

# **HARRISON TOWNSHIP**

## **MASTER PLAN**

### **HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT**

**Public Hearing: July 16, 1998**

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT

The TOWNSHIP OF HARRISON was formed on January 31, 1844 and was comprised of land taken from the then existing townships of Greenwich and Woolwich. Originally named SPICER TOWNSHIP in honor of Jacob Spicer, an early settler, the township was renamed in honor of General William Henry Harrison, Ninth President of the United States. The township originally included the land area now comprising South Harrison Township.

### A. EARLY SETTLEMENT HISTORY of HARRISON TOWNSHIP

The township's earliest settlement by all historic accounts was by the Mullica (Molica) family in the very late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Erick, the father, is often cited as the first resident although recent research has indicated that it may have been Erick's son, William Mullica, who was the first member of the family to move into the township. This early settlement was on the north side of the Raccoon Creek in Mullica Hill. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century as Mullica Hill grew as the center of commerce and civic activity of the township, the village of Ewansville (Ewan), and the hamlets of Jefferson and Five Points (Richwood) were established as smaller communities.

The relative significance of these four village areas has been maintained through the last two hundred years as the township has maintained its rural agricultural economic base and activities into the late 1980's.

During the 1970's and 1980's, the agricultural activity in the township has slowly given way to single family home development. The majority of this home building has been on individual lots facing onto county roads. Virtually all of the lots have been sold as individual home sites and split from larger agricultural land holdings. Most of these homes have added to the agricultural-rural character of the Township as they have spread at low density along the secondary roads.

The development applications presented to the Planning Board during the 1988-9 period have been significantly different. These applications have been for major suburban subdivisions in the form of large tracts of land divided into lots for builders/developers. This type of housing development threatens to change the entire character of the township as viewed from the principal roadways.

In addition, this development in sheer numbers threatens to overwhelm the existing villages visually as well as create a population base that will in time desire more commercial services in the immediate vicinity.

The *Land Use Plan*, adopted in March 1989, addressed several of these issues.

With regard to maintaining and preserving the desirable character of the village center areas, the *Land Use Plan* has provided locations for larger shopping areas outside the village centers on lands that are large enough to house late 20<sup>th</sup> century development. These areas are more easily reached by automobile and can accommodate the necessary parking. These commercial sites include land at the interchange of U.S. Route 322 and N.J.S.H. Route 55 and land south of Mullica Hill, in the vicinity of the Municipal Building, facing onto N.J.S.H. Route 77. It is felt that by providing appropriate location for new commercial uses, the pressure to tear down two to

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three story homes on heavily treed lots in the villages and replacing them with one story convenience stores will be greatly reduced.

This action by itself does not ensure that the village centers of Mullica Hill, Jefferson, Ewan and Richwood will be immune from other economic and development pressures that might create undesirable changes. Therefore, the Planning Board placed a high priority on the preparation and adoption of an Historic element of the Master Plan; an element that sets out the goals and objectives for the continuing positive evolution of these village centers.

## **B. HISTORIC CHARACTER of HARRISON TOWNSHIP**

The “historic” character of Harrison has been established in four significant ways.

1. The settlement and growth of the village centers.
  - Mullica Hill and Ewan were advantageously located along streams and roadways.
  - Jefferson and Richwood developed at crossroads of early transportation routes.
2. The clearing and farming of the land with the exception of the heavily wooded and steeply sloped side of the stream corridors.
3. The development of the farm as the cluster of buildings including the main house, barns, equipment buildings, and other buildings within the visual framework of an open field or an orchard setting.
4. The evolution of the community (both within the villages and on the farms) as a collective of homes, businesses and civic organizations. These buildings have been constructed over many years, almost always with respect for the character of adjoining uses. In great part this respect flows from the common values and activities of township residents.

A review of the two principal architectural survey documents which contain information about the buildings in Harrison Township shows that the villages and farms have homes, businesses, and civic buildings dating from the immediate post revolutionary war period up through the 1980s. As a result, the “historic” village character is not that of a “theme park” but truly one of a working community with appropriate evolution.

The significance of the farm home and farm building complex within the township is reflected in the current listing of state and national register sires within Harrison.

- **Butler Farm** – early 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Mullica Hill – Swedesboro Road  
State Register 7/12/78  
National Register 12/101/78
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- **Horner Farm** – c. 1872  
Mullica Hill – Harrisonville Road  
State Register 7/12/78
- **Sherwin Farm** – early 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Route 322  
State Register 7/12/78
- **Richwood Methodist Church** – c. 1860  
Elmer Road  
State Register 7/12/78  
National Register 1/19/78
- **Jessup Farm** – mid 19<sup>th</sup> century  
High Street  
State Register 7/12/78

## C. VILLAGE CENTERS

### 1. MULLICA HILL

Mullica Hill was the first and is the largest of the four villages in the Township. According to an account of the early settlement of Harrison Township by S. Stewart Joslen, Jr. in a Gloucester County Historical Society publication, there was a settlement along the Raccoon Creek in 1686 when Gloucester County was organized. This was just nine years after the landing of 230 Quaker Colonists at New Stockholm (Bridgeport) in August of 1677.

Although a number of accounts of the early settlement of Mullica Hill credit Erick Mullica (Eric Molica) with first settling the township, Mr. Joslen traces the earliest settlement to Erick Mullica's three sons; Erick Jr., William, and Olof. Land on the north side of Raccoon Creek was surveyed to William Mullica by the Proprietors of the Province of West New Jersey in 1704. Unlike the settlements of Jefferson, Richwood, and Ewan, the settlement of Mullica Hill appears to have retained the same name throughout its history. Although the name Mullica Hill was surely used in common reference to the settlement for some time, the earliest formal reference is traced to the 1772 will of another early settler, Robert Zane and in which the land was referenced as "Mullica Hill."

The portion of the present day Mullica Hill that is south of Raccoon Creek lies on 650 acres of land surveyed to Jacob Spicer on November 1, 1734 and was originally known as Spicerville. Spicer, who first settled in Cape May, was a prominent settler. A man of great standing in the

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community, he served as witness and executor of many wills. He was one of the compilers of the Book of Provincial Laws. He built the first dwelling on the south side, probably on the same site as the existing Spicer House at 76 South Main Street which dates to c.1805. When Harrison Township was formed on January 31, 1844, with Mullica Hill as its principal village, it was named Spicer Township in honor of Jacob Spicer. A Quaker and a member of the Haddonfield meeting Spicer willed land for a Mullica Hill meeting and school in 1779.

The Mullica Hill Friends Meeting was subsequently the first religious denomination in the village, established in 1797. Their present building dates to 1808. It was followed by the Episcopalians, who first met in the grist mill in 1809 and a log cabin built for the purpose in 1813, before the construction of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in 1852. The First Baptist Church dates to 1845; the Methodist Episcopal Trinity Church was built in 1848.

In its earliest days of exploration and settlement, Mullica Hill was a farming community, but the waterpower of Raccoon Creek was quickly utilized for industrial purposes. It was on the north side of the creek that the early industries were located, notably the grist mill and the woolen factory. The origins of the mill are obscure, but the operation was taxed in 1750. At that time it was under the ownership of John Gosling, who had purchased 172 acres of land from William Mullica in 1733 and 15 adjoining acres from John Plumley in 1741. The first specific deed reference to a "Grist and filling mill, caring, spinning, and other machineries" is in 1826 when the property passed from the widow of Christopher Knisel to Joseph Doran of Burlington County. Doran's heirs sold 26 acres with "Grist mill, woolen factory, Mansion house, dwelling house, waterpower and privileges" to Malachi C. Horner in 1854 for \$14,000.00.

The grist mill was in operation through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Catering to local demands, the operation thrived. Its demise was the result of "improvement" – in the 1870s Joseph Mounce replaced the grinding stones with fluted cast iron rollers. The expense of this equipment combined with its inferiority in grinding flour led to the mill's failure. The mill building was cut in half, truncated, and moved to its present site on Mill Road. (It is shown as a gas station on the 1926 Sanborn map.)

The mill property was sub-divided in 1903, with portions sold to the Trustees of the Harmony Fire Company and the Farmers National Bank of Mullica Hill. These two institutions had important roles in the development of Mullica Hill. Connecting the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the fire company, the public water system, and the electric company all made use of the mill race and the waterwheel. The waterwheel provided both the power to generate electricity and the water and pressure needed for the public water system and fire fighting. The use of these facilities continued from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to immediately before World War II, when improvements were made to the electrical generating units and the water pumps.

The woolen factory/textile mill was built by Christopher Knisel around 1810, operated for over 50 years, and demolished in 1867. The building of the woolen factory coincided with the first building boom in Mullica Hill from 1790s-1830s. By 1800, the village had begun to take form; the post office was established c.1810. The economy was based on the local industry as well as

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agriculture. The early road network, funneling travelers through Mullica Hill, facilitated the growth and supported two hotel/taverns: The Blue Bell Tavern at the north, established by Robert Gerrard in 1724; and the Spicerville Tavern at the south, begun in 1772 by Captain John Cozens.

In 1822, the village had the two mills, the two taverns, the Friends Meeting and School, an Episcopalian Church, two stores, and 17 houses. By 1847 the list of activities included two taverns, several mechanic shops, one grist mill, one woolen factory, a tannery, Episcopalian Church, one Methodist Church, one Friends Meeting, one Academy, 60 dwellings, and approximately 300 inhabitants.

Mullica Hill became a stable and functional commercial agricultural area, providing a service center for the surrounding countryside. The village merited a "Business Directory" on the 1861 Lake and Beers Map, which noted an iron foundry, carriage makers, farm equipment manufacturer, a pump maker, a blacksmith, and a machinist in addition to the grist mill and woolen factory. In addition, it listed a lumber merchant, three other merchants, a watchmaker, four house carpenters, a plasterer, a confectioner (and librarian), three physicians, two teachers, two hotel proprietors, a Baptist minister and eight farmers.

By 1876, Everts and Stewart proclaimed Mullica Hill as "in every respect one of the most prosperous and enterprising villages in Gloucester County." At this time the population was estimated to be about 700.

While there was steady growth throughout the nineteenth century, the final and greatest period of growth was precipitated by the arrival of the Williamstown branch of the Atlantic City Railroad, which was extended from Glassboro to Mullica Hill in 1879. This led to the village's establishment as an extremely successful agricultural produce shipping center. The railroad shipping was intensified by the late nineteenth century revolution in farming practices brought about by the introduction of farm machinery and the standardization introduced by farm bureaus, and complimented by intensive shipping of farm produce by truck to the Philadelphia region. Mullica Hill's farm goods were even shipped to Boston in the early 1920s in what may have been America's first air freight shipment of fresh produce (Richardson). This period brought the construction of more service buildings, such as the Produce Warehouse, and many new dwellings from the 1880s until c. 1920.

Since the 1920s, Mullica Hill has been a mature, stable village of intermingled commercial and residential buildings. Growth in the area has been outside the village core, with the historic buildings on Main Street being reused rather than being replaced. When statewide highway improvements and changing transportation times made Mullica Hill less competitive as a produce center, the industry floundered after peaking in the 1940s and 1950s. The proximity of larger competitive commercial centers such as those in Woodbury and Glassboro also hurt the smaller commercial businesses on Main Street. These older businesses have been steadily replaced by antique and specialty shops. The first antique shop opened in 1967 and by 1977 there were 18 antique shops. Today there are over 85 shops and Mullica Hill has established a widely known reputation as a center of antique furniture.

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## 2. MULLICA HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT NOMINATION

In 1989 the nomination form along with the necessary supporting documentation was completed for the nomination of a Mullica Hill Historic District for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The Harrison Township Society and its consultant architect, Margaret Westfield, have undertaken the required studies, field surveys, and research for the nomination of the district. (Information for this portion of the Master Plan has been excerpted from their nomination document, copies of which are on file with the Historic Society and in the Township planning and zoning office.)

The area nominated as a historic district is outlined on Map 12, Proposed Historic District. This proposed district included Main Street and some of the secondary side street areas. The proposed district has a total of 149 buildings of which only 13 are non-contributing buildings. Of these, six were built since 1940, and seven are historic buildings which have been significantly altered, but which may eventually be restored to their original character.

## 3. EWAN

Ewan is a small hamlet of approximately 40 buildings. Previously known as Ewan Mills and Ewansville, it was named after Israel Ewan who founded the saw and grist mill on 126 acres of land he purchased from John Gibson. Ewan is situated near the intersection of Ewan Road (County Road 622) and Mullica Hill-Aura Road (County Road 623). It lies on the northeast side of Ewan Lane, which is formed by a mill dam.

An 1876 map showing a grist mill, a distillery, 25± residences, several stores, a school and a church is confirmed by a 1883 account in the History of the Counties of Gloucester, Salem, & Cumberland, New Jersey which records that:

“There are at this place two general stores, two blacksmith shops and one wheelwright shop, grist mills and saw mills, school-house, Methodist Church and about twenty-five dwellings.”

In 1895 the building complex housing the saw and grist mill, the blacksmith, and the wheelwright shop burned, the second or possibly third time such a fire occurred. As a result, Ewan has a mixture of residential buildings dating from more recent times to several stores dating around 1880.

In addition, two homes constructed for Thomas Iradell date to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. One dates to 1788, the other to 1793. The village also contains the Ewan Volunteer Fire Company building which houses the volunteer company incorporated in 1947.

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#### 4. JEFFERSON

Jefferson is located about one mile to the north of Mullica Hill on N.J.S.H. Route 45 which connects Mullica Hill with Woodbury. The town of Jefferson is a small crossroads settlement of about 45 buildings, predominantly 19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular homes. Jefferson has had several names. Its first, Cox's Hill, dates back to the settlement of the area by Lawrence Cox in 1808. Allenboro was a succeeding name honoring Thomas Allen, a large landholder in 1835.

Following the eras of Cox and Allen, "the inhabitants of the place had not the best reputation for hard labor, or, in other words hard work didn't agree with their frail constitution and the name Lazy Lawrence or Lawrenceville" was given to the locality, which bore the name until 1872 when the post office was established and the name changed to Jefferson.

Recent development in the outskirts of Jefferson included the Clearview Regional School District facilities, the Mill Valley subdivision, and the High Pointe residential development.

#### 5. RICHWOOD

This village has had many names: Five Points, Campbell's Corner, Campbell's Store, Mount Pleasant, White Horse, and Hell Town. The present name, Richwood, dates to 1888. Richwood itself dated to the late 1850's when the five points intersection was a significant cross road location. The Mount Pleasant Methodist Episcopal Church, now the Richwood Methodist Church was established in 1861. The church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in January, 1989.

The older development within the village faces directly on the principal roadways at a visual density that belies the large orchard – farming activities surrounding the village. As a result of the opening of N.J.S.H. Route 55, the amount of traffic on U.S. Route 322 and on Barnsboro-Elmer Road and Harrisonville-Richwood Road should increase and have a pronounced effect on the older homes and buildings of Richwood.

#### **D. GROWTH and DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES of the 1990s**

Today these four village centers are beginning to be surrounded by late 20<sup>th</sup> century development which is taking a decidedly different physical form.

This new form has at its center the need to accommodate the automobile as the predominant form of transportation. This is true for homes as well as commercial, office, and other employment activities. (Suburban families of today generally have two vehicles and often three or four.) Thus, within the village areas there is a conflict between historic forms of development (such as narrow, uncurbed, tree lined streets with homes and businesses located relatively close to the street) and the modern demands for wide roadways and the expansive parking areas which accompany new commercial and residential development.

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The village centers in Harrison have developed over several periods of style and have survived periods of economic strength as well as depression. The economic boom of the later part of the 1980s has now reached into these village centers in the form of applications for development of vacant land and applications for the redevelopment of existing sites. Some of this redevelopment is in the form of the reuse of existing buildings.

However, some of the more destructive redevelopment has been and will be in the form of new uses in new buildings on sites previously housing historically significant structures.

The township, in adopting an Historic Element to its Master Plan, has the goal of blending new development into the existing community without destroying the character and quality which makes the villages so desirable. Likewise, it is a goal of the Master Plan to promote the preservation and restoration of those significant individual historic buildings located outside of the village centers.

#### **E. HISTORIC PRESERVATION POLICIES**

Historic buildings and districts are valuable to the Township and its residents for many reasons and the preservation of historic structures is to be encouraged and promoted. To promote consideration of historic resources the following goals and objectives have been adopted as part of the Harrison Master Plan:

1. Identify, evaluate, and designate historic resources as physical components of the Township's cultural heritage by:
    - a. Identifying, according to uniform criteria, historic resources in all areas of the township;
    - b. Identifying, for the purpose of protection, the environmental setting of historic resources;
    - c. Surveying and documenting archaeological resources; and
    - d. Increasing the number of properties listed on the National and State Register of Historic Places.
  2. Promote a favorable community image through preservation of historic resources and their environments.
  3. Protect historic resources through appropriate regulation & enforcement measures by:
    - a. Ensuring that the subdivision regulations and the zoning for historic resources are compatible with the retention of their historic features;
    - b. Ensuring that provisions of the building code, to the degree permitted by state legislation, are sympathetic to preservation so that the improvement and maintenance of historic resources is not discouraged.
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- c. Enacting appropriate township ordinances, including zoning, site plan and subdivision regulations to promote the economic use and reuse of historic buildings and sites in a manner consistent with maintaining the existing buildings and being a good neighbor to adjoining sites; and
    - d. Balancing private property rights with the public interest in regulating the alteration or demolition of historic resources by providing for a balance of incentives and controls.
  4. Assist the private market in the use of preservation incentives, financial and other, considering such means as funding assistance and tax reform by:
    - a. Acquiring Certified Local Government status for the Township; and
    - b. Investigating and enacting tax incentives for the rehabilitation and maintenance of historic buildings and their immediate environs.
  5. Support the position that historic preservation is in the public interest by:
    - a. Adopting the Historic Element of the Master plan which recognizes the Township's diversity and rich heritage of historic resources;
    - b. Informing owners of historic properties about funding for preservation as well as about the economic and social benefits of preservation;
    - c. Increasing the public education aspect of historic preservation through means such as school programs and tourism;
    - d. Encouraging the use of publicly owned historic properties by the community; and
    - e. Establishing a central clearinghouse with preservation information and advisory services.
  6. Use Historic preservation as one means to promote revitalization of historic buildings and countryside conservation by:
    - a. Encouraging the private sector to make adaptive reuse of historic buildings in order to prolong or reestablish their useful life;
    - b. Coordinating historic preservation efforts; and
    - c. Preserving the essential visual character of rural areas and farming communities.
  7. Support local private efforts to preserve historic resources by working with private groups to promote preservation.
  8. Capitalize on the tourism potential of historic resources, recognizing the contribution it can make to economic vitality, by:
    - a. Making public sites available to visitors;
    - b. Seeking the support and participation of the private sector in sponsoring restoration and adaptive uses;
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- c. Assisting in the development of tours and “self-guiding” tour brochures; and
- d. Operating publicly owned historic resources so that they serve the public well and contribute as much as possible to their own support.

## **F. HISTORIC PRESERVATION IMPLEMENTATION POLICIES**

In order to maintain and enhance the individual historic structures within Harrison and to maintain the village character and the desirable qualities of the four village areas, it is recommended that several methods be used to promote the preservation of historic buildings and sites.

These methods address:

- 1) treatment of individual buildings;
- 2) consideration of different needs for different uses; and
- 3) the need for historic district zoning and/or policies that address vacant land and non-historic buildings located in the village areas.

To move forward to the implementation of municipal ordinances which will properly address the preservation goals of the township, the following actions are recommended to be undertaken and completed within the calendar year 1990.

### 1. Map Historic Village Areas for Mullica Hill, Ewan, Jefferson and Richwood.

Two different sets of information should be merged to provide the mapping of proposed Village Districts for the four village areas.

- As part of the Master Plan, the planning consultant for the township has prepared and updated base maps for the four village areas. Mullica Hill and Jefferson are both shown on one map; Richwood and Ewan are shown on a second map. The maps have been prepared at the scale of 1” = 400’ which is the same scale as the 1985 aerial photographs currently available for the Township and the 1990 aerial photographs.
- The Harrison Township Historical Society and its architectural consultant, Margaret Westfield, have refined prior historic survey data to complete the Mullica Hill Historic District National Register Nomination. As a result, the information necessary to prepare an historic buildings and site map for each of the four villages is available.

It is recommended that the Harrison Township Historical Society or its consultant utilize the base maps prepared by the planning consultant and provide a map showing this historic buildings and sites according to the following differentiated categories:

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- a. Historic Buildings and Sites listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- b. Historic Buildings and Sites listed or eligible to be listed on the State of New Jersey Register of Historic Places.
- c. Historic Buildings and Sites listed or eligible to be listed on the Gloucester County Register of Historic Sites.
- d. Buildings and sites of local significance not eligible for any of the above official listings.

Additional information that would be useful and which can be shown on one or more maps would include:

- a. Land Use of the buildings and sites (e.g. residential, retail sales, office, civic, public, etc.)
- b. The age of buildings by time period of construction.
- c. The extent of environmentally sensitive lands including wetlands, street slopes, and flood plain as well as the mapping of vegetation.

The result of aggregating this information will be a Village Map for each area that accurately represents the character of the villages.

From this map, the Township Planning Board can determine the extent of the “Historic Village” areas that should be provided with zoning, site plan, and subdivision regulations which will promote the preservation of the village character as well as the individual buildings.

2. Map the individual Historic Buildings and Sites of significance that are outside the village areas as defined above.

These buildings and sites should be mapped according to the same national, state, county, and local criteria as described above.

The significance of this selection of buildings or sites lies not in their collective aspect, but in their unique representation of a particular style of building within the agricultural landscape of a previous time.

For many of these buildings or farm complexes, their continued use as a single family home is threatened when the farm is sold and becomes the site of a subdivision development. It has been found that many of these buildings can not be economically maintained by the single family owner and thus the developers often tear down good structures which have an extended useful life, but for some other use.

It is recommended that the Township consider adopting zoning and subdivision regulations that will permit and perhaps promote the preservation of such historic farm

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houses and structures by allowing them to be used for appropriate uses other than single family homes. This might include the conversion of some of the larger farm homes to two family occupancy in accordance with an approved historic renovation program or for the dedication of particularly appropriate historic buildings to the Township or non-profit organizations for educational, historic, or recreational sites.

3. Adopt development regulations that do not permit the demolition of any buildings or sites listed on the National or State Historic Registers unless an alternative economic use analysis has been prepared and submitted to the township for its review and consideration.

It has been repeatedly found that for most historic buildings there is a buyer willing to renovate and maintain the historic building in a positive way. The problem to be resolved is usually lack of knowledge or awareness that a building is in jeopardy. The form of public disclosure described above has been found to be extremely effective in notifying potential buyers that historic sites and buildings are threatened or available.

4. It is recommended that the provisions of the C-1 Historic Commercial Zone be expanded to be applicable to both residential and commercial use property in the Historic Village Areas to be mapped as described above.

The current provisions apply to several select areas that are Zoned C-1 Historic Commercial. The concepts of the district have broader application and can be a positive force in all four of the village areas. Once the Historic Village Areas are defined, existing zoning can be amended or new zoning established to require that new construction maintain the general character and appearance of prior buildings on the site or of the adjoining and nearby uses which establish the existing character of the immediate area.

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