

WILLOW OAKS REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

HARRISON TOWNSHIP, NJ

October 6, 2020

Block: 32

Lot: 4

Prepared by:



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Harrison Township designated Block 32, Lot 4 as a "Non-Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment" in accordance with the provisions of the New Jersey Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL) (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A.1 et seq.). For the purposes of this Redevelopment Plan, Block 32, Lot 4 shall be referred to as the "Willow Oaks Redevelopment Area" or the "Redevelopment Area."

On May 20, 2019, via Resolution #113-2019, Harrison authorized an investigation to determine the need for redevelopment of Block 32, Lot 4 pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-6. A Preliminary Investigation for Determination of an Area in Need of Redevelopment was prepared by Robert F. Melvin, PP/AICP, of Pennoni. That report concluded that Block 32, Lot 4 qualified to be declared a "Non-Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment" in accordance with the LRHL. As a result, the Planning Board recommended to the Governing Body of the Township of Harrison that Block 32, Lot 4 be designated as an "Area in Need of Redevelopment." Subsequently, Township Council designated Block 32, Lot 4 as an "Area in Need of Redevelopment" memorialized by Resolution, which also directed the Planning Board to prepare a Redevelopment Plan.

As such, this Redevelopment Plan has been prepared to articulate the Township's vision for this Redevelopment Area, and describes the standards and procedures for the development and redevelopment of Block 32, Lot 4 in accordance with the LRHL.

1.2 Site Description

Block 32, Lot 4 is a triangular lot that is +/- 3.99 acres in size that is wedged between Mullica Hill Road (U.S. Route 322) and Cedar Road (County Route 667). The lot is bounded generally to the north, east, and west by residential development, and to the south by Hoagland Oil Services and rotational crop fields. Gloucester County property tax records indicate that there has been no offer for the site for the last three years. The boundary of the redevelopment plan site is illustrated in **Figure 1 on page 2**.

1.3 Redevelopment Planning in New Jersey

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 LRHL requires municipalities to perform several 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 municipality'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 Governing Body. The required steps are as follows:

Figure 1. Location of Redevelopment Site



Source: NJ MOD IV ArcGIS Data.

1. 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).
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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."
6. The Governing Body may then act on the Plan by passing an ordinance adopting the Plan as an amendment to municipality's Zoning Ordinance.

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

2.0 RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES

2.1 Local Goals and Objectives

Harrison Township's most recent Master Plan Reexamination was completed in 2013. The goals of this Redevelopment Plan are derived directly from Township Master Plan policy and goal statements, and as such its vision is consistent with the goals of Harrison Township. This Redevelopment Plan furthers the following list of goals and objectives—and the broader vision—for Planning and Development in Harrison Township identified in the Township Master Plan.

2.1.a. Township Goals for Planning and Development

1. **Community Character:** “Provide for the continued scenic and low density nature of the Township by guiding development and land uses to protect and enhance the character of the Township. Consider the importance of existing village centers to the present Township landscape and image and develop a land use plan and development regulations which protect their integrity.”
2. **Visual Character:** “Establish design guidelines for primary roadways and new developments to enhance the uniformity of the Township. - Establish policies governing the development of land that will promote the preservation of views from the roadway and which will retain the visual “rural character” of the community. It is in the Township’s interest to promote high quality development through architecturally compatible design.”
3. **Community Balance:** “Encourage mixed uses such as residential, commercial, and industrial to create a well integrated community. A mix is encouraged for the convenience of the residents and enhancement of the tax base of the Township. The land use plan and development regulations should be designed to minimize conflicts between activities so that one land use does not adversely affect neighboring land uses.”**Township Master Plan**
4. **Natural Features:** Protect the critical natural features and resources of the Township such as floodplains, woodlands, steep slopes, wetlands, and bodies of water. Use these natural features to organize and separate where necessary different types and intensities of land uses in the Township. Establish controls on the permitted disturbance of critical resources during land development.

2.1.b. Employment Objectives

1. Promote the development of clear industrial uses, office-warehouse uses, and commercial services uses in locations which have good regional roadway service which will not adversely affect existing or proposed residential development.

3.0 REDEVELOPMENT VISION

3.1 Development Plan

The Cedar Road site is a prominent property wedged between the intersection of Mullica Hill Road and Cedar Road. The site's location, while strategically located within the region, has attributes that make it difficult to attract viable commercial users to the site, such as limited opportunity for access, as it is at the intersection of two higher volume roadways. However, it is those same attributes that make the site particularly suitable for the proposed medical office facility. The vision for this Redevelopment Plan is to redevelop the Cedar Road site into a hub location supporting several medical practices.

3.2 Development Program

The overall goal of this Redevelopment Plan is to put the Willow Oaks site back into productive use in a manner that meets the Township's goals while fostering a compatible land use for the surrounding circulation patterns. The development program for the site will include a medical office, stormwater basin, parking area, and attractive landscaping/buffering.

Additionally, the main obligation of the Redevelopment is to correct the faulty circulation pattern that currently exists in the area. Cedar Road meets Mullica Hill Road at a sharp angle, which creates a very dangerous intersection for motorists turning left onto Cedar Road from Mullica Hill Road or right from Cedar Road onto Mullica Hill Road. The solution that this Redevelopment Plan proposes is to create a connecting "slip" road—as seen in **Figure 2 on page 5**—to obviate the need to make the dangerous turns noted above by providing an alternate route.

The development program shall include:

- A roughly 12,000 square foot office building that shall be one (1) story tall.
- Approximately 106 parking spaces phased with development and tenancy of medical offices
- A stormwater basin large enough to fulfill the demands of the offices and parking area on site
- Buffering and landscaping around the perimeter and within the interior of the site
- A single access point from Cedar Road

3.3 Bulk Standards

3.3.a. Permitted Principal Uses:

1. Medical Offices
2. Professional Offices

3.3.b. Permitted Accessory Uses:

1. On-Site Parking
2. On-Site Stormwater Management

Figure 2. Redevelopment Site Conceptual Plan



- 3. Buffering and landscaping
- 4. Dumpster

3.3.c. Lot Requirements

- 1. Minimum lot area: 3.99 acres
- 2. Minimum lot width: 695 feet

3.3.d. Setbacks & Height

- 1. Minimum parking setback along Mullica Hill Road: 25 feet
- 2. Minimum parking setback along Cedar Road: 25 feet
- 3. Minimum parking setback along new connecting "split" road: 25 feet
- 4. Minimum building setback from neighboring residential parcels: 50 feet
- 5. Minimum building setback from Mullica Hill Road: 50 feet
- 6. Maximum building height: 35 feet

3.3.e. Buffers

- 1. Minimum landscaped buffer along all street right-of-ways: 25 feet
- 2. Minimum landscaped buffer along border with neighboring residential parcels: 50 feet

3.3.f. Parking

1. Parking shall meet **Section 225-86 “Off-Street Parking, Loading and Bicycle Parking Regulations”** of Harrison’s Township Zoning Code.
2. Parking shall also meet **Section 225-70(C)-3 “Professional Office District: Use regulations – Special use regulations”** and **Section 225-71(B) “Professional Office District: General regulations – Parking Space specifications”** of Harrison’s Township Zoning Code.
3. Minimum parking stall size: 9 feet x 18 feet

3.3.g. Multi-Purpose Path Requirements (Subject to JLUB Approval)

1. Path should accommodate two-way travel
2. Minimum width of path: 8 feet
3. Minimum graded area on each side of path: 2 feet
4. Landscaping in the form of shrubs and deciduous street trees shall be employed on the sides of paths to provide both regulation of the micro-climate and a physical and psychological separation between the path users and vehicular traffic.
5. Minimum distance of path from roadway: 10 feet
6. Bituminous paving shall be used for primary path surface

3.4 Design Standards: Architecture

The design and location of all buildings shall be subject to review and approval of the Joint Land Use Board for consistency of the goal that building locations and architecture shall be complimentary to the context of the site.

1. Architecture
 - a. To avoid large, monotonous walls, all buildings façades shall be modulated in a way that divides large faces into the appearance of several sections. Such modulation may be achieved with roofline offsets, bay windows, vertical breaks, balconies, or other architectural treatments. There shall be no “back” façade.
 - b. Permitted materials on facades include glass and masonry materials.
 - c. A minimum of 18% of all facades shall be glass.
 - d. Building shall be Hardiplank or masonry construction to be approved by the Joint Land Use Board.

3.5 Design Standards: Site Plan

3.5.a. Site Furniture

Site furniture and lighting shall be designed and implemented to the satisfaction of the Joint Land Use Board.

Figure 3. Site Edge Diagram



3.5.b. Stormwater Management

Stormwater management shall be designed and implemented to the satisfaction of the Joint Land Use Board with the requirement that it shall be a landscape amenity and its size and visual impact be softened through the use of strategic landscape treatment.

3.5.c. Site Landscaping

Site landscaping shall be designed and implemented to the satisfaction of the Joint Land Use Board.

3.5.d. Signs (Subject to JLUB Approval)

1. All signs shall conform to the minimum standards set forth in **Section 225-70(C)-4 "Professional Office District: Use regulations - Special use regulations"** of Harrison's Township Zoning Code.
2. Signs shall integrate with the architecture and shall be designed and implemented to the satisfaction of the Joint Land Use Board.
3. All facade signs, where lit, shall be indirectly lit through the use of downward pointing gooseneck fixtures.
4. All free-standing signs shall be indirectly lit.
5. One freestanding sign not to exceed eight (8) feet in height and a maximum of 20 square feet shall be permitted along Mullica Hill Road.

6. One facade sign shall be permitted on the building facade facing Mullica Hill Road.
7. One freestanding sign not to exceed eight (8) feet in height and a maximum of 20 square feet shall be allowed along Cedar Road.
8. One facade sign per tenant—for a maximum of two facade signs in total—shall be allowed along Cedar Road.
9. The total area of all facade signs shall be limited to a total of 50 square feet with no single sign to exceed 30 square feet.
10. Freestanding signs shall be set back a minimum of 15 feet from the R.O.W.
11. Directional signs at points of ingress and egress shall be permitted at the discretion of the Joint Land Use Board.

3.5.e. Buffers

Buffers shall be designed and implemented to the satisfaction of the Joint Land Use Board. Quality and size of buffers to be determined at site plan review by the Joint Land Use Board.

There shall be three primary buffer types within the Willow Oaks Redevelopment Area:

1. The buffer along Cedar Road shall be a minimum of 25 feet in width, primarily low and meadow-like, and shall have two conditions:
 - a. Along the stretch of Cedar Road directly behind the parking lot, the buffer shall consist of a series of shrubs 3 & 1/2 to 4 feet in height that are thick enough completely hide the bumpers and grills of parked cars—as well as their headlights—from view. This buffer shall also be planted with ornamental flowers and/or grasses and trees 25 feet on-center.
 - b. Along the stretch of Cedar Road that is not directly behind the parking lot, and within the triangular median between Cedar Road, Mullica Hill Road, and the connecting “slip” road, the buffer shall be primarily meadow-like, and does not need to include any specific trees, shrubs, flowers, or grasses. Rain gardens are encouraged to be planted in these areas.
2. The buffer along Mullica Hill Road shall be a minimum of 25 feet in width, slightly more densely planted than the buffer along Cedar Road, and shall also have two conditions:
 - a. Along the stretch of Mullica Hill Road directly behind the parking lot, the buffer shall consist of a series of shrubs 3 & 1/2 to 4 feet in height that are thick enough completely hide the bumpers and grills of parked cars—as well as their headlights—from view. This buffer shall also be planted with ornamental flowers and/or grasses and trees 25 feet on-center.
 - b. Along the Stretch of Mullica Hill Road that is not directly behind the parking lot, the buffer shall consist of low bushes, ornamental flowers and grasses, and may include trees planted 25 feet on-center.
3. The buffer along the neighboring residential lots shall be a minimum of 50 feet in width, and shall be planted with thick, tall bush or tree species, such as arborvitae, that completely obscure from view the medical office use on Block 32, Lot 4 from the homes on Block 32, Lots 3.01 and 3.02.

3.5.f. Dumpsters

Dumpsters shall have a minimum 8 foot high masonry enclosure buffered with landscaping.

3.5.g. Lighting

1. Site lighting shall be designed to the satisfaction of the Joint Land Use Board.
2. All lighting shall be designed and installed to avoid off-site spillage to the greatest extent possible and consistent with safety.
3. Light sources shall use full cut-off features to minimize impacts outside the boundaries of the site.

3.6 COAH Regulations

All applications for development for the Subject Site Redevelopment Area shall comply with all state and local laws as they relate to low and moderate income housing.

3.7 Infrastructure and Public Improvements

3.7.a. Sewage

The Subject Site Redevelopment Area falls within the existing Sewer Service Area and must be served by public sewer at the developer's expense.

3.7.b. Water

New Jersey American Water serves Harrison Township and other parts of Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester Counties and shall be provided at the developer's expense.

3.7.c. Other Utilities

Any new utility lines constructed to serve the Subject Site Redevelopment Area will be buried underground in accordance with Harrison Township's ordinances and shall be at the developer's expense.

3.8 Relocation of Displaced Residents and Businesses

As this Redevelopment Area contains vacant land, there will be no displacement of either residents or businesses that requires a Workable Relocation Assistance Plan.

3.9 Affordable Housing

As of the date of the adoption of the resolution finding the area to be in need of redevelopment, there were no housing units in the Redevelopment Area that are affordable to low and moderate income households because the Redevelopment Area is comprised of vacant land. As such, there is no need for the provision of affordable replacement housing.

4.0 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

4.1 Relationship to County Master Plan

Gloucester County last adopted a Development Management Plan in February 1982. The following goal of this Development Management Plan supports the Willow Oaks Redevelopment Plan:

- “To encourage a growth pattern that will concentrate rather than disperse development throughout the County.”

In addition, the plan identifies Growth Areas within the county, including “surrounding Mullica Hill in Harrison Township” (p.78). The plan stresses the importance of these growth areas to guide development into established areas. This helps to lower public infrastructure costs and preserves farmland and natural resources (p.78).

This redevelopment area is well-served by existing infrastructure, as it is located at the intersection of two major roadways, Mullica Hill Road and Cedar Road. The site does not sit within a Sewer Service Area for Mullica Hill and its surrounding environs, but is nonetheless consistent with the concept of encouraging development in “Growth Areas” throughout the County.

4.2 Relationship to State Development and Redevelopment Plan

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. Growth is directed at centers in these areas in order to preserve environmentally sensitive lands and open space.

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

- Focus development and redevelopment in appropriately located and designed Centers to accommodate growth that would otherwise occur in the Environs.
- 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)

Redevelopment at this site supports these planning objectives by directing redevelopment into a developed area of the township with supportive infrastructure, and recent infrastructural investments conducive to commercial activity. With respect to good Smart Growth, Center-based practices, and locating development near community amenities and walkable environments, the site is proximate to Harrison’s Historic Mullica Hill Village and will support the goals of the Township’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

4.3 Relationship to Development Regulations of the Municipality

The regulations that apply to the Redevelopment Area, and as modified by this plan, were adopted by the Harrison Township Committee and are known as the PO Professional Office Zone District. The regulations for this zone are found in the Township’s Combined Land Use Code.

4.4 Relationship to Other Municipal Plans

Harrison Township is contiguous to the following municipalities: Glassboro, East Greenwich, Mantua, Elk, and South Harrison. The Redevelopment Area is near the center of Harrison Township and does not abut any surrounding municipalities. As such, it is not likely to have any impact on the master plans of any of the contiguous municipalities.

4.5 Relationship to Municipal Master Plan

The Land Use Element of the Master Plan was adopted on February 10, 2000. At the time of the 2000 Master Plan, the Redevelopment Area was located in the PO Professional Office District between the Mullica Hill and Richwood sections of Harrison Township. No specific recommendations were set forth in the 2000 Master Plan for this area.

The 2013 Reexamination Report recognizes that “Route 322 and State Highway Route 45 provide an important integral transportation corridor for the Township of Harrison, adjoining municipalities, and intra-state and interstate commerce.” It also recognized that significant commercial and residential growth has occurred along the Route 322 corridor. In the 2013 Reexamination Report, it recommended rezoning several parcels along the Route 322 corridor (Block 33.01, Lots 2, 7, 8, 18, 19, 20 and Block 34, Lots 34, 35, 36) to Professional Office Overlay due to their frontage on Route 322 and because the lots in that area substantially comply with the bulk requirements of the PO Overlay zone. However, no specific recommendations were made for the Redevelopment Area’s block and lot, because the Redevelopment Area was already within the PO Professional Office District by the time of the 2013 Reexamination. The recommendations regarding the PO Overlay zoning were implemented, since much of the land to both the east and west of the Redevelopment Area along Route 322 is currently in the PO Professional Office District and PO Overlay zone.

In 2015, another Master Plan Reexamination Report was adopted. This time, the 2015 Reexamination Report evaluated several lots in Block 31, which is west of the Redevelopment Area. Like the lots recommended for PO Overlay zone in the 2013 Reexamination Report, the lots in the Block 31 area were located along “a major arterial,” which the 2015 Reexamination Report noted was “consistent with the access needs required for small office users.” This further highlights Harrison’s push to rezone parcels along major arterial roadways such as Route 322 as Professional Office or Professional Office Overlay due to their characteristics described in the paragraph above.

The Master Plan and the subsequent Reexamination Reports have not recommended any changes to the Redevelopment Area because it is already in the PO Professional Office District. As such, this Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the Master Plan and therefore adoption of this Redevelopment Plan is still appropriate. This Redevelopment Plan maintains zoning similar to the PO Professional Office District, with bulk standards that are substantially similar to those required by the PO District. The Redevelopment Area in question is located along the Route 322 Bypass, which is a major arterial in Harrison Township, and the Redevelopment Area currently complies with all of the bulk requirements of the PO District.

Although the Redevelopment Area is adjacent to residential uses to the south and southwest, it is undesirable to have residential uses along the Route 322 Bypass due to safety concerns because the high speed limit (45mph) makes cars turning off of and onto this road dangerous. Additionally, the office uses contemplated by this Redevelopment Plan are compatible with residential uses. Moreover, this Redevelopment Plan mandates sufficient buffers to minimize any impact on the nearby residential uses from the PO District.

5.0 GENERAL PROVISIONS

5.1 Zoning Map Amendment

The Zoning Map of the Township of Harrison should be amended to include this Redevelopment Area (Block 32, Lot 4) as identified, discussed, and outlined in this document.

5.2 Procedure for Amending the Redevelopment Plan

Upon compliance with the requirements of the applicable law, the Township Committee may amend, revise, or modify this Redevelopment Plan, as circumstances may make such changes appropriate. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to, those arising out of a redevelopment proposal by an existing owner of property in the Redevelopment Area. The Township Committee may require the party requesting the amendment to prepare a study of the impact of such amendment, which study must be prepared by a Professional Planner, licensed in the State of New Jersey, and, further, may require such party to establish an escrow account to defray the review costs of Township professionals.

5.3 Validity of Ordinance

If any section, paragraph, division, subdivision, clause or provision of this Redevelopment Plan shall be adjudged by the courts to be invalid, such adjudications shall only apply to the section, paragraph, division, subdivision, clause or provision so judged, and the remainder of this Plan shall be deemed valid and effective.

5.4 Redevelopment Entity

The Governing Body of Harrison Township will serve as the Redevelopment Entity responsible for the implementation of the Redevelopment Plan.

5.5 Applications for Development

Any site and/or subdivision plan application for parcels within the Redevelopment Area shall be in accordance with the requirements of this Redevelopment Plan and all applicable ordinances and regulations of Harrison Township. Approvals, waivers, and variances will be governed by the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law and the Township's usual procedure. Execution of a redevelopment agreement shall be a mandatory checklist item for any land use application seeking to apply the zoning set forth in this Redevelopment Plan and any such application shall not be deemed complete pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-10.3 until proof of an executed redevelopment agreement has been submitted as part of the application. Any development or construction within the Redevelopment Area shall be undertaken in accordance with a Redevelopment Agreement executed between the Borough and a municipally designated redeveloper.

The Planning Board may grant deviations from the strict application of the regulations contained within this Redevelopment Plan, except that no deviations shall be granted that result in any of the following effects or conditions:

1. to allow a use not specifically permitted within the redevelopment district;
2. exceeding the maximum density allowed for any permitted use;
3. exceeding the maximum building or structure height as measured in feet and/or stories;
4. to allow a deviation from any contractual obligations of the redeveloper to the Borough; or
5. any deviation sought that would necessitate the granting of a variance under N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70.d require an amendment of this Redevelopment Plan.

If requested, the Governing Body of Harrison Township shall consider the granting of a tax exemption and the execution of a financial agreement in accordance with the Long Term Tax Exemption Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:20-1 et seq. All development within the redevelopment area shall be within any financial agreement executed by the Township.