FLEMINGTON BOROUGH

REEXAMINATION REPORT

August 11, 1999

Adopted by
The Flemington Planning Board
August 24, 1999

Prepared by:

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INTRODUCTION

A reexamination report is a review of previously adopted master plans and amendments to see if the ideas and policy guidelines in them are still applicable to today's situation. The state land use law[1] requires that the Planning Board conduct the review (usually with professional assistance) every six years. Depending on the pace of change and the length of time that has passed, reexamination reports can be brief or complex. There are five specific areas that a reexamination report covers. These are:

1) The goals and objectives for land development (or redevelopment) of the last reexamination report or master plan, including any major problems identified in them;

2) An analysis of how well the plan or report addressed the problems identified in those plans;

3) A review of the changes in assumptions and policies since that time. In particular, changes in the assumptions about populations, land use, housing, and other similar master plan components have to be examined. These in turn are compared with state, county and other municipal goals;

4) Based on the analysis, whether or not there needs to be any changes in the municipality's land development policies and regulations; and

5) Recommendations by the Planning Board on the incorporation of any redevelopment plan into the land use plan element and its implementation through the zoning ordinance or other land development ordinance[2].

This fifth area of review in the Reexamination Report is not applicable to the Borough's Master Plan and so will not be discussed in this document.

PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

A master plan is the document that explicitly states the policies for land development and redevelopment. As such it is intended to guide the public and

[1] - The Municipal Land Use Law, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq. The specific provision governing Reexamination Reports is N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89

[2] - N.J.S.A. 40:55d-89e

private sector in making decisions on projects involving land and building. Through its goals and objectives statement, the master plan sets out a vision for the community in the coming years.

A master plan forms the legal foundation for the zoning ordinance and zoning map. New Jersey, among a handful of other states, explicitly ties the planning of a community as embodied in the master plan with the zoning ordinance and zoning map, which is the primary law governing the use of land. The zoning ordinance and zoning map in turn contains the set of rules and regulations governing what may and may not be done with land and buildings. A zoning ordinance must be substantially consistent with the municipality's land use policies in its master plan. Likewise, the zoning map must be substantially consistent with the land use plan that is a part of the master plan.

The six year period between reexamination reports affords a historical perspective significantly long to judge the effectiveness of the Master Plan and the subsequent Zoning Ordinance.

EXISTING 1997 PLAN OBJECTIVES

The Planning Board of the Borough last adopted a Master Plan on July 29, 1997 consisting of several chapters, or elements (including background studies). These included Goals and Objectives, Existing Environmental Factors, Analysis of Existing Land Use, Analysis of Existing Zoning, Existing Utility Services, Community Facilities Plan, Open Space and Recreation Plan, Land Use Plan, Housing Plan, Circulation and Parking Plan, Historic Preservation Plan, Recycling Plan and an Analysis of Consistency with Other Planning Documents.

The 1997 Master Plan includes a general statement of goals and objectives for the development of the Borough:

- Integration of the residential and commercial segments of Flemington Borough to benefit the entire community.

- Protect and promote the integrity of the existing residential districts within the Borough.

- Strengthen and promote the commercial sector.

- Consider and plan for areas of rapid growth within the Borough, including the County justice complex and Walter Foran Boulevard.

In addition to these general goals and objectives, more specific goals and objectives are included as recommendations within particular elements of the Master Plan as follows:

Community Facilities Plan

- The Borough should commence planning for the construction of a new municipal building which is sufficiently large to house all municipal functions including administration, court, and police department.

Land Use Plan

- Prepare a new land development ordinance to implement the land use plan recommendations of this plan.

- Prepare a 6-year Capital Improvements Program in accordance with *N.J.S.A.* 40:55D-29.

- Prepare a Center Designation application by the Planning Board to be submitted for approval to the Hunterdon County Planning Board and the State Planning Commission.

Circulation and Parking Plan

- The reconfiguration of the Bloomfield Avenue to Pennsylvania Avenue parking lots within Block 18, as well as the parking lots behind Mikasa on the west side of Main Street within Block 21 are recommended.

- The Borough's site plan ordinance should be revised to require cross-access and shared parking for properties throughout the Borough, since there are other potential parking lots than the two noted above which would benefit from such a policy.

- Speed limits should be systematically reviewed. It is recommended that the speed limits be set on all of the interior Borough streets at 25 MPH where the Borough has jurisdiction.

- Bike racks need to be provided in the downtown. A standard bike rack detail should be selected that is sympathetic to the architecture of the downtown and should then be used consistently. The Borough's site plan ordinance should be amended to include a requirement for Bike Racks for new or amended site plans for commercial buildings.

- The appearance of sidewalks, their condition, and their importance to the downtown dictate the need for government involvement, either by policing and requiring private restoration; or by public construction, with assessments attached to benefitting properties.

- Park Avenue will be realigned to meet Foran Boulevard which enters North Main Street. The traffic expected to use the new street will require signalization at the intersection of N. Main Street, Park Avenue and Foran Boulevard. A second set of traffic lights are needed at the intersection of Broad Street and Church Street based on the poor levels of service recorded at the intersection.

- It is recommended that the streetscape throughout the Borough be enhanced by the planting of additional street trees.

- Locate, designate, protect and maintain Flemington's most important historic sites and district(s).

- Maintain the historic character of Flemington's historic commercial and institutional resources while encouraging their development as commercial and cultural assets.

- Maintain the historic character of Flemington's historic residential resources while encouraging their development as residential and cultural assets.

- Contribute to the improvement of the economy of Flemington by encouraging expenditures for the restoration and/or adaptive reuse of historic buildings for local purposes and to encourage and promote tourism.

- Enhance Flemington's Historic Preservation Program to foster local interest in and a greater appreciation of and support for historic and archaeological resources.

- Establish a local incentive program to provide assistance in the preservation of historic resources.

- Integrate historic preservation review criteria and data into the local planning and development review process.

1997 MASTER PLAN PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

The Goals and Objectives of the 1997 Master Plan indicate both a reaction to identified problems as well as providing the framework for future land use decisions. Though by their nature goals and objectives typically identify problems, the 1997 Master Plan specifically identified the following obstacles:

- The Borough is virtually entirely developed. The little remaining vacant land usually has environmental constraints that preclude or severely limit its development.

- Additional park and recreational areas are needed for Borough residents, but the lack of available land makes locating these facilities difficult.

- Lack of parking for businesses and County facilities is a problem. A survey of parking capacity undertaken for the Master Plan indicated a deficit of 240 spaces under the median parking demand, or 1,198 spaces under the high demand scenario.

- Some retail development has spilled over into Raritan Township as the availability of land in Flemington has become scarce. To continue to prosper, and prevent being "swallowed up" by the extensive retail and other

development beyond Flemington proper, the Borough must draw on its unique character to differentiate itself.

- Even though the Borough is on the Federal and State Registers of Historic Places, historic preservation controls are inadequate and have led to the deterioration of buildings and inappropriate alterations or additions to buildings not in keeping with their historic architecture.

- The outlet centers that have been built from Mine Street to Route 12 (Liberty Village and Turntable Junction) were developed without a consistent architectural design. Streetscape improvements similar to those recommended for the downtown area would help to tie these disparate elements together. The outlet center area is oriented for the motoring public but there exists a significant proportion of the public that desires to walk between the Rt. 12 outlet centers and from these to downtown. This area lacks a complete sidewalk network to accomplish pedestrian connectivity and should be a priority as new stores are added or public improvements reconstructed.

CHANGES IN THE BASIS FOR THE MASTER PLAN

No significant changes have occurred in the trends of population, land use development, and housing since the Master Plan was adopted.

The worsening of several problems, particularly traffic congestion, identified by the 1997 Master Plan and its amendment leads to the conclusion that additional solutions should be sought.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MASTER PLAN

The Master Plan, adopted in 1997, should be implemented by a new zoning ordinance, land development ordinances and capital improvements program. The new ordinances should reflect the State of New Jersey's Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) as well as amendments to the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL).

The Circulation Plan Element should be revised to include a traffic light at Church Street and Broad Street. There have been numerous accidents at this location and with impending new development of Liberty Village, and properties along Church Street, better traffic control at this intersection is required.

The highway system serving the portion of the Borough flanked by Route 202 and Reaville Avenue has been developed or zoned as commercial. Accordingly, the access needs of the existing establishment strains the capacity of the roads and impacts safety. As development continues, Reaville Avenue will increasingly be used by motorists to access individual sites and will be used for circulation between sites. The master plan envisions several key planning elements that are intended to improve traffic conditions.

One element is creation of a Route 202 bypass road that will intersect Reaville Avenue opposite the new Flemington Outlet Center driveway and generally run parallel to Route 202 into Raritan Township. In Raritan Township, the road will connect to Route 202 west of Voorhees Corner Road. This road is intended to provide access to the abutting properties and permit access to Reaville Avenue via a signalized intersection.

The second element builds upon the opportunities the Route 202 bypass road offers. The planning of the various properties should examine providing access to the bypass road. Shared access and interconnections between properties are two ways of accomplishing this goal.

The third element is access control on Reaville Avenue and Route 202. By taking advantage of the first two elements, individual access to Reaville Avenue and Route 202 should be limited. The goal is to minimize the number of vehicular conflicts between driveway vehicles and through vehicles. Accomplishing this goal requires limiting left turns when alternatives can be provided, reducing the number of driveways, and when possible, locating driveways with respect to nearby driveways or ramps. A jughandle may be required with all properties having access to the jughandle.

The fourth element is to establish a desirable right-of-way width of 80 feet for Reaville Avenue. The road width will permit flexible planning options including four through lanes, turn lanes, and possible median treatments. At the Route 202 intersection, additional right-of-way may need to meet future capacity. This should

all be considered for an amendment to the Circulation Plan Element of the Master Plan.