

OAK TREE ROAD REHABILITATION PLAN



Department of Planning & Development
Township of Woodbridge
June 2018

Oak Tree Road Rehabilitation Plan

Township of Woodbridge

Prepared by
Township of Woodbridge Department of Planning & Development

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ENDORSED 7/25/18 by Township of Woodbridge Planning Board

ADOPTED 8/21/18 by Township of Woodbridge Council

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INTRODUCTION

The Oak Tree Road commercial corridor is one of four downtown business districts in the Township of Woodbridge. Located in the Iselin section of the Township, Oak Tree Road has a long history of being the commercial district for the residents of Iselin. Over the past twenty years, Oak Tree Road has seen a dramatic increase in the number of businesses serving the local south Asian community. As a unique commercial center for south Asian food, fashion, and jewelry, Oak Tree Road has become a widely popular destination for south Asians living throughout the metropolitan area.

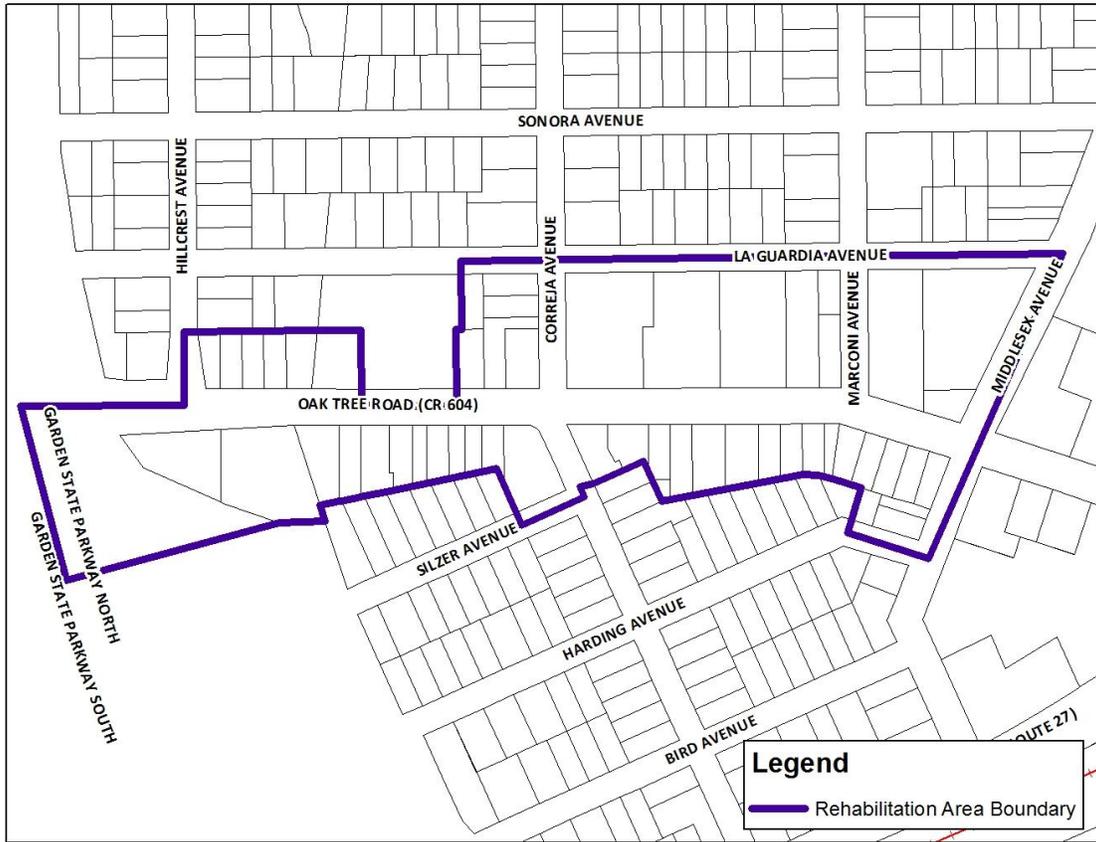
The Oak Tree Road Rehabilitation Plan presents an opportunity to take advantage of the strengths of the business district to further enhance the area and continue to grow the district's regional influence. The rehabilitation area consists of the commercial properties along Oak Tree Road between Garden State Parkway overpass and Middlesex Avenue.

In 2008, the Township retained the firm Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates, Inc. ("PPSA") to determine whether a portion of the Oak Tree Road neighborhood qualified as an area in need of rehabilitation under the New Jersey Redevelopment and Housing law (NJSA 40A:12A-1 et seq.). The boundaries of the study area were La Guardia Avenue to the north, Auth Avenue to the east, Lincoln Highway/Route 27 to the south and the Garden State Parkway to the west. Based on the age of the residential structures in the study area, PPSA concluded the area qualified as "an area in need of rehabilitation" in accordance with N.J.S.A.40:12A-14. In December 2008, the Municipal Council designated the study area as "an area in need of rehabilitation."

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."

In the fall of 2012, the Department of Landscape Architecture at Rutgers University conducted a senior studio where students studied Oak Tree Road and suggested different revitalization plans. Overall, there have been significant planning efforts devoted to looking forward on behalf of the district.

OAK TREE ROAD REHABILITATION AREA PARCEL MAP



OAK TREE ROAD REHABILITATION AREA AERIAL MAP



PLANNING CONTEXT

Oak Tree Road Rehabilitation Area and Location

The rehabilitation plan area consists of 52 parcels along Oak Tree Road. (See Appendix A for a complete list of properties.) It is the most dense shopping area in the Township (See Appendix B). The current land use in the Rehabilitation Area is primarily commercial properties with some residential buildings. The surrounding area around Oak Tree Road to the north and south is comprised mostly of single-family residential dwellings. Oak Tree Road is part of a larger commercial corridor which extends east and west of the rehabilitation area. Cooper Towers, a township housing facility is in the middle of the rehabilitation area.

The most properties in the Rehabilitation Area are currently in the B-2/P Central Business Zone. One property (1326 Oak Tree Road) is in the B-2 Central Business Zone. The purpose of the B-2/P Central Business Zone is to provide for 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. It also allows for the development of new and expanded ancillary businesses and cultural uses and provides for off-street parking facilities on each specific parcel. Permitted principal uses in the zone include retail, restaurant, personal service businesses, professional offices. The purpose of the B-2 Central Business Zone is to provide for and ensure retail sales and service containing uses which include activities servicing a larger segment of the population than the average neighborhood. It also allows for the development of new and expanded ancillary businesses and cultural uses and is to provide for the location of off-street parking facilities close enough to the business district to be convenient thereto. Permitted principal uses in the zone include retail, restaurant, personal service businesses, professional offices.

The adjacent areas to the north, south, and east of the Rehabilitation Area are zoned R-6 High-Density Single-Family Residential Zone. The purpose of the R-6 High-Density Single-Family Residential Zone is to provide for varied types of housing to meet the desires of a segment of the population. Two churches are located immediately east of the rehabilitation area, St. Cecilia's Roman Catholic Church and First Presbyterian Church of Iselin.

The adjacent area to the west of the Rehabilitation Area is the B-3 Highway Business Zone. The purpose of the B-3 Highway Business Zone is to provide areas for retail sales and services to accommodate the traveling public; to promote compatible land use development of attractive building groups; to ensure the compatibility of the development with adjacent residential areas; to improve and provide for the efficient and safe traffic flow within and through the B-3 Zone; and to provide highway-oriented commercial uses in the proper location. Permitted principal uses include: retail, restaurant, personal service, professional office, and hotels/motels.

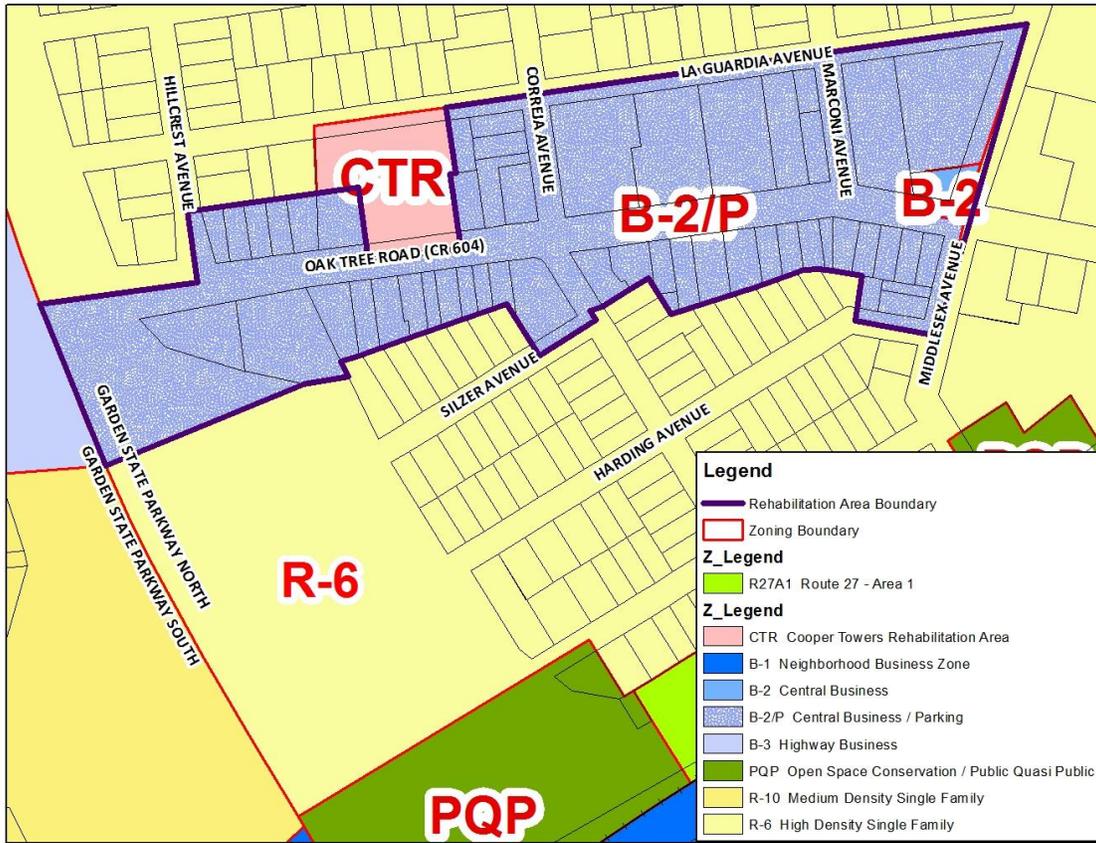
In analyzing the district similarities and differences, specifically the challenges of differentiation/branding of business in such a densely populated two block strip,

businesses within the district face greater challenges than any other business area in Town:

1. The density of businesses in the four (4) block radius is the highest in town, and probably the highest in Middlesex County. There are 116 businesses located in this district;
2. Complicating business differentiation even further, ninety (90) or 78% of the businesses are retail in nature;
3. Finally of those 90 businesses, over 65% are clothing or jewelry retailers.

These factors warrant assistance in business attraction through enhanced signage.

OAK TREE ROAD REHABILITATION AREA CURRENT ZONING



PLAN PRINCIPLES/STRATEGIES

The Township of Woodbridge proposes to enhance the Oak Tree Road business district. The rehabilitation of this area will improve the economic prosperity of a popular shopping district and promote the district's regional impact, while celebrating the area's very high density of development.

This Plan will afford the area, specifically the businesses, more signage options than previously available to them.

PLAN GOALS

The overall goal of this Rehabilitation Plan is to rehabilitate the Oak Tree Road commercial corridor as a vibrant, commercial district. This will provide a better shopping experience for residents of Iselin as well as visitors. Specific goals are as follows:

- Recognize the role of the area as an important central business district, preserving its unique quality and character;
- Create a sense of place in downtown Iselin;
- To provide business owners with additional ways of advertising;
- To create a unique experience for visitors;
- To control any commercial development that conflicts with adjacent residential uses;
- To create a walkable, human-scale environment that integrates retail shopping with existing residential development;
- To promote the effective use of the rehabilitation area and to increase the property tax base;
- To recognize and enhance the district's regional impact along the nation's Northeast Corridor;
- To brand the densely developed district;
- To attract additional customers to the growing clothier, jewelry, and restaurant/retail district.

RELATIONSHIP OF PLAN TO THE TOWNSHIP LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

This Rehabilitation Plan establishes an overlay zone for the Rehabilitation Area. The existing B-2/P Central Business/Parking Zone and B-2 Central Business Zone shall remain in effect. This rehabilitation plan shall supersede the use and bulk provisions of the Township Land Use and Development Regulations (Chapter 150) related to signage for the Rehabilitation Area. Other Township regulations affecting developments shall remain in effect; including, but limited to: existing engineering standards, performance standards and definitions.

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.

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

This Plan establishes an overlay zone for the properties in the rehabilitation area. The existing zoning standards in effect shall continue to apply to the properties in the rehabilitation area. Properties in the B-2/P Central Business/Parking Zone shall continue to be regulated by the B-2/P Central Business/Parking Zone standards. Properties in the B-2 Central Business Zone shall continue to be regulated by the B-2 Central Business Zone. The standards in this Plan shall apply for the signage regulations of the rehabilitation area.

Signage Regulations for the Oak Tree Rehabilitation Area

The following standards shall apply in the Oak Tree Road Rehabilitation Area. This Plan shall supersede any conflicting regulations found in the Land Use and Development Ordinance.

A. General Regulations

(1) The following types of signs shall be permitted :

- (a) Electronic, LED, and reader-type signs with stationary signage for a minimum of 60 seconds in the form of a façade sign. Such signs shall advertise only for the business where they are proposed to be located.
- (b) Use of lights, strings of lights, or similar displays is permitted.
- (c) Signs utilizing neon lighting, where such signs do not distract from the effectiveness of any traffic signal or similar safety or warning device.
- (d) Window signs, non-illuminated which do not cover more than 40 percent of the window area.
- (e) Signs may be composed of all colors

B. Exempt Signs Not Requiring Building Permits. Window signs, mounted flat against a glass window, which are non-illuminated and not covering more than 40 percent of the total window area, do not require building permits. Window signs shall not block public view of the inside of stores as a safety measure.

C. Façade Signs.

- (1) Exterior signs identifying or advertising the names or uses of the tenants or occupants of the premises may be affixed to the front of buildings and shall occupy no more than 30 percent of the front façade area of buildings.
- (2) Signs may be placed on the side and rear façades of a building. Side and rear façades facing an adjacent or immediately opposite residentially zoned property may not be internally-lighted.
- (3) All front facades fronting Oak Tree Road are permitted to have internally-lighted façade signage regardless of the zoning on the opposite side of the road.
- (4) The aggregate area of all signs cannot exceed more than 30 percent of the front façade.

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 strengthen downtown commercial shopping areas through:
 - Expanded retail offerings.
 - Improved facades and streetscapes.
 - Adequate parking.
 - Improved pedestrian and bike connections with adjacent neighborhoods
- To expand retail and service activities in appropriate locations to meet the future shopping needs of Township residents.
- To minimize conflicts between residential and non-residential development through appropriate lighting, buffering/landscaping, loading, parking and storage standards.
- To continue attracting premier Retail, Industrial and Office end users to the Township.

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

Master Plans of Adjacent Municipalities

The Oak Tree Road Rehabilitation Area is located in the western portion of Iselin. The closest adjacent municipality to the rehabilitation area is the Township of Edison. This rehabilitation area 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 Area, 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 rehabilitation area 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.

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 Area 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.

Appendix A

List of properties and zoning prior to the adoption of the rehabilitation area

Block	Lot	Address	Zone
436	1.02	1477 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
436	1.04	1481 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	19	1405 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	22	1407 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	24	1411 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	25.02	1415 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	27	1419 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	29	1421 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	30.02	1425 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	32.02	1429 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	35	1433 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.04	37	1437 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	16	10 Harding Avenue	B-2/P
437.03	18	41 Middlesex Avenue	B-2/P
437.03	20	1331 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	21	1329 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	23	1331-1335 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	25	1337-1339 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	27	1343 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	29	1345-1347 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	31	1349 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	32	1353 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	34	1355 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	36	1361 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	38	1367 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	41	1373 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	44.01	1375 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	46.01	1377 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	46.02	Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	48	1381-1389 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
437.03	50.02	1391-1395 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P

Block	Lot	Address	Zone
442.16	5	81 LaGuardia Avenue	B-2/P
442.16	6	99 Correja Avenue	B-2/P
442.16	7	95 Correja Avenue	B-2/P
442.16	8	1404 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
442.16	9	1404 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
442.16	10	1412 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
442.16	11	1430 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
442.16	12	1436 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
442.16	13	1440 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
442.16	14	1446 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
442.16	15	1450 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
442.16	16	1452 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
445.01	1	1384-1396 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
445.01	13	1370-1382 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
445.01	20	1358 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
445.01	26	1352-1354 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
445.01	29	1350 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
445.01	32.01	1350 Oak Tree Road	B-2/P
446.01	1	1326 Oak Tree Road	B-2
446.01	2	63 Middlesex Avenue	B-2/P
446.01	14	6-24 Marconi Avenue	B-2/P

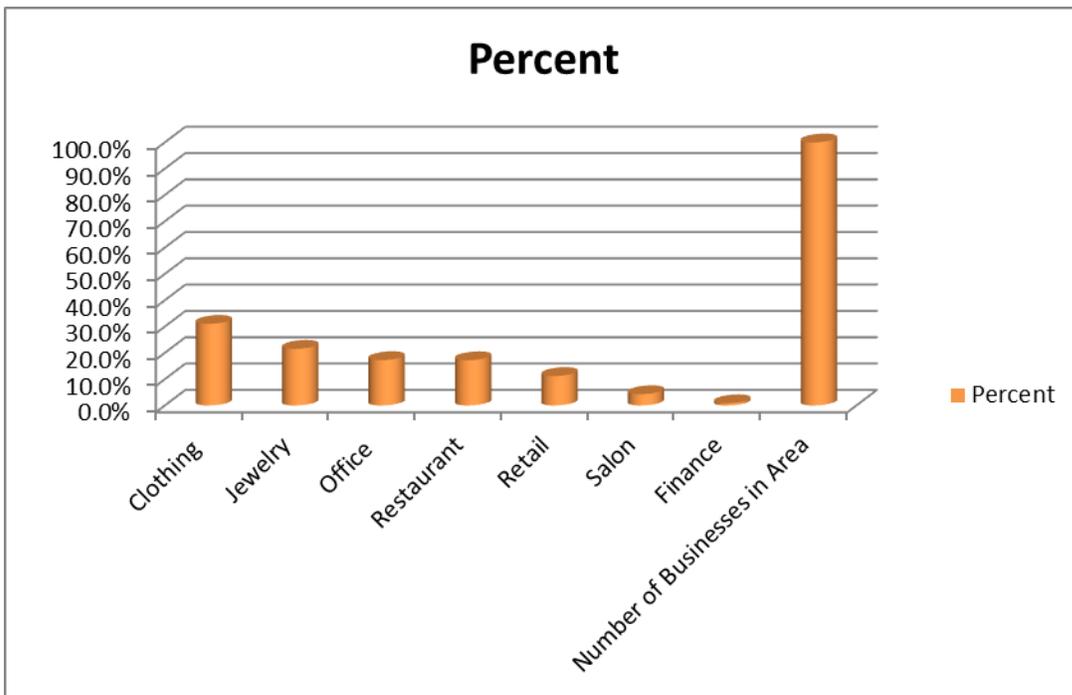
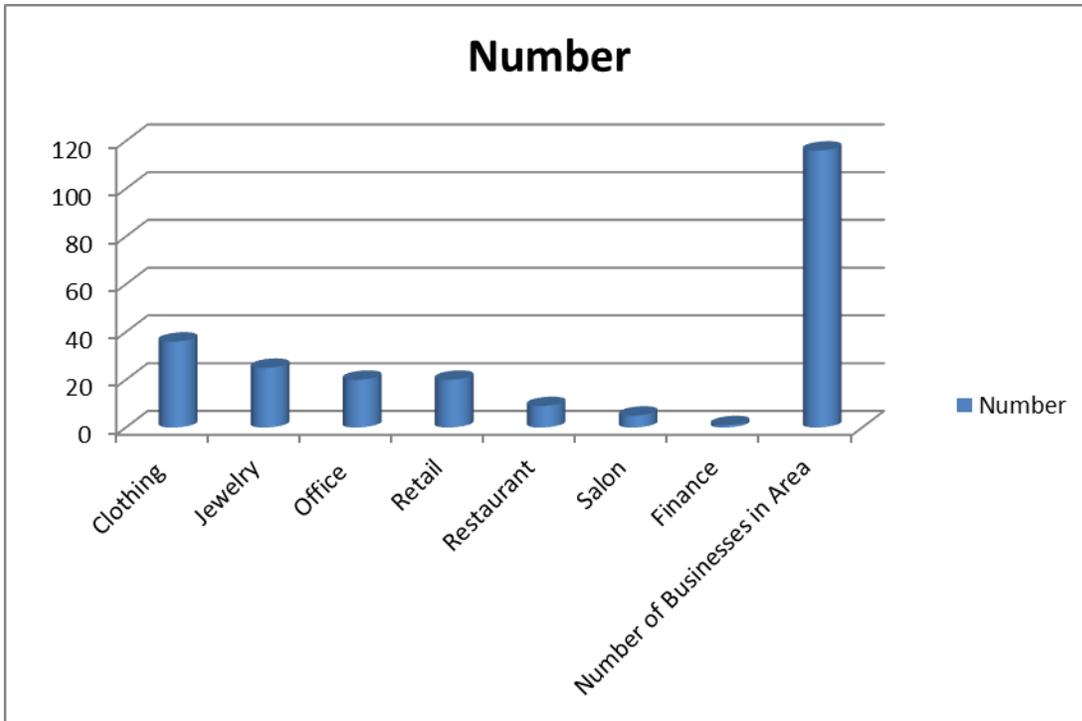
APPENDIX B

The rehabilitation area consists of properties along Oak Tree Road between the Garden State Parkway overpass and Middlesex Avenue, as well as some properties fronting on Middlesex Avenue, Harding Avenue, Marconi Avenue, Laguardia Avenue and Correja Avenue.

An analysis of this area shows there are currently 116 businesses currently operating as of May 2018 (see charts for business type and percentage breakdown). Some of the businesses are located in standalone structures, while others have residential units above. There are also a few nonconforming residential structures.

There are minimal vacancies in this area with construction occurring for new businesses at the corner of Oak Tree Road and Marconi Avenue, and the corner of Middlesex Avenue and Laguardia Avenue. Clothing sales (36 businesses) and jewelry shops (25 businesses) combine to make up the majority of the business types in this area. Office uses and retail are third with almost 17% each. Many of the offices are mostly condensed in two (2) parcels out of the 52 parcels in the area. Although restaurants only comprise almost 8% of the businesses, their spaces are some of the largest along Oak Tree Road.

Business Type	Number	Percent
Clothing	36	31.0%
Jewelry	25	21.6%
Office	20	17.2%
Retail	20	17.2%
Restaurant	9	7.8%
Salon	5	4.3%
Finance	1	0.9%
Number of Businesses in Area	116	100.0%



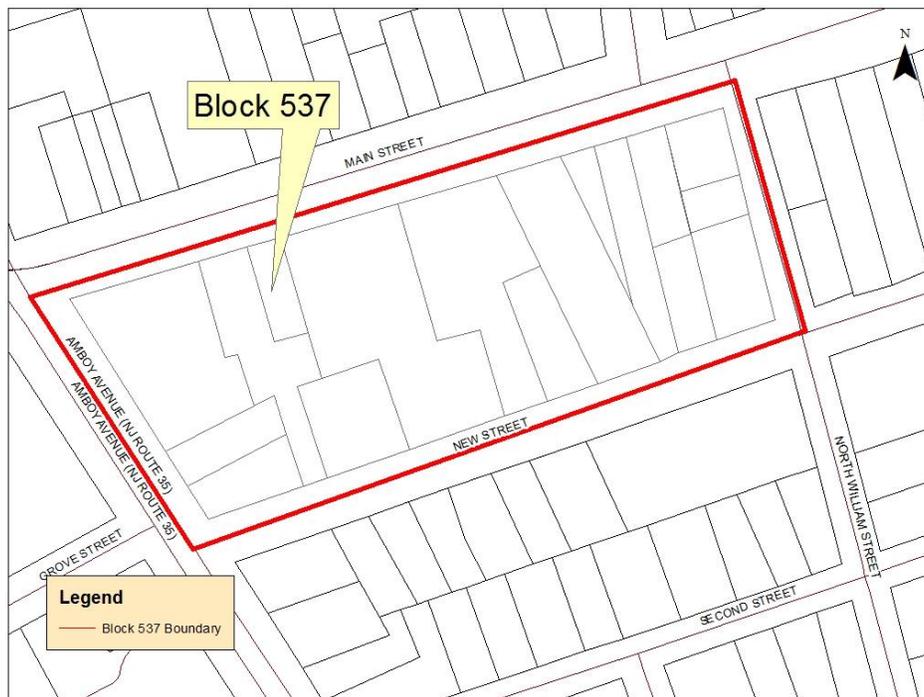
The amount of shopping that can be done in the approximate 0.30 miles stretch along Oak Tree Road and the narrow adjacent side streets are very immense. The Township

has four (4) traditional downtown commercial districts, including Oak Tree Road. No other downtown area of the Township has this much of a commercial business market in such a small area.

As a comparison in the formulation of the Rehabilitation Plan, a block along Main Street in downtown Woodbridge proper was analyzed. The Woodbridge proper section of Woodbridge Township has a traditional central business district with stores, restaurants, a train station, parks, and town hall.

For the purpose of this comparison the businesses located on Block 537 were inventoried. This is a thriving commercial block with typical downtown uses. It is bound by North William Street to the east, New Street to the south, Amboy Avenue to the west and Main Street to the north. The block contains 17 parcels and 29 businesses (see chart). Offices have the most locations on this block with 14 and the remaining businesses are scattered with gyms, restaurants, retail, arts related uses and a bank.

Block 537 Map



Business Type	Number	Percent
Office	14	48.3%
Gym Health	4	13.8%
Restaurant	3	10.3%
Retail	5	17.2%
Gallery/Dance	2	6.9%
Finance	1	3.4%
Total Number	29	100.0%

Although Block 537 is thriving with commercial activity, it is not comparable to the 116 businesses in the Oak Tree Road Rehabilitation Area, which has much more businesses in its downtown locations. Block 537 is dominated by office uses, most of which are in one structure. There is also a large real estate office, jewelry store, grocer and pharmacy, all which of which dominate the area in terms of size of buildings. Oak Tree Road has many more businesses in its area and results in more facades and signs.

When shoppers visit Oak Tree Road they can dine, jewelry and clothes shop, visit a professional office, and get takeout from a sweet shop. The area has major regional draw as people arrive from all over to shop the Oak Tree Road business district. With so many vibrant businesses in such a small area, any enhanced signage options to business stakeholders will be a great benefit to the area and ultimately allow businesses to continue to thrive and attract customers from a large regional footprint.