

2024 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT

PREPARED FOR:



Township of Franklin Planning Board
Gloucester County, New Jersey

Adopted: September 17, 2024

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This document has been prepared in accordance with N.J.S.A 40:55D-89 of the Municipal Land Use Law. The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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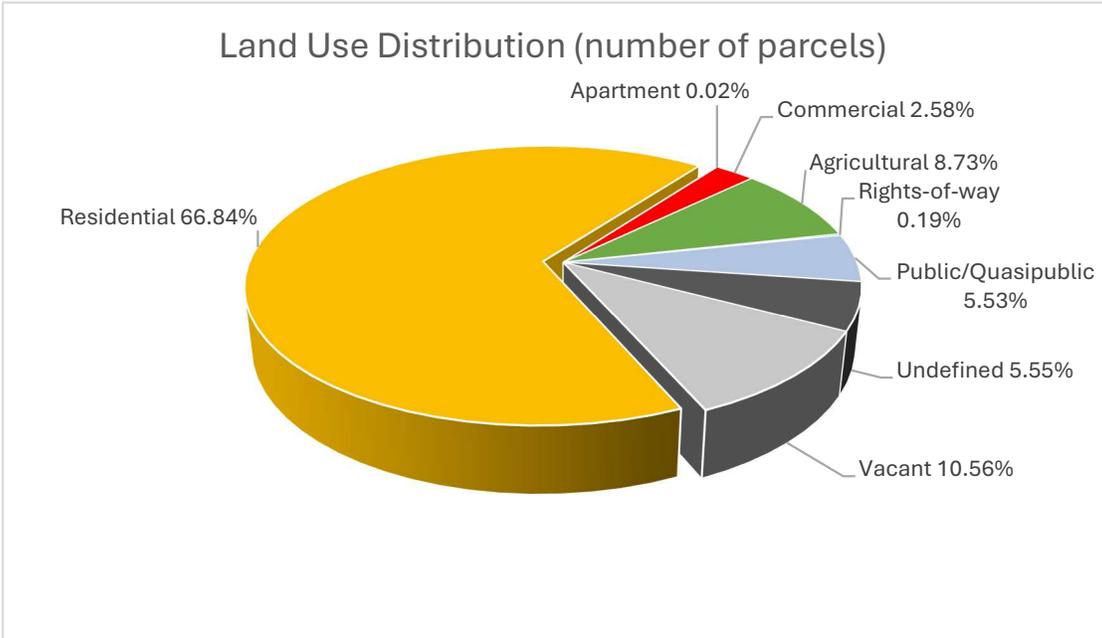
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INTRODUCTION

TOWNSHIP OVERVIEW

The Township of Franklin is primarily a rural community located in the southeastern corner of Gloucester County. The Township is the largest municipality in the County at 56.4 square miles in size, and is bordered by nine other municipalities including Monroe Township to the north; Pittsgrove Township (Salem County), Vineland City (Cumberland County), and Newfield Borough to the south; Clayton Borough, Elk Township, and Upper Pittsgrove Township (Salem County) to the west, and Buena Borough (Atlantic County) and Buena Vista Township (Atlantic County) to the east. Approximately one third of the Township is located within the Pinelands Management Area.

Land Use



Based on property tax classification records, the majority of the properties in Franklin Township are residential in use, as indicated in the chart above. These residential uses are spread throughout the Township, with the most concentrated areas of residential use being in the villages of Malaga and Franklinville and in the northern portions of the Township along Tuckahoe Road (CR555). The next most-common use in the Township in terms of number of properties as per tax records, is vacant land. This would indicate significant areas of undeveloped land in the Township. There is no concentrated area within the Township where vacant uses can be found, as it is spread throughout the Township. Many of these parcels classified as vacant are lands that are otherwise constrained from development. Finally, agricultural land uses are prevalent in the Township, comprising about 9% of the total properties in Franklin. As shown on the Land Use Map on the following pages, the number of Agricultural properties may not outweigh the number of Residential, but the amount of land used for Agricultural uses in the

Township is much more prevalent. Agricultural uses are spread throughout the Township, with the use becoming more intense further southeast, approaching the Pinelands Management Area.

State Plan

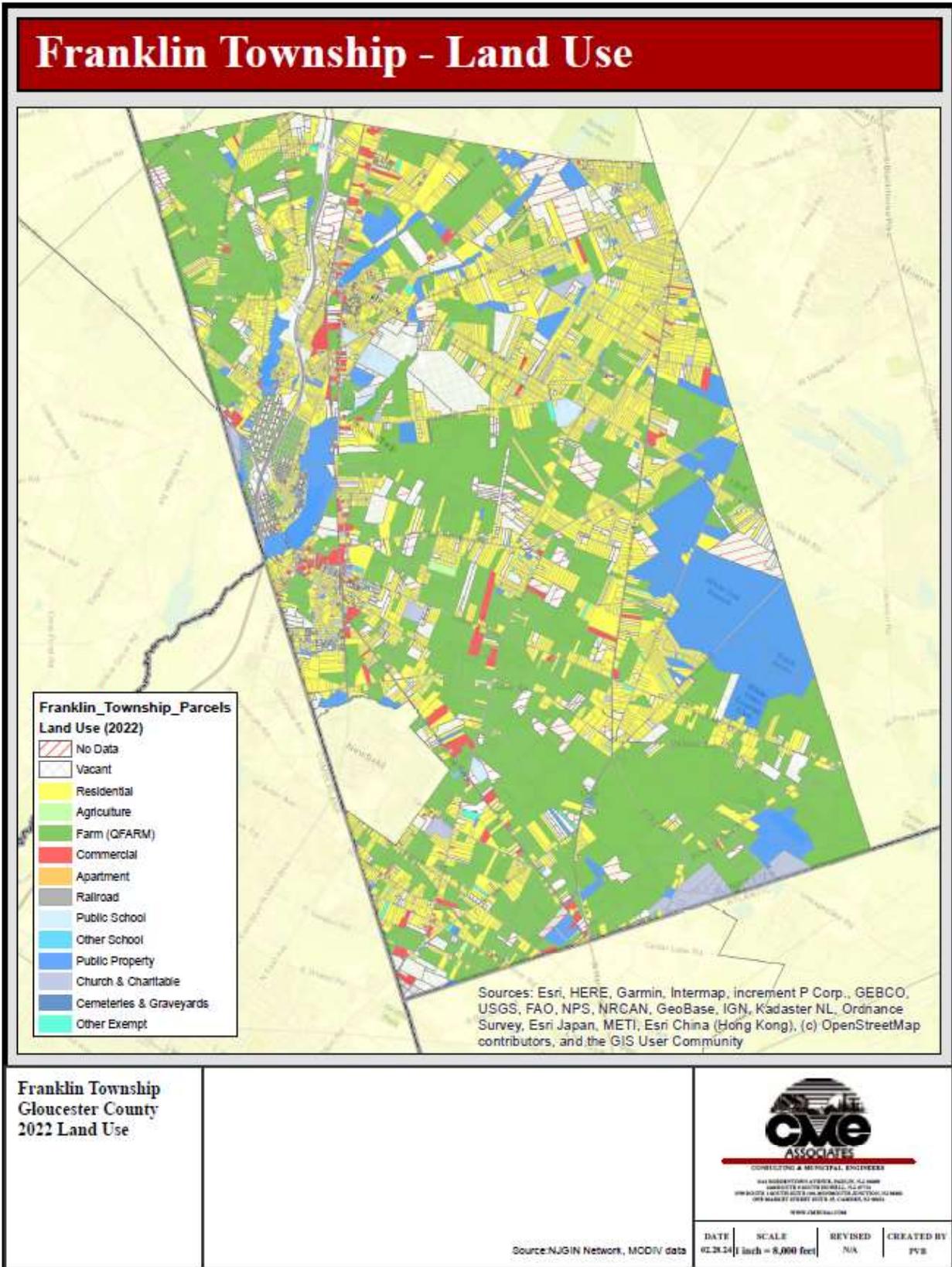
The State Plan Policy Map, a part of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, places portions of Franklin Township in one of three different Planning Area classifications for the purposes of encouraging or discouraging future growth and development. The northern end of the Township, generally in the Franklinville and Malaga areas are located in Planning Area 2, the Suburban Planning Area, where development and redevelopment is encouraged. The remainder of the town is located in either Planning Area 4 (Rural Environmentally Sensitive) or Planning Area 5 (Environmentally Sensitive). In these areas development and redevelopment is discouraged by the State.

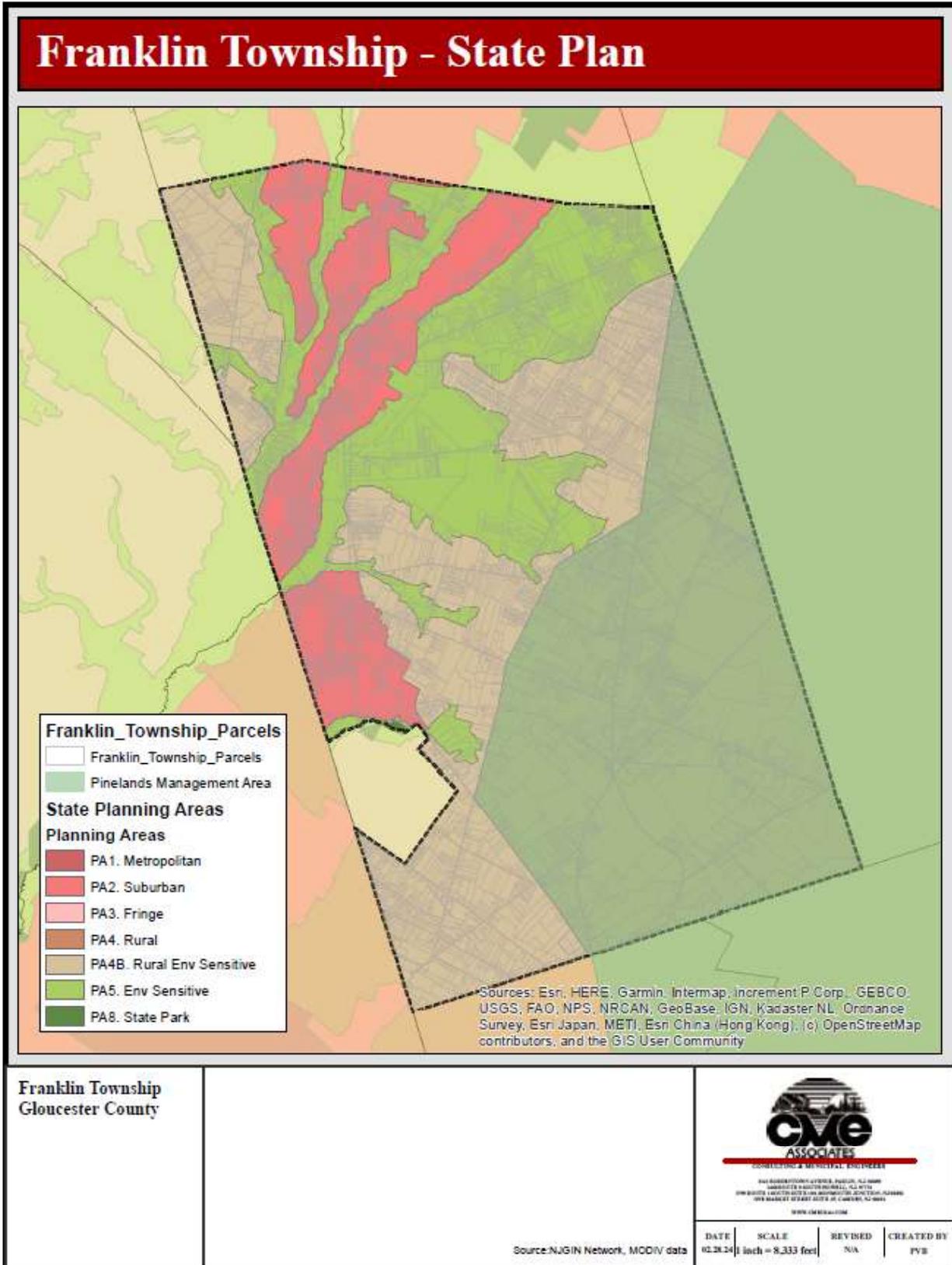
A map of the State Plan Policy map in regards to Franklin Township can be seen on the following pages.

Environment

Some portions of the Township are considered to be environmentally constrained, meaning that they are generally unavailable for development. These include lands that are within a flood hazard area or are designated as wetlands. These lands mostly fall around the water bodies of the Township, including the headwaters of the Maurice River and its tributaries, Malaga Lake, and other streams and ponds in the northwestern portions of the Township. There are also areas of wetlands noted within the Pinelands around the areas of Cedar Lake and the Squankum Branch that runs to Winding River to the east.

An environmental constraints map can be found on the following pages.





HISTORY OF THE MASTER PLAN IN FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP

The Township of Franklin prepared its last comprehensive Master Plan in 2004. Since that time, Master Plan Re-Examinations have been undertaken and in 2011 and most recently in 2013. Amendments to the Master Plan were also adopted in 2007. In addition, a Housing Element and Fair Share Plan was recently adopted on July 18, 2023. The Housing Plan implements the agreement between the Township of Franklin and Fair Share Housing Center addressing very low, low, and moderate income housing needs.

Per N.J.S.A 40:55D-89, a Planning Board is required to prepare a periodic reexamination of its master plan at least once every ten (10) years. A Reexamination Report is a review of previously adopted master plans, amendments and local development regulations to determine if the policy guidelines set forth therein are still applicable. The Township of Franklin last examined its Master Plan in 2013. In accordance with the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), the 2013 Master Plan Re-Examination is being examined to reflect the changing needs of the Township and to affirm or amend the policies that were set forth.

REEXAMINATION REPORT REQUIREMENTS

Per N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 the Reexamination Report shall state:

- a. *The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of adoption of the last reexamination report.*
- b. *The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.*
- c. *The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for 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 State, county and municipal policies and objectives.*
- d. *The specific changes recommended for the Master Plan or land development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.*
- e. *The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L.1992, c.79 (C.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 redevelopment plans of the municipality.*
- f. *The recommendations of the planning board concerning locations appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure, including but not limited to, commercial districts and, areas proximate to public transportation and transit facilities and transportation corridors, and public rest stops; and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary or appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure.*

ISSUES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES OF MASTER PLAN

The first provision of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 of the MLUL states that the Re-Examination Report shall include:

“The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last re-examination report.”

The second provision of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 of the MLUL states that the Re-examination Report shall include:

“The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.”

In July of 2004, the Township adopted a Master Plan (this Plan was further amended in June of 2007 and again in September of 2007). The 2004 Master Plan provided goals and objectives, which were then re-examined and revised as part of the 2011 Master Plan Re-Examination report, and again as part of the 2013 Master Plan Re-Examination report. The 2013 Master Plan Re-Examination established a set of Comprehensive Goals, Comprehensive Objectives, and Specific Goals intended to help guide future development and redevelopment in the Township of Franklin.

A review and discussion of each of these prior issues, goals, objectives, and recommendations as noted and reviewed in the 2013 Master Plan Reexamination report follow below:

ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE 2013 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT

The 2013 Reexamination Report reviewed the major problems identified by the 2004 Master Plan and 2011 Reexamination Report. Those problems identified in the plans are as follows:

1. LAND USE ELEMENT (2004)

- a. The existing zoning does not promote the retention of the rural character that is cherished by Franklin's residents. The lowest density zone, the R-A District, which has a minimum lot area of one acre (43,560 square feet), is not substantially different from the next highest density district, the R-1, which has a minimum lot area of 40,000 square feet. There is a similar lack of significant density variation in the remaining residential districts, with the R-2 and R-3 Districts permitting minimum lot areas of 35,000 and 30,000 square feet respectively.

The township's zoning code was amended in 2007 to address this, removing the R-1, R-2, and R-3 districts and expanding the R-A district, as well as increasing the minimum lot area required and requiring agricultural buffers.

- b. Manufacturing and industrial uses in particular tend to be scattered throughout the community, near residential development or residentially zoned land. A wide

variety of intensive manufacturing, warehouse and distribution uses are permitted in these districts. Franklin Township has no less than nine non-residential zoning districts, ranging from neighborhood commercial to a heavy manufacturing industrial district.

In 2007, the Township adopted zoning ordinance amendments to consolidate manufacturing and industrial districts, and amend the permitted uses in each district.

- c. Commercial uses are concentrated in the villages of Franklinville and Malaga, as well as along the portion of Delsea Drive that connects these two areas. Isolated neighborhood commercial zones serve smaller sections of the community such as Star Cross and Forest Grove. The Township has attempted to preserve the village character of Franklinville and Malaga by establishing zoning districts that are intended to promote mixed uses. Yet there are differences between the Franklinville Village Commercial District and the Malaga Village Commercial Zoning District. To a larger extent these reflect the existing conditions, in which Franklinville is a more traditional village and Malaga tends to be oriented towards highway commercial development. Yet zoning and the Master Plan should attempt to influence projected future conditions, protecting existing landmarks in Franklinville and encouraging the preservation of the remaining village in Malaga.

The last report recommended preparing surveys of each of the two villages to identify the differences between the two. No such surveys have been conducted.

- d. Recent code amendments have strengthened landscape and buffer standards but much needs to be done, particularly with signage. A particular concern is the commercial area along Delsea Drive and the Harding Highway, from the Clayton Borough line to Malaga. This area generally lacks a cohesive design theme and typically consists of strip commercial development or isolated uses. Unplanned strip commercial development leads to excessive access points onto the highway, which can be a traffic hazard. The lack of coordinated architecture also does little to enhance the aesthetics of the area.

The zoning amendments in 2007 included new design standards and a new consolidated Highway Commercial district that was largely intended to address these issues. The 2013 report notes the creation of the Architectural and Landscape Advisory Committee, which has not met in many years.

- e. The current zoning scheme is not consistent with the principles of Smart Growth that have become the cornerstone of planning philosophy, both nationally and in the State of New Jersey.

The 2007 zoning amendments created new standards for cluster development and environmental protections in the RA district, as well as “smart growth” requirements for development in Malaga Village, and directing growth towards existing highway corridors, which is largely consistent with the State Plan Policy Map of 2001.

2. HOUSING ELEMENT & FAIR SHARE PLAN (2004)

- a. There are many obstacles to the provision of affordable housing in Franklin Township, not the least of which is the lack of available public or community-based sewer service. COAH regulations require that sites proposed for new affordable construction must be suitable, which among other things requires that sites have access to water and sewer infrastructure. These same regulations state that "the lack of adequate (water and sewer) capacity, in and of itself, shall constitute a durational adjustment of the municipal housing obligation. The requirement to address the municipal housing obligation shall be deferred until adequate water and/or sewer are made available". Since no such sites now exist in Franklin Township, the Plan proposes to request a durational adjustment for the entire present need component of the affordable housing obligation.

The Planning Board has recently adopted a new Housing Plan that implements the terms and conditions of a 2021 settlement agreement with Fair Share Housing Center that has been approved by the court to adequately address the Township's low and moderate income housing needs.

3. OPEN SPACE PLAN (2002)

- a. The Open Space plan identified the following areas of concern: Recreation demand exceeds available open space; drinking water supply relies on aquifer recharge areas; upland forests need protection from encroaching development; non-point source pollution runoff threatens water quality in streams; wildlife habitats are fragmented; encroaching development from neighboring communities threatens rural landscape; and agricultural lands risk becoming isolated.

The Township continues to coordinate with the County on farmland preservation, and open space preservation. New cluster provisions for major subdivisions in the RA district require substantial open space preservation. The Township adopted a new Farmland Preservation Plan in 2022.

4. WATERSHED BASED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

- a. In early 2004 all New Jersey municipalities were required to obtain a NJPDES Municipal Stormwater General permit for control of their stormwater discharges. The new Stormwater Management Rules in N.J.A.C. 7:8 have been developed to address the adverse impacts that unmanaged land development can have on groundwater recharge and stormwater runoff quality and quantity. Along with this development has come a corresponding increase in stormwater runoff, and increased impacts associated with non-point source pollution.

NJDEP has adopted more recent rules since this time. A stormwater management plan was adopted in 2007, and the Township has adopted new stormwater management regulations to be consistent with the most recent DEP requirements.

ASSUMPTIONS, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES OF THE 2013 REEXAMINATION REPORT

The 2013 Reexamination Report reviewed the 8 assumptions and the related goals and objectives that were identified by the 2004 Master Plan and 2011 Reexamination Reports.

1. Assumption: Franklin Township will experience modest growth pressure. The Township will experience the general population increases being felt throughout Gloucester County but growth will be limited due to the lack of public utilities.

Goal 1: To preserve the quality of life in Franklin Township.

- a. Objective: Retain the rural character of life in Franklin Township.
- b. Objective: Preserve open space opportunities through public and private actions.
- c. Objective: Encourage farmland preservation in cooperation with the local agricultural community.
- d. Objective: Strengthen ordinances that enhance community character.

The 2013 report considers these to remain valid goals and objectives, but notes a need to strengthen municipal ordinances in regards to retaining the rural character of the community. In particular ordinance changes are recommended for signage in the MV and FV districts, clarification on buffer requirements, updated design standards, updates to conditional use requirements, and updates to the list of permitted uses in the industrial and commercial districts. Regulations for renewable energy projects were also specifically noted as being necessary at the time.

A new signage ordinance was adopted in 2014 through Ordinance O-6-14.

2. Assumption: As Smart Growth policies evolve Franklin Township will amend the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance as appropriate.

Goal 2: To promote orderly growth within Franklin Township.

- a. Objective: Develop in accordance with a comprehensive plan that has been coordinated with the various government agencies and that will preserve the Township quality of life and provide enhanced economic and environmental benefits to all residents and future generations.
- b. Objective: Promote and encourage new development and redevelopment that complements and enhances community character and that can be successfully integrated within existing village areas or in new hamlets to be identified.
- c. Objective: Greenways, open space areas, recreation areas, conservation areas, and the linkages between them should be identified on affected site

plan and subdivision applications, enabling the municipality to arrange for preservation of the reserved area as appropriate.

- d. Objective: Use environmental constraints, street patterns, and utility policies to enhance the design and layout in new development, redevelopment, and infill development.

These goals were amended in 2013. It does not appear that any ordinance revisions have been implemented to advance these goals since that time.

- 3. Assumption: Franklin Township will continue to be an attractive place to live.

Goal 3: Maintain a safe and attractive residential environment.

- a. Objective: Provide a variety of housing opportunities and dwelling types for residents at all income levels and provide locations for age restricted and/or senior housing.
- b. Objective: Comply with applicable laws and policies regarding affordable housing.
- c. Objective: Implement the master plan and zoning ordinance standards to guide development so that it enhances the Township and is successfully integrated with the surrounding natural environment and existing pattern of development.
- d. Objective: Provide an appropriate range of public services to meet the needs of current and future residents.

The 2013 report regarded these as valid goals, and made a revision to the language of objective c.

- 4. Assumption: As it develops, Franklin Township will upgrade all modes of transportation required for the efficient movement of people into, about, and through the municipality.

Goal 4: To provide a circulation system that is safe, efficient, environmentally sensitive, and respectful of the community's rural character.

- a. Objective: Work closely with federal, state, and county highway departments to upgrade and improve roadways that run through Franklin Township, but which are under the control of other jurisdictions.
- b. Objective: To ensure that new local streets are constructed to Township Residential Site Improvement Standards as appropriate.
- c. Objective: To provide a road network in Franklin Township that is safe and efficient but which, with the exception of N.J.S.J. Route 55, preserves the rural character of the community.

- d. Objective: To encourage alternative methods of circulation, including pedestrian, bikeways, use of abandoned railways, multi-use trails and to map potential and proposed pedestrian-bikeway routes as part of a circulation plan element of the master plan.

The 2013 report noted these as valid goals, and expanded the language in objective d. No circulation element of the master plan has been prepared since this time.

- 5. Assumption: Franklin Township seeks to diversify and expand its economy.

Goal 5. To provide Franklin Township with a broad-based economic foundation.

- a. Objective: Preserve and protect the Township's agricultural heritage.
- b. Objective: Expand opportunities for commercial and industrial development that complement Franklin's rural character, at defined locations in appropriate zoning districts.
- c. Objective: Encourage a sound fiscal mix of future uses.
- d. Objective: Implement the economic development / redevelopment plan for the area near the Downtown airport.

The 2013 report stated that these remained valid goals, and recommended an expansion of the HC district at Delsea Drive and Woodland Ave. This zoning change recommendation was adopted and has been implemented on the Township zoning map.

- 6. Assumption: Protection of the Township's natural features, open space resources, and historic heritage will remain a high priority.

Goal 6: To enhance and protect the Township's natural and cultural resources.

- a. Objective: Continue to implement environmental policies and regulations.
- b. Objective: Implement the Township's Open Space Plan.
- c. Objective: Explore new opportunities to protect historic resources.

The 2013 report states these remain valid goals and objectives, and made a minor revision to the language of objective a.

- 7. Assumption: Franklin Township will continue to work with the County and State to implement and enforce regulations to protect groundwater resources and improve water quality.

Goal 7: To preserve public health through groundwater quality protection.

- a. Objective: Develop a comprehensive wastewater treatment plan that will enable Township growth in appropriate areas of the Township, without compromising groundwater quality.

The 2013 report amended the language of the assumption and the objectives, and notes that this groundwater quality is an ongoing concern.

- 8. Assumption: In order to ensure that Franklin Township maintains its rural character and heritage, land use policies must be fully integrated with and complement other efforts, including economic development, open space preservation, and farmland preservation.

Goal 8: To strengthen the Township's agricultural heritage.

- a. Objective: Develop a comprehensive economic development plan that attracts and retains those businesses that compliment or enhance agriculture.
- b. Objective: Develop land use regulations that encourage the retention of the Township's rural character.
- c. Objective: Accelerate the preservation of important agricultural land in order to secure the maximum land base possible to maintain and enhance a viable agricultural industry.
- d. Objective: Use the Farmland Preservation Program as a strategic tool to support the agricultural industry while meeting the Township's planning goals.
- e. Objective: Create additional incentives and tools that will provide greater incentive for attracting landowners to participate in the Farmland Preservation Program.
- f. Objective: Utilize innovative conservation planning techniques to help accommodate growth in an equitable manner that preserves and supports agriculture.
- g. Objective: Create an environment that is supportive of agriculture to maintain the profitability of the industry.

The 2013 report considers these all to remain valid goals and objectives, but noted the development pressures on green fields due to changes in state laws to encourage renewable energy production. It also recognized the Meredith Farms redevelopment as a potential economic development opportunity to support the agricultural industry.

The 2013 Reexamination Report then recommended that the following additional assumptions, goals, and objectives be incorporated into the Master Plan:

Assumptions, Goals, and Objectives (2013 Reexamination Report):

1. Assumption: The State will adopt the new final draft State Strategic Plan (New Jersey State Development & Redevelopment Plan) within the next 1-2 years. It is also assumed the process that will replace the plan endorsement process will be more user friendly for municipalities to participate within.

The draft State Strategic Plan was never adopted. The 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan and its associated policy map remain the adopted state plan. This assumption is no longer valid. However, a new draft of the State Plan is currently being prepared by the State Office of Planning Advocacy.

2. Assumption: The Township, County, and State will work together to properly designate growth and priority investment and preservation areas in Franklin Township.

This assumption remains valid.

3. Assumption: The preservation of agricultural land and continuation of farming activities remain a critical component to the future of the Township. The Township's Rural and Agricultural character must continue to be protected.

This assumption remains valid.

4. Alternative methods to conventional farmland and open space preservation techniques will be continually evaluated and considered by the Township.

This assumption remains valid.

5. The agricultural lands of the Township provide both direct and indirect benefits that contribute to the health and welfare of all New Jersey citizens.

This assumption remains valid.

6. To encourage the more efficient use of land by promoting the co-location of renewable energy facilities on existing and new buildings.

This remains a valid objective.

7. The Township assumes the pressure to develop standalone renewable energy power plants could be reduced if more homes and businesses incorporated accessory renewable energy systems into their design.

This assumption remains valid.

8. Energy conservation and education are critical components to a cleaner environment that benefits the health and welfare of the community.

This assumption remains valid.

9. The Township recognizes energy produced from solar and wind facilities is not farming; it is an evolving technology for commercial energy production. Solar facilities (and

other types of power generation facilities) have the potential to substantially negatively impact contiguous agricultural areas that are essential to the Local, Regional and State economies. Standalone remotely monitored solar and wind facilities contribute few employment opportunities to local residents and are not conducive to our rural & agricultural character.

This assumption remains valid. However, the Township recognizes that such renewable energy facilities are considered inherently beneficial uses and are otherwise encouraged by State policy.

10. It is assumed advances in energy producing technologies (paint, solar film, etc.) and distribution could reduce the need for standalone solar facilities. Solar and Wind production facilities provide intermittent energy connections due to their reliance on sun and wind. Power/energy production from central plants is anticipated to remain the primary source of energy production.

This remains a valid assumption.

11. To promote the utilization of renewable energy resources through education and the development of a Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Master Plan Element.

No Green Buildings or Sustainability Master Plan element have been prepared.

12. To evaluate accessory, conditional, permitted and new uses for each district and allow uses consistent with the economic, environmental, and preservation goals and objectives of the Township Master Plan.

This remains a valid and ongoing goal.

13. A new zone Public, Park, Education (PPE) district could be added to the Township municipal planning scheme thereby clearly linking land use and zoning on a map that is used on a daily basis.

No such zone has been created.

14. The Township should consider updating the Open Space & Recreation Plan Element as part of a comprehensive update to the Master Plan. The updated Open Space and Recreation Plan could include a circulation plan component that identifies trails and bikeways. During the preparation of this report the Board identified a potential new walkway along a section of Franklinville Lake (MacArthur Ave. from Coles Mill Rd.) that could be connected to the Franklinville Village area and Delsea Drive corridor.

The OSRP has not been updated.

15. To update the development regulations for the Township's various zoning districts to incorporate standards for permitted renewable energy facilities.

The Township adopted several ordinances providing regulations for solar energy facilities.

16. All new electrical transmission lines associated with the installation of a solar or wind energy system should be located underground, unless the local utility can accommodate them on existing utility pole lines.

This remains a valid goal to project the character of the community.

17. The design of solar or wind energy systems should, to the maximum extent practicable, use materials, colors, textures, shades, screening and landscaping that will blend into the natural setting and existing environment. Potential negative offsite impacts including but not limited to aesthetics, glare, noise and other nuisances must be controlled.

The Township has adopted several ordinances providing regulations for solar energy facilities.

18. Additional development regulations, standards and requirements for accessory renewable energy systems could be prepared and adopted to provide additional clarification regarding system location and design.

The Township has adopted several ordinances providing regulations for solar energy facilities.

19. The standards and requirements for accessory structures (Pole Barns, garden sheds etc.) should be evaluated and revised as necessary relative to each district as part of the ordinance update process. For example, accessory use and structure sizes vary depending on the size and need of the lot they are intended to be subordinate.

This remains an ongoing goal.

20. The Definitions contained in the Land Development Ordinance should be reviewed and updated where necessary. Additions and amendments to clarify terms involving lot coverage, impervious coverage, parking dimensions and renewable energy system are examples of where updates may be necessary.

Renewable energy systems have been defined by the recently adopted ordinances.

21. The Highway Commercial (HC) zoning district along Delsea Drive should be extended to include Block 2201 Lots 22-33 & 72; Block 2302, Lot 29; and up to the first 365' of land fronting Delsea Drive for a section of Block 2302 Lot 30. Ordinance §253-88 Boundary tolerance would not apply to the proposed new zone boundary line.

The zoning map has been amended by Ordinance O-14-13 to incorporate this recommended change.

22. Block 6805, Lot 19 which is presently zoned R-A (Residential-Agriculture) and part of the tract included within the Meredith Farms Redevelopment Area should be rezoned LM (Light Manufacturing).

The zoning map has been amended by Ordinance O-14-13 to incorporate this recommended change.

23. Zoning Ordinance Article XII Buffers should be updated and amended where necessary to refine design standards and objectives. The Agricultural Buffer ordinance should also be updated to clarify what is permitted within buffer limits.

This section of the Code has not been amended since the 2007 ordinance amendments.

24. The ordinance sign standards should be further evaluated to ensure the master plan goals and objectives can be achieved with the existing standards. The zoning ordinance sign standards should be updated as necessary.

The signage code, Article XXXIV Signs, of the zoning ordinance, was last amended in 2014 by Ordinance O-6-14.

25. Article XXXV Conditional Uses'. "To preserve the quality of life in Franklin Township" the zoning ordinance should be updated immediately to provide conditions for conditional uses listed within the ordinance. Additionally, the existing conditions should be evaluated and considered for amendment where necessary to further achieve the goals and objectives of the master plan.

Conditional use requirements in this section were last updated in 2006.

CHANGES IN POLICIES AND ASSUMPTIONS

The third provision of 40:55D-89 of the MLUL requires that a Re-Examination Report address:

"The extent to which there have 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 state, county and municipal policies and objectives."

This Section provides a review of all new policies, guidelines, and legislation adopted by State agencies that may impact land use policy in the Township.

CHANGES IN STATE POLICY

Since the adoption of the 2011 Master Plan Reexamination for Franklin Township, the State has adopted several bills that impact the Municipal Land Use Law, how various meetings are conducted and how municipalities are meant to approach supplying affordable housing. The following sections detail these policies and regulations.

Non-contiguous Cluster Development:

On August 7, 2013 Governor Christie signed into law Assembly Bill Number 3761 titled "An Act concerning municipal land use approval, amending and supplementing P.L. 1975, c.291." This new law permits communities to offer alternatives to traditional development, through the use of equitable and effective planning tools including clustering, transferring development rights, and lot-size averaging in order to concentrate development in areas where growth can best be accommodated and maximized, while preserving agricultural lands, open space, and historic sites. The new law defines contiguous and non-contiguous clustering and, via non-contiguous clustering, allows development on one tract and preservation of another tract elsewhere in the community.

Local Redevelopment and Housing Law Changes:

On September 6, 2013 Governor Christie signed into law Assembly Bill Number 3615 titled "An Act concerning procedures and powers under the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law and amending P.L. 1992, c.79." This new law amended Criterion E regarding productivity and adding language to the criterion. The law also requires the resolution authorizing the Planning Board to undertake the preliminary investigation to state whether the redevelopment area determination authorizes the use of eminent domain or not. This created a non-condemnation redevelopment and a condemnation redevelopment area and outlined certain noticing requirements.

On August 9, 2019, Governor Murphy signed into law Assembly Bill 1700 titled "Expands Eligibility Criteria for Designating Certain Areas as Being in Need of Redevelopment

amending Section 5 of P.L.1992, c.7". This bill was to amend and expand criterion "B" for an Area in Need of Redevelopment. The amendment expanded the criteria within letter b by including a statement that it may apply to a single building or buildings, included retail buildings, office parks, and shopping malls expressly as commercial facilities, and states that such may meet this criterion if it has experienced significant vacancies for at least two consecutive years. This amendment is important because it establishes a new threshold for redevelopment qualification – a commercial building that has been "significantly vacant" for at least two consecutive years

Affordable Housing Third Round Regulations:

On March 10, 2015, the Supreme Court ruled that the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (hereinafter "COAH") failed to act and as a result, the Courts would be assuming jurisdiction over the Fair Housing Act. The Order divided municipalities into one of three categories – those that achieved Third Round Substantive Certification, those that filed or petitioned COAH and those that had never participated in the COAH process.

The transitional process created by the Supreme Court tracked the Fair Housing Act procedures for compliance. In this regard, the process permitted municipalities to file a Declaratory Judgment Action during a thirty- day window between June 8 and July 8, 2015 that sought an adjudication as to their fair share. This enabled a municipality to comply voluntarily with its constitutional obligation to provide a realistic opportunity for the construction of affordable housing.

On January 18, 2017, the Supreme Court ruled that municipalities are responsible for obligations purportedly accruing during the so-called "gap period," the period of time between 1999 and 2015. However, the Court stated that the gap obligation should be calculated as a never-before calculated component of Present Need (also referred to as Rehabilitation Obligation), which would serve to capture Gap Period households that were presently in need of affordable housing as of the date of the Present Need calculation (i.e. that were still income eligible, were not captured as part of traditional present need, were still living in New Jersey and otherwise represented a Present affordable housing need).

In July 2021 the Township was granted an Order approving a settlement Agreement with the Fair Share Housing Center. The Township's Planning Board has recently adopted a new Third Round Housing Plan Element and Fair Share Plan implementing the terms of the Settlement Agreement.

Affordable Housing Fourth Round Regulations

On March 20th of 2024, a bill was signed (Bill A-4/S-50) that adopted new "fourth round" affordable housing regulations. These regulations outline the procedures for establishing municipal fair share obligations for low and moderate income housing, and the mechanisms available to satisfy those obligations. The bill also laid out a process and timeline for compliance with the Fair Housing Act for the Fourth Round period between July 2025 and June of 2035.

Affordable Housing Foreclosure Revisions:

On June 24, 2019 Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill Number 362 entitled “An Act concerning affordability controls on affordable housing and amending P.L.1995, c.244.” This law provides that deed restrictions on affordable housing units are not extinguished by foreclosure proceedings

Affordable Housing Marketing:

On July 1, 2020 Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill Number 2527 titled “An Act concerning the online marketing of affordable housing units and supplementing P.L. 1985, c.111.” This law requires developers, owners, property managers, and/or administrative agents to post notices of available affordable housing on the Housing Resource Center website at least 60 days prior to conducting a lottery.

Long-Term Tax Exemptions:

On January 13, 2020, Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill Number 538 titled “An Act concerning long-term tax exemptions on certain low-income housing, amending P.L.1983, c.530, and supplementing P.L.1991, c.431 (C.40A:20-1 et seq.)” This law allows long-term tax exemption extensions for certain low-income housing. Previously, a property tax exemption could be granted to an affordable housing project for a maximum of 35 years, or until a loan provided by the new Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency was fully paid. This legislation permits a municipal governing body to continue a tax exemption for a State or federally subsidized housing project beyond the date of the payoff of the existing first mortgage as long as the project remains subject to certain affordability controls.

Statement of Strategy:

On January 8, 2018 Governor Murphy signed into law Assembly Bill Number 4540 titled “An Act concerning smart growth, storm resiliency, and environmental sustainability and amending P.L.1975, c.291.” This new law requires any land use element adopted after the effective date to include a climate change-related hazard vulnerability assessment. The content of these vulnerability assessments shall include the following provisions:

- Consider environmental effects and extreme weather-related events associated with climate change, including, but not limited to, temperature, drought, and sea-level rise. Additionally, contain measures to mitigate reasonably anticipated natural hazards, including, but not limited to, coastal storms, shoreline erosion, flooding, storm surge, and wind, following best management practices recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency;
- Analyze current and future threats to the municipality associated with climate change-related natural hazards;
- Include a build-out analysis of future residential, commercial, industrial, and other development in the municipality, and an assessment of the threats and vulnerabilities associated with a build-out;

- Identify critical facilities, utilities, roadways, and other infrastructure that is necessary for evacuation purposes and for sustaining quality of life during a natural disaster, to be maintained at all times in an operational state;
- Analyze the potential impact of natural hazards on relevant components and elements of the master plan;
- Provide strategies and design standards that may be implemented to reduce or avoid risks associated with natural hazards;
- Include a specific policy statement on the consistency, coordination, and integration of the climate-change related hazard vulnerability assessment with any existing or proposed natural hazard mitigation plan, floodplain management plan, comprehensive emergency management plan, emergency response plan, post-disaster recovery plan, or capital improvement plan; and
- Rely on the most recent natural hazard projections and best available science provided by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

New Jersey Land Bank Law:

On July 11, 2019, Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill Number 1214. Bill 1214 is known as the New Jersey Land Bank Law, which will allow New Jersey towns and cities to designate a land bank entity to obtain vacant, abandoned, and neglected properties for productive reuse purposes. This law provides municipalities with a tool to revitalize and reuse properties for public benefit. The law provides for accountability to local communities through the requirement for community advisory boards with mandatory access to certain information and opportunities for the board to comment on the land bank entity's decisions. Land bank entities will further be required to develop and maintain an online, publicly accessible database of current and former land bank properties. The community advisory board must issue an annual report on the accuracy, integrity, accessibility, and comprehensiveness of the land bank entity's online database.

Innovation District Designation Program:

On August 8, 2019 Governor Murphy signed into law Assembly Bill Number 5111, creating the Innovation District Designation Program. The program, established within the New Jersey Commission on Science, Innovation, and Technology, encourages development of innovation districts within New Jersey. Innovation districts promote the development or redevelopment of an area in a manner that facilitates collaboration between government, higher education institutions, and private enterprises, and are a strategic way to promote development in science and technology throughout the State. Municipalities may apply individually or jointly for designation of an area as an innovation district.

Temporary Supplemental Zoning Board:

On August 9, 2019 Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill Number 3212 titled "An Act concerning municipal zoning boards of adjustment, supplementing P.L.1975, C.291,

and amending P.L.2005, c. 133 and P.L.1991, c.256.” The law allows a municipality to establish a temporary, supplemental zoning board to address any backlog of applications. A municipality that determines a need for a supplemental zoning board must adopt an ordinance to establish one.

Virtual Public Meetings:

On March 20, 2020 Governor Murphy signed into law Assembly Bill Number 3850 titled “An Act concerning the conduct of public meetings during periods of emergency and supplementing P.L. 1975, c.231.” This law allows public meetings, including zoning and planning board meetings, to be conducted electronically during a public health emergency.

Adult-Use Recreational Cannabis:

On February 22, 2021 Governor Murphy signed into law Assembly Bill Number 21 titled “An Act concerning the regulation and use of cannabis, and amending and supplementing various parts of the statutory law.” The law legalizes recreational personal use of cannabis for adults and provides municipalities with 180 days from the date the law was signed to prohibit or establish zoning provisions regulating the six classes of cannabis – cultivation, manufacturing, wholesaling, distribution, retail, and delivery. Municipalities that do not act within the 180-day period will be “locked in” for a five-year period to standards established by the law.

Franklin Township decided to permit Classes I-IV (cultivation, manufacturing, wholesaling, and distribution) within the Township, but prohibits Class 5 retail and Class 6 delivery businesses from within the Township. This was codified in Ordinance O-6-21.

Certain Housing Exempt from Zoning Regulations:

On June 30, 2021 Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill 1676 titled “An Act concerning hospitals and supplementing P.L.1971, c.136 (C.26:2H-1 et seq.).” The law allows hospitals to construct housing for individuals who are homeless or housing insecure and deems such housing as a permitted use in all residential and non-residential districts of a municipality and exempt the use from local zoning restrictions.

Electric Vehicle Charging “Make-Ready” Parking Space Requirements:

On July 9, 2021 Governor Murphy signed into law Senate Bill 3223 titled “An Act concerning electric vehicles supply equipment and make-ready parking spaces and amending and supplementing P.L.1975, c.291 (C.40:55D-1 et seq.).” This law amends the MLUL’s definition of inherently beneficial to include electric vehicle charging infrastructure. It also amends the law to permit electric vehicle supply equipment as a permitted accessory use and structure in all zoning districts within a municipality and precludes variances. The law states that an application for the installation of electric vehicle supply equipment at an existing gas station, retail establishment, or any other existing building shall not be subject to site plan or other land use board review provided it does not violate any bulk requirements. Moreover, all applications involving five or more multi-family units must provide 15% of the parking spaces as “make-ready” spaces and

install electric vehicle supply equipment in at least one-third of the 15% of “make-ready” spaces. There are also requirements for parking lots containing certain numbers of spaces to provide “make-ready” and/or actual charging equipment. The act took effect immediately and any development applications filed after July 9, 2021 will be subject to these requirements.

Through Ordinance O-10-22, the Township incorporated these requirements into the Township code.

Warehouse Guidance

The State Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) in September of 2022 adopted a policy paper entitled “Distribution Warehousing and Goods Movement Guidelines” that is a non-regulatory document intended to provide guidance to individual municipalities in shaping new zoning regulations for warehouses and distribution facilities.

The guidance provided by the state suggests that warehouses are a necessary component of the modern economy, but that the size of the buildings and the resulting heavy truck traffic can have negative impacts on communities. The state recommends that warehouses be located in close proximity to highways to limit the impacts of truck traffic through residential neighborhoods, and also that warehouses be sited so that they are not in close proximity to homes or schools.

CHANGES IN TOWNSHIP POLICY AND REGULATIONS

Establishment of Agricultural Advisory Committee

Ordinance O-6-13 created an agricultural advisory committee in the Township with the purpose of preserving the farming heritage of the Township and to provide guidance to the Township Committee, Planning Board, and other governmental bodies as necessary.

Establishment of Economic Development Commission

The Township established an economic development advisory commission through Ordinance O-5-2017, which created the 7-member group tasked with identifying vacant land in the Township for the purpose of determining its utility for business or industrial development. The commission also has an express goal of promoting business and industries in the Township.

Resource Extraction Prohibition

Ordinance O-9-16 of the Township Committee prohibited any new resource extraction (mining) operations from being developed in the Township, but provided some exceptions to allow for the expansion and continued operation of existing mining operations.

Stormwater Management Ordinance & Pinelands Stormwater Ordinance

Ordinance O-1-19, adopted in 2019, and Ordinance O-5-23 adopted in 2023 provided a new stormwater management ordinance for the Pinelands area of the Township, adopted in order to be compliant with new Pinelands requirements for stormwater controls.

Ordinance O-1-21, adopted February 23, 2021 provided a new stormwater management for the lands of the Township outside of the Pinelands Commissions jurisdiction. These regulations match the NJDEP's model ordinance for managing stormwater closer to the source of runoff, and requiring green infrastructure best practices rather than traditional detention and retention basins to address stormwater impacts.

Solar Ordinance(s) O-12-22, O-13-22, and O-18-22

The Township adopted several ordinances in 2022 with the intent of providing definitions and standards for accessory solar energy systems and commercial solar energy systems. The primary intent of the ordinances are to permit solar energy systems as both accessory structures throughout the Township, and principal uses on larger lots or tracts within the Interchange Commercial district, while limiting the visual impact of these uses on the character of the community by requiring substantial buffering and screening.

Floodplain Management Ordinance

Ordinance O-9-23, adopted new management regulations for all regulated activities that occur within a designated flood hazard area as per mapping by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These regulations are required for any community participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Tree Removal and Replacement Ordinance

Ordinance O-11-23 provided new standards and requirements for removal of trees, in particular street trees. Any proposal removal of a street tree of greater than 2.5 inches in caliper requires a permit, as well as replacement of the tree at a ratio commensurate with the size of the tree to be removed. Larger trees require additional replacement trees.

Farmland Preservation Plan

In 2022, the Planning Board adopted a new Farmland Preservation Plan Update as an element of the master plan. The plan provides an overview of the agricultural industry in both Franklin and Gloucester County, and identifies all existing farmlands, while determining strategies and priorities for future preservation of farmlands in the Township.

Master Plan Housing Element adopted in 2023

A new Housing Plan Element and Fair Share Plan was adopted by the Planning Board in the summer of 2023. After the dissolution of COAH and the return of certifying affordable housing planning and obligations to the courts, the Housing Plan is the result of a negotiated settlement between Fair Share Housing Center, a non-profit housing

advocacy group, and the Township. The settlement agreement was approved by the Courts to satisfy the Townships obligations under the Fair Housing Act for the Third Round (1999-2025) of affordable housing obligations.

The Housing Plan recommended the creation of affordable housing overlay districts in those areas of the Township that are most suitable for housing development, notably those areas that coincide with the “smart growth” areas of the Township identified in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

Tree Removal & Replacement

Ordinance # 0-6-24, adopted July 9, 2024 as required by NJDEP for every municipality in the state, established new standards for obtaining tree removal permits, and replacement requirements for the removal of certain trees. The ordinance regulates the removal of trees based on their size, location, and type of tree.

CHANGES TO TOWNSHIP DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Population Analysis

The 2020 Decennial Census from the US Census Bureau indicates that Franklin Township has a population of 16,380 persons. This represents a slight decrease in the total population of the Township when compared to the 2010 US Decennial Census counts (16,820). This decade-to-decade decrease is also the only time in the past 70 years when the population of Franklin *declined* between US Census counting.

Prior to 2020, Franklin Township's population had been consistently growing since 1950. The decade that saw the largest rate of growth was the 1950s, where population increased by nearly 50% from 1950 to 1960. The largest decade of growth in terms of population increase, was the 1970's, where the Township's population grew by nearly 3,500 people. The population has continued to grow fairly consistently, showing an average increase of 1,961 persons between census counts. Population by decade and the Township's 2045 projection from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Franklin Township Population Characteristics 1950-2045 (Projected)			
Year	Population	Population Change	Percentage Change
1950	5,056	-	-
1960	7,451	2,395	47.4%
1970	8,990	1,539	20.7%
1980	12,396	3,406	37.9%
1990	14,482	2,086	16.8%
2000	15,466	984	6.8%

Table 1: Franklin Township Population Characteristics 1950-2045 (Projected)			
Year	Population	Population Change	Percentage Change
2010	16,820	1,354	8.8%
2020	16,380	-440	-2.6%
2045 (proj.)	22,110	5,730	35.0%

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), U.S. Decennial Census

According to the projections conducted by DVRPC, the Township is expected to have a population of 22,110 by 2045, which would be an increase of 5,370 persons from the current population as counted by the 2020 Census. This would represent an increase in the population by approximately 229 persons each year for the next 25 years, which should be considered in the Township's housing policies going forward.

However, as these DVRPC projections appear high, and the population increases that were projected from 2015 to 2020 did not materialize, we will also use an alternative method to project the Township's population. Basing population growth on housing trends in the past decade, using building permit data from NJDCA it shows that on average there were a net of 7 building permits issued for new residential construction per year between 2011 and 2021. This would equal 70 new housing units over the next 10 years, or 154 new homes by 2045, which is a substantially lower figure than the DVRPC projections. Using the current average owner-occupied household size of 2.87 persons per household, this would mean a total population increase of 442 persons rather than 5,370 if current trends hold.

Demographics

The population of Franklin Township, as counted by the 2020 Decennial Census, was 16,380 persons. This comes from the Decennial Census Count of the US Census Bureau which are physical counts of responses to the census survey. For much of the rest of this Housing Plan, figures and estimates have been taken from the running 5-year estimates from the American Community Survey (ACS) from the US Census Bureau. The ACS includes much more detailed information than the Decennial Census, however as it provides only estimates and extrapolations based on smaller data samples, the figures may differ from the Decennial Census counts. This includes an estimation of the total population, where the ACS estimates from 2020 indicate a population in the Township of 16,415 persons, which is a slight overestimate according to the actual counts taken that year.

Age/Sex

The Township's population of 16,415 persons according to ACS estimates is 49.4% male and 50.6% female. Throughout New Jersey and the rest of the United States, there is typically a slight imbalance in male-female population resulting in a higher female population. This is the case in Franklin as well, though the discrepancy is somewhat less in Franklin when compared to the County (48.6% male & 51.4% female) and the State (48.9% male & 51.1% female).

In terms of age distribution, the largest age group within Franklin Township is the population between the ages of 45 to 54 years of age. Residents within this age group represented nearly 15% of the population in the Township. In Gloucester County as a whole, an estimated 14.4% of County Residents fall within this age group, indicating that this age group's population being larger in Franklin is consistent for general age distribution of the area.

Table 2: Age and Sex of Population						
Label	2010		2020		Change	
SEX AND AGE	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total population	16,744	100.0%	16,415	100.0%	-329	-2.0%
Male	8,167	48.8%	8,110	49.4%	-57	-0.7%
Female	8,577	51.2%	8,305	50.6%	-272	-3.2%
Under 5 years	677	4.0%	803	4.9%	126	18.6%
5 to 9 years	1,128	6.7%	1,051	6.4%	-77	-6.8%
10 to 14 years	1,276	7.6%	1,025	6.2%	-251	-19.7%
15 to 19 years	1,251	7.5%	841	5.1%	-410	-32.8%
20 to 24 years	1,016	6.1%	905	5.5%	-111	-10.9%
25 to 34 years	1,650	9.9%	2,250	13.7%	600	36.4%
35 to 44 years	2,733	16.3%	2,144	13.1%	-589	-21.6%
45 to 54 years	3,156	18.8%	2,392	14.6%	-764	-24.2%
55 to 59 years	1,200	7.2%	1,545	9.4%	345	28.8%
60 to 64 years	843	5.0%	1,054	6.4%	211	25.0%
65 to 74 years	1,024	6.1%	1,584	9.6%	560	54.7%
75 to 84 years	504	3.0%	686	4.2%	182	36.1%
85 years and over	285	1.7%	135	0.8%	-150	-52.6%
Median age (years)	40.3	(X)	39.8	(X)	-0.5	-1.2%
Under 18 years	3,973	23.7%	3,432	20.9%	-541	-13.6%
18 years and over	12,771	76.3%	12,983	79.1%	212	1.7%
65 years and over	1,814	10.8%	2,405	14.7%	591	32.6%

Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS 5-year estimates

In addition to the slower pace of growth of the population in the last decade, there has been a small shift in the age of the population in the Township. Compared to 2010, the median age has decreased by 0.5 years, or 1.2%. Furthermore, the population of residents

ages 65 and older increased by nearly 600 persons, indicated by a percent change in this age group of +32.6%.

Race / Ethnicity

In terms of the racial and ethnic makeup of the Township's population, according to Census estimates, the majority of the Township's residents identify as white only. As the charts below indicate, the Township has a population that is nearly 88% white, 9% black, 0% American Indian and Alaska Native, 1.0% Asian, 0% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and 2% 'some other race'. These percentages are taken from those in the Township that identify by only one race. According to Census estimates, 97% of Township residents identify as one race whereas the remaining 3% identify by two or more races.

When compared to Gloucester County as a whole, the percentage of white population within Franklin Township is greater than that of the entire county. In 2020, it was estimated that 80.9% of Gloucester County's population identified as white. The percentage of Franklin Township residents that identify as Asian is less than the entire county, though. While 1% of Franklin residents identify as Asian, 3.1% of Gloucester County residents, more than triple the percentage of Franklin, identify as Asian.

When comparing the racial make-up of the Township currently to the same dataset from 2010, it shows some substantial changes. Although the general break-down within the Township shows similar percentages of each racial classification overall, some specific racial classifications shifted entirely. For example, while it was a smaller percentage in 2010 already, it's estimated that the population of American Indian and Alaska Natives has completely relocated *out* of Franklin in the ten-year time span. Furthermore, the Township saw a significant increase in the percentage of Black or African American residents in this time span. Increasing by over 50% when compared to 2010, the Black or African American population is nearing 10% of the Township, which is more in-line with the County's percentage of African American residents at an estimated 10.4% in 2020.

Table 3: Race						
Label	2010		2020		Change	
	Population	Percent	Population	Percent	Population	Percent
Total population	16,744	100.0%	16,415	100.0%	-329	-2.0%
One race	16,395	97.9%	15,919	97.0%	-476	-2.9%
Two or more races	349	2.1%	496	3.0%	147	42.1%
One Race	16,395	100.0%	15,919	100.0%	-476	-2.9%
White	15,009	91.5%	13,957	87.7%	-1,052	-7.0%
Black or African American	960	5.9%	1,462	9.2%	502	52.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native	18	0.1%	-	0.0%	-18	-100.0%

Table 3: Race						
	2010		2020		Change	
Asian	141	0.9%	157	1.0%	16	11.3%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	-	0.00%	-	0.0%	0	0
Some other race	267	1.6%	343	2.2%	76	28.5%

Source: 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census

Education

Census estimates indicate that the majority of residents in Franklin Township have attained a high school graduate level of education or higher. nearly 89% of those in the Township are estimated to have graduated from high school, with 20% estimated to have achieved a bachelor's degree or higher. These levels of educational attainment have improved since 2010, but have only improve slightly. In 2010, 87.5% of residents were estimated to have a high school diploma or higher, and that percentage has only increased by 1.3% relative to the 2010 and 2020 populations.

The 88.8% of Franklin residents with at minimum a high school diploma is somewhat lower than the percentage of Gloucester County residents at the same level of educational attainment. In 2020, an estimated 93.5% of County residents had attained at least their high school diploma, nearly 5% more than the relative population in Franklin.

Table 4: Educational Attainment						
	2010		2020		Change	
Label	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Population 25 years and over	11,396	(X)	11,790	(X)	394	3.5%
Less than 9th grade	410.26	3.6%	426	3.6%	16	3.8%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	1,014	8.9%	892	7.6%	-122	-12.1%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	4,912	43.1%	4,726	40.1%	-186	-3.8%
Some college, no degree	2,188	19.2%	2,372	20.1%	184	8.4%
Associate's degree	889	7.8%	1,014	8.6%	125	14.1%
Bachelor's degree	1,436	12.6%	1,557	13.2%	121	8.4%
Graduate or professional degree	547	4.8%	803	6.8%	256	46.8%
High school graduate or higher	9,972	87.5%	10,472	88.8%	501	5.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	1,983	17.4%	2,360	20.0%	377	19.0%

Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS 5-year estimates

Compared to 2010, the poverty rate for households as determined by educational attainment has changed significantly. For households in 2010, an educational attainment level of less than high school graduate yielded a poverty rate of 24.3%. In 2020, this number has decreased to 17.8%. Furthermore, the percentage of Franklin residents with at least their high school diploma (or equivalent) in 2020 have yielded a poverty rate of nearly 11%, more than double the percentage of residents with the same level of educational attainment in 2010.

Table 5: Poverty Rate for Whom Poverty Status is Determined by Educational Attainment		
Education Level	Estimate (2010)	Estimate (2020)
Less than high school graduate	24.3%	17.8%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	4.4%	10.9%
Some college or associate's degree	4.9%	5.3%
Bachelor's degree or higher	5.7%	2.8%
<i>Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS 5-year estimates</i>		

Examining the change in median earnings as they relate to educational attainment level, the ACS Estimates provide mixed results. Of the five (5) educational attainment categories, three (3) of them saw increases in annual median earnings when comparing 2020 to 2010 estimates. The most significant estimated increase was among those with less than a high school diploma. This educational attainment level saw an increase in median earnings of over \$20,000 annually. Conversely, those with either their associate's degree or graduate degree were estimated to have had a decrease in median annual income, with both median incomes decreasing by about \$9,000 annually.

Table 6: Median Earnings in the Past 12 Months by Educational Attainment		
Median Earnings	2010 Estimate	2020 Estimate
Population 25 years and over with earnings	\$43,133	\$44,825
Less than high school graduate	\$23,162	\$43,553
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	\$39,079	\$41,542
Some college or associate's degree	\$46,511	\$37,396
Bachelor's degree	\$54,837	\$58,523
Graduate or professional degree	\$77,679	\$69,803
<i>Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS 5-year estimates</i>		

Dwelling Units

2020 Census estimates indicate that there is a total of 6,080 housing units within Franklin Township. Of those housing units, 5,834 or 95.95% are occupied, leaving the remaining 246 or 4.05% of housing units in the Township vacant.

Tenure and Occupancy

The 2020 ACS estimates show that the number of housing units in the Township has increased by only 92 homes since 2010. Of the estimated occupied housing units, over 87% were owner-occupied, with the remaining 13% being renter occupied. When compared to the entirety of Gloucester County, Franklin has a slightly higher rate of owner-occupancy, where the County has an owner-occupancy rate of 80.4%. The estimated percentage of vacant units in Franklin Township versus all of Gloucester County shows that Franklin Township is fairly consistent with the occupancy characteristics of the entire County. In 2020, it was estimated that 93.4% of the housing units in Gloucester County were considered occupied, only about 2.5% less occupied proportionally than Franklin.

In 2010, the average household size of an owner-occupied housing unit in Franklin was 0.16 persons greater than a renter occupied unit. That gap is estimated to have shrunk slightly in 2020, with the average owner-occupied home having 2.87 persons and a renter-occupied home having 2.36 persons per household. It is also of note that the average owner-occupied household size has not changed since 2010 as that estimate is still 2.87 persons per household.

Table 7: Housing Tenure and Occupancy						
	2010		2020		Change	
Label	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total housing units	5,988	100%	6,080	100%	92	1.54%
Occupied housing units	5,817	97.14%	5,834	95.95%	17	0.29%
Owner-occupied	5,130	88.19%	5,078	87.04%	-52	-1.01%
Renter-occupied	687	11.81%	756	12.96%	69	10.04%
Vacant housing units	171	2.86%	246	4.05%	75	43.86%
Homeowner vacancy rate	4.0	(X)	0.1	(X)	-3.9	-97.50%
Rental vacancy rate	6.5	(X)	3.4	(X)	-3.1	-47.69%
Average household size of owner-occupied unit	2.87	(X)	2.87	(X)	0.00	0.00%
Average household size of renter-occupied unit	2.71	(X)	2.36	(X)	-0.35	-12.92%

Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS 5-year estimates

Age of Housing

Historically, Franklin saw the most growth and construction within the Township take place during the 1970s. During this time, over 22% of the current housing stock in the Township was built. When compared to Gloucester County, it is clear that this decade was an elevated period of growth in general as the 15% of the County's current housing stock was also built during this decade. Also of note, Franklin has only seen an approximate 48 new housing units built after the year 2014, or 0.8% of the Township housing stock. While

this 6-year period has generally not seen a substantial amount of growth both at the County and State levels, both the County and State saw a minimum of 2% of their housing stock built from that time. Thus, a clear slowdown of residential development has taken place in Franklin in the recent years.

Table 8: Housing Type – Age of Structure (2020)				
Label	Franklin Township		Gloucester County	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Total housing units	6,080	100.0%	113,945	100.0%
Built 2014 or later	48	0.8%	3,031	2.7%
Built 2010 to 2013	171	2.8%	2,827	2.5%
Built 2000 to 2009	764	12.6%	16,466	14.5%
Built 1990 to 1999	659	10.8%	16,018	14.1%
Built 1980 to 1989	1,077	17.7%	15,683	13.8%
Built 1970 to 1979	1,362	22.4%	17,307	15.2%
Built 1960 to 1969	576	9.5%	12,130	10.6%
Built 1950 to 1959	709	11.7%	12,502	11.0%
Built 1940 to 1949	381	6.3%	5,386	4.7%
Built 1939 or earlier	333	5.5%	12,595	11.1%

Source: 2020 ACS 5-year estimates

Home Values and Costs

One of the more important considerations of a housing plan is an analysis of the value of housing in the Township, and its cost. For owner occupied homes, most of the housing units in the Township are valued somewhere between \$150,000 and \$299,000. Approximately 8% of homes are valued at less than \$100,000, while 1.5% of homes are valued over \$500,000. These figures however are estimates from 2020, and home values throughout the state have risen considerably in the past two years. Home values were estimated to have dropped overall from 2010 to 2020, but conceivably the median home value may now be closer to what it was in 2010 than the 2020 estimates.

The value of homes in Franklin Township is somewhat lower when compared with the rest of Gloucester County. The median home value in Gloucester County overall in 2010 was \$236,900, and in 2020 was \$224,300. Compared to Franklin Township, which had median home values of \$234,700 to \$202,800 respectively. It is of note that Franklin Township's median home value decreased by a much larger margin than that of the County, where Franklin saw a decrease of nearly 14% in the median home value whereas the County saw a decrease of 5.32%.

Table 9: Home Values						
	2010		2020		Change	
	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Owner-occupied units	5,130	100.0%	5,078	100.0%	-52	-1.01%
Less than \$50,000	150	2.9%	251	4.9%	101	67.33%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	203	4.0%	144	2.8%	-59	-29.06%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	474	9.2%	642	12.6%	168	35.44%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	1,072	20.9%	1,452	28.6%	380	35.45%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	1,607	31.3%	1,648	32.5%	41	2.55%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	1,315	25.6%	866	17.1%	-449	-34.14%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	252	4.9%	69	1.4%	-183	-72.62%
\$1,000,000 or more	57	1.1%	6	0.1%	-51	-89.47%
Median (Franklin Township)	\$234,700	(X)	\$202,800	(X)	-\$31,900	-13.59%
Median (Gloucester County)	\$236,900	(X)	\$224,300	(X)	-\$12,600	-5.32%

Source: 2010 and 2020 ACS 5-year estimates

Household Income

The median household in Franklin Township earned \$82,465 in 2020. This is over \$3,000 less than the statewide median household income of \$85,245 at the same time. The median income for an owner-occupied housing unit is greater than the state-wide median income, being over \$91,000. The estimated median income for renters in the Township was much lower than the owner-occupied income in Franklin as well as the median renter-occupied income in New Jersey as a whole. The state-wide median income for renter-occupied housing units was \$50,532 in 2020, which is over \$18,000 higher than the Township’s median income for renter-occupied housing units at the same time.

Table 10: Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)						
	Occupied housing units		Owner-occupied housing units		Renter-occupied housing units	
Label	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent	Estimate	Percent
Occupied housing units	5,834	100.00%	5,078	100.00%	756	100.00%
Less than \$5,000	108	1.85%	69	1.36%	39	5.16%
\$5,000 to \$9,999	66	1.13%	57	1.12%	9	1.19%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	148	2.54%	45	0.89%	103	13.62%
\$15,000 to \$19,999	115	1.97%	50	0.98%	65	8.60%
\$20,000 to \$24,999	199	3.41%	154	3.03%	45	5.95%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	510	8.74%	388	7.64%	122	16.14%

Table 10: Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2020 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)						
	Occupied housing units		Owner-occupied housing units		Renter-occupied housing units	
\$35,000 to \$49,999	620	10.63%	564	11.11%	56	7.41%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	953	16.34%	795	15.66%	158	20.90%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	825	14.14%	713	14.04%	112	14.81%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	1,301	22.30%	1,261	24.83%	40	5.29%
\$150,000 or more	989	16.95%	982	19.34%	7	0.93%
Median household income (dollars)	\$82,465	(X)	\$91,462	(X)	\$32,109	(X)
<i>Source: 2020 ACS 5-year estimates</i>						

Compared to data from 2010 estimates, the median household income in the Township is estimated to have increased by the ACS. As shown below, in the years 2010 to 2020 it was estimated that the median annual income of residents in Franklin Township increased by nearly \$8,000.

Table 11: Household Income in the Past 12 Months (2010)	
Label	Estimated Percent
Total Households	5,817
Less than \$10,000	4.1%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	4.0%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	6.0%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	6.8%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	11.7%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	17.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	17.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	18.8%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	8.5%
\$200,000 or more	4.4%
Median income (dollars)	\$74,327
Mean income (dollars)	\$91,234
<i>Source: 2010 ACS 5-year estimates</i>	

RECOMMENDATIONS

The fourth provision of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 of the MLUL states that the Reexamination Report shall include:

“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.”

CONSOLIDATED ASSUMPTIONS, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

1. The current list of assumptions, goals and objectives in the Master Plan should be reviewed and consolidated. Between the initial Master Plan, amendments, and subsequent reexamination reports, the assumptions, goals, and objectives of the Township's master plan have become muddled. The current list in previous master plan reports contains several duplicitous and redundant statements. Consolidating these policy statements would clarify the intent of the Plan.

Consolidated Assumptions, goals, and objectives are listed below:

Assumption #1 - *Franklin Township will experience limited growth and development pressure due to the lack of public water and sewer infrastructure. However, if either such utilities are made available, substantial growth and development may occur.*

Goal #1: Protect the rural character and quality of life in Franklin Township.

Objectives:

- a) Promote the preservation of open space, with a particular emphasis on contiguous open space, through both public and private actions.
- b) Encourage the preservation of farmland consistent with the Township's Farmland Preservation Plan.
- c) Encourage growth and development in clusters rather than sprawling development, and in those areas near existing infrastructure in order to minimize impacts to or loss of open space, farmland, and forested lands.
- d) Promote development that respects the community character and that can be integrated into the existing village areas of the Township.
- e) Seek to protect historic resources and the unique character of the Township's established villages and communities.
- f) Require substantial landscape buffering to minimize visual, noise, or other impacts of non-residential development on residential uses.

- g) Discourage excessive lighting that may lead to light pollution or glare in residential areas.

Assumption #2 – *Policies at the State, County, and regional levels that impact land use will continue to encourage growth and development within limited corridors within Franklin Township, and discourage any growth and development outside of these corridors in areas deemed environmentally sensitive.*

Goal #2: Promote orderly growth and development within Franklin Township consistent with State and regional plans, and consistent with the Township's Master Plan elements.

Objectives:

- a) Coordinate with appropriate State and County agencies to ensure that Franklin Township's policies and land use regulations are consistent with state policies and regulations.
- b) Maintain consistency with the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan and any other policies or regulations as they pertain to lands within the Township that fall under the jurisdiction of the Pinelands Commission.

Assumption #3 – *Franklin Township will continue to be an attractive place to live.*

Goal #3: Maintain a safe and attractive residential environment for current and future residents to enjoy.

Objectives:

- a) Provide for a variety of housing types to meet the needs of households of different income levels, ages, and abilities.
- b) Comply with all applicable laws and policies of the State regarding low and moderate income housing generally referred to as "affordable housing".
- c) Ensure that appropriate public services are available to meet the needs of residents.
- d) Provide adequate opportunities for active and passive recreation to meet the needs of residents of all ages and abilities.
- e) Encourage innovative and creative techniques for managing stormwater runoff, including the promotion of rain gardens. Stormwater basins should be viewed as opportunities for enhancing the aesthetics of a property rather than simply utilitarian.

Assumption #4 – *As development occurs, transportation infrastructure may need to be upgraded to support the efficient movement of people and goods into and through the Township.*

Goal #4: To provide a safe and efficient transportation network to provide access and connectivity to the greater region, while respecting the Township's desire to protect open spaces and limit development to appropriate locations.

Objectives:

- a) Coordinate with the State and County to maintain, improve, and upgrade roadways in the Township that are under a different jurisdiction.
- b) Ensure that any new Township owned or private local streets are built in accordance with the New Jersey Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS).
- c) Encourage alternative modes of transportation where feasible, such as walking, bicycling, or use of public transportation, and provide appropriate infrastructure and linkages to support these modes of travel.

Assumption #5 – *The Township will continue to seek to diversify and expand its economy.*

Goal #5: To provide opportunities for business development, employment, and non-residential growth while respecting the Township's agricultural heritage and desire to maintain a rural character.

Objectives:

- a) Recognize the importance of the agricultural industry to the local and regional economy, and promote policies and actions to support local agricultural production.
- b) Provide for flexibility to allow for innovative techniques or alternative methods in agricultural production as technologies evolve, in order to support the agricultural industry.
- c) Encourage economic development and industrial growth in those areas of the Township that would have minimal impacts on residential communities.
- d) Encourage redevelopment on lands that are no longer economically productive.
- e) Provide support for the growth and retention of businesses and industries currently located in Franklin.

Assumption #6 – *As the Township relies on water provided from wells rather than a public water utility, protection of both surface and groundwater resources will be a high priority.*

Goal #6: To preserve public health and protect the natural environment through the safeguarding of water quality.

Objectives:

- a) Enforce environmental policies and regulations on activities that would contribute to degradation or contamination of groundwater supplies.
- b) Continue to pursue protections, including open space preservation, on lands that contribute to water quality in the Township, such as those within or adjacent to wetlands, on environmentally sensitive lands, areas contiguous to other preserved open spaces, and forested areas with high groundwater recharge levels.

Assumption #7 – *Alternative and renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power will continue to grow as an industry, and there will be pressure to utilize lands in Franklin Township for production of alternative energy.*

Goal #7: Recognize the need for alternative energy sources to meet the growing demand for energy in the region, while encouraging such facilities to minimize their impacts on the rural character of the Township.

Objectives:

- a) Encourage the use of solar energy facilities on existing buildings and paved areas, and as accessory uses to existing facilities in the Township, which may help to reduce the need for stand-alone commercial scale energy facilities.
- b) Ensure that any alternative energy facilities provide adequate buffering to minimize visual impacts on residential areas or scenic corridors.
- c) Require that any new electric transmission lines associated with alternative or renewable energy production facilities are located underground.
- d) Promote energy conservation through education and encouraging more sustainable design and construction practices that use less energy than conventional methods.

PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

2. A new Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) element of the Master Plan should be prepared. If one of the goals of the Township remains preservation of the rural character, an updated OSRP that identifies lands to be preserved as open space or recreation lands would be one of the first steps towards achieving that goal.
3. The Township should prepare a new Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) to identify environmental resources in the Township.
4. A Historic Preservation Plan Element should be prepared. A historic preservation plan can be used to help identify historic resources in need of protection, and strategies to protect them.
5. Franklin should continue to work to implement the recommendations of the recently adopted Farmland Preservation Plan and support the agricultural industry.
6. The Township should strongly encourage developers of major projects to seek conceptual review hearings with the Planning Board and/or Township staff to solicit feedback prior to formal submission of applications. Through the conceptual review process many issues that may impact the community can be identified and potentially addressed before a site plan is fully designed and engineered.
7. The Township should continue to recognize the need and obligation to provide for its fair share of low and moderate income housing, and should strive to comply with the recently adopted Fourth Round regulations and methodology for determining municipal housing obligations, including updating the Township's Housing Element and Fair Share plan once the Township's obligation numbers are determined.

ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

8. The intent and regulations of the RA district could be clarified and simplified. The intent of the district is to require major subdivisions to provide environmental protections such as open space or farmland preservation through clustering of the new residential lots. But the provisions for minor subdivisions or construction of a new home on an existing lot that is undersized are vague, and reference past sections of the code that are not readily available for review.

Recommended standards for development on pre-existing legally established undersized lots:

- No minimum lot area requirement
- Min front yard: 45 feet
- Min side yard: 15 feet each, 35 feet total
- Min rear yard: 40 feet
- Max Lot Cover: 20 percent

Recommended standards for new lots created via minor subdivision:

- Lots and construction associated with minor subdivisions should follow the requirements for a “conventional lot subdivision”, which requires a 1.5 acre minimum lot area.
 - A minimum lot frontage requirement should be established.
 - A maximum lot coverage of 15 percent should be included.
9. With the proliferation of large warehouses being constructed throughout the region, primarily on properties that have access to the state highway network, the Township should consider amendments to the zoning code to address the issues presented by larger warehouse and distribution facilities and to reasonably accommodate development while protecting the rural character of the community. The guidance document on regulating such facilities recently prepared by the NJ Office of Planning Advocacy should be used as a reference in any ordinance updates.

The Township should consider permitting large warehouse and distribution center facilities that are greater than 50,000 square feet in area only as conditional uses within the ‘HC’ Highway Commercial, ‘LM’ Light Manufacturing, and ‘IC’ Interchange Commercial zoning districts. Warehouses or distribution facilities less than 50,000 square feet in area should continue to be treated similarly to other permitted light industrial uses in appropriate districts.

Recommended conditional use standards for large warehouses and distribution facilities (50,000 square feet or greater) are as follows:

- a. The property must be located within 1/2 mile (2,640 feet) of the entrance/exit interchange of a limited access highway.
- b. The property must have direct frontage on a State or County highway. No access from local roads should be permitted.
- c. Principal structures shall be located a minimum of 1,000 feet from any school or residence, as measured from building to building.
- d. The minimum lot area shall be 10 acres
- e. Building setback and buffering requirements should be established, with greater setbacks and enhanced buffering required for larger buildings:

Proposed Warehouse Setbacks and Buffer Requirements			
Building(s) Size (square feet)	Front Yard Setback	Side and Rear Yard Setback	Minimum Landscape Buffer Width
Less than 100,000	150 feet	125 feet	75 feet
100,000 to 500,000	200 feet	150 feet	100 feet
500,000 +	300 feet	200 feet	125 feet

- f. Maximum permitted impervious coverage shall be 40 percent, and maximum permitted building coverage shall be 25 percent.
- g. Maximum permitted building height should be 45 feet.

Additional requirements as bulk standards or design standards should also be established to mitigate the potential impacts of warehouse uses, including the following:

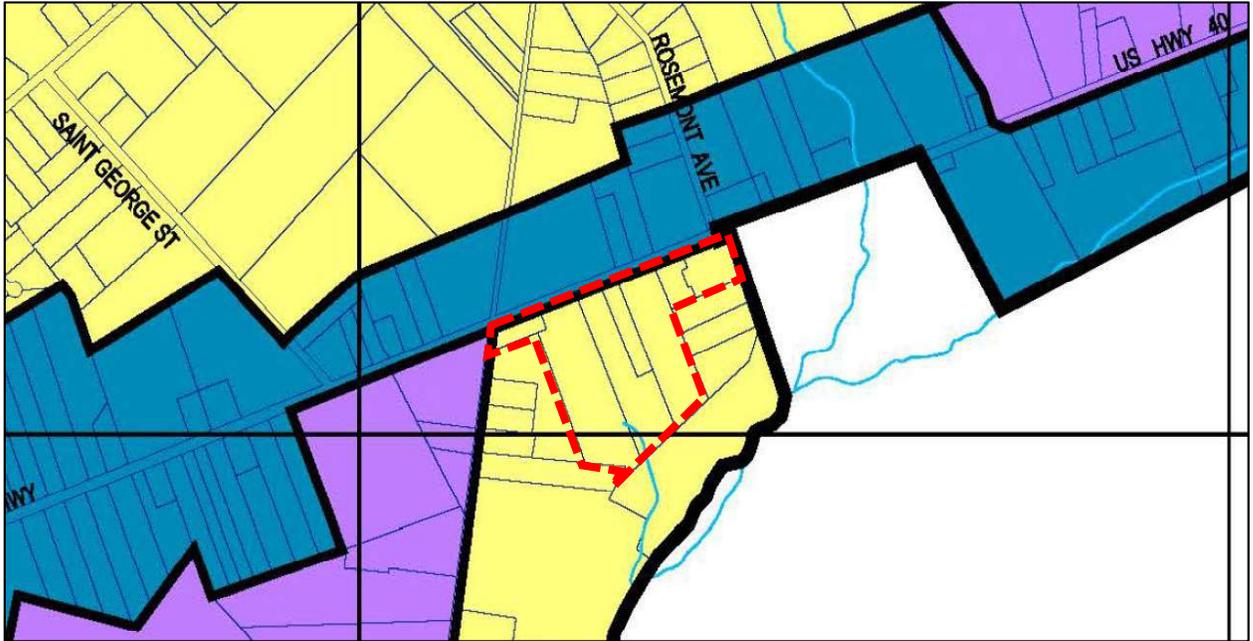
- h. Landscape buffers should be required to incorporate berms of 6-8 feet in height unless existing vegetation provides sufficient visual screening.
- i. Provisions for renewable energy usage should be incorporated into the building and site design.
- j. Entrance driveways should provide sufficient space for queuing of trucks so that they do not block the roadway.
- k. Off-street parking requirements should reflect the different parking demands based on the type of warehouse use proposed. Additional parking should be required for fulfillment center warehouses to accommodate greater numbers

of employees and sprinter vans and other fleet vehicles, whereas typical distribution center warehouses may not have as high a parking demand.

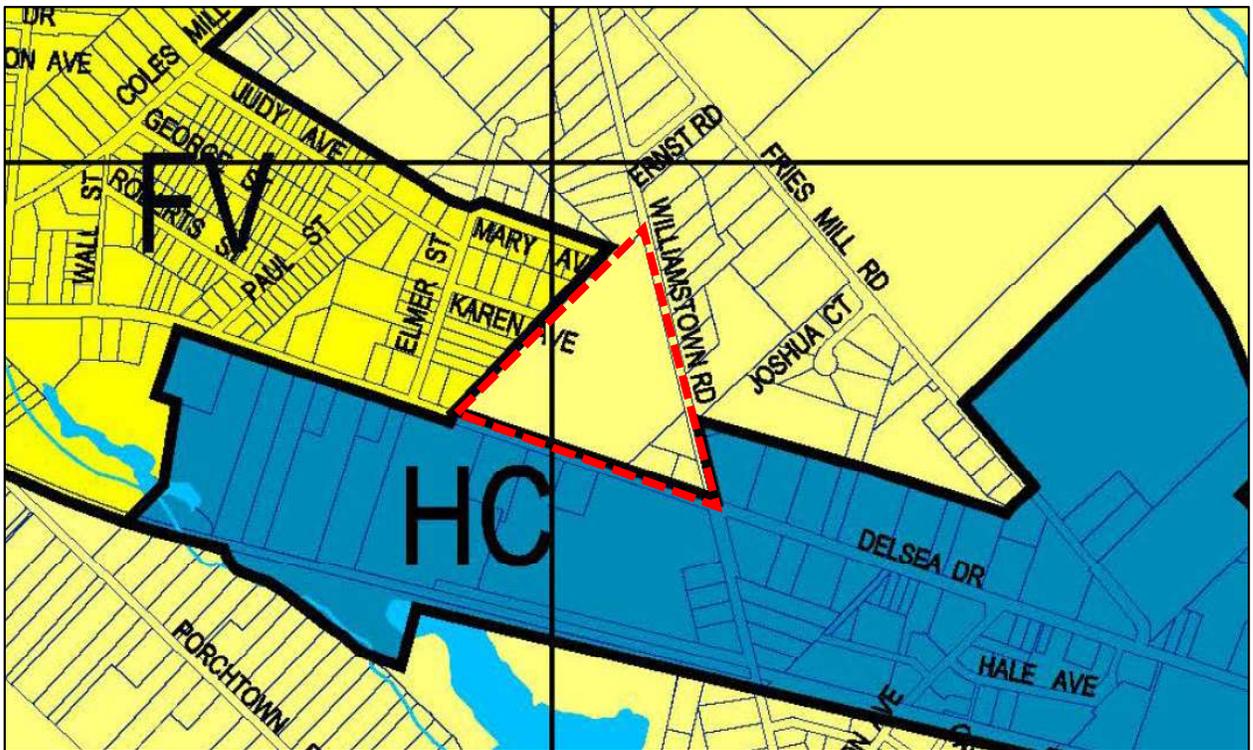
- l. Sound walls or barriers should be provided if any warehouse is to be located adjacent to any sensitive uses, such as a school or residence, even if the distance between the structures otherwise satisfies the conditional use requirement noted above.
 - m. Warehouse facilities should be designed to appear as modern office structures more so than bland big boxes. Portions of the warehouse that may be visible from the public ROW should utilize stone, brick, metal, glass, and other more attractive materials.
 - n. Warehouse facilities should include provisions for charging of electric vehicles for trucks and vans in addition to state requirements for electric vehicle charging stations for standard vehicles.
 - o. For any warehouse that may include cold storage, provisions for the plugging in of refrigerated trucks should be required so that no trucks need to have their engines idling on the property in order to maintain cold temperatures.
 - p. Additional documents should be required of large warehouses to be submitted in connection with applications for major site plan approval. These include enhanced traffic impact studies, environmental impact reports, and community impact reports.
- 10.** The Township should consider revising the list of permitted uses within the Highway Commercial Zoning District. There are many stretches of the district along the Harding Highway frontage that are and have historically been residential uses, and current zoning makes them non-conforming to this commercial district. As non-conforming uses any expansion to an existing home then would require approval of the zoning board as a d-2 variance. Provisions should be put in place to recognize the status of these residential uses and permit them to remain as legally permitted uses.
- 11.** The majority of the properties in the Township that have frontage on Delsea Drive (Route 47) or Harding Highway (Route 40) are currently zoned to permit commercial development in some form by being placed within the Highway Commercial, Interchange Commercial, Pinelands Highway Commercial, Light Manufacturing, Malaga Village, or Franklinville Village zoning districts. However, there are a few pockets of properties that have frontage on one of these two major thoroughfares in the Township that are zoned in the RA Residential Agricultural district. The Township should consider rezoning these parcels to a commercial district in order to have uniform commercial zoning along these highway frontages.

Parcels recommended for rezoning include:

A: Block 5502, Lots 12, 14, 15, 15.01, 16, 17, 18 – Rezone to HC Highway Commercial



B: Block: 4003, Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 – Rezone to HC Highway Commercial



- 12.** Within the areas of the IC Interchange Commercial district, the lands are made up of numerous undersized parcels that are laid out in small block grid patterns separated by Township Rights-of-Way that are currently undeveloped, making these lands a patchwork of small properties separated by “paper streets”. As the Township does not intend to improve these paper streets, and current planning does not call for development of new communities on these smaller lots, the Township should consider vacating the rights-of-way. Vacating the paper streets may help to consolidate parcels and create more buildable tracts along the highway frontages.
- 13.** The Township has ‘opted in’ to permit classes 1-4 cannabis businesses (cultivation, manufacturing, storage, and distribution) but has not addressed these uses in the zoning code or other development regulations. As of now, they are simply considered permitted uses in any industrial district although not actually listed as permitted uses. The Township should consider developing standards specific to these newly permitted cannabis businesses, including identifying the specific zoning districts where they are permitted. It is recommended that they be classified as conditionally permitted uses only in industrial districts, and that they be located at least 1,000 feet from schools, and adequate buffering be provided from adjacent uses, in particular any residences or residential districts. Cannabis businesses should be expressly prohibited in all other districts.
- 14.** The definitions of accessory structures and in particular “private garages” should be reviewed. The size of accessory structures and garages being limited by definition to 1,200 square feet has required many relatively minor applications for pole barns on residential properties and industrial or agricultural properties to seek a variance at the zoning board, where such structures should be able to be approved administratively. This is partly an issue because this regulation is found in the definition of private garage, rather than being located within any section of the code that provides regulatory standards for buildings.

The definition of a “private garage” should be amended. The current definition is noted below:

“Either a freestanding accessory structure not exceeding a height of 15 feet or an area within a principal structure that is designed or used to provide for parking or storage of a total of no more than three motor vehicles and in which no occupation, service or business is carried on. The total area of private garage space on any lot shall not exceed 1,200 square feet.”

Any reference to the size of an accessory structure or private garage, or number of vehicles that can be stored within, should be removed from the definition of the term within the code. Definitions should be limited to identifying and defining terms, and should in general be free of any regulatory language. Regulatory language regarding height, size, or restrictions on use should be located within an appropriate section of the land development code.

It should also be clarified that any private garage that is attached to a principal structure is considered a part of the principal structure, and should not be included in any calculations regarding the maximum height or size of a private garage that is an accessory structure.

15. Accessory structures such as garages and pole barns should be permitted up to a certain size based on a sliding scale, with larger accessory structures being permitted on larger properties.

Accessory Structure Sizes	
Property Area	Max Permitted Size Accessory Structure
Less than 1/2 acre	1,200 s.f.
1/2 acre to 1 acre	1,500 s.f.
1 acre to 2 acres	2,000 s.f.
Greater than 2 acres	3,000 s.f.

Buildings used for agricultural purposes on farm assessed lands should be exempt from these building area standards, but should conform to minimum setback requirements.

16. Setbacks for accessory structures should be revised, or permitted to be less than the required setbacks for principal structures in each district. Current code requirements for accessory structures at Section 253-91 note that they are prohibited from a front yard, and must be setback a minimum of 10 feet from any property line unless otherwise noted. Standards otherwise vary by zoning district as to how far back an accessory structure must be located from a property line.

Similar to the recommendation regarding the size of accessory structures, minimum required setbacks for accessory structures should also be viewed on a sliding scale, with larger structures requiring greater setbacks. The building height of an accessory structure should be determined in the same way

A recommendation for such standards is below:

Accessory Structure Setback and Height Requirements		
Accessory Structure Size	Minimum side and rear yard setback	Maximum Permitted Height
Less than 400 s.f.	5 feet	12 feet
400 s.f. - 1,200 s.f.	7 feet	15 feet
1,200 s.f. – 1,499 s.f.	10 feet	15 feet
1,500 s.f. – 1,999 s.f.	12 feet	20 feet
2,000 s.f. – 3,000 s.f.	15 feet	20 feet
Greater than 3,000 s.f.	20 feet	25 feet

- 17.** The Township should consider reducing the minimum requirements for accessory solar energy systems. The 50-foot buffer requirement and the minimum lot area of 3 acres are excessive and a hinderance to the practical use of solar energy as an accessory use on residential properties. Accessory solar energy systems should be subject to the same setback and buffering requirements of other permitted accessory structures.
- 18.** The Township should consider addressing 'battery energy storage systems' in the land development regulations. A battery energy storage system is a new trend in energy production where energy generated by different sources, such as wind and solar facilities, are stored in batteries that are approximately the size of a shipping container. The Township's current code does not provide any provisions for such a facility, either as a single accessory structure, or for a large-scale use which may include dozens of battery storage structures. Similar to any standards for other utility infrastructure, an amendment to the land development code could address suitable locations, as well as appropriate measures to ensure that they do not detract from the desired rural character of the Township.
- 19.** Storage is not currently listed as a permitted accessory use in the Business District. This then technically could require a legitimate business to seek a use variance if they needed to install a shed or pole barn on their property for storage purposes, which is common for many light industrial and business uses. Accessory storage should be permitted, provided that it is within an enclosed structure.
- 20.** The Township should consider revising the definitions of "major" and "minor" development, "major" and "minor" subdivisions, and "major" and "minor" site plans to clarify the distinctions between each. There is considerable overlap within the definitions of major development and major subdivisions in particular, and a "major site plan" is not defined at all.

The definition of "major development" should simply reference a major subdivision and major site plan to ensure that there are no inconsistencies between them.

The definitions for minor development, subdivisions, and site plans should be consistent between the zoning ordinance and any other sections of the Township code that regulate development, such as the stormwater management ordinance.

- 21.** The submission requirements for minor developments should be revised so that formal grading plans are not required for any such development that will include less than 400 square feet of disturbance, and is located more than 100 feet from any adjacent property line.
- 22.** Section 253-190.9.B of the code currently limits the height of fences within a side yard of a residential district to a maximum of four feet, with side yards specifically being measured to the back of the house. While limiting the height of fences within a front yard is typical and maintains open front yards, the limitation on side yard fences is not necessary and has resulted in several variances granted by the Zoning Board of

Adjustment. Fences within a side yard on residential properties should be permitted to have a maximum height of 6 feet rather than 4 feet, treating them the same as a rear yard rather than a front yard.

- 23.** Update the Township code to have a moratorium on road openings within 5 years after the road is repaved. Opening of roads should only be permitted in case of emergencies or hardships for utility repairs or similar service needs, with a hardship being determined by the construction official. Where roads have been recently repaved, efforts should be made to use methods such as directional boring to tunnel under the pavement where feasible in order to protect the asphalt. In any circumstance, where pavement is to be removed or directional boring uses, bonds should be required to be posted to cover the costs of repairs if necessary. An appeal of the decision of the construction official on a denial of a permit due to the moratorium would be heard and decided by the Township Committee.
- 24.** The definitions of lot lines and yards within the Township's land development regulations should be updated to clarify where front yards or side yards exist for circumstances of corner lots, through lots, or irregularly shaped lots, where it is not necessarily clear how bulk requirements of each district are intended to be applied. The current wording of the Township code references that a lot "frontage" for a corner lot is whichever frontage is the shorter side, which may or may not be the functional front yard of the property.
- 25.** Township code within the Design Standards for subdivisions at Section 253-50.A(37) currently prohibits the creation of lots where the depth of the lot exceeds 2.5 times the width, even if the minimum lot width is otherwise satisfied. This provision should be reviewed and considered for removal. Where new lots otherwise satisfy minimum lot area, width, and depth requirements for their particular zoning district, it is not necessary to further limit the depth of the lot.
- 26.** Buffer requirements between residential uses and non-residential uses should be enhanced, and enforced through subdivision and/or site plan review where current code already requires them. The current code includes a provision stating that the reviewing Board may waive buffer requirements if impractical. This provision is unnecessary, as both the Zoning Board and the Planning Board already have the authority to grant variances and waivers from bulk standards and design standards when properly justified.
- 27.** Landscaping requirements for new subdivisions and site plans should be reviewed and enhanced. In order to provide for attractive new developments that improve the community, substantial landscaping and planting should be required to complement new buildings, with an emphasis on requiring native species of plants that are suited to thrive in this environment. The Township may consider developing lists of recommended and/or not-recommended species of plants for specific situations,

such as shade trees, evergreen trees used for buffering, plantings within stormwater basins, ornamental trees and shrubs, and other ground covers.

- 28.** Architectural design standards or guidelines should be developed for non-residential development or multi-family development, and used as a tool to ensure that new development fits into the desired character of the community.
- 29.** The Township should consider revising the stormwater management regulations to require stricter controls on stormwater runoff in environmentally sensitive areas and those areas with poor soil conditions. Through the site plan review process, the reviewing boards should encourage alternatives to traditional stormwater management techniques, and when such alternatives cannot be used, justification for their lack of inclusion should be provided.

REDEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The fifth provision of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 of the MLUL states that the Reexamination Report shall include:

“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 redevelopment plans of the municipality.”

30. The Master Plan should reflect the current redevelopment plan for the 'Meredith Farms' property adjacent to the Downtown airport on Harding Highway. The Township was provided with funds to remediate contamination on this former poultry processing facility site from the USEDA, with the condition that the site be used as an economic development project with a goal of providing local employment.
31. The property located between South Broad Street and Route 55 on the border with Clayton Township, was designated in need of redevelopment in 2009. No redevelopment of this site has occurred since this designation. The Township should review the current redevelopment plan to determine if proposed development is feasible.
32. The Township Committee should only target those areas for redevelopment that have a realistic potential to be redeveloped, or are generally free of environmental constraints such as wetlands. Redevelopment as a tool of economic development should be focused on properties that were previously developed but are now underutilized.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE

The sixth and final provision of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 of the MLUL states that the Reexamination Report shall include:

“The recommendations of the planning board concerning locations appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure, including but not limited to, commercial districts and, areas proximate to public transportation and transit facilities, and public rest stops; and recommended changes, if any, in the local redevelopment regulations necessary or appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure.”

The following recommendations are made regarding EV infrastructure:

- 33.** The Township should consider the possibility of providing electric vehicle supply/service equipment at any Township-owned and operated parking facilities, including the municipal building, library, and all parks and recreation spaces.
- 34.** Commercial areas in the Township are appropriate locations for electric vehicle infrastructure. By adopting the State-mandated “Ordinance Authorizing and Encouraging Electric Vehicle Supply/Service Equipment (EVSE) & Make-Ready Parking Spaces” and incorporating the state requirements into Township code, the Township will help ensure that electric vehicle infrastructure is provided in all new commercial parking lots.
- 35.** Outside of those areas where either the land is owned by the Township, or new EV infrastructure will be required by law, the lands within the IC Interchange Commercial District would provide a logical location for EV charging infrastructure due to their proximity to Route 55 and Harding Highway (Route 40), and would be consistent with the intent of that zoning district to provide services to the traveling public.