

# Borough of Metuchen

## MASTER PLAN

The **Borough of Metuchen Master Plan** is actually a compilation of several documents which represent the on-going planning process in the Borough. The various parts or plan elements are provided for in the Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28.

### CONTENTS

- I. **Master Plan Reexamination Report**, prepared by the Planning Board, Adopted, July 21, 1992.
- II. **Land Use Plan Element**, prepared by Frost Associates, Adopted March 17, 1983.
- III. **Housing Element/Fair Share Plan**, prepared by Hintz-Nelessen Associates, PC, Adopted August 1989, Amended June 4, 1992, Substantive Certification received May 6, 1992
- IV. **Southwest Gateway Plan**, prepared by Hintz-Nelessen Associates, PC, Adopted June 20, 1991.
- V. **Recreation/Open Space Plan**, prepared by A. Nelessen Associates, Inc., Adopted May 7, 1992

Note: The elements have been assembled in this document for convenience and ease of reference. As such, the page numbers which appear in the individual

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**MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT**

ADOPTED JULY 21, 1988

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The 1967 Master Plan for the Borough of Metuchen, prepared by Candeub, Fleissig and Associates espoused a number of policies which were endorsed in the 1976 Amendment to the Master Plan and, with minor modifications, remain valid in 1982:

- \* To provide a variety of housing types to serve the residents of the Borough.
- \* To preserve and enhance the residential character of the Borough.
- \* To maintain the Borough's physical and visual identity in the region.
- \* To improve the competitive position of Metuchen's downtown area.
- \* To encourage new industrial development, but not at the cost of blighting residential areas.
- \* To improve the efficiency of the major street network in Metuchen.
- \* To provide quick and convenient access to the downtown area for the people who desire to use the facilities of the business district.
- \* To develop and sustain a compact, efficient, and viable shopping area within the central business district.
- \* To improve the overall appearance of the business district.
- \* To provide a circulation system which brings into balance the needs of the pedestrian and the needs of cars, trucks, and buses.

While the specific strategies for promoting these policies have been refined over the past fifteen (15) years as some of the original (1967) recommendations have been implemented and others have needed to be modified, the overall goals for the Borough have remained essentially the same.

These policies with respect to land use and development are consistent with the fourteen (14) Purposes set forth in the Municipal Land Use Law:

- a. To encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in this State, in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals and general welfare.
- b. To secure safety from fire, flood, panic and other natural and manmade disasters;
- c. To provide adequate light, air and open space;
- d. To ensure that the development of individual municipalities does not conflict with the development and general welfare of neighboring municipalities, the County and the State as a whole;
- e. To promote the establishment of appropriate population densities and concentrations that will contribute to the well-being of persons, neighborhoods, communities and regions and preservation of the environment;
- f. To encourage the appropriate and efficient expenditure of public funds by the coordination of public development with land use policies;
- g. To provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses and open space, both public and private, according to their respective environmental requirements in order to meet the needs of all New Jersey citizens;
- h. To encourage the location and design of transportation routes which will promote the free flow of traffic while discouraging location of such facilities and routes which result in congestion or blight;

- i. To promote a desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangements;
- j. To promote the conservation of open space and valuable natural resources and to prevent urban sprawl and degradation of the environment through improper use of land;
- k. To encourage planned unit developments which incorporate the best features of design and relate the type, design and layout of residential, commercial, industrial and recreational development to the particular site;
- l. To encourage senior citizen community housing construction;
- m. To encourage coordination of the various public and private procedures and activities shaping land development with a view of lessening the cost of such development and to the more efficient use of land; and
- n. To promote the conservation of energy through the use of planning practices designed to reduce energy consumption and to provide for maximum utilization of renewable energy sources.

In a developed municipality such as Metuchen, the principal goal is one of preservation: preservation of the Borough's essentially residential character, of the integrity of its neighborhoods, of the viability of its central business district, of levels of municipal services, of fiscal stability and, ultimately, of its desirability as a community in which to live. Maintaining service levels while preserving a community's desirability as a place to live generally requires an expanding tax base, so that consistent levels of service can be provided without creating an unreasonable property tax burden. However, Metuchen has little vacant land which is suitable for new development. In addition, traffic and parking problems exist and inhibit the ability of the community to absorb new development and redevelopment.

Thus, achieving the preservation goal outlined above necessitates compromise in both the magnitude of what is sought and the balance among the components of the preservation goal. The following objectives have guided the selection of the land use policies expressed in the Land Use Plan Element:

1. Although it is recognized that traffic and parking problems already exist in Metuchen, any development or redevelopment of the central business district should not intensify traffic problems beyond acceptable levels and should be undertaken only in conjunction with the provision of adequate parking.
2. Land uses to be encouraged in any development or redevelopment strategy should be appropriate to the area in which they are proposed, should represent an economic benefit to the community, and should serve a valid market to ensure the likelihood of their realization.
3. Areas of environmental sensitivity, such as flood plain areas, should be protected from development, but surrounding land uses should be planned to ensure maximum public benefit from the resultant open space.
4. Opportunities to meet the housing needs of Metuchen's residents and work force, such as those outlined in the Housing Plan Element, should be encouraged. In addition, housing should be considered as a means of creating an expanding market for existing businesses in Metuchen.

## THE LAND USE PLAN

### Introduction

Plate 12 presents the Land Use Plan for the Borough of Metuchen. The Land Use Plan has been drawn in an effort to implement the goals and objectives set forth in the preceding section of this element. Specifically, it has attempted to balance the desirability of new development within the Borough's central business district and the northwest quadrant against considerations of traffic and parking impacts, a concern for the costs of providing public services, considerations of environmentally sensitive areas, particularly the floodplain of Dismal Brook, and housing needs. Finally, an overriding concern of the plan is the preservation of Metuchen's essentially residential character.

In general, Metuchen is a developed community with few opportunities for ~~extensive~~ changes in land use policy. The target areas for the Land Use Plan are two. The northwest quadrant of the Borough has been zoned for industrial uses but has not attracted extensive or desirable development. It abuts residential areas which have been adversely affected by the visual impact of those businesses which do exist. The central business district was the subject of the Metuchen 2001 Study and is of particular concern to Borough officials because of the potential for redevelopment in certain areas and the downtown's significance with respect to the established character of the Borough, as well as the desirability of protecting the viability of Metuchen's Main Street as a place of business. Redevelopment proposals described in the text are numbered to correspond with the numbers used on Plate 12, for clarity.

The Land Use Plan for Metuchen recommends the continuation of current land use planning policies in the existing residential areas of the Borough. However, it is suggested that the Zoning Ordinance be amended to eliminate the "cumulative zoning" approach now in effect. The term "cumulative zoning" means, for example, that in a multi-family residential district, single-family residences are permitted to be constructed, since, in each district listed in the Ordinance, all of the less intensive uses permitted in the previously listed districts are permitted, usually by reference. While in some specific

instances, such an approach may be desirable, it generally increases the potential for future land use conflicts.

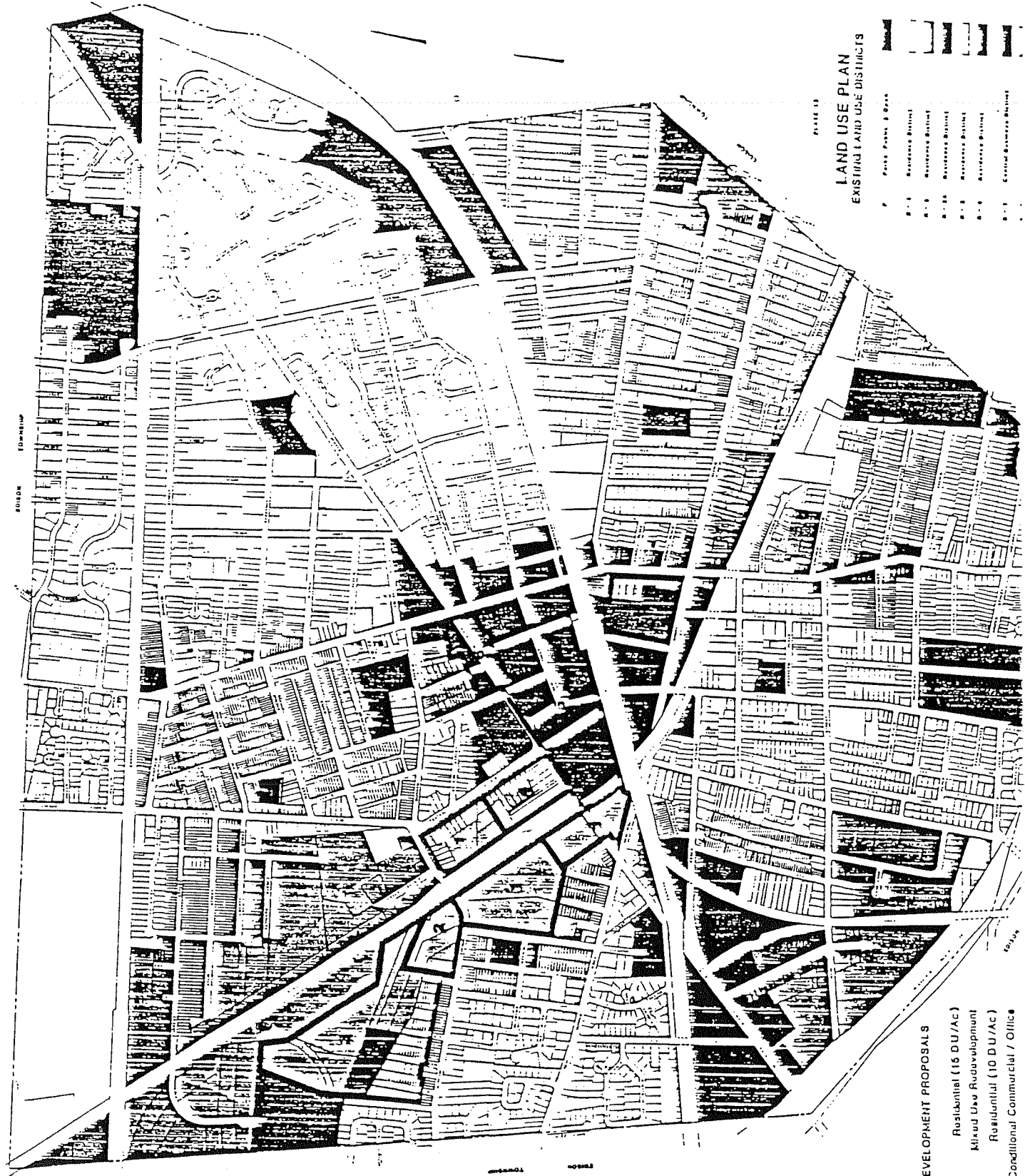
The treatment of less intensive uses in zones designed for more intensive uses should normally be limited to providing relief for existing uses, unless for planning purposes a mixture is specifically deemed to be desirable in a particular zone.

#### Residential Development - Northwest Quadrant (Proposals 1, 2 and 3)

In the northwest quadrant, two areas are recommended to be rezoned for attached or semi-detached single-family residential development. One area is owned by Gulton Industries; the other is located north of the Oakite Plant and fronts on Durham Avenue and Hampton Street. Additional areas recommended for such rezoning encompass both vacant and developed parcels on dead-end streets located north of Durham Avenue and south of the vacant portion of the Gulton property as well as developed properties to the east of Conrail. These additional areas could potentially be infilled and/or redeveloped, although the acquisition of a number of parcels and the razing of existing buildings would be involved.

The residential development proposals for the northwest quadrant encompass certain properties now used for industrial purposes. It is not the intent of the Land Use Plan to make it difficult for viable industries to continue to function in Metuchen, and it is not recommended that the industrial zoning currently applicable to existing industrial buildings be changed at this time. Rather, it is the purpose of the recommendations to offer alternative uses of land if and when it is no longer needed for industrial purposes. Such land, if redeveloped as proposed, could enhance existing residential neighborhoods and provide needed housing. Some sort of redevelopment "overlay" zoning would be one possible approach to the treatment of these areas. Another would be to wait until the appropriate time to rezone the properties based upon the health of the existing industrial activity or the transfer of ownership of a property.

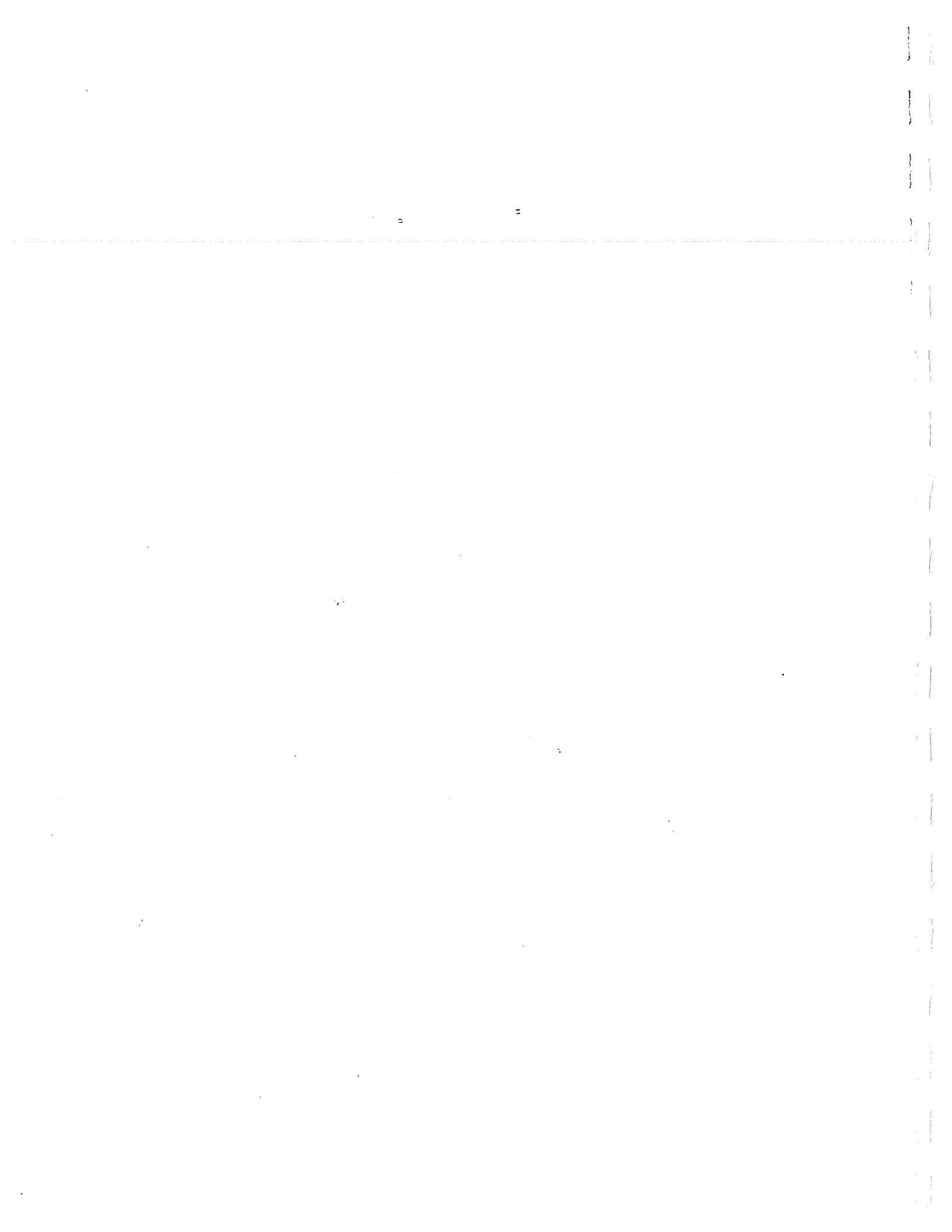




LAND USE PLAN  
EXISTING LAND USE DISTRICTS

- PLATE 10
- 1 Public Parks & Open
  - 2 Residential District
  - 3 Residential District
  - 4 Residential District
  - 5 Residential District
  - 6 Residential District
  - 7 Central Business District

- REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS
- 1 Residential (15 DU/Ac)
  - 2 Mixed Use Redevelopment
  - 3 Residential (10 DU/Ac)
  - 4 Conditional Commercial / Office



Proposal 1  
South Side of Durham Avenue

Residential development of the parcels lying south of Durham Avenue will necessitate the creation of berms and extensive landscaping to screen out the nearby industrial and commercial activities. Obtaining such amenities from a developer at the time of development is best accomplished through the site plan review and approval process. Forms of development other than detached single family homes, such as twin houses, townhouses, patio houses, or zero lot line development, all involve the preparation of a comprehensive scheme for an entire tract, would require site plan approval, and are therefore preferable to development with detached dwellings on individual lots, which would not involve a site plan. The ultimate densities of development permitted in the areas south of Durham Avenue should be related to the costs of providing the necessary berms (man-made earthen mounds, generally four (4) to six (6) feet high and landscaped; used where extensive screening is desired) and other amenities; but densities should not exceed fifteen (15) dwellings per acre to retain reasonable compatibility with existing residential development in the area.

Proposals 2 and 3  
North Side of Durham Avenue

The area lying north of Durham Avenue, which includes the Gulton Industries site, portions of the Dismal Brook flood plain, and some vacant and some underdeveloped parcels along Houston, Electric, Weston and Westinghouse Streets, should be redeveloped in a comprehensive manner which would ensure compatibility with the residential character of the area, keep structures out of the flood plain while improving it as an open space buffer, and permit adaptive re-use of the Gulton Industries building, if feasible. Two separate zones are recommended for this area. The developed portion of the Gulton Industries tract, which is in active industrial/office use, should remain zoned for industrial purposes for the time being with the understanding that a long-range plan for the ultimate use of the site should be established. Such a plan could involve the creative adaptation of the existing industrial structure to accommodate a combination of small residential units and limited non-residential activities, such as professional offices or convenience retail

uses. However, in the interests of maintaining the viability of the central business district, extensive non-residential development, particularly with uses which are competitive with those permitted along Main Street, should not be encouraged.

The type of development advocated for the remaining area is attached or semi-attached dwellings. The net density of development in the area should be approximately ten (10) dwellings per acre, although it could be higher, depending upon the sizes of the units. Gross densities should be low enough to ensure that, when structures are clustered into the area south of the railroad spur right-of-way and outside of the flood plain, the resultant net density has an impervious surface coverage and scale appropriate to the adjacent neighborhood. The specific density of development ultimately assigned to this area should be determined by the Borough Council at the time the Zoning Ordinance is amended based upon considerations of whether or not the open space will be accessible to the surrounding neighborhood or will only benefit new residents; the types and costs of improvements which will be necessary to make the tract developable, such as removal of the cable TV antenna and other non-residential structures and improvement of the stream and surrounding road network; the sizes and types of units proposed; and the compatibility of the overall development proposed with the adjacent neighborhood.

Except for the infill of individual lots, no development in this area should involve fewer than five (5) contiguous acres, and larger tracts are preferred. The zoning should provide sufficient flexibility to allow existing detached single-family residences to be enlarged and to permit the infill of vacant lots with attached or detached dwellings as appropriate.

As part of the master plan review process, a few other sites north of Durham Avenue were also considered for redevelopment with residential uses, notably the Lawler tract and the area north of the Borough garage. Site improvement costs, aesthetic considerations, and the fact that the Lawler tract may still have some potential for industrial development, were deterrents to including these areas in the redevelopment proposals. The Municipal Land Use Law mandates the periodic reexamination of a municipality's master plan and

development regulations at least every six (6) years. It is suggested that the whole northwest quadrant be evaluated again in 1989, or before, to determine if there are other sites appropriate for residential use.

#### Non-residential Development - Northwest Quadrant (Proposal 4)

An area of the northwest quadrant which is bounded by Central Avenue to the east and Middlesex Avenue to the south is recommended to be redeveloped for commercial/office space under certain conditions. Conditions to be met would necessarily include acquisition of access to Central Avenue so that traffic could be routed out Durham Avenue to minimize the impact on Middlesex Avenue. This is of particular importance if office development takes place, since the peak hour for traffic generated by that use would occur simultaneously with peak-hour traffic flows on Middlesex Avenue. Such office development should be limited to professional uses in moderately sized buildings. Commercial development should not include those uses which are permitted in the central business district, with a few exceptions (banks, restaurants). Supermarkets and variety stores are specifically discouraged.

Should the Oakite property ever terminate as an industrial site, the southern portion and the parking area opposite, on the south side of Middlesex Avenue, should be redeveloped for commercial/office purposes. However, it is not recommended that a rezoning from industrial to commercial/office occur now; when it becomes appropriate to rezone these parcels, the range of uses permitted should be carefully selected to ensure that traffic impacts will be minimal, especially at peak hours.

#### Central Business District (C.B.D.) (Proposals 5 and 6)

Recommendations for changes in the central business district are intended to encompass the blocks lying south of Middlesex Avenue, north and east of the juncture of the Conrail railroad lines, and west of the rear lot lines of lots fronting on Main Street. Although, clearly the lots fronting on both sides of Main Street are part of the central business district, no dramatic changes are proposed for the treatment of this corridor. Moreover, while Plate 3 of this document shows a central business district extending east of Main Street, north of Middlesex Avenue, and south of the Conrail main line (designated in

the 1967 Master Plan by Candeub, Fleissig Associates), this Land Use Plan Element advocates a different treatment of the excluded areas from that advocated for the more limited central business district area defined in this paragraph.

In the central business district, it is recommended that redevelopment of the four (4) block area bounded by Pearl Street, Middlesex Avenue, and the juncture of the railroad lines be considered.

In all probability, Metuchen cannot anticipate drawing major office complexes; there are other locations for such uses within the region which are more visible and accessible and therefore more attractive to relocating firms. Moreover, if speculative office construction should resume in the future, it would most likely cluster around existing major office developments. Nevertheless, Metuchen should provide for some professional office development opportunities since such uses serve a residential population. The current zoning in the Borough's various business districts permits offices, yet new office development has not occurred in the downtown.

Further retail development in Metuchen is inadvisable unless the resident population increases. If new retail activities were to be introduced through redevelopment of peripheral areas, they could, unless carefully restricted as to type of use, draw shoppers away from the Main Street stores, the core of Metuchen's central business district. The promotion of the viability of the downtown area is as important to the preservation of the Borough's character as is the protection of its residential neighborhoods. Moreover, the potential traffic impacts from, and the parking requirements for, extensive retail development could be overwhelming to the downtown.

It is therefore recommended that new multi-family or attached single-family residential development occur in the delineated redevelopment area, but that a mix of uses be permitted which would include some professional office space and selected retail uses. This type of development is defined in the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D - 1 et seq.) as planned unit residential development. As emphasized in an earlier section of this document dealing with Parking Considerations, the effectuation of the planned unit residential development redevelopment proposal may depend upon the Parking Authority's willingness and ability to relocate or eliminate some of the

commuter parking spaces on the Pearl Street lot so that block can be available for redevelopment. However, there is no intent to jeopardize either the Parking Authority's obligation to its bondholders or the Borough's responsibility to provide for some amount of commuter parking within reasonable proximity to the railroad station.

The zoning should provide the opportunity for planned unit residential development in the C. B. D. incorporating sufficient flexibility to allow a developer to respond to market considerations in terms of the precise mix of uses and types and sizes of dwelling units. Under no circumstances should such redevelopment occur unless adequate parking can be provided. The density of development on the site will have to depend, to a large extent, on the ultimate mix of land uses created by the developer, since that will affect the parking requirements which will, in turn, affect the total amount of development which can occur.

Redevelopment in the C. B. D. with planned unit residential development should not occur unless five (5) or more acres of land can be assembled. This is the statutory minimum acreage for planned unit residential development set forth in the Municipal Land Use Law and is a reasonable minimum to justify costly site improvements and amenities. Strict design controls, including parking standards, should be adopted by the Mayor and Council as part of an amended Zoning Ordinance to promote public health and safety and also encourage a visually pleasing development. The scale of any new development should be compatible with that which already exists in the downtown. The developer should be encouraged to orient structures for solar energy use, to the extent possible, and, in siting structures, should attempt to buffer residential uses from the noise of the railroad through such techniques as non-residential building mass and noise barriers along the railroad and placement of residential units at some distance from the railroad line can be used to mitigate the condition.

If residential redevelopment cannot be achieved, the expansion of commuter parking areas and concomitant streetscape improvements (landscaping, pedestrian amenities) should be considered. Parcels of less than five (5) acres in size are intended to continue to be utilized for retail, office, and service activities as permitted under the current zoning. However, the zoning map should be amended to ensure that new retail development or redevelopment

is confined to properties south of Middlesex Avenue, north of the Conrail Main Line and east of Lake Avenue. Although a number of retail uses currently exist in the two (2) blocks west of Lake Avenue, new retail uses should not be located there. Retail development or redevelopment between Lake Avenue and the railroad line should be restricted to the relocation and expansion of existing uses, possibly in conjunction with the realignment of Central Avenue and other traffic circulation improvements, unless there is a plan which incorporates these blocks into a planned unit residential development. Under no circumstances should retail uses be permitted north of Middlesex Avenue.

In two areas of the downtown, shown on the Land Use Plan, it is recommended that an "office overlay" zone be created which would use incentives to encourage the assembly of smaller parcels into single parcels of substantial enough size to permit new professional office development and the requisite parking. Access points should be limited to reduce traffic conflicts.

Development in the downtown should no longer be permitted an exemption from on-site parking requirements. Each use should be required to provide parking on-site, and the Zoning Ordinance should specify the number of spaces required for specific uses.

Another recommendation regarding the zoning of the downtown, as well as Metuchen's other business districts, has to do with eliminating the "cumulative" zoning currently in effect. The term "cumulative" zoning describes a situation in which all of the uses permitted in, say, a neighborhood business district are also permitted in a highway business district, along with other, more intensive, uses, and all of the uses permitted in both of these districts are permitted in an industrial district. Since an important objective of this plan is to encourage the viability of Metuchen's central business district, it is recommended that each of the non-residential zones be assigned a specific set of permitted uses. Although some of the enumerated uses may be permitted in more than one district, the goal is to establish a set of uses for each zone which is appropriate in terms of location, scale and off-site impacts (visual, traffic, parking) and which is, with some exceptions, exclusive to that zone.



Finally, areas contiguous to the central business district which are currently zoned for business but developed residentially should be rezoned for residential use to avoid the intrusion of business activities into residential areas and to reinforce the limits of the existing CBD area.

#### Other Recommendations

Two other areas of Metuchen have been reexamined as part of the Master Plan review process.

The Borough has witnessed the steady conversion of residences along Amboy Avenue and Main Street to professional offices over the last several years. While office conversions are permissible under the current zoning, the participants in the Master Plan discussions have expressed concern over the compromising of the original residential character of these areas, the increasing parking problems along Main Street and Amboy Avenue, and the potential for competition with office space to be created in the central business district and elsewhere as specified in the Land Use Plan. It is therefore recommended that new office conversions be prohibited and that techniques be sought which would promote the use of the remaining residential structures as residences rather than as offices, permitting the creation of as many as two (2) or perhaps more residential units within the main dwelling. Strict standards should be established and enforced regarding parking requirements (particularly along Main Street), sizes of units, owner-occupancy, and amenities whenever such conversions occur.

Finally, a concern has developed regarding the northeast corner of the Borough. That area has remained residentially zoned despite the existence of a number of non-residential uses. It is recognized that certain parcels on the south side of Middlesex Avenue are potentially redevelopable. They are currently zoned "R-4" as are the adjacent Metuchen Manor apartments. After serious reconsideration of the existing zoning, it was decided that the "R-4" designation should continue in the entire triangle formed by Conrail to the south, Middlesex Avenue to the north and the Edison boundary to the east. This will ensure that any redevelopment which occurs on the redevelopable tracts will be multi-family residential, complementary to the Metuchen Manor development.

Consideration was also given to rezoning a portion of the "R-1" area lying north of Middlesex Avenue for professional office or limited commercial uses. This area is already virtually entirely developed with non-residential uses, most of which were approved by variance and were never permitted uses. However, the desirability of the "R-1" zoning which exists there now was ultimately re-affirmed. It was felt that rezoning for non-residential uses could promote redevelopment which would be incompatible with the residences to the west in terms of scale and character. Moreover, due to the proximity of the hospital, the area is particularly vulnerable to development with medical offices which traditionally have a comparatively high trip generation rate. In view of the proximity of the high school and the residential development, and considering existing traffic conditions on Route 27, increasing traffic in the area would be detrimental to the public good.

In addition to implementing the recommendations contained in this document regarding the rezoning of various areas of the Borough, attention should be paid to upgrading the standards in the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to site plan review, particularly in non-residential areas. Strict attention should be paid to developing appropriate requirements for buffering and screening of business and industrial uses, especially where they will be located adjacent to residential areas. Additionally, consideration should be given to the traffic impacts of all developments, particularly where a development is proposed to occur at or near a major intersection, and to the possibility of requiring improvements to the adjacent street or intersection.

## RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

The Municipal Land Use Law stipulates that a master plan must include a specific policy statement indicating the relationship of the proposed development of the municipality as set forth in the local master plan to (1) the master plans of contiguous municipalities, (2) the master plan of the county in which the municipality is located, and (3) the State Development Guide Plan. The following paragraphs describe the plans of Edison Township, the State of New Jersey, and Middlesex County and relate Metuchen's Land Use Plan Element proposals to the policies expressed in those plans.

### Edison Township

Edison Township completely surrounds the Borough of Metuchen. The present zoning along both sides of the common municipal boundary line is illustrated on Plate 13. In general, land use policies in the two municipalities are consistent with regard to adjoining land areas. The exception is in the northeast corner of Metuchen along Middlesex Avenue just east of the railroad crossing. The north side of Middlesex Avenue is zoned for single family residences on 10,000 square foot lots, although existing land uses also include an office, a bank, a quasi-public use, and the Metuchen High School. A portion of the south side is zoned for multi-family residences and contains apartments. The remainder of the south side is zoned for single family residences and contains an isolated residence and a service station.

Edison's zoning is G-B (general business) adjacent to the apartments, office, commercial and quasi-public uses and E-I (educational-institutional) adjacent to the high school. Edison's zoning in this area reflects the current uses of land within its boundaries, which include the John F. Kennedy Memorial Hospital, retail commercial uses and low-rise apartments.

From a land use perspective, changes in the zoning of this area to achieve consistency between Metuchen and Edison would be unlikely to have any meritorious impact, since the land uses existing on adjoining properties in both municipalities are well established. Moreover, Conrail's main line separates the two municipalities along the eastern border, providing a buffer between the results of any conflicting land use policies there.

One other area is mapped as having conflicting local policies, and that is the southwestern border where medium density residential uses are zoned for and exist in Metuchen and light industrial and business office uses are provided for in Edison. However, Route 287 separates the two municipalities at this point and provides an effective barrier between potentially incompatible uses.

#### Middlesex County

The Middlesex County Planning Board's Proposed Land Use Plan - 2000 shows Metuchen's existing residential areas as residential and existing commercial and light industrial areas as non-residential. In addition, a small open space conservation area is indicated in the northwest corner of the Borough in the Dismal Brook area. The County plan does not as yet specify specific types of uses or densities. To the extent that land use changes have been proposed in the central business district and in the northwest quadrant, Metuchen's Land Use Plan Element is not consistent with the County's policies as shown on the Proposed Land Use Plan - 2000. However, it is consistent with and promotes the County's commitment to providing housing opportunities.

#### State of New Jersey

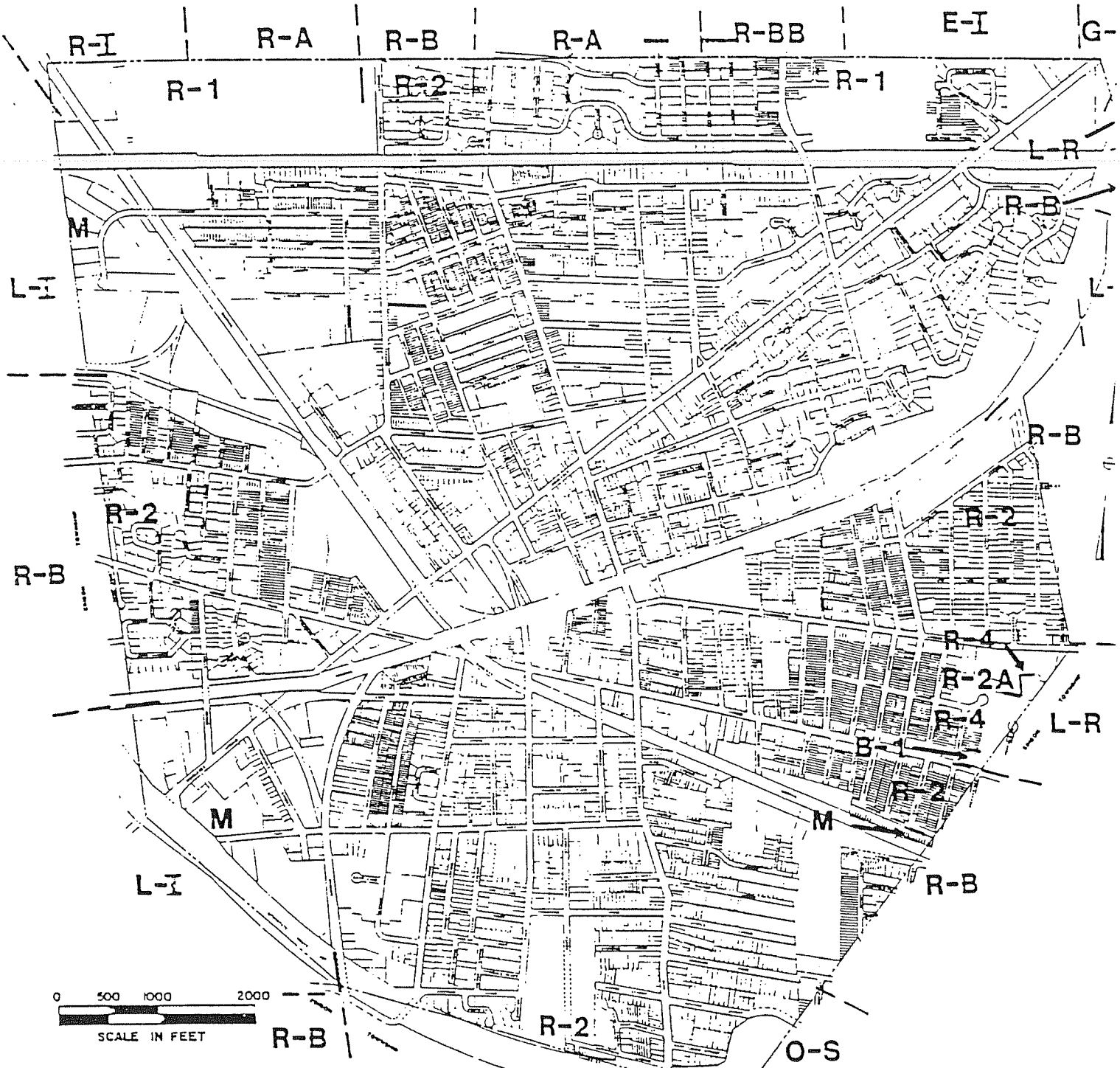
The revised draft of the State Development Guide Plan (May 1980), prepared by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs, shows Metuchen as part of the State's "Growth Area".

The Growth Areas include those regions of New Jersey where development has already occurred to an extensive degree, as well as partially suburbanized areas where accessibility to employment and services make them particularly suitable for development...

It should be emphasized that the Growth Area designation does not imply that only growth supporting investments will be made within this area or that the development of environmentally sensitive lands is encouraged. Land acquisition for recreation and resource conservation, as well as local controls protecting flood plains, steeply-sloped areas, wetlands, agricultural uses and forested areas constitute valid components of the kind of land use pattern which should characterize such Growth Areas. (p. 47-49)

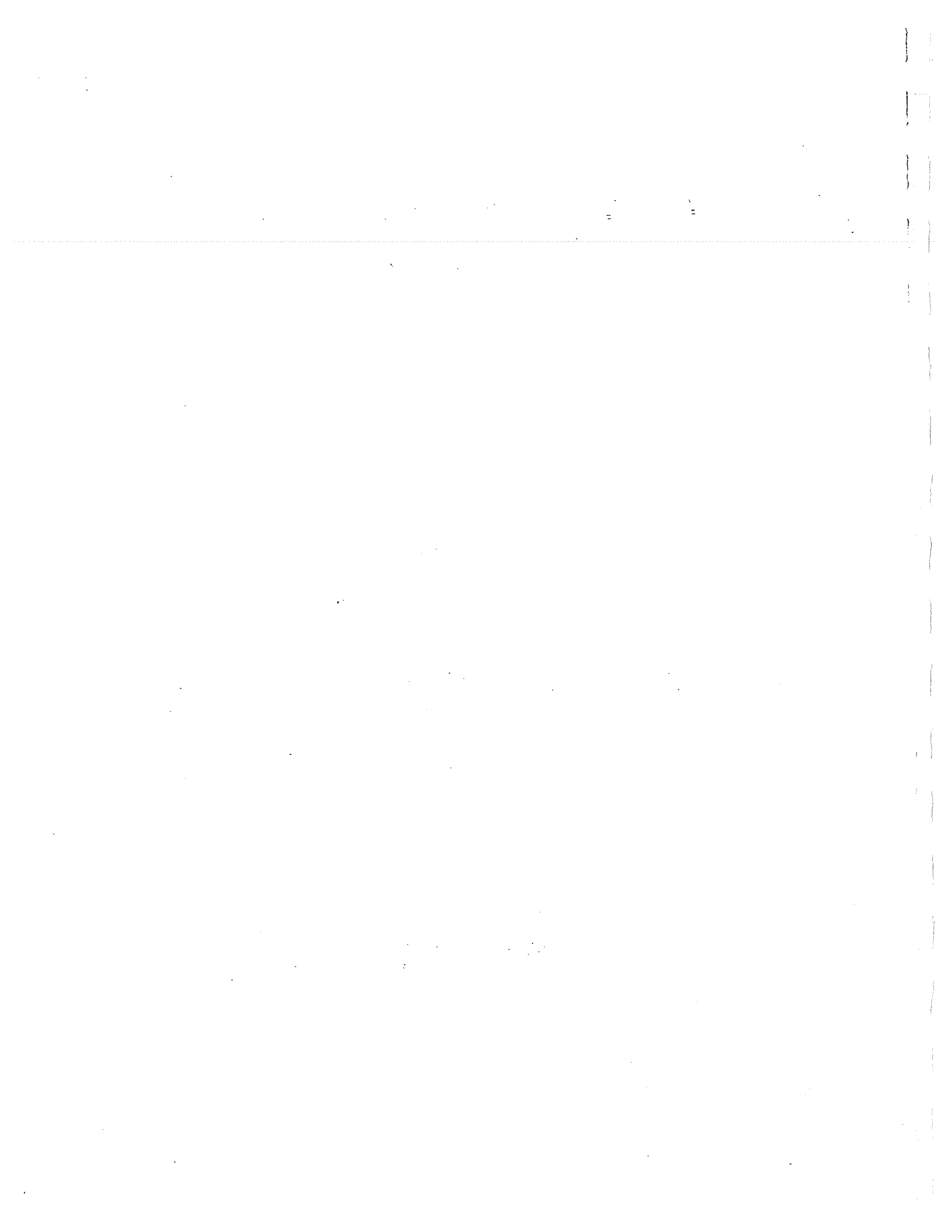
With respect to the State's policies for Middlesex County as a whole, the Guide Plan indicates that most of the County is designated as a Growth Area.

BOROUGH OF METUCHEN  
Middlesex County, New Jersey



- EDISON TOWNSHIP DESIGNATIONS
- |                               |                             |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| R-A SF 2-3/Acre               | L-I Light Industry          |
| R-BB SF 3-4/Acre              | G-B General Business        |
| R-B SF 4-5/Acre               | L-R Low Rise Apartments     |
| R-I Restricted Industry       | O-S Business-Office Service |
| E-I Educational/Institutional |                             |

PLATE 13  
Comparison Of Zoning  
Borough Of Metuchen And Edison Town



County policy recommends that new development occur adjacent to existing development and infrastructure and/or at selected new growth nodes. Older cities should be strengthened and revitalized. Critical environmental areas and farmland should be conserved ...

All of the existing and proposed sewerage facilities in Middlesex County now serve or will serve areas that are classified as Growth Areas. While much of the infrastructure is in place, a significant amount of investment is required to correct existing problems and to accommodate additional growth in these areas.

The proposals contained in Metuchen's Land Use Plan Element appear to be consistent with State planning policies.

## IMPACTS OF THE PLAN

If the plan is implemented fully, the major impact will be an increase in traffic. The traffic impact is not likely to be specific to any particular location, but, instead, will be reflected in longer peak periods. While the limitations of the roadway system within the Borough preclude any major improvements to alleviate traffic circulation problems, there are a number of strategies that the Borough can consider in the future which, while not eliminating congestion, can bring about an improvement in traffic flow. First, any reduction in side stream interference to through traffic movement will bring about an improvement in traffic flow. Consequently, in developing its zoning requirements and in reviewing site plans for development or redevelopment, the Borough should make an effort to reduce the number of driveway openings to and from arterial and collector roadways. Furthermore, whenever possible, minor operational improvements such as the provision of right turn lanes and/or an increase in the radii at intersections, should be required of developers at the time of site plan review. At particularly congested intersections, it may be necessary to restrict turning movements to right turns only.

One major municipal roadway improvement is recommended within the Borough. The major underdeveloped areas of Metuchen lie in the northwest quadrant. The industrial uses which exist in the Forrest Street area are typically warehousing and storage types of facilities adding little to the Borough's tax base. For this area of the town to develop further with additional industrial uses it would be necessary to improve its accessibility. It is therefore recommended that Jersey Avenue be extended through to Forrest Street to provide a connection to Durham Avenue. This will improve access to I-287, facilitate access for public safety vehicles, and still keep traffic out of the developed residential neighborhoods to the east of the Forrest Street area. As part of this improvement, Durham Avenue, between Central Avenue and a point just west of the Conrail right-of-way, should also be improved. It is recognized that the implementation of this recommendation may have to await redevelopment of the area north of the Borough garage, and, at this time, that area is not proposed to be redeveloped.



Certain roadway improvements outside of the Borough's jurisdiction are also urged to facilitate traffic flows in Metuchen. The first is the prompt creation of the proposed new interchange between Route 287 and Talmadge Road in Edison Township. The second is the rerouting of Route 27 to cross the Conrail railroad line instead of routing traffic onto Essex and Lake Avenues. This improvement, while not immediately pending, has long been endorsed by Borough officials and is still considered desirable despite the practical difficulties involved in its implementation.

In terms of schools, there is adequate capacity in the system to absorb a much greater number of schoolchildren than the number which would result from any of the development/redevelopment proposals. It is not anticipated that more than four or five hundred new dwelling units could be constructed under the plan, assuming all of the recommended redevelopment areas and conditional residential areas were to be built to full capacity. The resultant number of schoolchildren, should this occur, would be approximately one hundred (100).

Parking impacts resulting from the implementation of the plan as proposed are expected to be minimal, since all development would be required to provide the necessary parking. However, should the sales volume levels of retail establishments on Main Street increase as a result of the additional population, the existing theoretical parking deficiencies could become more evident to shoppers. However, it is hoped that any increase in sales volume will reflect pedestrian rather than automobile access.

The condition of sewer lines within the Borough is uncertain. It is possible that additional development could require replacement of lines. At the time a major development proposal is submitted, the developer should be required to prove the adequacy of the sewerage system and, if necessary, contribute a pro-rata share of the cost of the replacement through off-tract improvement requirements. There is sufficient treatment capacity to handle the level of development proposed.

The plan is not anticipated to have a detrimental effect on any historic sites within the Borough. To avoid an adverse environmental impact, residential development is recommended to be precluded within any portion of the flood

plain of Dismal Brook. The plan envisions that all or most of the Dismal Brook flood plain will continue to be retained as open space. It also recommends clustering residential development on adjacent areas outside of the flood plain. Grooming of the open space will have a positive aesthetic effect on adjoining areas for which residential uses are proposed, enhancing property values and offsetting higher densities. Air pollution levels may be increased in the downtown area due to longer peak hour traffic volumes.

Energy conservation will be promoted by the plan. The intensification of housing opportunities in close proximity to the railroad station should help to reduce automobile dependency. Moreover, it is recommended that sufficient design flexibility be incorporated into an amended Zoning Ordinance to encourage the use of solar energy where appropriate.

It is anticipated that any new development under the plan will have a positive impact on the municipal fisc. At the densities proposed, new dwelling units will tend to be smaller in size and will therefore produce fewer schoolchildren and a lower demand for services than single family homes. In addition, new residential development can be expected to have a positive effect on retail sales volumes and land values generally.

Social impacts of the plan are expected to be positive. Assuming approximately one thousand (1000) new residents (if full implementation of the plan occurs), the Borough will reclaim some of the population lost during the preceding decade. The new households will most likely include a mix of smaller families, single persons, young couples and the elderly. Housing needs and demands, both locally and within the region, will be concomitantly reduced.

Summarily, the overall effect of the implementation of the plan will be positive, with drawbacks related primarily to traffic. At the time of development plan review, the Borough is cautioned to be attentive to parking requirements and environmental concerns as well as to the condition of the sewerage system.