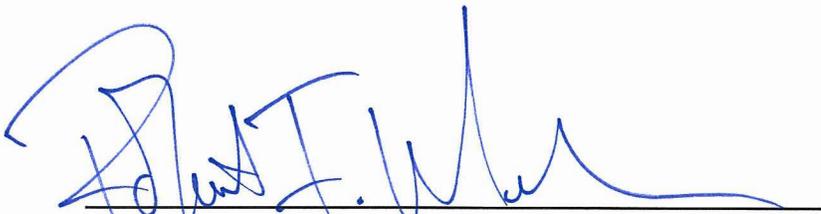


Harrison Township, New Jersey
PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

BLOCK 59 LOTS 12.01, 13, 14 and 17

10/20/2011

Redevelopment Preliminary
Investigation Report
pursuant to Harrison Township Committee
Resolution 173-2011.



Robert F. Melvin, PP, AICP
N.J. Planner License No. 04018

GROUP **melvin** DESIGN
3 South Broad Street, Suite 3C
Woodbury, NJ 08096
p.856.251.9989 f.856.202.8007

This page intentionally left blank.

Acknowledgements

MAYOR

Louis Manzo

TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE

Louis Manzo, Mayor
Dennis Clowney, Deputy Mayor
Don Heim
Robert Shearer
Matt Diggons

PLANNING BOARD

Joseph Pacera, Chairman
Jack McElwee, Vice Chairman
Santo Maccherone
Niki Trunk
Steve Dickson
Nancy Kowalik
Louis Manzo, Mayor
Matt Diggons, Councilman
Mark Reidenauer, Alternate No. 1
Bill Madara, Alternate No. 2

PLANNING BOARD SECRETARY

Susanne H. Rhudy

PLANNING BOARD SOLICITOR

Joan Adams, Esquire

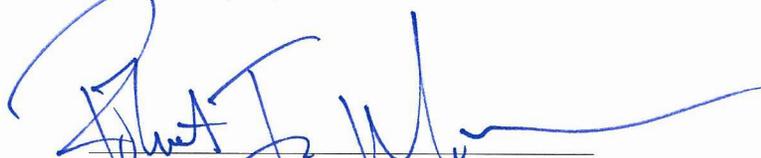
PLANNING BOARD ENGINEER

Justin Gibson, PE

PLANNING BOARD PLANNER

Robert F. Melvin, PP/AICP

prepared by:



Robert F. Melvin, PP/AICP
NJ Planner License No. 04018

This page intentionally left blank.

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 The Redevelopment Act.....	2
3.0 Redevelopment Procedure	2
4.0 Current Progress	4
5.0 Existing Conditions.....	5
6.0 Raccoon Creek Bridge/Mullica Hill Pond Dam Improvements	7
7.0 Statutory Criteria for Redevelopment	10
8.0 Applicability of Statutory Criteria to the Redevelopment Area	11
9.0 Conclusion	14

List of Figures

Figure 1: Zoning Map	3
Figure 2: Aerial Map.....	6
Figure 3: Environmental Constraints	8
Figure 4: Aerial Views & Environs	9
Figure 5: State Planning Areas & Sewer Service Areas.....	13

This page intentionally left blank.

1.0 Introduction

Harrison Township through Resolution No.173-2011 has requested that Group Melvin Design evaluate Block 59, Lots 12.01, 13, 14 and 17 to ascertain whether this area qualifies under N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5 as an "Area in Need of Redevelopment". Specifically, it was resolved by the Mayor and Committee of the Township of Harrison, that:

- A** The Planning Board of the Township of Harrison be directed to conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether the area known as Block 59, Lots 12.01, 13, 14 and 17 identified on the Township Tax Map in Harrison Township, is an area in need of redevelopment according to the criterion in N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1, et. seq; the staff of the Planning Board and its consultants be directed to assist the Planning Board in conducting the blight and/or area in need of redevelopment investigation; and
- B** The Township Clerk would forward a copy of the Resolution to the Secretary of the Planning Board for immediate action, and
- C** The preliminary investigation once completed would be submitted to the Governing Body for review and approval in accordance with the provisions of the Redevelopment and Housing Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1, et. seq.

The analysis presented within this document serves as the basis for our recommendation that Block 59, Lots 12.01, 13, 14 and 17, which is located along Mullica Hill Road (Route 322) in Harrison Township, Gloucester County, New Jersey, is in need of a redevelopment designation and warrants accompanying guidelines that will ensure that the entire area is developed in a manner that adheres to local and state plans, incorporates sound principals of urban planning and design, promotes the public welfare, and contributes to the sustainable economic development of the Township. The lands in question equal a total of 46.9 acres.

The area being reviewed falls under the Township's R-1 Residence-Agricultural District and R-2 Residential District ordinances, which permits single-family detached houses as well as other uses that include agricultural, usual farm buildings and dwellings, public recreation or private recreation, and municipal services.

2.0 The Redevelopment Act

New Jersey's Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL), empowers municipalities and local governments with the ability to initiate a process that transforms underutilized or poorly designed properties into healthier, more vibrant, or economically productive land areas. The process has been used successfully across the state to creatively improve properties meeting statutory redevelopment criteria. Projects approved for redevelopment are often eligible for certain types of technical and financial assistance from the state.

Harrison Township has identified the parcels at Block 59, Lots 12.01, 13, 14 and 17 as an opportunity for redevelopment in accordance with the provisions of the LRHL. This investigation encompasses 0.45 acres located just east of Mill Road (Block 59, Lot 12.01), 4.24 acres located between Mill Road and Kayla's Way (Block 59, Lot 13), 0.98 acres located just east of Mill Road (Block 59, Lot 14), and 41.23 acres located north of Mullica Hill Road and south of Lot 13 (Block 59, Lot 17).

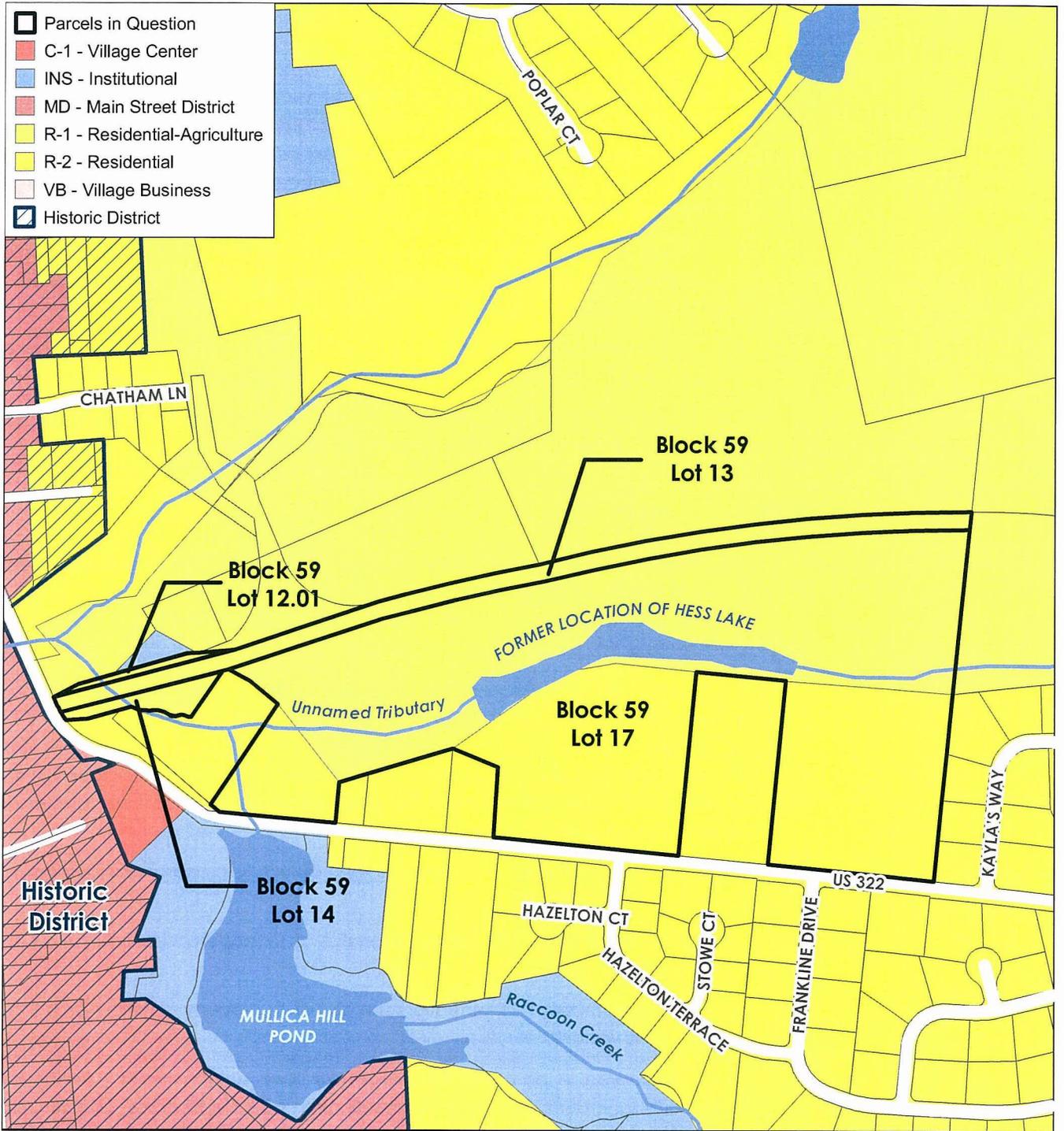
Figure 1 contains a Zoning map of the site and its surroundings and shows the location of the four lots in question.

3.0 Redevelopment Procedure

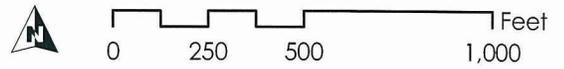
The LRHL requires municipalities to perform a number of steps before it may exercise its Redevelopment powers. This process is meant, in part, to ensure that the Governing Body acts in concert with the goals and objectives of the Township's Master Plan. Recognizing the Planning Board's role as the steward of the Master Plan, these steps require the Planning Board to make recommendations to the Township Committee. The required steps are as follows:

- A** The Governing Body must adopt a resolution directing the Planning Board to perform a preliminary investigation to determine whether a specified area is in need of redevelopment according to criteria set forth in the LRHL (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5). The Township Committee has adopted Resolution No. 173-2011.
- B** The Planning Board must prepare and make available a map delineating the boundaries of the proposed redevelopment area, specifying the parcels to be included in it. This map should be accompanied by a statement setting forth the basis of the investigation.
- C** The Planning Board must then conduct the investigation and produce a report presenting the findings. The Board must also hold a duly noticed hearing to present the results of the investigation and to allow interested parties to give testimony. The Planning Board then may adopt a resolution recommending a course of action to the Governing Body.

Figure 1: Zoning Map



Zoning



-
- D** The Governing Body may act on this recommendation by adopting a resolution designating the area an "Area in Need of Redevelopment". The Governing Body must make the final determination as to the Redevelopment Area boundaries, although these are typically accepted as recommended by the Planning Board.
 - E** A Redevelopment Plan must be prepared establishing the goals, objectives, and specific actions to be taken with regard to the "Area in Need of Redevelopment."
 - F** The Governing Body may then act on the Plan by passing an ordinance adopting the Plan as an amendment to Township's Zoning Ordinance.

Only after completion of this process is the Township able to exercise the powers granted to it under the State Redevelopment Statute.

4.0 Current Progress

The Harrison Township Committee adopted a resolution on September 6, 2011 (Resolution 173-2011) instructing the Planning Board to initiate an investigation in accordance with Part "a" above. Together with its accompanying maps, this report is meant to satisfy parts "b", and "c" above.

This analysis concerns an area that totals 46.9 acres comprised on four (4) lots. All of the lots are owned by Tarak and Zoubir Akrou. This analysis will determine if this entire area warrants redevelopment based upon the statutory criteria of the LRHL. This report will conclude by recommending if these lots should be included in any redevelopment designation in order to produce an effective and comprehensive redevelopment plan for the area.

Lot 12.01 is located in the R-1 Residential zone district. Its property classification is 1. This lot is currently vacant.

Lot 13 is located in the R-1 Residential zone district. Its property classification is 1. This lot is currently vacant.

Lot 14 is located in the R-1 Residential zone district. Its property classification is 1. This lot is currently vacant.

Lot 17 is located in both the R-1 Residential zone district and R-2 Residence-Agricultural zone district. Its property classification is 3A (14.90 acres) and 3B (26.33 acres). Approximately 36% is located in the R-1 district and 64% is located in the R-2 district. This lot is currently vacant.

On July 3, 2008 the Planning Board adopted Resolution 45-2008 approving a Preliminary Major Subdivision for a 40 lot subdivision to construct single-family detached houses on Block 59, Lots 12.01, 13, 14 and 17. The houses in the R-1 zone

area were proposed on a minimum lot size of 21,750 square feet and the houses in the R-2 zone area were proposed on minimum lot size of 18,750 square feet. All residential lots were going to be serviced by centralized water and public sewer. The approved plan contains 3 cul-de-sacs, 3 roadway curb cuts onto Route 322, 5 internal streets, open space along Route 322, open space associated with the on-site lake, and 4 storm water basins. All new residential development was shown to take place on Lot 17. The existing Hess Lake dam was supposed to be reconstructed as part of the approval.

Figure 2 contains an Aerial Photo of the site. Analysis is being presented on the following pages in accordance with the Township Committee's resolution concerning Block 59, Lots 12.01, 13, 14 and 17.

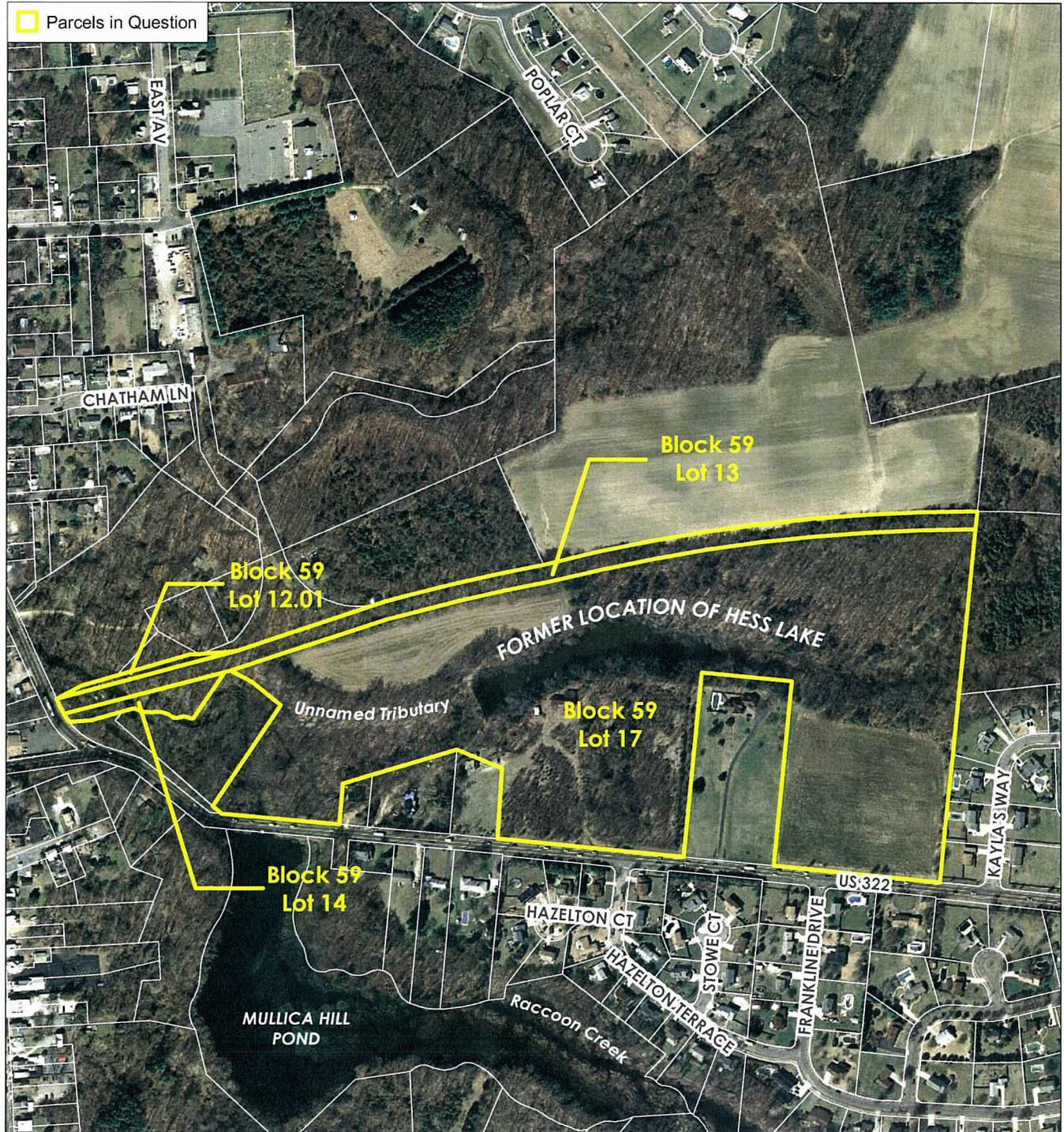
5.0 Existing Conditions

The site area is bounded by Route 322 to the south, an abandoned railroad right-of-way (Lot 13) and farmland to the north, an existing single-family detached residential development to the east, and wetlands associated with the existing Raccoon Creek to the west. The Village of Mullica Hill is located approximately 1,000 feet to the northwest. According to the subdivision files the site itself contains two derelict wood frame structures, a combination gravel/dirt road that intersects with Route 322, many trees, a lake and dam, wetlands, steep slopes, and a stream corridor. Site investigation as part of this study indicates that as of the date of this study, the two derelict wood frame structures are still on the site. The dam associated with Hess Lake no longer exists.

The approved subdivision plan, which was prepared by Wood Engineering Associates, Inc., shows an unnamed tributary of the Raccoon Creek, a lake called the Hess Lake, a 50 foot wetland buffer and a 75 foot riparian buffer along the lake and stream corridor, slopes 20% or greater with wetlands along the stream, and wooded areas. Essentially all of these site features are located on Lot 17, and many on the other lots.

Trees located on the site include oak, pine, maple, wild cherry, beech, locust, sycamore, sassafras, cedar, and gum. According to an Environmental Impact Report prepared by Marathon, dated 2/25/2005, the site area contains 18% Forested Wetlands and Open Waters, 10% Secondary-Growth Uplands, 27% Agricultural Fields, and 43% Forested Uplands. Soils on the site include Alluvial, Collington Sandy Loam @ 5-10% slope, Freehold Sandy Loam @ 0-2% slope, Marlton Sandy Loam @ 0-5% slope, 10-15% slope, and 25-40% slope. Site area topography runs from north to south at 72 feet to 46 feet located north of the tributary and 78 feet to 30 feet in the area south of the tributary. Slopes in excess of 15% exist along the unnamed tributary.

Figure 2: Aerial Map



Aerial (2007)

At present, the dam associated with Hess Lake and the lake itself, do not exist. There are no plans to reconstruct a new dam to re-establish the lake.

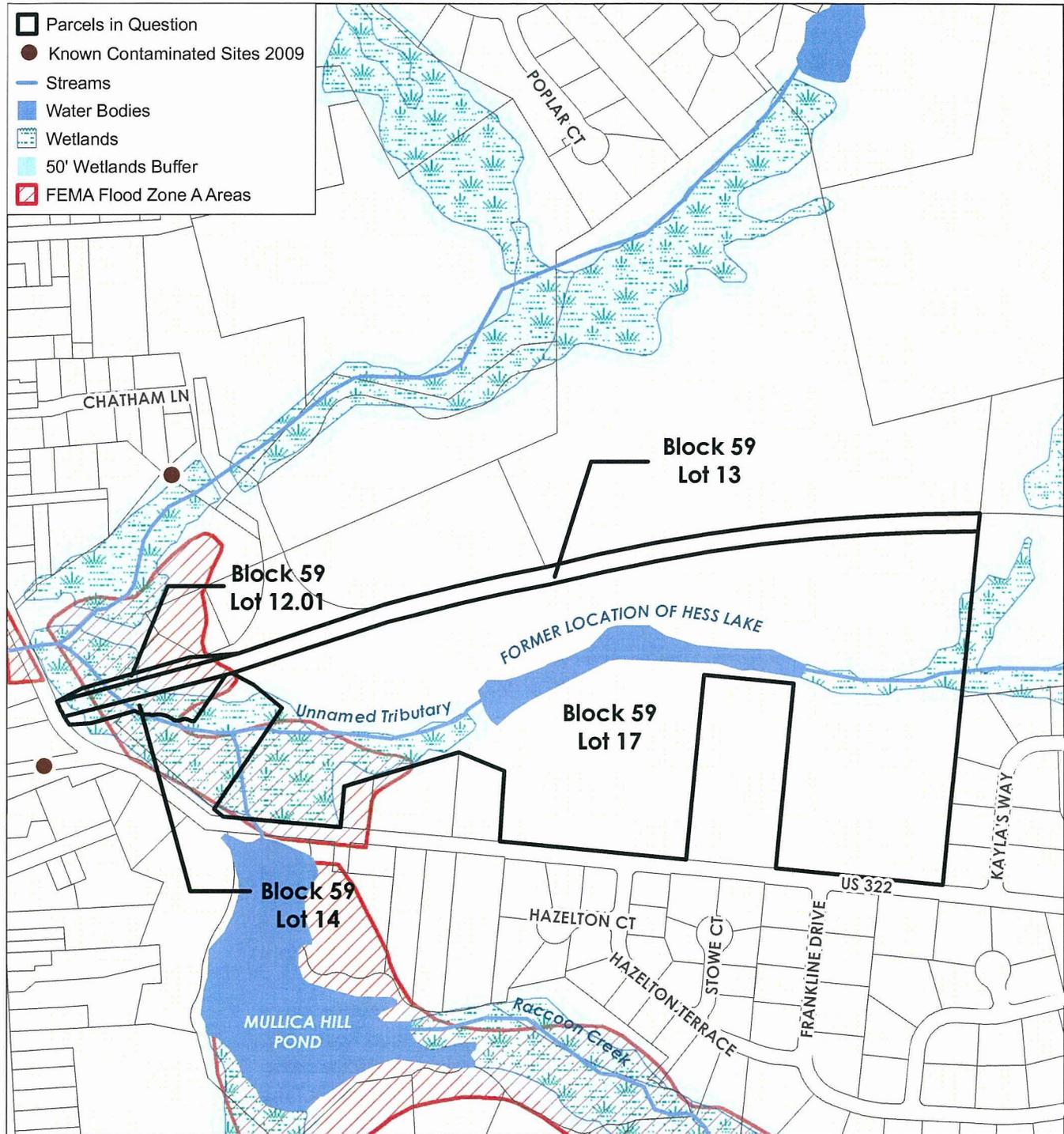
Figure 3 shows existing Environmental Constraints and Figure 4 presents two (2) detailed Aerial Views of Lot 17 and environs.

6.0 Raccoon Creek Bridge/Mullica Hill Pond Dam Improvements

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has prepared plans (See NJDOT Plan Sheets 1 and 2 of 2 dated October 2009) for the proposed Route 322 Raccoon Creek Bridge/Mullica Hill Pond Dam Improvements project that appears to necessitate the public acquisition of certain drainage and utility easements from Block 59 Lot 17. The first such proposed acquisition is located along the north side of Route 322 between Block 59 Lot 16 (Owned by Harrison Township) and Block 59 Lot 7 (Owned by John William Fletcher and Ann H. Fletcher). These areas are known as Parcel 9A, a drainage easement area, which totals 0.461 acres and Parcel UE9B, a utility easement area, which totals 0.24 acres. In addition to these two easement areas the NJDOT has identified a drainage easement area located along Route 322 and also on Block 59 Lot 17. This third easement area, known as Parcel E9C, is located east of and immediately adjacent to Block 59 Lot 18 (Owned by Chuck Congdon). This drainage easement measures 0.688 acres in size and is proposed to contain an infiltration basin and basin forebay with a 15 foot wide concrete block driveway curb cut onto Route 322.

Parcels 9A and UE9B impact the Route 322 frontage of a permanent open space lot shown on the approved Mullica Lake Estates subdivision plan while Parcel E9C, which contains the proposed NJDOT basin, is located where the approved Mullica Hill Estates "Basin 1" was envisioned to be constructed. NJDOT construction within Parcels 9A and UE9B may result in some tree removal to permit the proposed improvement including an expanded road right-of-way and the construction of new pipelines. Basin 1 contains 25,457 square feet (.584 acres) with 107 feet of frontage along Route 322. The improvements for Basin 1 includes ten (10) 6 to 8 foot tall Norway Spruce trees and ten (10) 5 to 6 foot tall Eastern White Pine trees to be planted around its perimeter at a minimum 30 feet on-center and maintenance access contemplated off of approved residential Road A rather than Route 322. The NJDOT basin to be constructed on Parcel E9C has 125 feet of frontage along Route 322 and measures 240 feet of depth. The size of Parcel E9C may impact the location of approved residential Road A, places a maintenance access driveway curb cut immediately next to the Road A T-intersection with Route 322 and appears to result in the elimination of approved residential building Lot 10. The NJDOT plan sheets show no landscaping and fencing in association with proposed drainage easement Parcel E9C.

Figure 3: Environmental Constraints



Environmental Constraints

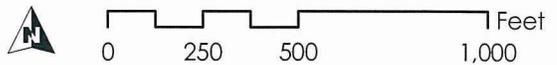
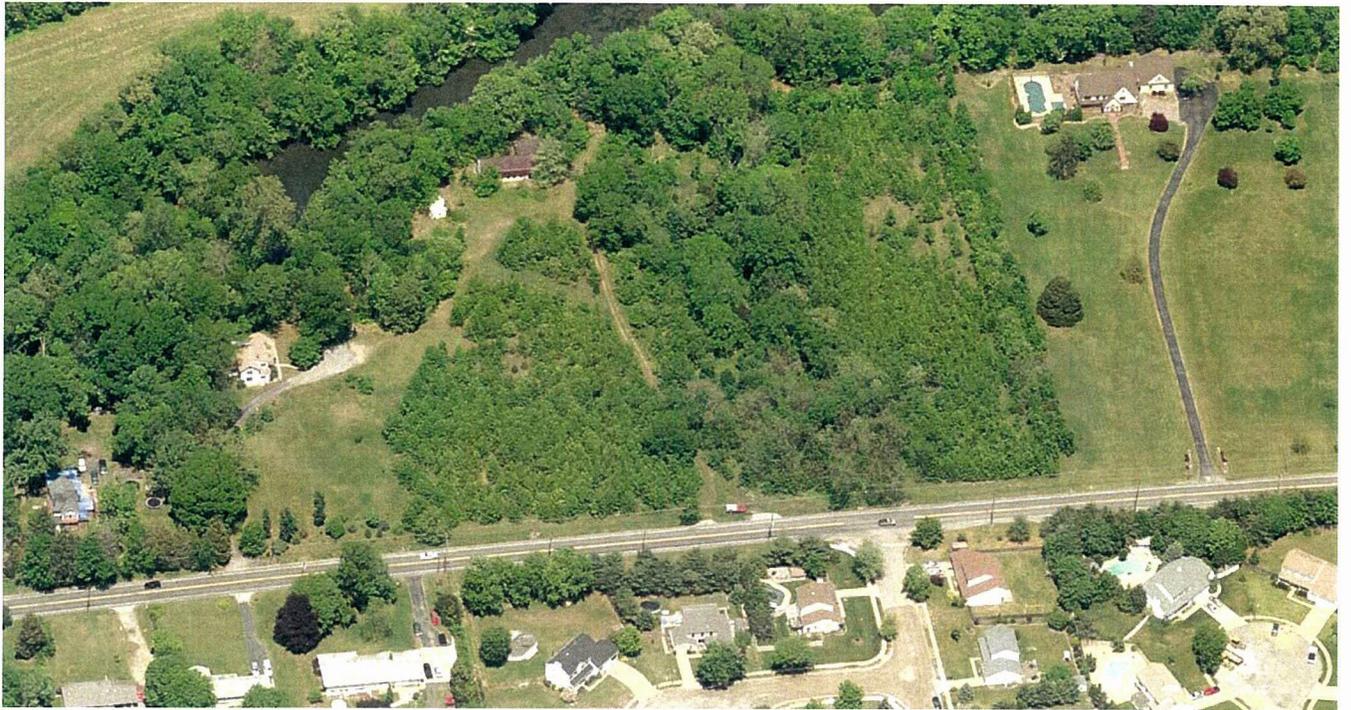


Figure 4: Aerial Views & Environs



View of Block 59 Lot 17, the former Hess Lake, Route 322, Hazelton Court and Stowe Court.



View of Block 59 Lot 17, Route 322, and Kayla's Way.

7.0 Statutory Criteria for Redevelopment

An area qualifies as being in Need of Redevelopment if it meets at least one of the eight statutory criteria listed in Section 5 of the Land Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5). These criteria are as follows:

- A** The generality of buildings are substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated, or obsolescent, or possess any of such characteristics, or are so lacking in light, air, or space, as to be conducive to unwholesome living or working conditions.
- B** The discontinuance of the use of buildings previously used for commercial, manufacturing, or industrial purposes; the abandonment of such buildings; or the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to be untenable.
- C** Land that is owned by the municipality, the county, a local housing authority, redevelopment agency or redevelopment entity, or unimproved vacant land that has remained so for a period of ten years prior to adoption of the resolution, and that by reason of its location, remoteness, lack of means of access to developed sections or portions of the municipality, or topography, or nature of the soil, is not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital.
- D** Areas with buildings or improvements which, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout, or any combination of these or other factors, are detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community.
- E** A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real property therein or other conditions, resulting in a stagnant or not fully productive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare.
- F** Areas, in excess of five contiguous acres, whereon buildings or improvements have been destroyed, consumed by fire, demolished or altered by the action of storm, fire, cyclone, tornado, earthquake or other casualty in such a way that the aggregate assessed value of the area has been materially depreciated.
- G** In any municipality in which an enterprise zone has been designated pursuant to the "New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zones Act," P.L.1983, c.303 (C.52:27H-60 et seq.) the execution of the actions prescribed in that act for the adoption by the municipality and approval by the New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zone

Authority of the zone development plan for the area of the enterprise zone shall be considered sufficient for the determination that the area is in need of redevelopment pursuant to sections 5 and 6 of P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-5 and 40A:12A-6) for the purpose of granting tax exemptions within the enterprise zone district pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1991, c.431 (C.40A:20-1 et seq.) or the adoption of a tax abatement and exemption ordinance pursuant to the provisions of P.L.1991, c.441 (C.40A:21-1 et seq.). The municipality shall not utilize any other redevelopment powers within the urban enterprise zone unless the municipal governing body and planning board have also taken the actions and fulfilled the requirements prescribed in P.L.1992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) for determining that the area is in need of redevelopment or an area in need of rehabilitation and the municipal governing body has adopted a redevelopment plan ordinance including the area of the enterprise zone.

- H** The designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.

8.0 Applicability of Statutory Criteria to the Redevelopment Area

Under the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, an area may be deemed in need of redevelopment if it meets any one of the statutory criteria. Block 59, Lots 12.01, 13, 14 and 17 meets Criteria A, D, E and H as follows:

Criteria "A" applies to Block 59, Lot 17 because this lot contains two (2) derelict wood frame structures, and they have been in such state and condition since 2008.

Criteria "D" applies to Block 59, Lot 17, due to the state of the dam and the general condition of the onsite circulation and access. There is a lack of defined ingress and egress points to the property. The 41.23 acre tract is accessed via a dirt road off of Route 322 and bifurcated by the wetlands area associated with the former location of Hess Lake. Access to the rear half of lot 17 and to lot 13 via an old farm road, over a now defunct dam, is obsolete and no longer meets modern access standards necessary for safe ingress and egress. As a result, site conditions for access and circulation quality meet the criteria of site factors detrimental to safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community.

The "E" Criterion, "Underutilization", may be applied in circumstances where there is a quantifiable economic underutilization. According to the *Redevelopment Handbook*, The ratio improvement to land value from tax assessments provides evidence of underutilization (53). Block 59, Lot 17 has a land value of \$159,500 and an improvement value of \$11,200, which equals an improvement to land ratio of 1:14. Properties with a ratio of less than 2:1 indicate underutilization. In

addition, the property contains wetlands, steep slopes, a stream corridor, and other environmental constraints that inhibit, reduce or constrain the development potential of the entire area. As stated in Criteria "D" above, access to the rear half of lot 17 and to lot 13 via an old farm road, over a now defunct dam, is obsolete and no longer meets modern access standards necessary for safe ingress and egress and thus meets the criteria of site factors detrimental to safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community. In addition, lots 12.01 and 14 are severely constrained by environmental factors such as wetlands and FEMA Flood Zone A areas. Access to the only non-environmentally constrained areas of Lots 12.01 and 14 is through the interior of Lots 13 and 17 respectively. This results in a significant constrain to even minor usability of Lots 12.01 and 14. These factors together explain and quantify the underutilization of the site.

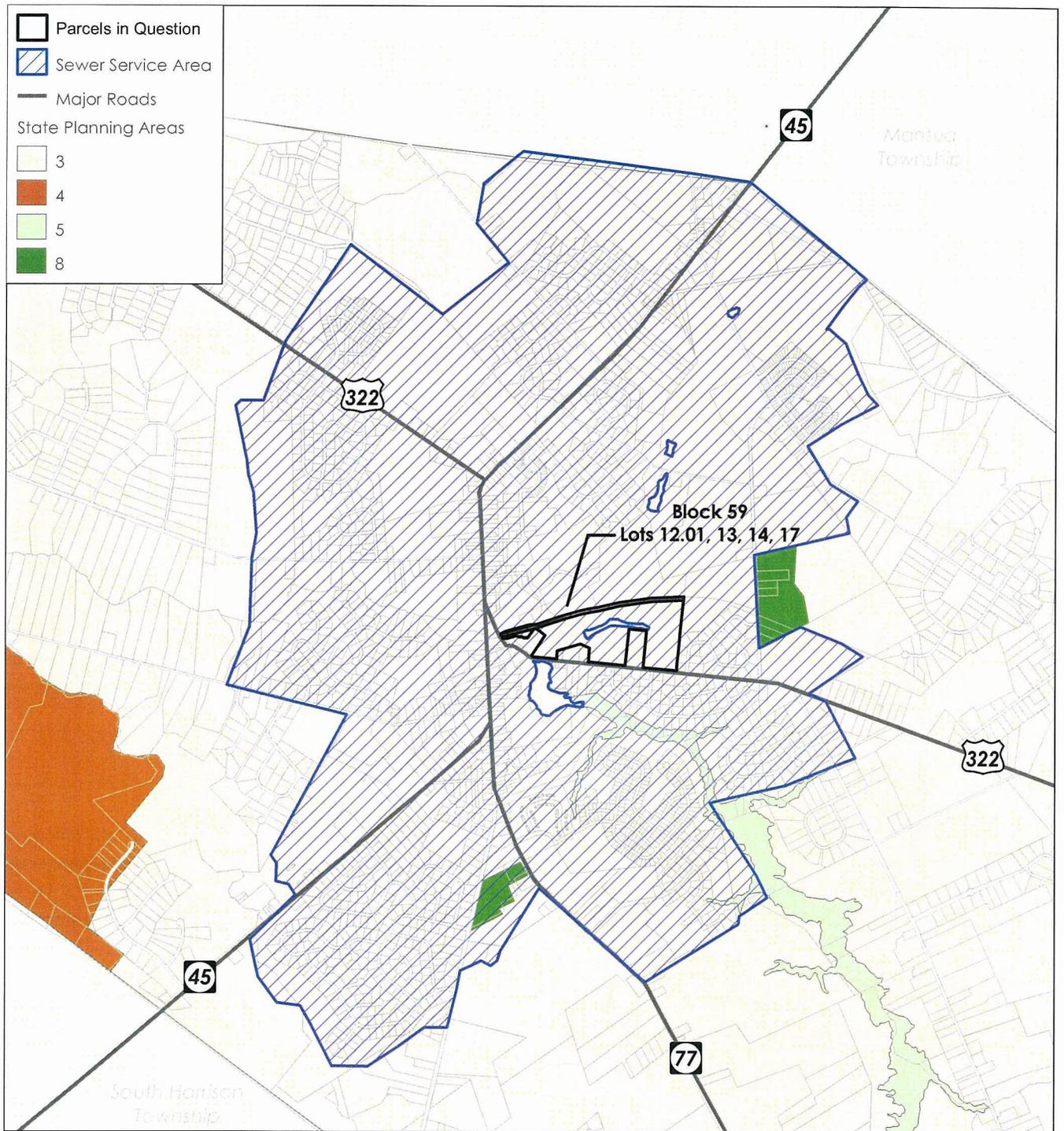
The "H" criterion, Smart Growth Consistency, applies to this parcel. The State Planning Act (N.J.S.A. 52:18A-196 et seq.), adopted in 1985, establishes the framework, for State policies and regulations related to smart growth principles. Among the stated objectives in the Act that serve as this framework are the following:

- A** Protect the natural resources and qualities of the state, including, but not limited to: agricultural development areas, fresh and saltwater wetlands, flood plains, stream corridors, aquifer recharge areas, steep slopes, areas of unique flora and fauna, and areas with scenic, historic, cultural and recreational values;
- B** Promote development and redevelopment in a manner consistent with sound planning and where infrastructure can be provided at private expense or with reasonable expenditures of public funds. This should not be construed to give preferential treatment to new construction;
- C** Identify areas for growth, limited growth, agriculture, open space conservation and other appropriate designations that the commission may deem necessary;
- D** Coordinate planning activities and establish statewide planning objectives in the following areas: land use, housing, economic development, transportation, natural resource conservation, agriculture and farmland retention, recreation, urban and suburban redevelopment, historic preservation, public facilities and services, and intergovernmental coordination.

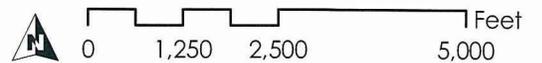
The New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan, adopted pursuant to the State Planning Act, contains a series of smart growth goals and policies and a map which reflects desired growth patterns. The parcel in question is located in Planning Area 3, Fringe Planning Area, where growth is directed at centers in these areas in order to preserve environmentally sensitive lands and open space.

Figure 5 contains a map of State Planning Areas and Sewer Service Areas.

Figure 5: State Planning Areas & Sewer Service Areas



State Planning Areas & Sewer Service Areas



The policy objectives of State Planning Area 3 include the following:

- A** Focus development and redevelopment in appropriately located and designed Centers to accommodate growth that would otherwise occur in the Environs.
- B** Provide for a full range of housing choices primarily in Centers at appropriate densities to accommodate projected growth.
- C** Encourage appropriate redevelopment in existing Centers and existing developed areas that have the potential to become Centers, or in ways that support Center-based development, to accommodate growth that would otherwise occur in the environs.

(2001 State Plan, p. 202, 203)

Block 59, Lot 17 is adjacent to an existing residential subdivision. Redevelopment of this parcel and the other lots supports smart growth principles, by directing redevelopment close to an established village area and directing development away from the environs. With respect to good Smart Growth, Center based practices, and locating development near community amenities and walkable environments, the site or area is an extension of Mullica Hill with walkability into the historic downtown. The current use of the site does not support this walkable mixed-use downtown. Development in alignment with the existing residential zoning patterns on and adjacent to the site or area should align itself with the goals of the State Plan by supporting a walkable community and environmental protection and preservation.

9.0 Conclusion

Based on the above analysis and findings, it is concluded that the conditions on Block 59, Lots 12.01, 13, 14 and 17 qualify as an "Area in Need of Redevelopment" as defined in N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5). As described above Block 59, Lots 12.01, 13, 14 and 17 meet several of the following statutory criteria listed in the Local Redevelopment Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1):

- A** – Dilapidated buildings
- D** - Obsolete Layout and Design
- E** - Underutilization
- H** - Smart Growth Consistency

The Planning Board, upon adoption of a resolution, hereby recommends to the Governing Body that the Block 59, Lot 12.01, 13, 14 and 17 study area be found to be an "Area in Need of Redevelopment" in accordance with N.J.S.A 40A:12A-5 pursuant to the findings of this report.

This page intentionally left blank.

