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THP, Inc.

## Reexamination Report

Borough of South Plainfield

Master Plan

And

Development Regulations

June 16, 2006

Borough of South Plainfield Middlesex County, New Jersey

Prepared by:
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<sup>\*</sup> Plates 1 through 5 are presented following page 17.

#### I. Introduction

The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55 D-1 et. seq. requires each municipality in the State of New Jersey reexamine its Master Plan and development regulation at least every six years. Specifically, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 states:

"The governing body shall, at least every six years, provide for a general reexamination of its Master Plan and development regulations by the Planning Board which shall prepare and adopt by resolution a report on the findings of such reexamination, a copy of which report and resolution shall be sent to the county planning board and the municipal clerk of each adjoining municipality."

This report is intended to conform with the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law and as such addresses N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89:

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
- b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
- c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for such plan or regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, County, and Municipal policies and objectives.

- d. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations if any, including underlying objectives, policies, and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.
- e. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992, C.79 (C.4DA:12A-1 seq.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

#### **Historical Prospective**

The Borough of South Plainfield adopted a comprehensive master plan in 1973. In 1978 the Planning Board adopted a revised plan and in April of 1985 another plan was adopted and further revised in April of 1988. The Planning Board undertook another reexamination in April of 1995.

In June of 1995 the Borough adopted a revised Housing Element and Fair Share Housing Plan. This plan was reviewed by the Superior Court and was further revised in 1997 and 1998. The Planning Board adopted a revised Master Plan on May 9, 2000. The 2000 Master Plan incorporated the revised Housing Element and additional plan elements as well. A redevelopment plan for the Hamilton Boulevard Industrial Site was adopted by the Borough Council in 2002 and a stormwater management plan was completed and adopted by the Planning Board in the summer of 2005. A revised Housing Element was prepared to comply with the third round housing regulations adopted by the Council On Affordable Housing and this plan element was adopted by Planning Board in December, 2005. Growth share implementing ordinances were adopted by the Borough Council in

January of 2006. The Borough has petitioned to COAH for certification of the revised Housing Plan.

This report presents the findings of the reexamination of the Borough of South Plainfield Master Plan, adopted May 9, 2000 and current development regulations of the Borough.

#### II. Major Problems and Objectives Relating to Land Development, 2000.

The 2000 Master Plan contains a statement of goals and objectives established as a guide for its preparation as follows:

- 1. Protect the public health, safety, and welfare through the proper use and development of all lands in the Borough.
- 2. Preserve the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods in the Borough.
- 3. Provide for a variety of housing types, tenure, and ranges of affordability as needed to accommodate the expected future resident population.
- 4. Provide adequate commercial uses to serve the needs of the community.
- 5. Provide adequate park and recreation systems.
- 6. Provide for adequate community facilities to serve the Borough.
- 7. Provide adequate light and air around buildings.
- 8. Promote a desirable visual environment.
- 9. Preserve historical sites and promote and strengthen the viability of the historic downtown area.
- 10. Preserve environmentally sensitive areas of the Borough, such as wetlands and flood plains, and continue the preservation and expansion, where possible, of the Highland Woods Preserve.
- 11. Maintain an adequate amount of industrial land use.
- 12. Provide an efficient and safe transportation system to move goods and people.

- 13. Provide adequate open space.
- 14. Encourage conservation of environmental resources and energy.

Specific problems and objectives relating to land development are addressed throughout the Master Plan:

#### Land Use Plan Element

The 2000 Land Use Plan Element includes additional land use classifications which were proposed to address the major goals and objectives as noted above. The plan states these additional categories were included to recognize the court approval of the 1997 Fair Share Housing Plan, the continued growth and change of regional employment within the Interstate 287 corridor, the Borough's desire to strengthen the Historic Downtown Retail District, and revised state environmental regulations relative to wetlands.

Major revisions included designation of the completed shopping center and open space area at the intersection of Park Avenue and Oak Tree Avenue, multi family residential designations then under construction, the creation of the regional hospitality districts and redesignation of lands located between Interstate 287 and Hamilton Boulevard to office development from commercial retail. The plan notes the need to limit commercial retail development not located within the Historic Downtown District, the existence of regional shopping areas to the south and west and the goal of improved aesthetics and traffic flow within this gateway area.

#### **Circulation Plan Element**

The circulation plan element includes discussion of severe traffic congestion. The plan notes "of the 19,090 commuters working in South Plainfield in 1990, over 96% commuted by automobile; about 82% in single occupancy vehicles. These factors, along

with the truck traffic servicing the Borough's industrial areas, contribute to heavy volumes of traffic and severe problems of congestion in South Plainfield." Specific corridors within the Borough that are especially prone to congestion are noted and traffic volume data is presented. Heavy truck traffic is specifically recognized as a major problem on many of the Borough's roadways. "This problem was recognized in the previous Master Plan and remains an issue." Also noted is the percentage of truck involvement in accidents on certain roadways as being much higher than the statewide average. Fourteen intersections are identified as hazardous based on borough police department accident records. The plan lists numerous roadway improvements many of which have been implemented. The proposed Helen Street extension is discussed in detail and is viewed as a critical element in an effort to remove truck traffic from congested roadways and residential neighborhoods.

#### Demographic Profile

The following is a brief summary of the demographic profile of the Borough. It is presented to update the data contained within the 2000 Master Plan. The majority of the information is from the *South Plainfield Housing Element*, prepared by THP, Inc. in November, 2005, and the interested reader should refer to the Housing Element for a comprehensive discussion of demographics and, in particular, housing issues in the Borough.

The population within South Plainfield peaked in 1970 and declined over the next 20 years. During the 1990's, the Borough's population increased from 20,489 to 21,810. The reported 2000 population is slightly higher than the Borough's population in 1970. The July 1, 2004 estimated population increased to 23,034 and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority projects an additional increase to 24,780 persons by the year 2015.

Year	Population	Increase	Percentage Increase	
1940	5,379	-		
1950	8,008	2,629	+48.9	
1960	17,879	9,871	+123.3	
1970	21,142	3,263	+18.3	
1980	20,521	20,521 -621		
1990	20,489	-32	0.0	
2000	21,810	1,321	+6.5	
2004	23,034	1,224	+5.3	

#### Household Size and Age Distribution

As noted in the *Housing Element*, household size within the Borough has declined which mirrors national and regional trends. The Borough's average household size in 1980 was approximately 3.3 persons. In 1990, it was 3.0. The 2000 Census reports the average household size slightly increased to 3.01 in the year 2000. The Borough's household size is larger than much of the state. The 2000 Middlesex County average is 2.74. The 2000 Census reports that 54.8 percent of all New Jersey households consist of one (1) and two (2) person households. In Middlesex County, 52.6 percent of all households are one (1) and two (2) person households. Only 44.8 percent of South Plainfield households were one (1) and two (2) person households in the year 2000.

The median age of the Borough's population was 38 in the year 2000. As with much of the State, more of the Borough's population fell within the older age cohorts.

Age Cohort	1990 Distribution	2000 Distribution	
0-4	7.1	5.9%	
5-17	16.3	19.1%	
18-24	8.8	6.5%	
25-44	33.9	30.4%	
45-64	21.6	23.8%	
65+	12.3	14.3%	

U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

This trend toward more elderly households is typical throughout the State. New Jersey's Department of Labor (DOL) anticipates that this trend will continue. DOL projects population by age. It projects that New Jersey's population will increase by 1,366,550 people between 2000 and 2020. It attributes 69.9 percent of this increase to people over 55. In Middlesex County, DOL projects that the 2000-2020 population will increase by 160,438 and 49.9 percent of that increase is attributable to people over 55.

#### **Housing Element**

The 2005 Housing Element lists the affordable housing projects constructed within the Borough and presents the manner in which the Borough plans to respond to its third round housing obligation. The Borough has a 23 unit rehabilitation share and proposes to continue to participate with the Middlesex County Housing and Community Development Program in an effort to rehabilitate 23 units over the next ten years. Discussions with county officials reveals there is a shortage of qualified contractors who are willing to perform the required work. If the County cannot accommodate the request to rehabilitate the 23 units, the Borough shall fund a rehabilitation program that will be administered by a for-profit or non-profit entity experienced in the day-to-day management of such a program.

The Housing Element discusses other specific problems and objectives including the provision of an alternative zoning plan for the 101 acre Harris Steel site and the then proposed growth share ordinance which requires each development to provide one affordable unit for every eight (8) market units and one (1) affordable unit for every 25 jobs generated by non-residential development.

#### Municipal Stormwater Management Plan

Specific goals and objectives of the Borough's Stormwater Management Plan are set forth as follows:

- promote public education
- reduce flood damage, including damage to life and property;
- minimize, to the extent practical, any increase in stormwater runoff from any new development;
- reduce soil erosion from any development or construction project;
- assure the adequacy of existing and proposed culverts and bridges, and other instream structures;
- maintain groundwater recharge;
- prevent, to the greatest extent feasible, any increase in nonpoint pollution;
- maintain the integrity of stream channels for their biological functions, as well as for drainage;

- minimize pollutants in stormwater runoff from new and existing development to restore, enhance, and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the waters of the state, to protect public health, to safeguard fish and aquatic life and scenic and ecological values, and to enhance the domestic, municipal, recreational, industrial, and other uses of water; and
- protect public safety through the proper design and operation of stormwater basins.

The plan notes the Borough has exhibited severe water quantity problems including flooding, stream bank erosion, and diminished base-flow in its streams. Specific roadways and intersections which experience flooding are enumerated in the plan.

#### Recreation and Open Space Plan

The recreation and open space plan element of the 2000 Master Plan notes the adequacy of the total acreage of recreation land to meet the Boroughs needs. It is also noted, however, that there are some neighborhoods that are not within easy reach of adequate recreational facilities. Current parkland is somewhat below national recommended standards in meeting the needs of the Borough's population as projected for the future. The plan recommends an acquisition and development program to provide additional parkland and facilities within reasonable proximity to each resident's home as well as a program to acquire floodplains and environmentally sensitive lands. The plan notes that 50 percent of the then existing parkland is County owned and another 25 percent is located on school property. "It is essential that these recreational facilities remain open to the public in order for the Borough to be able to continue to meet its recreational and open space needs."

#### **Community Facilities Plan Element**

The Borough's public facilities and services have been analyzed as they relate to the Borough's present and future needs. The 2000 plan element noted the inadequacy of fire protection facilities and the municipal building/police headquarters/library complex. The plan recommended a feasibility study be undertaken concerning the possible expansion of the municipal complex and the recommendations of that study be implemented to correct the deficiencies.

#### Recycling Plan

The 2000 Master Plan describes the goals and objectives of the state, county and borough's efforts with regard to recycling of the municipal waste stream. The Borough implements a comprehensive recycling program administered by the Recycling Commission under the direction of Dr. Alice Tempel.

#### Relationships to Other Area Master Plans

The 2000 Master Plan examined the relationship between existing land uses, land use plan elements and development regulations of the bordering municipalities of Piscataway Township, Edison Township and the City of Plainfield. The plan notes that the majority of contiguous lands are now developed with a variety of residential light industrial and commercial uses. The Borough's inclusion of open space designations in the vicinity of Coolidge Street and Metuchen Road made the Edison Township Master Plan consistent in all respects.

The Borough's 2000 Master Plan also notes consistency with the goals and objectives of the Middlesex County Master Plan Documents and the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

#### The Land Use Ordinances of the Borough of South Plainfield

The Land Use Ordinances of the Borough include the Zoning Regulations, Subdivision and Site Plan Regulations, Land Use Procedures, Tree Removal Regulations and the Fair Share/Growth Share Housing Plan implementation regulations. Each of the ordinances noted above include stated goals and objectives consistent with those enumerated in the Municipal Land Use Law.

### III. The Extent to Which Such Problems and Objectives Have Been Reduced or Have Increased Since 2000.

The fourteen stated goals and objectives as enumerated in the 2000 Master Plan remain valid even though the Borough has experienced significant growth between 1999 and the present. Most of the residential growth occurred between 1999 and 2002, the period in which several of the Borough's inclusionary housing projects were constructed. A total of 748 certificates of occupancy for residential units were issued during this time frame. Approximately 1.83 million square feet of non-residential space was occupied between the period 1996 and 2004 with 1.39 million square feet or 76 percent occupied between 1999 and 2004.

The following is a review of the specific goals and objectives and the Master Plan elements indicating the extent to which they have been reduced or have increased.

 Goal Number 2 – Preserve the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods in the Borough. This goal has been realized for the most part. However, various applications made before the Borough's Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment have focused on the importance of specific sensitive neighborhoods where incompatible land use relationships between developable and potential redevelopment sites exist. Continued achievement of this goal will require increased buffer requirements and rezoning of some sites within the Borough.

Goal Number 3 – Provide for a variety of housing types, tenure, and ranges of
affordability as needed to accommodate the expected future resident population.

The choice of housing types and ranges of affordability for housing within the Borough have increased significantly due to the Borough's compliance with affordable housing objectives and requirements, the construction of the above noted affordable housing projects, and the inclusion of age restricted housing alternatives within the Borough's Zoning regulations.

• Goal Number 5 – Provide adequate park and recreation systems.

The Borough continues to expand and improve existing recreational facilities whenever possible. Funding sources are monitored and applications for open space funding have been approved and grant monies have been used to purchase additional open space and recreational land. Efforts should continue to preserve as much environmentally sensitive area as possible such as the flood prone areas identified in the Municipal Storm Water Management Plan.

• Goal Number 6 - Provide for adequate community facilities to serve the Borough.

This goal and objective has continued to be attained since the adoption of the 2000 Master Plan. A new senior center has been constructed, a police substation has been established, renovations have been made to Borough Hall and expanded

facilities provided for emergency management. Plans for a new library facility have recently been approved.

• Goal Number 8 - Promote a desirable visual environment.

As recent development has occurred, this goal and objective continues to be realized. However, in certain older sections of the Borough, some industrial properties continue to deteriorate and negatively impact the neighborhoods in which they are located. The major gateway areas into the Borough especially reflect upon the image and marketability of commercial retail, office and residential areas. The area along Hamilton Boulevard and between Route 287 and the rail line in the southeastern portion of the Borough should be examined to determine whether the redevelopment criteria are met.

• Goal Number 9 – Preserve historical sites and promote and strengthen the viability of the historic downtown area.

The 2000 Master Plan recommended the creation of the Historical Downtown District, and implementing zoning regulations were adopted by the Governing Body. A major redevelopment project was approved by the Zoning Board, which has not yet been constructed. Several of the property owners at the northern end of the district have expressed the desire to improve their properties in accordance with the prior one and two family zoning requirements in effect prior to the last rezoning. It is recommended that the district line be shifted in an effort to promote both the rehabilitation and improvement of those properties and continue to strengthen the viability of the southern core of the commercial district.

Goals 11 and 12 – Maintain an adequate amount of industrial land use (goal number 11) and provide an efficient and safe transportation system to move goods and people (goal number 12).

The Borough has more than an adequate amount of industrial land use. More than 20 percent of the Borough's land area is devoted to such use. Although the historical development trends for industrial use have fortunately been separated from residential development, the resultant truck traffic generated by such industrial use has continued to present a growing traffic safety problem. Police records and continuous input from traffic safety personnel to the municipal land use boards show a continually growing concern for traffic safety and congestion caused by the conflict of trucks and, non-truck vehicular traffic. Particular attention should be given to reducing the amount of land area zoned for M-3, Industrial Use within the Borough where such permitted uses present inherent conflict with neighboring development.

# IV. The Extent to Which There Have Been Significant Changes in the Assumptions, Policies, and Objectives Forming the Basis for the 2000 Master Plan and Development Regulations.

Since the Borough's Master Plan and Development Regulations were last revised, there have been no significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan and Development Regulations. The provision of more housing types and ranges of affordability for Borough residents has resulted in a total population increase of only five (5) percent since the year 2000, and the stated goals and objectives of the Master Plan as revised remain valid today. It should be noted that as the very few vacant and developable tracts of land within the Borough become developed, any additional growth will most likely occur through redevelopment.

Recently adopted state regulations concerning development activity within the Borough include the above mentioned Stormwater Management Plan requirements and the third round rules and regulations adopted by the Council on Affordable Housing. No significant changes are foreseen with regard to the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan as it may impact the Borough since the Borough lies within the

Metropolitan Planning Area designation expected to accommodate much of the state's growth.

## V. Recommended Revisions to the Borough Master Plan and Development Regulations

The major goals, underlying objectives and policies which form the basis of the 2000 Master Plan remain valid today. The major areas of concern as set forth in section III of this reexamination report can be summarized as follows:

- Reduce the potential for conflict between incompatible land uses wherever possible to preserve the integrity of existing residential neighborhoods.
- Continue to provide for adequate recreational facilities and preserve environmentally sensitive lands such as floodplains whenever possible.
- Promote a more desirable visual environment throughout the Borough and especially the major gateway areas.
- Continue efforts to enhance redevelopment of the historic downtown district and encourage individual property owners to improve and maintain the residential dwellings already located therein.
- Traffic safety and congestion continue to be major concerns. Truck traffic and non-truck vehicular conflicts should be reduced wherever possible.

The following revisions are recommended to the Borough's Master Plan and Development Regulations in an effort to address these issues:

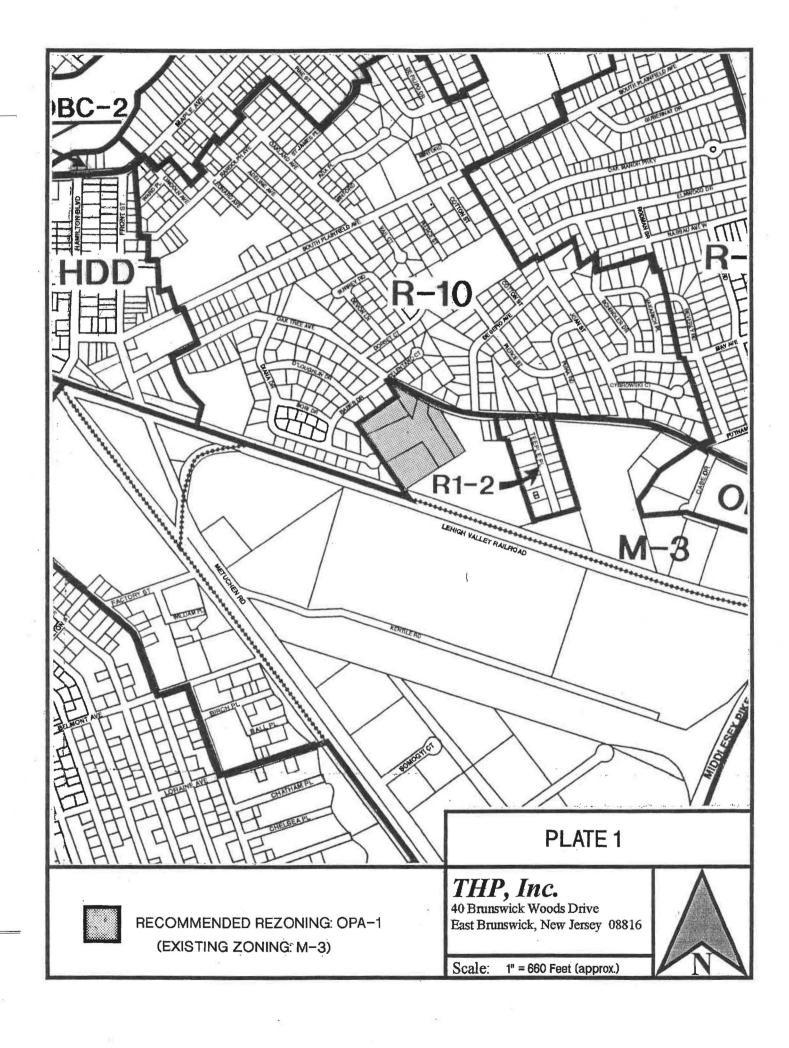
- Lots 29, 30, 31, 30.01 and 32 in block 254 should be rezoned from M-3, Industrial to OPA-1, Professional Office (see Plate 1). Office use would provide a reasonable transition between the existing single-family neighborhoods to the west and north and the existing warehouse facility to the east. The Land Use Plan Element and Zoning Map should be revised to incorporate this revision. These lots would ideally serve as an open space buffer area and it is recommended that the Borough seek funding to purchase these lots for open space and recreational purposes. Accordingly the Community Facilities Plan should be revised to include these lots as "parks, recreation and open space."
- Lot 16 in block 254 is currently zoned M-3, Industrial (Plate 2). Development or
  redevelopment of this tract could require access for truck traffic through Teeple
  Place, a residential street. It is therefore recommended that this lot be designated
  for residential use in accordance with the R1-2 zoning designation. Single family
  or two-family attached housing would provide a reasonable use of the site, would
  be consistent with existing development, and would have no substantial impact on
  the neighborhood.
- Lots 15, 16.02 and 20 in block 255 are currently zoned M-3, Industrial.
   Development of these areas in accordance with existing zoning would require truck traffic to travel through an existing residential neighborhood. It is recommended that these lots be rezoned OPA-2 (see Plate 3).
- The area bounded by Durham Avenue on the west, Helen Street on the north, the Port Reading Rail Line to the east and the Edison border on the south represents a major gateway for the Borough (Plate 4). Existing land uses comprise excavating equipment storage yards, junk yards, and other uses, some of which appear to be in deteriorating condition. It is recommended that this area be studied to determine whether it meets the criteria for an area in need of redevelopment. In the interim, it is recommended that the lands be rezoned from the current M-3, Industrial to OPA-1, professional office.

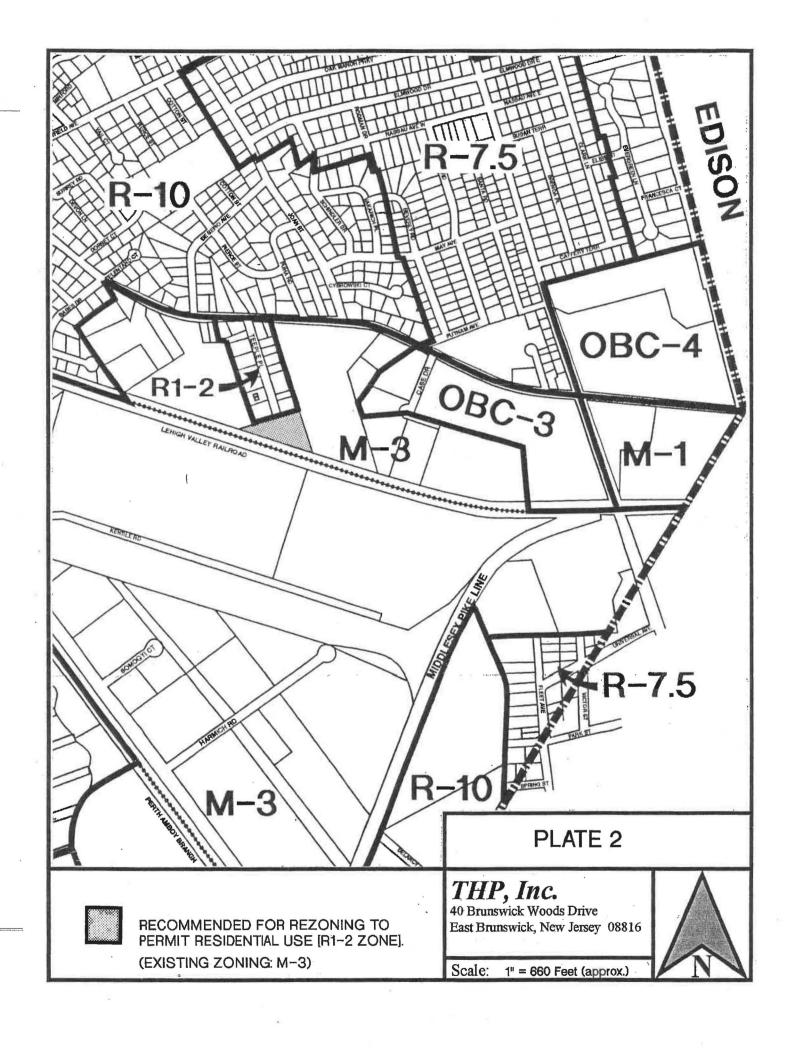
Similar conditions of incompatible land uses, large contracting storage areas with
inadequate screening and landscaping, junk storage and underutilization are
evident for some properties on Hamilton Boulevard between the Port Reading
Rail Line to the south and those lots just to the north of the St. Nicholas Avenue
intersection (see Plate 5). It is recommended that this area also be studied further
to determine whether it meets the criteria for an area in need of redevelopment.

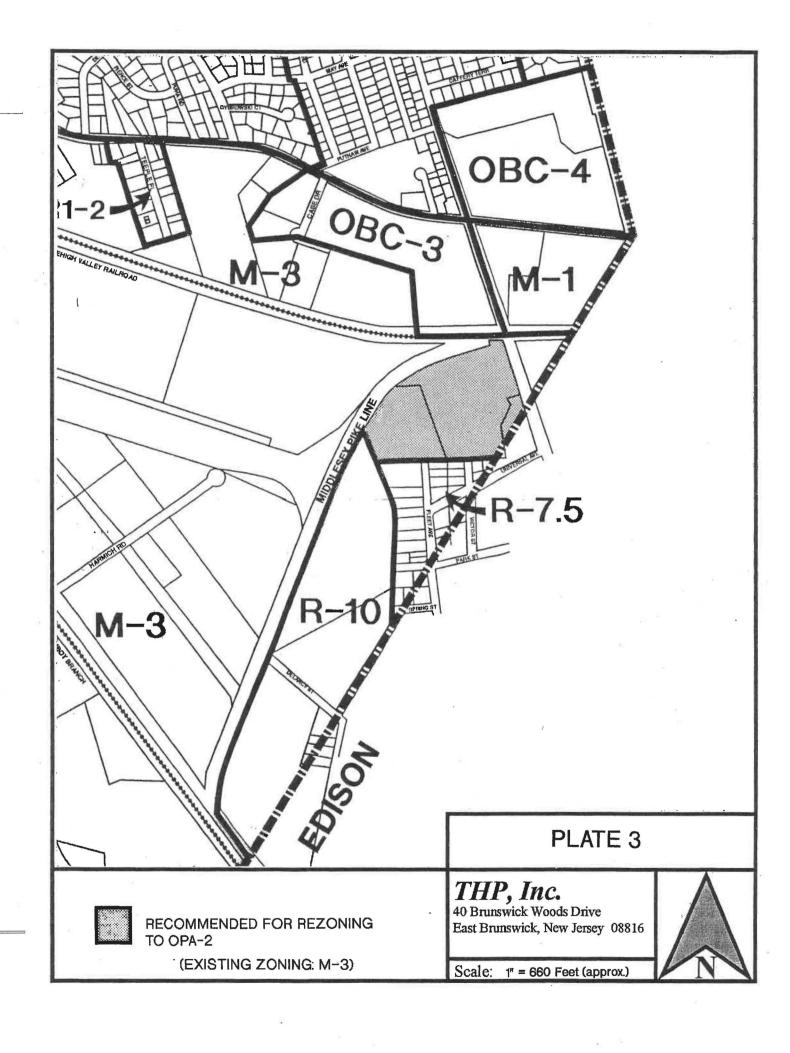
The Borough of South Plainfield Master Plan Land Use Plan element should be revised to implement the above noted recommendations for rezoning.

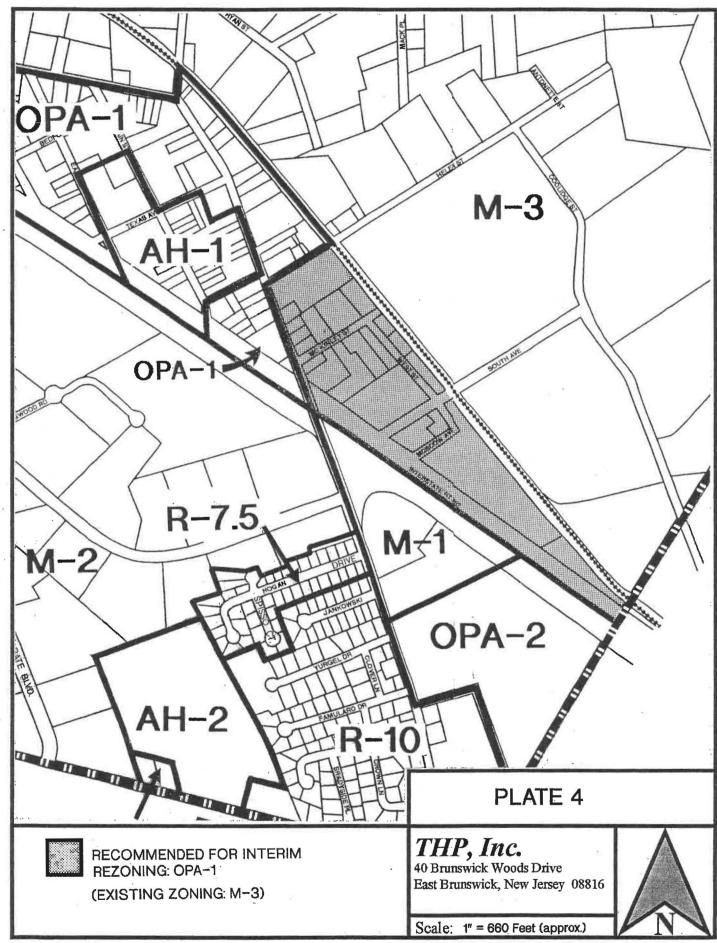
## VI. Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans Adopted Pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law

The South Plainfield Borough Council adopted "The Redevelopment Plan for the Designated Redevelopment Area in the Vicinity of the Hamilton Boulevard Industrial Site" dated April, 2002. It is recommended that the Redevelopment Plan be formally incorporated into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan. No recommended changes are necessary in the Borough's development regulations at this time to effectuate the redevelopment plan.

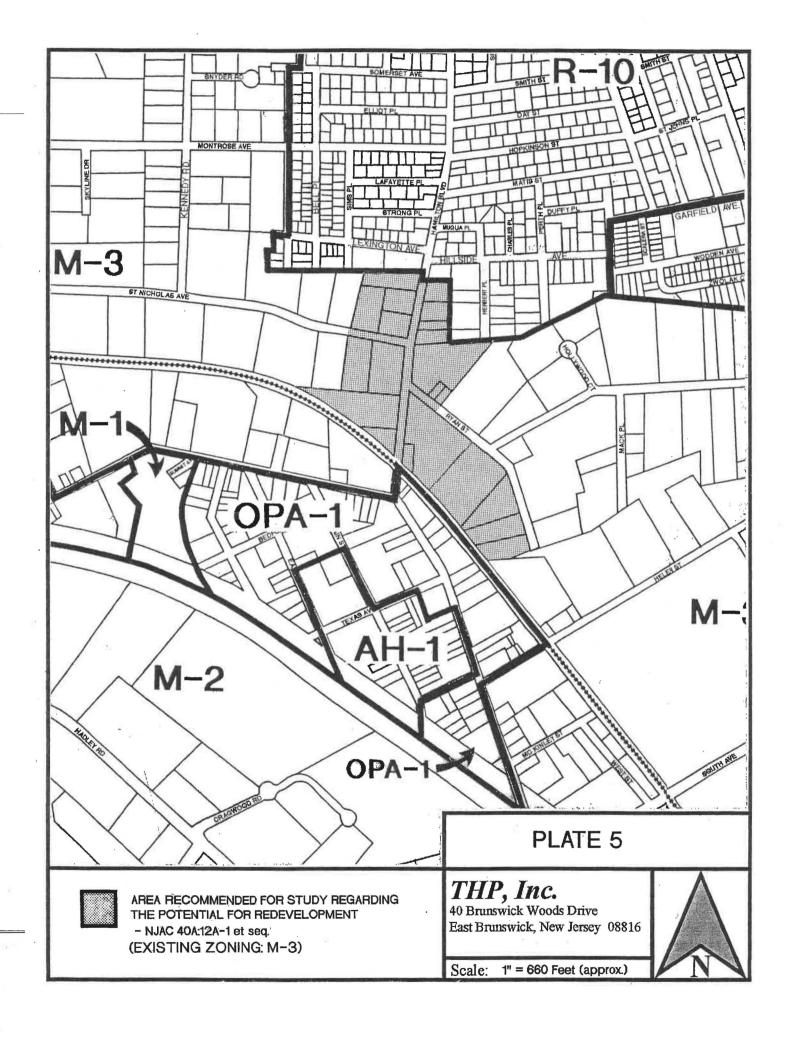


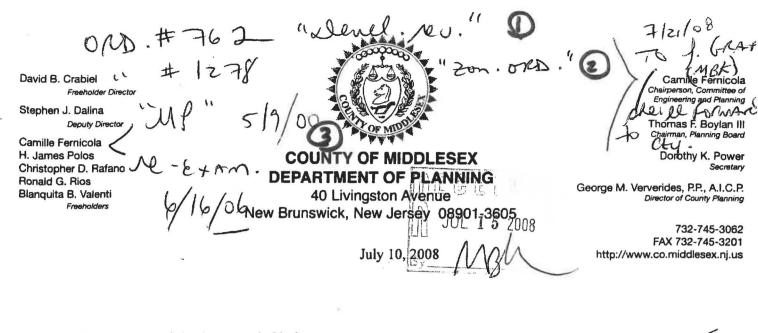






NOTE: AREA RECOMMENDED FOR STUDY REGARDING THE POTENTIAL FOR REDEVELOPMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING LAW (NJAC 40A:12A-1 et seq.)





Mr. Vincent Buttiglieri, Borough Clerk Borough of South Plainfield 2480 Plainfield Avenue South Plainfield, NJ 07080-3531

Re: Municipal Ordinance and Master Plan Information required for Middlesex County Wastewater Management Plan, 2008

Dear Mr. Buttiglieri:

Middlesex County is preparing an Update to the Lower Raritan-Middlesex County Wastewater Management Plan to comply with newly adopted New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) requirements. We must document the current status of your Master Plan, Zoning ordinances and specific municipal ordinances advocated by NJDEP and related to land development and individual septic system design and maintenance.

Please provide copies of the most recent resolutions of adoption and ordinance texts for the topics highlighted in the attached summary table. Please mail this information to the attention of Mr. Nicholas Tufaro, Principal Planner at the above referenced address.

If you have any questions please feel free to call Nicholas Tufaro at 732-745-3866 or email him at nick.tufaro@co.middlesex.ni.us.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

MIDDLESEX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

George M. Ververides

George M. Ververides Director of County Planning

GMV:NT:lak

Attachment

c: Mr. John Sully, Assistant Planning Director Ms. Mirah Becker, Supervising Planner Mr. Nicholas Tufaro, Principal Planner bc: South Plainfield Planning Dept.

#### Municipal Ordinance and Master Plan Information Required For Middlesex County Wastewater Management Plan, 2008

Tab	le Sta	tus of Muni	cipal Ordi	nances ar	id Mast	er Plan*		
Municipality	Master Plan	Zoning Ordinance	Stormwater Ordinance	Riparian Zone Ordinance	Steep Slope Ordinance	Septic System Maintenance	Dry Conveyances in Septic System Areas	Sewer Service Areas
Date of adoption								1
Resolution #, Name and copy								
Ordinance #, and copy	NA	NA						

<sup>\*</sup> Y means that the master plan is within its 6 year update period, or that the ordinance has been adopted and is in compliance with NJAC 7:15.

This information was prepared by the undersigned and transmitted with copies of applicable resolutions and ordinances to

MIDDLESEX COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING Environmental, Parks and Comprehensive Planning Division 40 Livingston Avenue New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901 732-745-3866 Fax 732-745-3011 Email Nick.tufaro@co.middlesex.nj.us

Date