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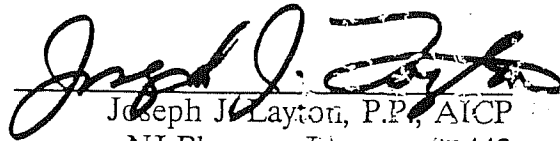
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BOROUGH OF METUCHEN

Middlesex County, New Jersey

**MASTER PLAN  
REEXAMINATION**

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The original document was signed and sealed  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
A. Major Problems and Objectives Relating to Land Development in the Borough of Metuchen in 1988, the Year the Master Plan was Last Reexamined	2
B. The Extent to Which Such Problems and Objectives Have Been Reduced or Have Increased	6
C. The Extent To Which There Have Been Significant Changes In The Assumptions, Policies and Objectives Forming the Basis For the 1988 Master Plan Re-examination Report and Subsequent Master Plan Documents	7
D. Specific Changes Recommended For Master Plan or Development Regulations	8
E. Recommendations Concerning Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans	9

## INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, NJSA 40:55 D-1 *et seq.* stipulates that each municipality in the State of New Jersey reexamine its Master Plan and development regulations at least every six years. Specifically, NJSA 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 shall be sent to the county planning board and the municipal clerk of each adjoining municipality."

This reexamination of the Borough of Metuchen Master Plan conforms with the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law and addresses the requirements of NJSA 40:55D-89 by including the following:

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the Master Plan adoption, or last revision or reexamination.
- 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



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incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992, c.79(C.40A:-12A-1 et 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.

This reexamination report represents the reexamination of the Metuchen Master Plan Reexamination Report which was adopted on July 21, 1988 and subsequent amendments to the Master Plan adopted since that date. These include the Housing Element/Fair Share Plan Adopted in August 1989 and amended June 4, 1992 and April 15, 1993; The Southwest Gateway Plan Adopted June 20, 1991 and the Recreation/Open Space Plan Adopted May 7, 1992.

**A. Major Problems and Objectives Relating to Land Development in the Borough of Metuchen in 1988, the Year the Master Plan was Last Reexamined**

A list of goals and objectives relating to land development is presented in the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination Report. The goals and objectives listed are those contained in the 1983 Land Use Plan Element prepared by Frost Associates and the 1967 Master Plan prepared by Candeub Fleissig and Associates. These goals and objectives were generally determined to still be valid in 1988. Additional goals and objectives contained in the 1983 Housing Plan Element were also listed in the 1988 Reexamination Report. Specific recommendations to implement each of the Housing Plan Element goals were presented in the 1988 Reexamination Report.

The 1988 Reexamination Report also noted that a common land use problem in 1983 was the extent to which non-residential land uses encroach upon residential areas. A new land use plan and accompanying land development ordinance to specifically address changes in industrial uses and non-residential use impacts on residential areas was anticipated to be developed and approved in 1988. This did not occur but the uses permitted in industrial zones was comprehensively reviewed and modified in 1993 to improve the compatibility of industrial zones with adjacent residential areas.

The major problems and objectives identified in the 1988 Reexamination Report can be summarized as follows:

The goals and objectives taken from the 1983 Land Use Plan Element which were still valid in 1988:

1. 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, of its desirability as a community in which to live. Preservation must be balanced with the necessity of an expanding tax base that alleviates an unreasonable tax burden to provide consistent levels of service.
2. Traffic and parking problems already exist in Metuchen, and in recognition of this, any development or redevelopment of the central business district should not intensify traffic problems beyond acceptable levels and should be undertaken in conjunction with adequate parking provisions.
3. 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 community, and should serve a valid market to ensure the likelihood of their realization.
4. Preservation of areas of environmental sensitivity, but surrounding land uses should be planned to ensure maximum public benefit from the resultant open space.
5. Providing opportunities to meet the housing needs of Metuchen residents and work force should be encouraged. In addition housing should be considered as a means of creating an expanding market for existing businesses in Metuchen.

The policies of the 1967 Master Plan which were endorsed by the 1976 Amendment to the Master Plan and the 1983 Land Use Plan Element, and with minor modifications remained valid in 1988:

1. To provide a variety of housing types to serve the residents of the Borough.
2. To preserve and enhance the residential character of the Borough.

3. To maintain the Borough's physical and visual identity in the region.
4. To improve the competitive position of Metuchen's downtown area.
5. To encourage new commercial development, but not at the cost of blighting residential areas.
6. To improve the efficiency of the major street network in Metuchen.
7. To provide quick and convenient access to the downtown area for the people who desire to use the facilities of the business district.
8. To develop and sustain a compact, efficient, and viable shopping area within the central business district.
9. To improve the overall appearance of the business district.
10. To provide a circulation system which brings into balance the needs of the pedestrian and the needs of cars, trucks and buses.

The goals and objectives of the 1983 Housing Plan Element which were still valid in 1988:

1. To improve and preserve the existing housing stock.
2. To promote, within the next two decades, the development of 300-500 units of new housing of varying types and sizes.
3. To stimulate the development of such housing in locations convenient to shopping, the railroad station, and employment centers.
4. To permit such housing to be constructed at densities high enough to encourage private investment but within the density range already permitted under the Borough's zoning (6-23 dwelling units per acre).



MASER SOSINSKI  
& ASSOCIATES, P.A.

5. To foster the development of one hundred (100) or more units of subsidized family and elderly housing by non-profit sponsors, should funding be made available in the future.

The Housing Element/Fair Share Plan adopted in 1989 referenced all of the above goals and objectives and made specific recommendations to implement them. Subsequent amendments to the Housing Element/Fair Share Plan in 1992 and 1993 dealt with specific properties and did not review the underlying goals and objectives.

The Southwest Gateway Plan listed the following goals and objectives:

- 1) Improve the visual quality/image of the Route 27 corridor.
- 2) Develop a set of specific land uses for each residential, business, and industrial zone that will promote appropriate future development.
- 3) Revise existing zoning district boundaries to reflect existing land use patterns and provide direction for future development.
- 4) Limit future residential development to the area defined by existing residential land uses.
- 5) Promote planned development opportunities for vacant and underutilized land in accordance with an overall urban design plan.
- 6) Improve existing traffic conditions on Route 27 and at the Middlesex Avenue/Bridge Street intersection.

The Recreation/Open Space Plan listed the following goals and objectives:

1. To provide adequate and accessible active and passive recreation areas for use by Borough residents and others throughout the region.
2. To provide for safe accessible neighborhood playgrounds for the youth of the Borough.

3. To increase the number, size, type and variety of open space and recreational opportunities for the residents of the Borough.
4. To provide additional open space parcels with appropriate vegetation necessary to reduce noise, traffic and air pollution, in closer compliance with the Clean Air Act of 1990.
5. To provide for the establishment of alternate transportation modes (bicycle/pedestrian) to reduce traffic, noise and air pollution in compliance with the requirements of the Clean Air Act of 1990.
6. To provide for pedestrian and bicycle connections between the various recreation and open space parcels in the Borough, thereby providing additional recreational opportunities to all residents.
7. To utilize the unique characteristics of all specific open space parcels to further the goals and objectives of the Borough Master Plan for environmental, land use and circulation issues.

**B. The Extent To Which Such Problems and Objectives Have Been Reduced or Have Increased**

The broad goals and objectives related to the Land Use Plan Element contained in the 1967, 1976 and 1983 Master Plans still remain valid since Metuchen has remained a stable developed community over the intervening years. The initial goal which is the "preservation of the Borough's essentially residential character, of the integrity of its neighborhoods, of the viability of its central business district should be expanded to add "and other commercial uses."

The objectives of the original Housing Plan Element have been influenced by the passage of the Fair Housing Act and subsequent adoption of the Housing Element/Fair Share Plan which received substantive Certification from the Council on Affordable Housing in 1992 as amended in 1993. Several goals and objectives expressed in the 1983 Housing Plan Element which were still valid in 1988 are no longer desirable. These include the development of 300-500 units of new housing within the next two decades, densities as high as 23 dwelling units





per acre and a specific goal of one hundred or more units of subsidized housing. Instead it is recommended that no specific numbers be listed as goals for housing units. Also it is recommended that maximum densities permitted by the Borough's Zoning range from 6 to 12 dwelling units per acre.

Since 1988 additional planning documents have been prepared each of which addressed specific goals and objectives or problems. These include the Southwest Gateway Plan adopted June 20, 1991; the Recreation/Open Space Plan adopted May 7, 1992, amendments to the LI Zone permitted uses in 1993, and amendments in permitted uses and expansion of the B-4 Zone in 1993. The goals and objectives expressed in association with each of these actions have not changed to date and remain valid as is.

C. The Extent To Which There Have Been Significant Changes In The Assumptions, Policies, and Objectives Forming the Basis For the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination Report and Subsequent Master Plan Documents

Metuchen is a stable community which owes much of its stability to the fact that it is a desirable residential community. Although essentially fully developed new dwellings continue to be constructed on fill-in lots or on subdivided lots. Census data show a decline of 7% in the total population from 13,762 in 1980 to 12,804 in 1990. This largely reflects a decrease in average household size rather than an out-migration of population.

Since the Metuchen Borough Master Plan Reexamination Report was adopted in 1988 there have been no significant changes in the municipal assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan. Changes in density and distribution of population and land uses and housing conditions have not been significant and the majority of the objectives of the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination Report remain valid as discussed previously.

Changes in State and County policies and objectives since 1988 which have an influence on planning in Metuchen Borough include most notably the imposition of freshwater wetland

buffer requirements in association with the New Jersey Freshwater Wetlands Act and the adoption of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) in 1992. In association with the SDRP the Planning Board intends to submit the Borough Master Plan to the State Planning Commission for Consistency Review.

**D. Specific Changes Recommended For Master Plan or Development Regulations**

The majority of the assumptions, policies, goals and objectives which formed the basis for the 1988 Reexamination Report are still valid to varying degrees in 1994. There are certain land use issues that continue to be of concern however, and which should be addressed in more detail.

Based on the findings of this Reexamination Report and taking into consideration the ultimate planning goals of the Metuchen, it is the determination of Metuchen Borough Planning Board that the following areas should be reviewed/updated and incorporated as amendments to the Master Plan where appropriate:

1. Infrastructure (sewer capacity) as it poses a constraint for development
2. Residential Densities
3. Traffic Congestion and Siting Requirements For High Traffic Generating Uses.
4. Potential Uses For Franklin School Property
5. Southwest Gateway Uses
6. Main Street and Off-street Parking requirements
7. EFCO Property Uses
8. Oakite Property Uses
9. Current Foodtown Site Uses
10. Industrial Zones Location and Marketability

11. Locations For and Definition of Fast-Service Restaurants
12. Zoning on Middlesex Avenue Between Main Street & Rector Street
13. Zoning on Middlesex Avenue Near Elks Building
14. Metuchen as a Hub for Mass Transit
15. Pursue a Roadway Link on the Lehigh Valley RR right-of-way Between Durham Avenue & Liberty Street
16. Foster Development of a Greenway on the Lehigh Valley RR right-of-way Wherever Possible
17. Establish a Five-year Capital Improvement Program
18. Discuss Disposition of Municipal Building

**E. Recommendations Concerning Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans**

At this time there are no recommendations for the incorporation of redevelopment plans pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law".

