

**TOWNSHIP OF HARRISON
COUNTY OF GLOUCESTER**

**MASTER PLAN RE-EXAMINATION
REPORT**

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The original of this document was signed and
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TOWNSHIP OF HARRISON MASTER PLAN REPORT

INTRODUCTION

New Jersey communities, especially those in the southern New Jersey and Gloucester County sub-regions, are caught in a nexus of powerful, fundamental and unavoidable forces. These include severe fiscal constraints at all levels of governance, increasing service costs and expectations, extraordinary pressure for development with the resulting strains on circulatory and other systems, and state land use mandates and requirements for certain land usage. All of this co-exists with a dysfunctional and inequitable method of raising revenue to accommodate many of the needs of the people and communities of New Jersey.

Each community is unique and special, however; and each deserves to have as much of its individualized vision implemented within the many parameters imposed by those forces. This is the task before us: to make changes in the Master Plan in fulfillment of that vision while accommodating current realities and constraints. It is clear that within a relatively short time the entire available land area within Harrison Township will be committed to some developed land use whether it be residential, non-residential, or institutional.

There are finer gradations to impose, however, which can result in significant differences in impact beyond those usually associated with broad land use categorization. That is, within the broad category of residential there are a number of alternatives; each with their own consequences and impacts.

Clearly, Harrison Township is and will continue to be a basically residential community with centers of commerce and institutional uses at appropriate locations. It is the alternative configurations to these sectors that will determine the overall level of conformance to the Township's preferred vision.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et. seq., requires that a municipality must provide for a general reexamination of its master plan and development regulations at least every six years. There are specific items of conditions for that report in Section 89 of the MLUL as well. They are, that the reexamination report shall state:

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
- b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
- c. 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 or 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 recommend 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.
- 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.

The last Reexamination Report was adopted in April 2004. This Report adopts by reference the narrative included therein to address subsections (a) and (b). The balance of the required re-examination report documentation is reflected in the discussions herein. There are no redevelopment plans being recommended (40:55D-89e).

The major principle guiding most Southern New Jersey municipalities certainly including Harrison Township is simple in its expression yet extraordinarily complex in its execution: To preserve and enhance the qualities which make an area one which is attractive in which to live and raise a family, using what tools are available, all within preferred and imposed parameters.

All of the Township's stated Master Plan goals are variations or sub-sets of that principle. Such items as community character, low density, historic preservation, protection of agricultural lands, open space preservation, design guidelines and community balance are all different ways of saying the same thing, of envisioning the same future.

As noted however, there are alternative methods of achieving the same goals. Opportunities have been offered which allow a consideration of some of these options. In addition, significant demographic trends, including household formation and the aging population allow a fortuitous matching of today's reality with the Township's vision.

All of the various objectives specified in the recent re-examination of the Master Plan (April 2004), will either be advanced, maintained, or unaffected by the recommendations included below. Indeed, it is expected that the changes will enhance the municipality's ability to fulfill many of the goals due to increased efficiency of land use patterns, less traffic congestion, lowering the projected school enrollment, as well as other areas of concern.

More specifically, all of the following general policy statements adopted in April 2004 are enhanced by the changes recommended:

1. Diversifying the economic composition of the Township are priorities through increased commercial development.
2. The preservation of open space and cultivation of recreation opportunities within the Township should continue as well as exploring new possibilities for the acquisition of open space.
3. Preserving the rural quality of the Township, which is vital to the Township's identity and quality of life.
4. Integration through design of affordable housing units with new units should be encouraged.

Most importantly the April 2004 report recommended certain changes. These included: rezoning to create more commercial and professional office opportunities including along major corridors, and increasing yard areas where appropriate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We have re-reviewed all of the acreages, developments and preserved areas to determine total potential for development and, therefore population. The process, steps and numbers are below for the R-1 and R-2 and RR zones.

The DVRPC analysis was reviewed for accuracy in relation to the current data from the Township for developed and approved tracts, sensitive areas and preserved areas. The base number for gross acreage were verified by computer calculation.

R-1 Zone	Acres	
Gross Developable Acres	8033	
Developed Acres		1466
Approved Acres		1833
Protected Acres		944
Constrained		643
Developable Acres	3147	
10% for Infrastructure		315
Proposed Non-Residential Development		250
Net Probable Residential Acreage	2582	

R-2 Zone		
Gross Developable Acres	1334	
Developed Acres		707
Approved Acres		123
Constrained		63
Developable Acres	441	
10% for Infrastructure		44
Net Probable Residential Acreage	397	

Probable Future Development		
R-1	2,582 Acres x 1 =	2,582 units
R-2	397 Acres x 2 =	794 units
RR	272 Acres x .5 =	136 units
	Subtotal	3,512 units
	Population Per Unit	3.6
	Total	12,643

Total Estimated Population by Units	
	Units
2000 Census	2,939
2001-2005	1,080
Projected	3,512
Total	7,531
Persons per Unit x 3*	22,593

*Using 2000 Census average persons per units.

A more realistic estimate would break the units down as follows:

Year 2000 units - 2,939 x 3 = 8,817
 Post 2000 units - 4,592 x 3.6 = 16,531

Total 25,348 population

It is proposed that the densities be reduced by the following to generate fewer units:

<u>Zone</u>	<u>Units per Acre</u>	<u>Units</u>
R-1	0.50	1,291
R-2	1.00	397
RR	0.25	<u>68</u>
	Total	1,756

For this scenario, using the mean population of 3.6, yields a total population of 6,321. Added to the 2005 population of 12,017 gives 18,338. Any lowering of densities should include provisions for exempting minor subdivisions and a review of the definition of minor to prevent “creeping majors”. There should also be a provision to assure that existing conforming lots do not become non-conforming.

As one of the primary goals of the Township is the preservation of agriculture and open space, any ordinance revisions to lower densities should include feasible and practical incentives to allow active farming to continue on areas left undeveloped when a cluster subdivision design is utilized.

The principals of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) revolve around the concept of ‘Centers’ at various levels of magnitude. The reason behind this proposition are many and varied: conservation of land, concentration of infrastructure, generation of open space, lessening vehicular congestion, balancing of land uses and many others, generating social, physical and economic benefits. Mullica Hill is an extraordinary example of a center that evolved within an agriculture area because of transportation routes and major intersections.

There is now an additional opportunity for a Town Center in Harrison Township as a result of contemporary additions to the circulation system. The major intersection of Rts. 322/55 is probably the major node in this sub-region of Gloucester County. As such it has attracted significant interest for development of various types including most notably the Rowan University proposals to the east side of Rt. 55.

The current undeveloped status of most of the acreage in the Richwood section provides a unique opportunity for pro-active planning on a large scale. The recommendation is for a Town Center development to be added as an overlay in the area bounded by Rt. 322 from Rt.55 westerly to Lamb's Road, northerly to the Township line with Mantua Township, westerly to Barnsboro Road (CR609), southerly to Williamson Lane, easterly to Rt. 55, northerly to Rt. 322, with very specific use, bulk and design standards. (See Appendix A) These regulations would include proportions of various types of units as follows:

25% +/-	Age-restricted
25% +/-	Single-family detached
50% +/-	Single-family attached/flat

Based upon the most current demographic multipliers the following population would be generated at four (4) units per acre for 300 acres +/-.

300 age-restricted x 1.8 =	540
300 sfd x 3.0* =	900
600 sfa/flts x 2.3 =	<u>1,350</u>
Total	2,820

[*smaller units]

Any implementing ordinances should limit total development to these general parameters.

Thus, it is estimated that with a potential of 25% of the R-1 zone being developed as age-restricted and the Town Center option the new projected population would be:

2005	12,017
Less AC (570 x 1.8)	-1,026
+ Town Center	2,820
R-1, R-2 & RR:	
Age-Restricted	1,161 (645 x 1.8)
Standard	<u>5,158</u> (1,433 x 3.6)
Total	20,130

This is a reduction of +5,000 persons. As noted, it is probable that this is a low estimate of the reduction because the units being eliminated are those that would attract larger household sizes. The mix of units being proposed is, however, more reflective of the actual household mix now apparent in the society at large at all levels of measure: national, state and region-wide. The inclusion of the Town Center overlay should be accompanied by the removal of the AC option.

These recommendations are totally consistent with the principles of the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.