed, called “The State Strategic Plan: New Jersey’s State Development and Redevelopment Plan.”

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

IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

REDEVELOPMENT ENTITY

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

Phasing:

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

SELECTION OF DESIGNATED DEVELOPERS

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

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

APPOINTMENT OF A DESIGNATED REDEVELOPER

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

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

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

A person or entity that owns or controls the parcels within the Redevelopment Area shall be given priority in the designation of Redeveloper, provided such person or

entity has appropriate development experience and financial resources, as this would minimize acquisition costs and delay.

CONDITIONS IN REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT(S)

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

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

7. The Redevelopment Entity and the Township of Woodbridge reserve the right to terminate any Redevelopment Agreement with a designated redeveloper subject to the terms and conditions of the Redevelopment Agreement.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

An application for preliminary and/or final site plan approval for uses authorized in this Plan may be filed by: (i) a redeveloper designated by the Redevelopment Entity; or (ii) an assignee of the redeveloper as approved by the Redevelopment Entity. In addition to any requirements of the Redevelopment Entity, preliminary and/or final site plans and/or subdivisions, with details sufficient to comply with the Municipal Land Use Law and Local Ordinance, shall be submitted for Planning Board review and approval for each development parcel, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq.

DURATION OF REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

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

AMENDING THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

This Redevelopment Plan may be amended from time to time in compliance with the requirements of law, provided that 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.