

Harrison Township, New Jersey

Preliminary Redevelopment Investigation

Block 29.06, Lot 10

October 28, 2014

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Acknowledgements

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Study Authorization

Harrison Township through Resolution No. 198-2014 has requested that Group Melvin Design perform a Preliminary Investigation into Block 29.06, Lot 10 to ascertain whether this area qualifies under N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-5 as an “Area in Need of Redevelopment.”

Figure 1 identifies the location and surrounding environs of the Investigation Area

1.2 Description of Site Area

Block 29.06, Lot 10 is located on Barnsboro Rd (Gloucester County 609) on the border between Harrison Township and Mantua Township. In 2014, former Block 259 Lot 7 was annexed from Mantua Township and was incorporated into Harrison Township Block 29.06, Lot 10. Figure 1 is current as of the publication of this report.

Block 29.06, Lot 10 (“Study Parcel”) is owned by Nanak Produce & Marketing, Inc and currently operates as a fruit distribution center. According to MOD IV tax data, the assessed land value for taxes purposes in 2014 of the parcel was \$214,500, and the improvement value was \$99,200, resulting in a total value of \$313,700.

Based on aerial photography made available on historicaerials.com, the building was constructed in more than one phase, the majority of which was constructed between 1951-1957.

1.3 Summary of Findings

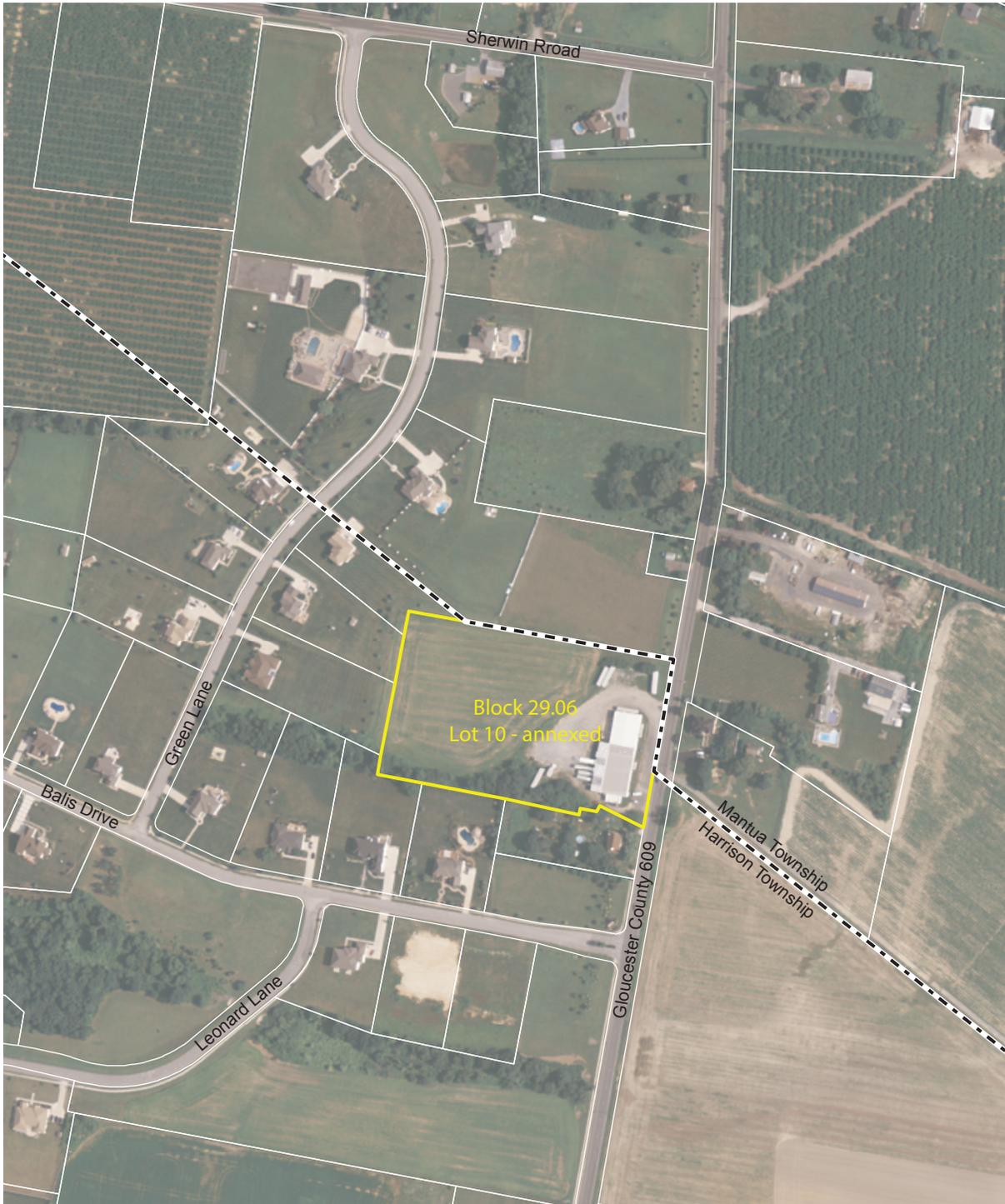
The following analysis finds that Block 29.06, Lot 10 should be designated an area in need of redevelopment. The site has a poorly designed circulation system, insufficient loading areas, and inadequate facilities for parking large commercial trucks. As a result, trucks are parked haphazardly on site, gravel is often carried into the drive lanes of Barnsboro Rd, and loading/unloading is being performed in spaces not designed for that purposes. The result is a clear risk to those who both work on site and for those who drive past it along Barnsboro Rd (Gloucester County 609).

1.4 Non Condemnation

Resolution No. 198-2014 authorized the Study to establish a “Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Area” and the findings of this report are consistent with that authorization.

As of 2013, the Legislature required that Preliminary Investigations state whether the redevelopment area determination shall authorize the municipality to use all those powers provided by the Legislature for use in a redevelopment area, including eminent domain. Those Redevelopment Areas where the municipality declares it will not use eminent domain are referred to as “Non-Condemnation Redevelopment Areas.”

Figure 1. Aerial of Site



2.0 Redevelopment Law

2.1 Purpose of the 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 New Jersey 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.

2.2 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 Council. 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).
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 the 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.

3.0 Statutory Criteria

A study area qualifies as being an "Area in Need of Redevelopment" if it meets at least one of the eight statutory criteria listed in Section 40A:12A-5 of the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law:

- A. The generality of buildings are substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated, or obsolescent, or poses 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 properties therein or other similar conditions which impede land assemblage or discourage the undertaking of improvements, resulting in a stagnant and unproductive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare, which condition is presumed to be having a negative social or economic impact or otherwise being detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the surrounding area or the community in general.
- 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.

N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-3 further states that "A redevelopment area may include lands, buildings, or improvements which of themselves are not detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare, but the inclusion of which is found necessary, with or without change in their condition, for the effective development of the area of which they are a part." This is commonly referred to as the "Section 3 Criteria."

According to the Redevelopment Handbook, this section allows for the inclusion of properties that do not meet the statutory criteria but are,"essential to be included in the designation to effectively redevelop the area." Examples of such properties include properties located within and surrounded by otherwise blighted area, property that are needed to provide access to an area to be redeveloped, areas needed for infrastructure or utilities, or properties that otherwise could be determined to be critical to the area's successful redevelopment.

4.0 Applicability of Statutory Criterion “D”

4.1. Statutory Language

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.

4.2. Obsolete Layout

Block 29.06 Lot 10 is currently operating as a fruit distribution center, a use that is not allowed under the current zoning. A large volume of truck traffic, including 18-wheeled vehicles, comes on and off of the site throughout the week.

4.2.a. Parking

The building and the site are not designed to accommodate this level of traffic. There is no adequate location for parking or storing vehicles that are not involved in loading and unloading. A Google Satellite image taken in 2011 and a Bing Maps “Birds-eye” image both demonstrate the haphazard parking that occurs throughout the site. As can be seen in the Figure 3, the parking of vehicles can impede the circulation around the site. This poses a threat to people who both walk and drive around the site. Because of the poor condition of the circulation surface after it rains (see 4.2.b Gravel Circulation Surface), large trucks may have a particularly difficult time stopping to avoid these hazards, creating an additional safety risk.

4.2.b. Gravel Circulation Surface

The site is not paved and the circulation space is all gravel. As illustrated in Figure 4, the high volume of vehicle traffic that comes on and off of the site carries a large amount of gravel into the drive lanes of Barnsboro Rd (Gloucester County 609). This gravel is a serious threat to both bicyclist and to motorcyclists.

According to *NJDOT Bicycle Compatible Roadways and Bikeways - Planning and Design Guidelines*,

Sand, gravel and other debris in the bicyclist’s path present a potential hazard. In order to minimize the possibility of debris from being drawn onto the pavement surface from unpaved intersecting streets and driveways, during new construction, reconstruction and resurfacings, all unimproved intersecting streets and driveways should be paved back to the right-of-way line or a distance of 3.0 meters (10 feet).

With only two tires, motorcycles have less tire traction than other vehicles. Gravel such as that pictured in Figure 4 will pose a serious threat to any motorcyclist that may have to avoid a truck or other vehicle leaving the study site.

In addition, the gravel circulation space does not drain properly. As a result, the area where trucks must stop before turning onto Barnsboro Rd (Gloucester County 609) is muddy during and after rain events. The poor traction of entering and existing vehicles poses a serious risk to the community

Figure 2. Google Earth Satellite Image



Figure 3. Bing Birds Eye (looking West)



Figure 4. Google Earth Satellite Image



Figure 5. Bing Birds Eye (looking East)



because of the large size and weight of these trucks.

4.2.c. Loading

The building is not well designed to accommodate the large amount of traffic needed to properly operate a distribution center. As illustrated in figures 2 - 4, the front of the building has three loading areas that are fenced off to prevent their use. This is due to the fact that the building set back 45 feet from the road. A typical 18-wheeled truck is often longer than 50 feet, making loading into these area incredibly dangerous.

In addition, the rear loading bays are clearly inadequate in both quality and quantity. As demonstrated by the frequent parking of vehicles throughout the site and not at properly designed loading areas, the facility is operating beyond capacity. Figure 5 shows that two trucks are parked in the rear of the building but not using loading areas, most likely because the docks are not designed at the proper height to accommodate smaller trucks.

4.3. Detrimental to the safety, health, morals, or welfare of the community.

As noted above, the issues with the circulation system and loading areas create serious risks to the safety, health, and/or welfare of the community. The site make driving along Barnsboro Rd (Gloucester County 609) more dangerous. In addition, the site design and the lack of a paved circulation space and well designed loading areas makes it dangerous for those who walk and drive around the site.

4.4. Conclusions

The Study Site meets statutory Criterion "D" and therefore qualifies as an Area in Need of Redevelopment. The poorly designed circulation system, lack of appropriate loading areas, and unpaved driving areas on site all contribute to an area that poses significant risks to the safety of those traversing along Barnsboro Rd (Gloucester County 609) and those who work on site.