

HIGHTSTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING BOARD

2004 REEXAMINATION REPORT

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**APPROVED BY THE PLANNING BOARD ON MARCH 14, 2005
WITH REVISIONS, DATED APRIL 11, 2005**

I. MUNICIPAL LAND USE LAW

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40-55D-89 of the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) Municipal Master Plans and Development Regulations shall, at least every six years, be generally reexamined by the Planning Board. Upon such adoption, a copy of the Report and Resolution shall be sent to the County Planning Board and to the Municipal Clerk of each adjoining municipality.

The statute provides that Reexamination Reports shall state:

- a. the major problems and objectives related 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. extent to which there had been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan or Development 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 the 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 regulation 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.40A:12A-1, et al.) 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 development plans of the municipality.

The preparation of this Master Plan and Development Regulations Periodic Reexamination Report was authorized by the Hightstown Borough Planning Board pursuant to the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law. The most recent comprehensive Master Plan for the Borough of Hightstown was adopted by the Planning Board on October 13, 1998. The 1998 Plan superceded the previous Plan adopted in 1992. The Planning Board, in adopting the 1998 Plan, found that circumstances had changed since 1992 some of which had important consequences to the Borough.

In summary they were as follows:

1. Demographic information revealed that Hightstown was shifting from mature families to younger ones. The Master Plan concluded from this trend that it was reasonable to assume that Hightstown would continue its tradition of being a family-oriented community and that the Borough should plan accordingly;
2. In accordance with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) in March 1997, Hightstown became a recognized "town center" within the SDRP. As such, Hightstown is entitled to receive priority for State funding and permitting. As a "town center" the Borough has committed itself to redevelop the central business district, define and establish an historical image and improve open-space corridors and utilize them to connect residential neighbors with the downtown area.

Hightstown was also required to work to rehabilitate housing, provide a balanced mix of land uses and strengthen pedestrian circulation in the face of overwhelming vehicular traffic. All of these were intended as stated in the 1998 Master Plan "to reinforce the Borough's viability as a cohesive and highly functional town center."¹

II. MAJOR PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Municipal Land Use Law, enacted by the State Legislature in 1976, authorizes municipal governments to control the physical development of the lands within their boundaries. N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2 of the MLUL, as amended, lists fifteen (15) purposes:

- a. To encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of 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 desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangements;
- j. To promote the conservation of historic sites and districts, open space, energy resources and valuable natural resources in the State and to prevent urban sprawl and

¹ 1998 Master Plan, at page 45.

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 of the particular site;
- l. To encourage senior citizen community housing construction;
- m. To encourage the 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;
- n. To promote utilization of renewable energy sources; and
- o. To promote the maximum practicable recovery and recycling of recyclable materials from municipal solid waste through the use of planning practices designed to incorporate the State Recycling Plan goals and to compliment municipal recycling programs.

Consistent with these purposes, the Borough set forth certain specific objectives and goals to guide its future development in order to achieve a sustainable balance of land uses that promote high quality family life for a diverse resident population within a quaint, historic town center.²

The following "Goals and Objectives" appeared in the 1998 Master Plan:

Goal #1: Protect and perfect an historic town center image for the Borough.

Objective #1: Refine the Borough's historic land use pattern of a central economic core surrounded by residential neighborhoods.

Objective #2: Encourage the development and redevelopment of the town center for the municipality.

Objective #3: Encourage land uses which provide the residents with their daily needs for family life, enrichment, recreation, vocation and prosperity.

Objective #4: Promote development and services that are family oriented and enhance and support family life.

Objective #5: Provide opportunities and services for people of all ages, income levels and cultural backgrounds.

Objective #6: Promote and restore the historic image of Hightstown in the Borough.

² 1998 Master Plan, at page 46.

Objective #7: Develop a unifying visual theme in the Borough, centered and most evident in the central downtown business district.

Objective #8: Promote the priority of pedestrian movement throughout the Borough and create pedestrian links between the residential neighborhoods and the central downtown business district.

Objective #9: Encourage a strong sense of community and promote local pride among both residents and business owners.

Objective #10: Recognize the value of the schools and churches in Hightstown and integrate the goals of the Borough with those of the schools and churches to create a closer, more symbiotic relationship that advances the objectives of all three; the Borough, the schools and the churches.

Goal #2: Revitalize the central downtown business district and improve the economic viability of the Borough.

Objective #1: Improve the appearance and economic viability of the Borough and restore the historic character to the central downtown business district.

Objective #2: Improve the streetscape to make the central downtown business district inviting, appealing and pedestrian friendly.

Objective #3: Maximize high valued ratables to help balance the cost of municipal services throughout the Borough.

Objective #4: Encourage the protection and maintenance of an enhanced aesthetic quality of the buildings and the streetscape in the business district.

Objective #5: Encourage creative and innovative reuse of underutilized or abandoned properties.

Objective #6: Encourage businesses that contribute to the historic, small town character of the Borough and are likely to stay and thrive for a long time.

Objective #7: Improve and expand employment opportunities for local residents.

Objective #8: With sensitivity and careful study, incorporate mass transit service into the municipality's intimate, town center character, helping to reduce onerous vehicular traffic.

Objective #9: Promote the redesign of the Route 33 corridor to maximize the pedestrian usability and minimize vehicular intrusion in the central downtown business district.

Objective #10: Promote the redesign of vehicular circulation patterns where ever necessary to enhance the environment of the central downtown business district and maximize the pedestrian experience.

Objective #11: Develop a functional plan for parking that complements the municipality's small-scale town center image.

Objective #12: Maximize the ease with which community residents can walk to the central downtown business district from Hightstown's residential neighborhoods.

Objective #13: Promote an environment within the central downtown business district which is inviting to visitors and encourages them to stay and enjoy the many valuable assets of Hightstown.

Objective #14: Establish a public/private partnership to market the Borough as an attractive town center and a destination of activity.

Objective #15: Promote and expand Hightstown's annual and cultural events and employ a public/private partnership between the municipality, the local businesses, schools and churches to market and produce the events.

Objective #16: Identify and utilize outside funding sources to facilitate improvements and business incentives.

Objective #17: Provide incentives for business owners to rehabilitate store facades and restore Hightstown's original historic appearance.

Objective #18: Develop a unifying theme for signage and insure that signs are not overly invasive within the general appearance of the streetscape.

Objective #19: Assure that the street furniture, including lighting and photometric design enhances the original quaint, historic, intimate scale of the central downtown business district.

Objective #20: Preserve, protect and enhance Peddie Lake, its environs and open space corridors as valuable natural resources within the central downtown business district.

Goal #3: Preserve and enhance the existing residential character of the Borough.

Objective #1: Maintain and enhance quaint, family oriented residential neighborhoods.

Objective #2: Promote less intense land use development in the more expansive residential neighborhoods and intensify development in the smaller business core so as to establish a balance throughout the municipality both fundamentally and economically.

Objective #3: Maintain and enhance the housing diversity in terms of housing types and styles.

Objective #4: Maintain the existing residential character along the primary corridors into and out of the Borough.

Objective #5: Provide a reasonable mix of housing for all ages and income levels.

Objective #6: Provide a variety of housing for senior citizens of varying income levels and physical abilities.

Objective #7: Minimize conflicts between incompatible uses and segregate nonresidential uses from residential housing.

Objective #8: Promote historic restoration of old homes and historically appropriate architectural design of new or rehabilitated homes to help restore the Borough's historic visual image.

Objective #9: Encourage housing designs and site plans that promote social, family friendly community behavior.

Objective #10: Improve and rehabilitate the existing housing stock.

Objective #11: Develop housing within the existing housing stock for low and moderate income families to meet current State requirements.

Objective #12: In the central downtown business district, integrate residential development that is complementary to the intensity of the use and appearance of the Borough's commercial core district.

Objective #13: Strive to create an appropriate balance between housing, which typically consumes more municipal services than the revenue it generates, and other, more highly valued ratables that increase municipal revenues.

Objective #14: Promote well landscaped lots that create an appealing residential streetscape appearance.

Objective #15: Give pedestrian movement priority over any other form of transportation.

Goal #4: Improve the municipal services including the infrastructure as well as operational systems.

Objective #1: Provide a complete range of municipal services to support a diverse resident population with people of many different ages, economic levels, cultural and educational backgrounds.

Objective #2: Expand the cultural opportunities within the Borough and integrate them seamlessly with quasi-public and private cultural opportunities available within the Borough.

Objective #3: Improve both the function and the appearance of public utility services throughout the Borough.

Objective #4: Recognize and promote the benefits of regional cooperation and pursue balanced, equitable and positive relationships with neighboring communities.

Goal #5: Protect the natural resources and improve recreational opportunities within the Borough.

Objective #1: Improve and maintain the natural resources of Peddie Lake and the Rocky Brook corridor.

Objective #2: Redevelop and maintain the abandoned railroad right-of-way; redesigning it and integrating it into the natural open space system of the Borough.

Objective #3: Provide controlled public access to the Borough's natural resources, balancing the public's opportunities to enjoy the resources with necessary safe guards to protect and preserve the resources for future generations.

Objective #4: Develop Memorial Park along Peddie Lake as a central community focal point.

Objective #5: Provide sufficient recreational opportunities for people of all ages.

Objective #6: Integrate public recreation with available facilities at local schools and other recreational sites.

Objective #7: Develop a continuous open space system throughout the Borough.

Objective #8: Establish high priorities for the protection of existing historic sites and the restoration of the historic quality of the Borough.

III. SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN ASSUMPTIONS, POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES

The Planning Board hereby reaffirms the objectives laid out in the 1998 Master Plan. If anything, the trend of increasing intermunicipal competition for tax base has rendered even more important the Master Plan's overarching goal of preserving and enhancing the Borough's uniquely appealing elements. Hightstown differs from its neighbors in its walkability, the human scale of its core commercial district, and the historic charm of

many of its residential neighborhoods; these assets are referenced throughout the Master Plan's goals and objectives. More than ever, the Borough must protect and leverage these advantages to secure long-term prosperity and livability.

Long-term livability in the Borough also requires that adequate affordable housing be available, as affordable housing accommodates residential diversity that helps make Hightstown a vibrant, interesting place to live. Recently the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) adopted a new approach (Growth Share) to determine the amount of affordable housing required in each New Jersey municipality. For our own sake, the Borough must continue to comply with State requirements.

Another important change in the Borough is Minute Maid's vacation of its bottling plant on Mercer Street. Although Minute Maid contributed to the Borough budget significantly, through fees, usage charges, and property taxes, it also burdened the Borough with regular truck traffic. The loss of Minute Maid therefore represents a fiscal stress but also an opportunity to make Hightstown more livable. Recommendations regarding the Minute Maid property are provided below.

IV. THE EXTENT TO WHICH IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN REDUCED AND OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED

The 1998 Master Plan articulated five interrelated goals aimed at preserving and enhancing value in the Borough.

1. Enhance the Borough's historic charm and identity.
2. Make the downtown economically viable.
3. Maintain the character of the Borough's residential neighborhoods.
4. Improve services.
5. Preserve natural and recreational resources.

The following history highlights changes in Hightstown since the most recent master plan was adopted in 1998, focusing on goals 1 and 2, which the 1998 Master Plan emphasizes. The 1998 Master Plan "concentrates on the character and sustainability of the downtown area and the economic core of the Borough", and further states: "At this point in time, the state of the Borough is such that little can be improved in the municipality without substantial reforms to the commercial sector first to enhance ratables and strengthen revenues".³

Recent changes in Hightstown have been led by massive public investment. In the summer of 2002, the Borough saw the fruit of its work with the New Jersey Department of Transportation. The streetscape in central downtown, including parts of North Main, Franklin, Mercer, Stockton, and Rogers, was greatly improved. Sidewalks were rebuilt, brick-style crosswalks were laid, and period streetlights and benches were installed. A turning lane was removed from Main Street at Stockton, replaced by a traffic-calming island. In 2004, the Borough received grants to continue the streetscape improvements

³ 1998 Master Plan, at pages 2- 3.

along Mercer Street, and to install a fountain at the intersection of Mercer and North Main.

Partly in response to the Borough's revitalization efforts, private investment increased as well. The Court Jester was purchased before the completion of the original streetscape work, and the new owners, after renaming it Theo's Lakeside Tavern, have invested heavily. Most notably, Theo's now features windows overlooking a new patio, which in turn has a view of the lake. Situated at the Borough's most heavily traveled intersection, the patio welcomes travelers to Hightstown's downtown. Other new businesses have moved into town as well, strengthening the Borough's mix of regional-draw (for example, Perennial Homes and the Cranbury Design Center) and local-service (for example, the Hightstown Pharmacy and Slowdown Café) establishments. Also, some existing businesses improved their facades, such as those at the southeast corner of Mercer and Ward.

The Peddie School entered the process, becoming the Borough's new partner in downtown's revitalization. The school purchased the mostly vacant theater building in the center of town, renovated it, and has fully leased it out. It also redesigned and resurfaced the municipal parking lot surrounding the theater. The school, in partnership with the Borough and state, repaired the historic old Ward Street bridge, rather than replace it.

Hightstown has seen substantial reinvestment in residential properties as well. House facades around town have improved, especially along Stockton Street. A residential development at the end of Grant Street has been completed. Market rate housing is under construction on the former site of the Sunlawn Nursing Home on North Main Street. Thanks to a Borough rezoning, a 78-unit age-restricted development, in the Monmouth Street/Shapiro Avenue area, is in the final stages of regulatory approval. A nine-unit townhouse development has also been approved on a long-vacant site on Williams Street.

Far from being the passive recipient of good luck in revitalization, Hightstown has worked hard to manage its development for maximum benefit. To help rehabilitate housing stock, the Borough accepted COAH funds from Manalapan Township. It enacted a sign ordinance to help create a consistent image downtown. It has consistently planned for a system of greenways to connect various parts of the Borough. It created a Historic Preservation Commission, which is in the process of designating the Borough's first historic district. Borough volunteers have put on a number of successful special events downtown: concerts, a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Borough's incorporation, festivals, the consistently popular fishing derby, etc. The Planning Board, Borough Council and Mayor have developed a redevelopment plan for the old rug mill, which, when it materializes, will bring new retail, office space, and luxury housing downtown, while connecting to the greenway system and offering improved access to the Rocky Brook.

Despite this apparent momentum, forces from beyond our borders threaten Hightstown's continued revitalization. Owing to asset allocation decisions from the corporate office,

the Minute Maid plant has closed, which immediately reduced the Borough's revenues. Population growth is anticipated in our neighbor, East Windsor Township, and in the area in general. The projections that necessitated school construction in the District, and the recently approved plan to widen the New Jersey Turnpike south of Exit 8A, stand as evidence of that growth. The growth will likely increase vehicular traffic through the crossroads that is Hightstown.

The national and local retail landscape has changed significantly as well. As regional malls replaced downtowns as shopping centers, so called "power centers" composed of big box stores are killing the regional malls. Chain stores of all types increasingly dominate retailing. Our neighboring municipalities reflect the national trends: Big box stores now surround us, while some smaller, nearby retail sites, despite their easy automobile access and ample parking, have shown persistent turnover in tenants.

In summary, Hightstown's downtown has made significant progress recently, but faces obstacles to its continued revitalization. Coordinated efforts have led to significant infrastructure improvements, which have spawned private investment. As the challenges persist and intensify, coordination among public and private entities must continue.

V. SPECIFIC CHANGES RECOMMENDED FOR MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Hightstown is entering a new phase of its evolution—one of redevelopment, both residential and commercial. The pending construction of an active adult residential complex will consume the last sizeable undeveloped lot in the Borough. All future construction will entail rehabilitation of existing properties or their demolition and replacement. For the benefit of the whole town, this infill development must be coordinated with its neighborhood.

What's so different now? To be sure, Hightstown has been regenerating itself since its establishment. There are three key differences between now and previous times:

1. All future population growth, and the commercial growth that it supports, will be accommodated on currently developed lots. To the extent that Hightstown grows at all, it will do so by increasing its development density: subdividing lots, converting single-family housing into multifamily housing, increasing height limits, and so on. New commercial space must be built atop existing businesses or interspersed among residences.

But why grow? We residents chose and built the Hightstown that is, with its current density, numerous quiet residential neighborhoods, and small-town feel. In short, Hightstown must grow because the rest of the state is growing. As our neighbors in Mercer County and elsewhere continue to add population, we must grow as well to preserve our political influence. As our neighbors add commercial property to their tax base, we must also grow and strengthen our commercial properties to maintain

our share of local commerce and help mitigate future property tax increases. Given that the intent of SDRP is to focus growth in existing centers, such as Hightstown, we must grow to support statewide goals for population distribution, and to combat sprawl.

The alternatives to growth are decline or consolidation with other municipalities. But it is paramount that we preserve Hightstown's unique character, and we need resources to do so. The Borough must plan to accommodate growth. If we do grow, then, the key issue is *how* we grow. Good design and proper coordination are key to the Borough's future growth..

2. Hightstown is poised to reclaim a vibrant commercial district. Along with other small downtowns across the country, Hightstown's commercial district has struggled. Changes in the retail landscape removed town centers from dominance in retailing, and many downtowns' customer base and physical infrastructure decayed as a consequence.

Recently, the Borough's downtown has begun to return to viability. Physical improvements have proceeded apace. Numerous new businesses have come to town, and a renewed optimism is displayed in updated storefronts and building facades. Planning continues for further infrastructure improvements, and promising new commercial ventures continue to prepare to open their doors in Hightstown.

Although the downtown is developing well, it has not yet reached its potential. Its unique assets include its history, a close-knit layout, good automobile access, and the Peddie School. These assets should combine to host a robust mixture of community services along with specialty shops and eateries with regional appeal—an eclectic mix whose dynamism and charm is unique in the area. To thrive, Hightstown's downtown can and must offer a diversity of high-value services and products, with standards of service and a pedestrian experience that the big box stores cannot match.

3. Public investment has catalyzed Hightstown's redevelopment thus far. Between securing the construction of the Route 133 bypass and working with the New Jersey Department of Transportation to reconstruct the roads and sidewalks downtown, public monies have played key roles in setting the stage for future redevelopment. Significant private investment has followed the initial public infrastructure investments. The commitment by Borough citizens and businesses to cooperate to improve our shared situation has helped convince private property owners to invest: they are not alone in wanting their hometown to improve, and that improves the chances that their private investments will not go to waste.

Given the remarkable commitment to the Borough that Hightstown's residents and businesses have demonstrated thus far, the Planning Board believes that new economic development strategies can be implemented. The Planning Board anticipates that continued public involvement will be necessary to sustain the Borough's revitalization and ensure that it leads to maximum public benefits. The

Planning Board recommends six courses of action to revise development regulations in the Borough and ensure that the vision articulated in the 1998 Master Plan and reaffirmed here is effectuated.

1. *Increase coordination of the Borough's downtown economic development efforts.* The challenges identified here are unlikely to be effectively handled by small businessmen working independently. They could use the help of the Borough's volunteers and its government. There are numerous and effective volunteer organizations operating in Hightstown now, many of which do work that directly or indirectly benefits the downtown. The experience of other municipalities in the state shows, however, that coordination of those efforts can increase their impact. Municipalities that actively manage their downtowns, such as Freehold Borough, have been most successful in their revitalization. Coordination work could include: creation of a weekly summer/fall farmer's market downtown, capitalizing on Hightstown's history as an agricultural trading center; cooperation with business and landowners to improve facades; overseeing street cleaning; marketing and branding downtown Hightstown; negotiating shared parking agreements with downtown churches; advocating the merchants' needs to the Borough Council; etc. Traditionally economic development is a job that has been handled, often admirably, by the Mayor. Because changes in administration can disrupt the continuity of efforts, and because the challenges and objectives laid out in the Master Plan are formidable, the Planning Board recommends that a partnership of citizens, business owners, and landowners be given the responsibility for coordinating economic development and encourage complementary businesses and the continued implementation of people friendly amenities downtown.
2. *Develop enforceable design guidelines* for commercial structures in the downtown and other areas of town where design consistency is present and merits preservation. For example, streets with a predominance of Victorian houses may warrant design standards. In such cases, inconsistent design of a given building can adversely affect the appeal of an entire neighborhood. New infill development is threatening Hightstown's historic charm, and this step is essential to preserve it. The guidelines must be prepared on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis.
3. *Review and revise the residential zoning* in the Borough. The current residential zoning regulations were established decades ago. They were appropriate for the suburban-style construction occurring largely at the Borough's periphery at the time. However, as we enter a phase of pure redevelopment, we should revise the standards to allow denser construction in parts of the Borough. As the regulations stand, they would not allow many of Hightstown's oldest buildings to be built today. Additionally, future development is more likely to include mixed uses, and the regulations should accommodate them. The design standards recommended above must also account for this trend.

As stated in the 1998 Master Plan,

...when the Borough can study residential neighborhoods in more detail, and

concentrate on the residential areas with the same intensity as this Master Plan concentrates on the commercial areas, the Borough should prepare an illustrated Housing Element that accurately and clearly describes the desired character of the residential community.⁴

The Planning Board hereby reaffirms this recommendation.

4. *Accommodate* mixed uses in the Industrial Zone

The Borough land currently zoned for Industrial development and formally occupied by Minute Maid, remains vacant and for sale at the time of the writing of this Report. Due to the physical constraints of the site and the relatively high costs of operating an industrial facility in this location, the Minute Maid site is unlikely to attract another industrial use. As discussed above, the loss of Minute Maid presents an opportunity to improve Hightstown's livability. To capitalize on that opportunity, this Report recommends that steps be taken to ensure that the former Minute Maid site is redeveloped with a mix of retail, residential, and perhaps office uses.

The land to the North and East of the I Zone is currently zoned as R-4 (Residential.) To the East and South is HC (Highway Commercial) zoning and to the West is East Windsor Township, (which the Minute Maid property extends into).

Therefore the Planning Board recommends that the I Zone be planned to include highway commercial development along State Highway 33 and predominantly if not purely residential in the rest. The additional highway commercial along Route 33 complements the neighboring businesses, and is appropriate for the level of automobile access there. By providing an opportunity for additional residential development, the Borough would be increasing needed housing stock in the region, and likely make the Minute Maid property more economically viable and attractive for development.

Defining the details of the development is beyond the scope of this Report. That must be left to the Planning Board, Borough Council, Mayor, the interested developer, and not least, East Windsor Township. Being that this zone borders East Windsor, the planning for this district should be closely coordinated with East Windsor's Master Plan in order to create the maximum tax-revenue and livability benefit to both communities.

That said, the Planning Board recommends that the development be guided by a few broad principles in addition to the land use recommendations above. A variety of housing types and commercial tenants should be accommodated in the district. It should be integrated with the Borough and Township Greenway plans. It should be laid out to favor walking as the preferred mode of transportation on streets and paths other than Route 33. As much as possible, the district should be integrated with the rest of the Borough rather than being a distinct development area. In general, the development should exemplify "smart growth," by attending carefully to the site's

⁴ 1998 Master Plan, at page 51.

organization so as to maximize pedestrian activity and foster a sense of community.

The 1998 Master Plan adopted by the Borough contained a number of goals and objectives which support this proposed planning:

Goal #1: Protect and perfect an historic town center image for the Borough.

Objective #1: Refine the Boroughs historic land use pattern of a central economic core surrounded by residential neighborhoods.

Goal #2: Revitalize the central downtown business district and improve the economic viability of the Borough.

Objective #3: Maximize high valued ratable to help balance the cost of municipal services throughout the Borough.

Objective #5: Encourage creative and innovate reuse of underutilized or abandoned properties.

We recommend that the 1998 Master Plan be revisited to reflect the proposed land use changes for the Minute Maid Site.

5. *Ensure consistency* among new land use regulations

For maximum impact, the new land use regulations discussed in recommendations #2, #3, and #4 on pages 13-14 should be coordinated. Doing so avoids duplication and conflict in the Borough regulations, and allows us to exploit natural synergies among them. At a minimum, their implementation should draw on the Bank Street Redevelopment Plan and the PED zoning that preceded it.

A more proactive step, which the Planning Board recommends, is to create an integrated “Development Code for Centers”⁵ the likes of which are used by many New Jersey municipalities, including Cranbury Township. These codes are specifically designed to accommodate mixed uses by thoroughly and graphically describing appropriate building design and focusing on the relationship of buildings and uses to each other.

Whether accomplished piece-by-piece (in recommendations #2, #3, and #4) or all together (recommendation #5), the regulatory actions recommended here will require significant resources to complete. The Planning Board recommends that the Borough aggressively pursue outside funding to support this work, which we deem essential to guide Hightstown’s future development.

⁵ See “Development Codes for Centers,” New Jersey Office of State Planning, October 1996.

6. Storm Water Management

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:8-4.2, the Borough Planning Board has prepared and adopted (March 14, 2005) a Municipal Stormwater Management Plan. This Plan addresses all required non-structural management strategies as set forth in N.J.A.C. 7:9-5.3(b), as well as other relevant Plan components.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE INCORPORATION OF REDEVELOPMENT PLANS

In 2004, Hightstown's Borough Council adopted a three-section Redevelopment Plan covering parts of Bank, Academy, Mercer, and Ward Streets. The Plan for the Bank Street section has been fully developed, while the details of the Plan for the other parts of the Borough have been deferred. This Redevelopment Plan, especially the Bank Street section, referring to Bank Street, should be considered an example of the Borough's latest thinking on appropriate development and redevelopment in the downtown. The Redevelopment Plan should be incorporated into the Borough's body of development regulations. At the same time, the two remaining sections of the Redevelopment Plan must continue to be developed, ideally to the level of detail of the Bank Street Plan section.

59819 Reexam. Report GSR 4/19/05 8:00 am