

**HARRISON TOWNSHIP**

**MASTER PLAN**

**LAND USE ELEMENT**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Municipal Land Use Law, under 40:55D-28b, requires the inclusion of a land use element in the Master Plan. The purpose of this element is to:

- relate the goals and objectives stated in the previous chapter with the existing natural conditions and other developed conditions of the Township;
- show the existing and proposed location, extent, and intensity of development of land to be used in the future for residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, educational, and other public and private purposes or combinations of purposes;
- state the relationship between the existing zone plan and any proposed zone plan amendments;
- show the existing and proposed location of any airports and the boundaries of any airport safety zones; and
- state the standards of population density and development/intensity recommended for the municipality.

The land use element is typically considered to be the most important element of the Master Plan as it provides a framework for the general arrangement of future land use and is the basis for the development ordinances which implement that future arrangement. In part, the element, and the proposals contained therein, are shaped by the ideas and recommendations enunciated in the other constituent elements, and is influenced, as well, by the pattern of existing land use.

This Harrison Township land use element has been prepared in accordance with the other individually adopted elements of the comprehensive Master Plan, and acknowledges the continued validity of policies and goals adopted in previous plan efforts. Further, this element has been prepared as a result of a current land use survey conducted during the Fall of 1999, which recorded through field observation, the types of existing land uses.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The land use element has the central role of correlating land use issues, policies, goals, and objectives into a comprehensive development program. As such, it is appropriate to note that the goals for planning and development, adopted as part of this Master Plan and as set forth below, are a reaffirmation of those goals originally established in the master plan effort of 1976. Accordingly, these aforementioned goals reflect the development determinations of a municipality seeking to preserve its cultural heritage and retain its traditional agricultural/rural character while integrating a suburban style of development that lends itself to the creation of a community. As reaffirmed, they are:

- Provision for the continued scenic and low-density nature of the Township thereby protecting the character of the Township.
- Protection of, and preservation of the Mullica Hill Village historical area.
- Protection of critical natural features and resources to include floodplains, woodlands, steep slopes, wetlands, and bodies of water.
- Promotion of the maintenance of agricultural uses, and in the alternative, the promotion of the orderly development of agricultural lands.

- Recognition of the importance of a proactive role, by the Township, in the preservation of open space.
- Preservation of roadway views to promote the visual rural character.
- Promotion of a well integrated, balanced community having a mix of land uses.
- Provision of community facilities and public services to meet the needs of present and future residents.

In furtherance of these goals, specific residential and commercial objectives have been adopted and are discussed within the framework of Harrison Township's planning areas.

## **EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING**

### THE VILLAGE OF EWAN

The Village of Ewan, located in the southern portion of the Township abutting the Borough of Glassboro, is indicative of the traditional rural/agricultural character of Harrison Township being defined by large lots, farms, orchards, and a mix of older and newer single family homes generally of wood frame construction. It is an area of great natural beauty possessing open spaces, scenic vistas, stream corridors, wetlands, and treelines. Despite the lack of infrastructure, the area is subject to heavy development pressure as evidenced by the Peach Ridge and Raccoon Crossing developments. Of particular concern are the threats that development imposes vis-à-vis loss of prime agricultural lands, loss of open space, disturbance of natural features, and the overall possible deleterious effect on community character.

From a zoning classification standpoint, the RR Rural Residential and R-1 Residential-Agricultural zones predominate providing for, through density controls: adequate living space, sufficient land area, individual ownership, and residential safety by exclusion of uses that would generate non-residential traffic.

The intent of the RR Residential District is to provide appropriately zoned land for the development of single family detached dwellings compatible with agricultural uses, and to permit other uses deemed compatible. A gross density of one dwelling unit per/two acres is required due to soil conditions and to maximize open space preservation within the context of a low-density residential area. The land use element takes into account the importance of farmland and open space preservation, and the consistency with which this concern has been reaffirmed by the Township. Accordingly, where possible, sensitive natural features of a proposed development should be located within the areas set aside for open space preservation. Although single family detached dwellings are a permitted use in the zone, no provision is made for "family member suites." With the advances in medical care, nutrition, and healthier living, the population is aging so that it is often the case where the elderly, for security reasons or other, need to live with children. As it is often difficult to ascertain when a single family home with a "family member suite" becomes a duplex, it is recommended that legislation be enacted so as, at a minimum, such suites can enjoy the status of a permitted conditional use thereby alleviating the need to petition for a use variance.

The intent of the R-1 Residential-Agricultural zone is to encourage residential development in response to housing needs while recognizing the need to preserve prime lands and protect the natural environment. A gross density of one dwelling unit/acre is required where waste water treatment is not available; one dwelling unit/.5 acres where said capacity exist with a cluster option of 18,750 square feet so as to maximize open space preservation and encourage the

maintenance of farming. The discussion of the RR Zoning District relative to preservation of open space, sensitive natural features, and “family member suites” is applicable.

With respect to institutional land uses, two parcels in the Village of Ewan are zoned INS-Institutional. The intent of the INS-Institutional Zoning District is to provide for public and quasi-public land uses compatible with surrounding land uses and thereby address the protection needs, municipal services needs, and cultural needs of a residential area. The two INS Districts are each comprised of one lot. The Methodist Church is located on the south side of Ewan Road near the intersections with New Street (Block 13, Lot 2). A fire hall and post office are located on the north side of Ewan Road just west of the intersection of Clems Run Road (Block 11, Lot 8). An overgrown baseball field with a rusting backstop is located to the rear of the fire hall. Given the articulated concern for the provision of services necessary for the enjoyment and convenience of residents and given the village concern about the lack of recreational facilities, recommend the re-introduction of a recreational use at the site.

Commercial land uses are located at the intersection of Ewan Road with Clems Run Road and at the intersection of Ewan Road with Richwood Road and have the respective zoning classifications of C-1 Village Center District and C-2 General Commercial District. Combined, these commercial zones provide for convenient neighborhood shopping and cultural facilities.

The intent of the C-1 Village Center District is to provide retail and service facilities serving the daily needs of the surrounding community while encouraging compact development. This C-1 zone intent is, as well, in concert with the desirability of fostering a mix of land uses for the convenience of the community and enhancement of the tax base. In the immediate vicinity of the C-1 zone, i.e. a general store use, a fire hall, a post office, a church, and a deteriorated building opposite the church, are found. The land use element recognizes the imperative for compact commercial development within a village center and the blending of such uses with the character of the surrounding area. To promote the intent and purpose of the Master Plan, recommend the expansion of the C-1 district in a westerly direction along Ewan Road. Bulk requirements, in particular lot area, should be reviewed given the less stringent requirement for lot area set forth in the C-2 District for which more intense commercial uses are envisioned.

The intent of the C-2 General Commercial District is to provide for more intense, traffic generating, commercial uses for which arterial locations are generally required thereby promoting resident safety by excluding from residential areas, to the extent possible, uses generating non-residential traffic, and at the same time, promoting commercial development attractive to the motoring public. To avoid the often garish nature of certain types of business uses, it is proposed that this area maintain a required building setback line with provisions for a landscaped front yard. Consideration should also be given for the provision of multiple occupant and tenancy (MOT) signs for those cases where compatible spin-offs may be generated and placed on the same lot with the original use.

#### THE VILLAGE OF RICHWOOD

The Village of Richwood is situated in the southeastern portion of Harrison Township being generally bounded by Bishop Road to the west and south, by the boundary with Mantua Township to the north, and by the boundary with the Borough of Glassboro to the east. This is an area similar in many respects to that of the Village of Ewan given the presence of large tracts, prime agricultural lands, active farms, residential uses, scenic vistas, and sensitive natural features. The greatest concentration of active farms are located in this portion of the Township. Lack of infrastructure is the principal constraint to development; however, large tracts have given way to the pressure of development as evidenced by the Woods of Harrison and Hunters Creek residential subdivisions. The threats imposed by development are the same as those articulated for the Village of Ewan. Richwood is the area, for which it is envisioned, the most significant development will occur given the Route 55 interchange at Route 322, and given the likelihood of

eventual sewer installation. With this future significant development of the Route 55 interchange area, increased pressure for farm land development should be anticipated.

From a residential zoning classification standpoint, the area is classified as being R-1 Residence-Agricultural generally to the west of Richwood Road with R-2 Residence District zoning to the east of the aforesaid road tending to parallel Route 55. No specific recommendations, beyond those made in the Ewan discussion, are advanced relative to the R-1 Residence-Agricultural Districts. With respect to the R-2 Residence Districts, the intent of the zone is to provide for agricultural uses and low density single family detached dwelling development at an intensity of one dwelling unit/acre, or with sewer, one dwelling unit/18,750 square feet so as to enable residential development while encouraging the preservation of prime agricultural lands and the protection of the physical environment. No cluster option is permitted. The adopted Master Plan recognized that the Route 55 corridor is an appropriate location for higher intensity residential, commercial, and industrial uses. An R-4 Special Residential District has been established along the west side of Aura Road north of Williamson Lane encompassing lot 2 of block 3, and lot 13 of block 22. This district has been established in recognition of the municipality's obligation to provide a realistic opportunity for the construction of low and moderate income housing, and in so doing satisfy, in part, Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) requirements. Maximum number of dwelling units is established as being equal to four (4) times the gross site area providing a minimum gross site area of one hundred (100) acres. This practice of pursuing substantive certification through the Council should be continued so as to ensure the municipality full enjoyment of important benefits that said certification provides.

To provide for public and quasi-public land uses so as to maintain the level of community facilities and public services necessary to support present and future residents, two areas of the village have been zoned INS - Institutional. The first area is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Lambs Road and Mullica Hill Road (Block 25, Lot 13) which is the site of the Richwood Academy. The second area is located on either side of Richwood Road just south of the intersection with Mullica Hill Road and further being described as Block 20, Lots 6 and 7 and Block 22, Lots 1, 1.02, and 14 upon which, in combination, are located the First Methodist Church of Richwood and athletic fields acquired from Richwood Academy. Given the Master Plan stated objective relative to the provision of recreation areas, full utilization of the athletic fields should be promoted.

Three commercial zoning classifications are found in Richwood: C-1 Village Center District, C-2 General Commercial District, and the C-3 Shopping Center Commercial District. As indicated in the Ewan discussion, the intent of the C-1 zoning district is to provide for the daily retail and service needs of the surrounding neighborhood. This zoning classification is located along the east side of Lambs Road between the boundary with Mantua Township and a point just north of the Aura Road intersection with Williamson Lane. C-1 zoning is also found on Mullica Hill Road at the confluence of Harrisonville Road and Richwood Road. Additionally, parcels zoned C-1 Village Commercial are located on the north side of Mullica Hill Road just north of the intersection with Lambs Road. To provide convenient access to commercial uses and promote the development of attractive and safe neighborhood commercial centers, it is recommended that the existing C-1 zone, on the north side of Mullica Hill Road at the intersection with Richwood Road be expanded westward so as to take better advantage of the traffic moving through the area.

Relative to the C-2 General Commercial Districts, located northeast and southwest of the Route 55 interchange, no specific recommendation is advanced as the permitted uses of the C-2 zoning classification are appropriate and compatible to an area close in proximity to Routes 55 and 322.

The C-3 Shopping Center Commercial District is located along the south side of Route 322 extending east from Route 55 to the boundary with the Borough of Glassboro. The intent of the zoning classification is primarily to provide areas for shopping center development having uniform architectural, building, and land use standards thereby encouraging commercial enterprise development in the immediate vicinity of limited access highway interchanges. The area has

excellent highway access and visibility. Permitted uses include shopping centers, retail outlets, professional and business offices, and automobile service centers. To maintain the character of the Township, recommend that consideration be given to increasing the green space ratio beyond the current ten percent (10%). Also, the use of shared drives and parking areas should be encouraged. Uniform building design and land use standards should be maintained according to a community design ordinance.

The Planned Industrial District - PI is contiguous to the C-3 zoning district on the east side of South Route 55. Larger tracts predominate upon which are principally located nursery uses. In support of the Township determination to avoid sprawl, and promote the development of clean industrial, office-warehouse, and commercial service uses in locations enjoying good regional roadway service, the zone seeks to provide suitable land area for multi-use centers in planned unit development. Retail, office, fabrication, and manufacturing typify the permitted uses of the zone. The bulk requirements, i.e. twenty (20) acre minimum tract size with a minimum three (3) acre lot size, are illustrative of the Township's efforts to promote orderly large scale development along major regional traffic arteries. It is envisioned that the highest and best use of the land, within this zoning classification, will occur with the provision of sewer collection and treatment capability.

#### THE VILLAGE OF MULLICA HILL

The Village of Mullica Hill is comprised of that land being bounded to the north by Mantua Township, to the west by Woolwich Township, to the south by the Village of Ewan, and to the east by the Village of Richwood. In terms of land uses, it is the most diverse of all of Harrison Township's villages, and in the last ten (10) years has experienced the greatest growth measured in terms of permits issued for new housing starts. Since 1990, over one thousand (1,000) such permits have been issued. Along the Route 322 corridor (the primary east-west roadway), between the boundary with Woolwich Township and the town center, are found large housing developments, farms, and west of Tomlin Station Road farmland having a Planned Industrial zoning classification. R-1 zoning predominates with R-2 zoning on the south side of Route 322 near Bridgeton Pike. This pike bisects the village running north and south. Along Bridgeton Pike, north of the Route 322 intersection, R-2 zoning predominates.

The cultural center and most historic area of the Township is found along Main Street. Quaint shops, historic structures, churches, and professional offices suggest an 18<sup>th</sup> Century ambiance. From a zoning standpoint, land is classified as being INS Institutional, C-1 Village Center, C-1H Historic Commercial, and R-2 Residential. The other zoning classifications having been discussed, the purpose of the C-1H zoning district is to provide for commercial and residential uses within existing buildings and within new buildings replicating the appearance of previous buildings thereby protecting and promoting this historic area which significantly contributes to the positive image and economic strength of the Township. Mixed land uses should be encouraged provided such uses are compatible with the historic character of the area. The historic area does not appear to have a core. To contribute to the development of an intimate character suggestive of a core, it is proposed, in the area defined by the current Historic District adopted by Ordinance 14-1992 and/or as may be amended by Harrison Township Council, that decorative sidewalk, period lighting, and street furniture be installed. To further enhance the economic potential of the area, recommend that the Township purchase/lease land in order to provide convenient off-street parking.

In satisfaction of the municipality's inclusionary element under C.O.A.H., an R-4 Special Residential District has been established along Bridgeton Pike on a one hundred (100) acre tract south of the intersection with Commissioners Road being further described as Block 57, Lot 22. Given the established maximum dwelling density of 4:1 i.e. four (4) times the gross site acreage, it is theoretically possible that as many as four hundred (400) dwelling units could be constructed. This type of density, considering the needs of future residents, gives credence to the recommendation of the Economic Development Committee vis-à-vis the re-zoning of the

contiguous parcel (Block 57, Lot 19) to a commercial zoning classification. Accordingly, recommend the parcel be assigned a C-2 zoning classification.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Historically, large lot zoning has been, at best, a temporary measure in terms of protecting prime agricultural lands and preserving open space. Recommend the Township assume a proactive posture through encouragement of, and participation in easement purchase programs so as to retire the development potential of prime farm land.
2. Recommend establishment of specific clearing limit ratios as a protection against the complete deforestation of wooded parcels.
3. Recommend enactment of "family member suite" legislation to alleviate use variance petitions.
4. Recommend that golf courses be specifically identified as being permitted uses in the RR, R-1, and R-2 Residence Districts.
5. Recommend the re-zoning of the parcel identified as Block 57, Lot 19 to a C-2 commercial classification so as to provide for the convenience and needs of future residents residing in the adjoining high density (R-4) area.
6. Recommend that the recreational needs within each of the village centers of Richwood, Jefferson, Ewan and Mullica Hill be addressed by the acquisition of additional property to satisfy the needs of the whole community.
7. Buffer requirements on all commercial uses shall be enforced as required under ordinance.
8. The concept of buffers between residential areas should be reviewed.
9. Recommend the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.