MASTER PLAN

Borough of Somerville, New Jersey

Summary report describing Somerville's Master Plan prepared with the technical assistance of Lenaz, Mueller & Associates, Planning Consultants, Princeton, New Jersey

May 2, 1990

Adopted July 11, 1990

PLANNING BOARD
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE

RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A MASTER PLAN FOR
THE BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE

WHEREAS, the Planning Board of the Borough of Somerville has the power and obligation in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40:55d-25a(1) and N.J.S.A. 40:55d-28 to update and maintain a Master Plan for the physical, economic and social development of the Borough of Somerville; and

WHEREAS, the prior Master Plan was adopted in 1969 and since that date the development of the Borough of Somerville, its surrounding communities and Somerset County require a reexamination of the problems and objectives of the Borough and the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board of the Borough of Somerville has held public meetings on March 20, 1990, March 22, 1990, May 2, 1990 and July 11, 1990; and

WHEREAS, the original proposed Master Plan update prepared by Lenaz, Mueller & Associates, Planning Consultants, Princeton, New Jersey was dated January 1990 and as a result of the public meetings on March 20, 1990 and March 22, 1990 certain revisions dated April 10, 1990 have been included in the Master Plan update and further revisions as stated at the public meetings on May 2, 1990 and July 11, 1990 are included in the Master Plan update; and

WHEREAS, said proposed Master Plan update with the above stated revisions was adopted on July 11, 1990; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, on this 11th day of July 1990 that the Planning Board of the Borough of Somerville hereby adopts the revised Master Plan of the Borough of Somerville dated July 1990.

Certified to be a true copy of a Resolution adopted by the Planning Board of the Borough of Somerville at a public meeting held on July 11, 1990.

Richard Codd

Richard Codd,
Chairman of the Board

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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MASTER PLAN

Borough of Somerville, New Jersey

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I. INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

A. General

The Borough of Somerville, founded in 1909, has evolved into a mature urban community, with most of its land developed and its vital community facilities in place. It now occupies an important position in the Somerset region. The borough's approximate 2.3 square miles consists of a diverse, yet stable, environment that enjoys a mixture of residential and non-residential land uses.

Large scale new development is no longer taking place within Somerville. The emphasis is now on conserving the best qualities of an established community while planning for selected redevelopment and revitalization, and encouraging sensitive infill development that is compatible with the surrounding areas.

In formulating the master plan recommendations, the Borough Planning Board has been directed by a desire to enhance those attributes that contribute to the vibrancy of the borough community, while still providing proper guidance for those influences created by changing market demands within the region.

Since the borough is almost completely developed, the challenges confronting Somerville relate to preservation, revitalization and redevelopment. Before articulating specific goals and policies upon which the various master plan recommendations for the physical, economic and social development of the borough are advanced, it is necessary to develop an overall development strategy for Somerville.

The comprehensive development objective for Somerville Borough can be stated as follows:

Somerville Borough is a residential community and should remain committed to that purpose. Housing is a critical borough resource and should be protected. Critical resources such as the central business district, County Complex, and Somerset Medical Center also need to be preserved without sacrificing the existing character of the borough community.

Every effort should be made to preserve the existing residential amenity, while promoting the central business district; to permit office and mixed residential re-use of existing older buildings in designated areas without compromising existing residential character; to preserve the borough's

historic tradition through preservation planning; to improve the vehicular and pedestrian circulation throughout the borough; and to increase recreational opportunities for all segments of the borough's population.

Augmenting this overall development strategy for Somerville Borough, more specific goals and policies are advanced in Chapter II (Master Plan.)

B. Master Plan

Somerville Borough is planning for its future. It must address itself to the task of carefully combining new land uses with existing development within its boundaries. As Somerville plans, complex development issues have begun to emerge, e.g., maintaining those physical attributes which contribute to the borough's quality of life, strengthening its commercial and office land uses, protecting historic properties and existing residential development from encroachment, encouraging an increase in economic opportunities, and providing opportunities for affordable housing.

This Master Plan is a response to these and other challenging issues now confronting the region. It is a guide that re-establishes and refines planning and development policies first set into motion with the borough's 1969 Master Plan. This plan relates to the distribution and interrelationship of future uses of land, housing needs, movement of goods and people, and the expansion of community facilities and services. It supersedes the 1969 Master Plan document.

The plan is a guide oriented to the year 2000 as a logical reference point to which regional, state, county, and other public or private agencies could relate their respective planning and development decisions. It sets no precise timetable for the realization of each of its component parts; rather, it is an attempt to give rational forethought to the development of these elements as the borough continues to grow over the next decade.

The plan is not a permanent or unalterable document. According to state law, it must be periodically reexamined every six (6) years or sooner, depending upon the rate at which changes in the conditions or circumstances affect the basic assumptions upon which the Master Plan is based. Its strength, however, is predicated upon its comprehensiveness. To accept one part out of context with other parts would reduce the effectiveness of the plan. Accordingly, any subsequent change in the plan should be preceded by an investigation of its implications and effect on interrelated elements of the plan. Only in this manner can modifications be made without destroying the integrity of the Master Plan.

C. Nature of the Master Planning Process

The planning process used in developing Somerville's Master Plan involved three phases of study.

The first phase dealt with the preparation of special studies or "mini-plans" which formed the basis for comprehensive review and appropriate revisions to the state required elements of a Master Plan for the entire borough. The special studies included:

- Recreation improvement and potential expansion of recreation/open space opportunities;
- County Complex/East end of Main Street;
- Potential for a local historic district;
- Professional office uses and related policies;
- Circulation improvements strategies;
- East Main Street improvement strategy.

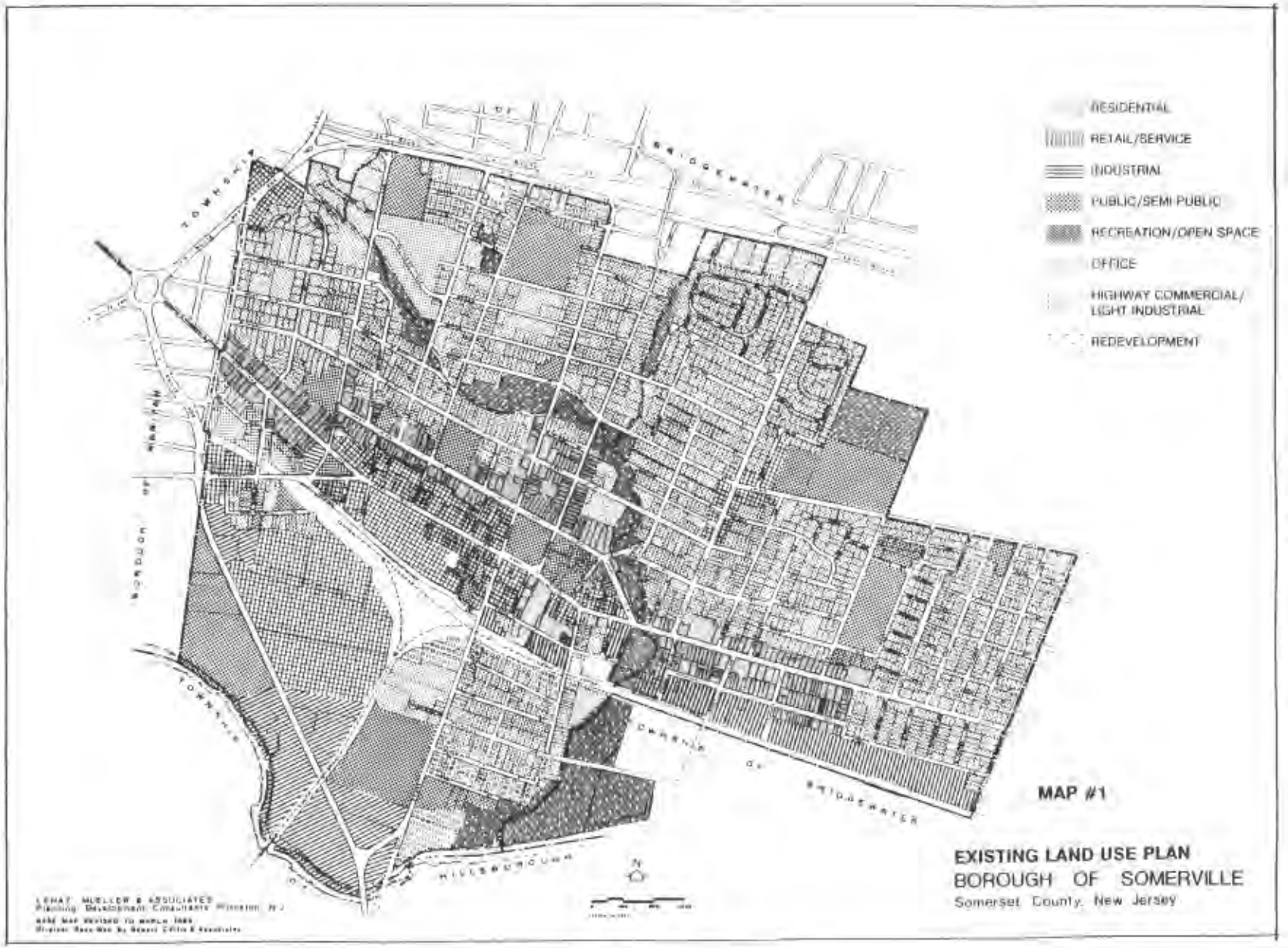
The second phase of this planning process involved updating basic data pertinent to the Master Plan at both regional and local levels. Such background documentation has been made part of this Master Plan document.

The Master Plan, or phase three, is summarized in this report. This plan consists of refinements to the policies and goals originally established in the 1969 Master Plan as necessary to guide and control future development. Together with appropriate maps, proposals relating to the spatial distribution of land uses, circulation and necessary community facilities to support such future uses are advanced.

During the process of updating the plan, a series of open public workshop sessions were held by the Advisory Review Committee, which was established to increase the opportunities for input from the Borough Council, Zoning Board, Recreational Committee, District Management Corporation, other borough committees, private entities, and local residents. In addition, several neighborhood workshop meetings were held in various portions of the borough to offer greater public participation in the Master Plan process. Not only were these workshops and neighborhood meetings designed to gain input, but these meetings

were also established to discuss findings of studies undertaken as well as to explore the current validity of various policies, proposals and planning options regarding future development of the borough.

II. MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS


RESIDENTIAL
RETAIL/SERVICE
INDUSTRIAL
PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC
RECREATION/OPEN SPACE
OFFICE
HIGHWAY COMMERCIAL/
LIGHT INDUSTRIAL
REDEVELOPMENT
MAP #1
EXISTING LAND USE PLAN
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
Somerset County, New Jersey
LEHAT, MUELLER & ASSOCIATES

II. MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS

A. Goals and Policies for the Future

Somerville has formulated goals and policies to guide future decision making in the borough. The goals and policies described in this section are the basis for the recommendations of the Master Plan. These goals and policies should be reviewed periodically and altered when necessary.

Housing Goal and Policies

Goal:

Provide a range of housing types to meet varied resident population's needs as well as to preserve established residential areas.

Policies:

- Evaluate existing regulations to ensure the preservation of established residential areas.
- Locate housing in selected locations within and around the Central Business District to stimulate business and retail activity beyond traditional work hours.
- Prevent the deterioration of individual structures from exerting a deleterious effect on the surrounding area by adopting reasonable regulations controlling maintenance standards. Building code standards should be actively enforced throughout the borough.
- Increase the opportunities for households to obtain satisfactory housing at affordable prices by supporting the Mount Laurel II decision.

Local Economy Goal and Policies

Goal:

Encourage development and improvement of non-residential uses in designated areas. A strong business community is vital to the fiscal health of the borough.

Policies:

- Maintain the economic vitality of the Central Business District by improving its physical appearance and introducing new compatible revenue producing land uses.

- Support the efforts of the District Management Corporation to upgrade the visual appearance of the CBD.

- Reinforce the existing pattern of commercial and office use along Gaston Avenue to Union Street while discouraging encroachment of these uses into surrounding properties that do not have frontage along Gaston Avenue. Upgrade the visual appearance of frontage properties along Gaston Avenue.

- Commercial and office uses should be controlled through the enforcement of a site plan review code whenever redevelopment or expansion is contemplated.

Open Space Goal and Policies

Goal:

Continue the creation of local park and recreation systems designed to provide a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities to all members of the borough.

Policies:

- Encourage the development of the borough-wide "greenbelt", incorporating the existing park land along Peters Brook and natural areas along the Raritan River to connect various neighborhoods of the borough.
- Improve borough-owned land where possible and as necessary for recreational purposes.
- Provide recreation areas which are easily accessible to all segments of the population.
- Maintain, improve, and expand borough parks and recreation areas in a comprehensive manner.
- Development of park facilities should minimize any adverse effects on neighbors.

Circulation Goal and Policies

Goal:

Develop a coordinated road system which enables the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

Policies:

- Emphasize short term road improvements, limited road widenings and key intersection improvements to increase the capacity of the existing street network and eliminate traffic hazards.

- Discourage increased through traffic from blighting the residential character of the community by emphasizing through signage and other techniques, and use of arterial roadways as major intra-community thoroughfares.

- Seek improved access (vehicular and pedestrian) to the Central Business District, including development of off-street parking facilities.

- Encourage the extension of Urban Drive to Vanderveer Parkway in order to improve CBD traffic flow and enable useable redevelopment parcels to be assembled.

- Minimize conflicts among local, through and pedestrian traffic on Main Street, giving priority to the needs of shoppers and pedestrians.

Central Business District Goal and Policies

Goal:

Improve the physical appearance and mix of businesses in the CBD to further create an attractive and diversified business area.

Policies:

- Continue to concentrate businesses in the existing downtown area and avoid dispersion or linear expansion of commercial activities. The CBD should be the commercial and professional center of the borough in a compact setting.

- Discourage one story structures in the CBD. Encourage development on upper floor spaces to prevent building deterioration while still protecting retail and service oriented business activities on the first floor. Consider limited introduction of residential uses within the CBD.

- Provide unified landscaped parking facilities linked to business activities by attractive walkways.

- Encourage architectural compatibility within the Central Business District.

- Emphasize development and redevelopment opportunities in the eastern portion of the CBD that reinforces retail and service functions of the downtown.

- Encourage the redevelopment of under-utilized properties within the CBD according to a unified downtown revitalization plan.

Design Goal and Policies

Goal:

Improve the visual appearance of the business areas while protecting residential neighborhoods from encroachment and insure improvements are made which respect the architectural character of the borough.

Policies:

- Help preserve and strengthen the built environment by providing landscaping such as street trees and plant screening in public rights-of-way and within open spaces and encourage landscaping of major private facilities, such as parking lots.

- Encourage attractive site appearance, consistency and good design.

- Insure compatibility with surrounding land uses and with prevailing physical features, e.g. setbacks, buffer between dissimilar uses.

- Develop a coordinated policy covering the location and design of public and private parking areas.

County and Medical Center Expansion Goal and Policies

Goal:

Encourage county and medical center expansion opportunities to certain designated areas to limit any adverse effects of expansion on established residential neighborhoods.

Policies:

- Develop Master Plan guidelines to ensure integration of Somerset County and Somerset Medical Center expansion plans without detrimental affect on the borough's existing neighborhood fabric.

- Establish appropriate setbacks, buffers along abutting residential edges.

Historical Goal and Policies

Goal:

Safeguard the historic, aesthetic, and cultural heritage of Somerville.

Policies:

- Protect architecturally significant buildings that contribute to the character of the community.

- Establish a historic preservation commission to assess the visual, historical, and cultural characteristics of various neighborhoods in the borough.

- Establish a conservation district around the Washington Place neighborhood.

- Capitalize on the historic beginnings of the borough. Build on the established growth area of the community that evolved in the early nineteenth century. Consider the preparation of an historic preservation ordinance.

  Increase the borough's economic competitive stance in the immediate region by emphasizing the benefits of a unique town center appropriately scaled to the pedestrian as a dramatic alternative to an enclosed mall environment.

- Reinforce historic gateway into the downtown area as part of an overall visual experience when entering a special place.

B. Land Use Plan

The Borough of Somerville can be classified as a developed community. Using existing zoning, while little vacant land remains available for development purposes, there is significant potential for redevelopment within selected areas of the downtown. Map #1 shows the generalized Existing Land Use Plan for the borough. The preparation of the borough's land use plan focuses on issues and policies related to redevelopment in the downtown area and infill development as well as conservation of established residential areas in the community.

The basic land use planning issues that have been identified for specific policy treatment in this plan are as follows:

- The borough's existing sound housing stock needs to be preserved and affordable housing opportunities should be increased where appropriate for borough residents.

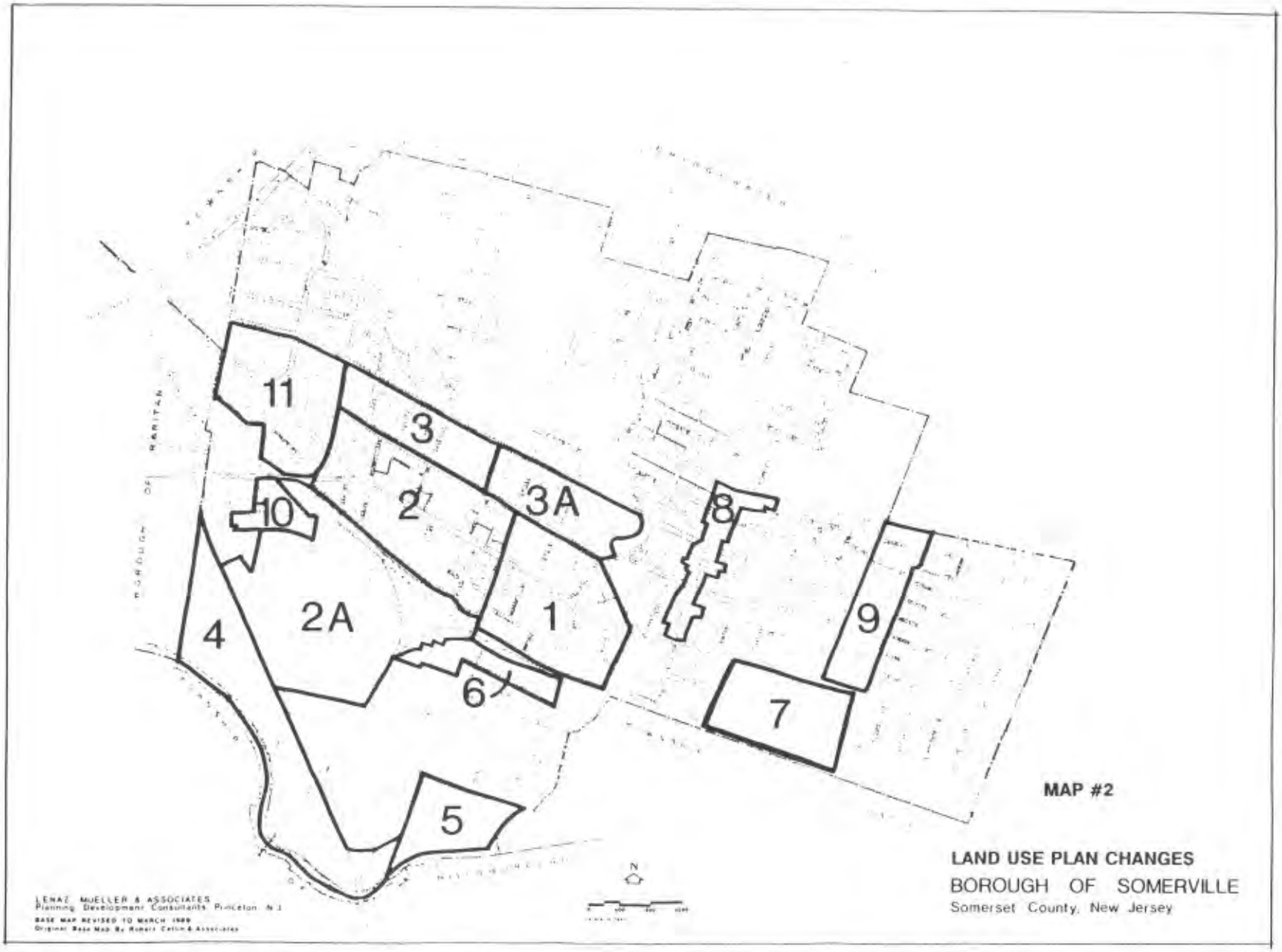
- Indiscriminate conversion without regard to the historic attributes of a dwelling or sound planning principles with respect to the provision of adequate off-street parking and on-lot landscape buffering as part of such conversions needs better controls.

- Public service uses such as the County Complex and Somerset Medical Center should be treated as unique and beneficial uses to the borough's economic base, whose expansion should be encouraged in designated areas within strict development guidelines.

- The Central Business District is the commercial and professional center of the borough and dispersion or linear expansion of commercial activities, which deletes business activity concentration, should be avoided.

- Redevelopment of several areas within or abutting the downtown should be encouraged to enhance Somerville's position as a regional service center in Somerset County. Those would include:

  - Landmark Mall included in Area 2
  - East Main Street economic revitalization area designated as Area 1
  - Transitional blocks abutting the county complex shown as Area 3A


11
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BOROUGH OF RARITAN
MAP #2
LAND USE PLAN CHANGES
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
Somerset County, New Jersey
LENAZ MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning Development Consultants Princeton N.J.
BASE MAP REVISED TO MARCH 1989
Original Base Map By Robert Catlin & Associates

As a result of further discussions on the scope of the CBD a clarification of what general area constitutes downtown Somerville emerged. While precise boundary delineation of the downtown would materialize from further study during the zoning implementation phase, a working definition could include the areas shown as 1, 2, and 3A on the Land Use Plan Changes map.

The development strategy for the CBD centers on four objectives:

- To revitalize and enhance Somerville's downtown commercial district as a shopping area.

- To create high value, high amenity mixed-use developments which provide competitive office space, in-town housing, specialty retail and public amenities.

- To attract and contain professional offices within the CBD to prevent further conversion of residential properties within neighborhood settings.

- To create a destination place through cultural and entertainment opportunities which enhance the quality of life within the borough and draws "day tourists" from the county for shopping and leisure activities.

Map #2, "Land Use Plan Changes" reflects generalized areas where current land use policy is recommended to be changed by this master plan. These recommendations are organized according to identified areas listed on the "Land Use Plan." In this manner, when the Master Plan is implemented, detailed zoning text refinements and zone boundary adjustments can be made which will reflect the land use recommendations for these specific areas.

The delineated areas are not intended to serve as zone boundaries, but rather as planning study areas, for ease in discussion of specific land use concepts to guide the future development or conservation of the study areas.

Area 1:

Area 1 is a special study sub-area as discussed in other sections of this master plan. It is designated as a potential redevelopment area. This area, also known as the East Main Street area, contains the Franklin

Street neighborhood. It is bordered to the north by East High Street, to the south by the railroad tracks, to the east by Vanderveer Parkway, and to the west by South Bridge Street.

A Department of Transportation project, the Urban Drive Extension Project, has already been initiated. It is anticipated that the extension project will be completed within the time frame in which this Master Plan is developed. Therefore, the designation of this area for redevelopment reflects the expected Urban Drive improvements and its impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

Varied land uses comprise this area, including residential, commercial, office and public/semi-public uses. This seven block study area has no comprehensive land use pattern. Therefore, the following key policy recommendations are advanced to accomplish selected redevelopment of the area:

- Encourage mixed use redevelopment, residential, office, retail in nature in this area.

- Medium density townhouse and multi-family residential development in portions of this area should be encouraged. Housing should continue along the Hamilton Street corridor adjacent to the proposed Meadow Street housing project.

- In order to create a unified building area the existing firehouse on Warren Street should be relocated, possibly along the periphery of the CBD. A specific site analysis will be necessary to determine the most appropriate location for a relocated firehouse.

- Develop greater landscape treatment standards and screening techniques for non-residential uses that abut residential structures.

A generalized redevelopment strategy is advanced, reflecting these policy recommendations in a following section of the Master Plan.

Area 2:

Area 2 represents the major commercial center of Somerville. It is in this area that the majority of the borough's retail businesses operate. These businesses are generally oriented along Main Street with some peripheral activity located along side streets. There is a transition area of existing residences and office activity on the High Street edge of the downtown.

The center encompasses the area generally bounded by Bridge Street, West High Street, Urban Drive and Mountain Avenue.

One of the features that is attractive to existing and prospective borough residents is this downtown commercial area. Efforts should continue to be made to increase the economic feasibility of businesses locating in the downtown. Continuation of the mixed residential/office character of the High Street edge is also encouraged.

It is anticipated that the proposed Somerville Square Mall, to be located on the former landfill site, will impact the existing retail businesses in the downtown. Therefore, it is vital that the borough's downtown image be strengthened. As such, several key land use policy directions are recommended:

- Landmark Mall and associated parking areas should be considered for future mixed use development rather than remaining solely as a one story retail/service activity.

- Ground floor uses should be limited exclusively to retail and service uses in order to encourage a concentrated business core to remain oriented towards pedestrian shopping patterns.

- Office use should be prohibited on the ground floor in favor of second floor or upper floor usage, with adequate off-street parking provided.
- Residential uses on the upper floors of existing buildings in the downtown would be permitted, but only where housing code requirements can be met.

- Encourage enhanced architectural standards within the downtown to emphasize the character of significant buildings.

- Encourage multi-storied structures within established building height criteria in the borough's downtown area.

Commercial and other activities within this study area should be oriented to pedestrian traffic. Explore opportunities for additional off-street parking facilities oriented on the outer fringe of the downtown with well-lighted and handsome pedestrian paths linking such facilities to downtown activity centers. Emphasis should be on the protection and recycling of older buildings, thereby maintaining the existing charm and downtown atmosphere of the commercial center. Buildings should be either restored, reconstructed or renovated with compatible storefronts. Any new

construction should compliment existing architectural styles. Specific public amenities should be promoted, e.g. landscaped courtyards or plazas, small sitting areas, pedestrian amenities, upgraded signage, and street tree improvements, including tree planters.

To assist in the physical upgrading of the downtown is the aim of a recently created and operating District Management Corporation. The Corporation has begun implementing some of the above planning concepts and will be useful in establishing architectural standards, signage and landscape guidelines. The Corporation was formed in 1988 to oversee the revitalization of the downtown. Also, with the passage of the New Jersey Public Amenities Act, the Special Improvement District was established to fund improvements to the downtown area. As a result, the elements are in place for the revitalization of the downtown to occur with the District Management Corporation as the lead agency.

To aid in the improvement program for the downtown, the following major design elements are recommended for the downtown commercial center:

- Develop opportunities for the establishment of outdoor cafes or restaurants which attract both daytime and evening patronage.

- Rehabilitate and upgrade all deteriorating structures.

- Create informal public seating areas in carefully selected sites which do not encourage undesirable congregations.

- Provide for well-lighted landscaped walkways from parking lots to Main Street stores.

- Restore and improve store facades to reflect original design elements which recreate the physical charm of older buildings and establishes a unique character on Main Street.

- Use colorful and retractable awnings or canopies for weather protection coordinated to an overall design theme.

- Encourage businesses to be open during set evening hours; to market their goods as a unified community; and to coordinate local advertising efforts for maximum market appeal as a unique home town shopping district.

- Design and implement community informational kiosks.

- Provide attractive and functional exteriors refuse containers for shopper convenience.

- Consider special effects, such as historic wall murals along main pedestrian walkways between parking lots and Main Street.

- Consider unique outdoor art which enhances the character of the borough (e.g. sculptures of historic bicycles.

- Locate store entrances toward the Main Street side of all buildings.

- Provide ornamental lighting,architectural sidewalk planters and special paving materials for crosswalks.

- Insure that the treatment of side and rear walls of all buildings should be similar to front facade in terms of materials, color, and roof line.

- Encourage better land utilization of the one story mini-mall site now existing on Main Street.

- Insure that signs should be of uniform height, color, type-face and material; and that signs be kept in good repair at all times.

- Treat sidewalks as linear or strip parks which include trees, shrubs, and other visual amenities.

- Provide benches, bike racks, newspaper racks and bus shelters where needed.

- Attempt to relocate all overhead wires either underground or above ground toward the rear of existing businesses.

- Advertise the downtown center by using special maps and other promotional materials and events.

- Establish a sense of entry or gateway effect into the downtown by using special signage and enhanced landscaping at these entry locations.

- Insure that infill structures complement the size and scale of existing buildings and harmonize with the established streetscape.

Area 2A:

Area 2A is the proposed site of the Somerville Square Mall, an enclosed retail commercial complex. It is located on the former sanitary landfill site and consists of approximately 89 acres. The site is vacant and contains several wetland areas and other environmental constraints.

In order to achieve better integration with the master plan's recommendations for the mixed use redevelopment and upgrading of the existing commercial center on Main Street, consideration should be given to a different mix of commercial activity on this parcel. Additional uses such as hotel, corporate offices, and entertainment activities should be considered. Additionally, some decked parking and taller building elements would help create a stronger physical connection with the existing downtown area of Somerville. Greater open space can be preserved in order to protect the site's environmental sensitivities.

Also contained within this study area is the NJ Transit station. The importance of this commuter rail stop as a potential development generator should be explored as part of any reuse scheme for the landfill site. The station can be a substantial asset for Somerville's development of office and future mixed-use development areas that are targeted elsewhere in this master plan.

Area 3:

Area 3 is located between West High Street and West Cliff Street between Ross Street and Mountain Avenue. The area can be best described as a transition area between the downtown and established residential neighborhoods north of the CBD area.

There are two schools, several offices, and a variety of residential uses located within this area. The lots fronting on West High Street are zoned for office development, while the lots fronting West Cliff Street are zoned residential.

Area 3 is close to the downtown and the County Complex. This location has led to the incremental conversion of residential structures to general business and professional office uses. Some of these conversions create adverse impacts in abutting established residential neighborhoods.

As the County Complex increases its service capabilities, additional pressures are seen to further remove residential opportunities in proximi-

ty to the downtown. Over intensification of office uses on relatively small lots creates both on-site and off-site impacts which are deleterious to maintaining the integrity of Somerville's historic character. In addition, increased traffic generation from uncontrolled conversions overburdens the existing street network.

Residential and office uses are not necessarily incompatible. However, unplanned mixed use development in Area 3 needs to be controlled. Greater site plan criteria should be established which do not preclude conversions or new construction, but do mandate that any development or conversion be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood. The following policy recommendations focus on preventing ill-conceived and poorly planned development and conversion in this area:

- Develop stringent bulk standards for infill development on vacant parcels and/or parcels subject to private redevelopment.

- Permit controlled conversions of existing buildings provided such conversions do not increase the existing floor area of the principal structure.

- Encourage coordinated vehicular access on adjoining parcels, together with interconnected rear parking areas through the use of cross-easements between abutting properties.

- Develop greater landscape treatment standards and screening techniques for non-residential uses that abut residential structures.

- Establish a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone or, in the alternative, specific design standards governing conversion of residential structures into office facilities.

Area 3A:

Area 3A is located between Ross Street and Ross Brook from East Cliff Street to High Street. This area is across from the County Complex and is appropriate as a transition area for office development at a scale that does not dilute the East Main Street Revitalization area or adversely affect residential neighborhoods fronting on East Cliff Street. Any redevelopment plans for this area should be designated in scale with the adjacent residential structures along East Cliff Street with modestly increasing building height in proximity to the county complex.

The intent of the transition area is to capitalize on the area's proximity to the County Complex while still maintaining and buffering the surrounding established residential neighborhoods, particularly on East Cliff Street. Actual boundaries of this transition area will be determined during the zoning ordinance update process, but they should not extend beyond East Cliff Street or frontage properties along Ross Street. When the entire easterly side of Ross Street has been redeveloped, the board shall examine the zoning uses for entire Ross Street corridor and the northerly side of West Cliff Street from the corner of Ross Street in a westerly direction to the border of the school complex.

The mixed residential and office uses between Area 3 and Area 3A are not necessarily incompatible. However, non-residential use in Area 3A needs to controlled. Greater site plan criteria should be established which mandate that any development or conversion in Area 3 shall be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood, including Area 3A.

Area 4:

This area is located on the western side of Route 206 between the Raritan River and the Highway. Area 4 consists mostly of environmentally constrained land; wetlands and floodplains cover the majority of this area. While there is a service station located within the area, most of the land is undeveloped.

According to the Somerville tax maps, the parcels which make up Area 4 are in private and public ownership. The parcels in the northern portion of the area are owned by the Borough of Raritan. The remaining parcels are privately owned.

The area's development potential is severely limited by the environmental constraints on the parcels. Newly established regulations governing use within wetlands and the establishment of transition buffers to such wetlands require reconsideration of the zoning use and bulk controls for this area. Zoning for this area is I-Industrial which permits manufacturing and industrial operations with high building and lot coverage allowances.

Based on the need to conform with new wetland controls, preserve the natural resources in the area, as well as protect the water quality of the Raritan River, the following policy directions should be applied in this area:

- Establish a Conservation Zone for the northern portion of Area 4 (Borough of Raritan parcels). This would reflect the current passive open space nature of this property as presently maintained by its municipal owner.

- Maintain the I-Industrial zoning on the balance of the area while limiting the intensity of development and site coverage that could be established in Area 4.

- Reserve a "greenbelt" strip along the Raritan River to link eventually with the existing park land in the southern portion of Somerville.

Area 5:

Area 5 is located in the southern portion of Somerville. The area is bounded to the south by the Raritan River, to the east by Peter's Brook, to the west by Bridge Street, and to the north by Fifth Street.

The area is zoned C-Commercial district which permits highway commercial uses, warehousing and storage, repair business and limited manufacturing uses by right. A variety of uses have been established in this area, including the borough's public works facility and a cemetery.

Even though Area 5 does consist of some environmentally constrained land near the river, developable parcels still exist in the area. It is envisioned that consideration and analysis be devoted to the possibility of additional public service type facilities. Other areas could be considered as a relocation resource for certain industrial type uses that would, of necessity, be displaced by redevelopment efforts in the Second Street area.

Area 6:

Area 6 can be described best as an area with no land use pattern. This area, which is bordered by the railroad tracks, Second street, Hamilton Street and apartment complex on South Bridge Street, consists of residential, neighborhood commercial, and light industrial uses.

In addition to this lack of consistency in land use, the established and stable residential neighborhood adjacent to Area 6 is being affected by the area's deleterious mix of land uses. Discussions with current residents in the surrounding neighborhood point to increased traffic conges-

tion, particularly truck traffic, and negative aesthetic quality as major issues related to the incompatibility of the current mix of uses in the Second Street area.

The following policy recommendations are advanced to improve the Second Street area:

- This area should become integrated with the existing residences in the surrounding area through the introduction of multi-family residential redevelopment opportunities.

- The eventual relocation of non-residential uses in the area to more appropriately zoned areas within the borough should occur.

- There should be no future expansion of existing non-residential uses in Area 6, it being the intent of this plan to conserve and rehabilitate the residential neighborhood that exists in this area.

Area 7:

Area 7 is located in the eastern portion of Somerville. The area is bordered by Loeser Avenue to the west, Main Street to the north, the railroad tracks to the south, and Haynes Street to the east.

Currently, this area covers three zoning districts: P-1, P-2 and I-Industrial. However, the predominant land use is residential. In addition, the portion of the area zoned for industrial use contains a vacant industrial building. It is the primary intent that portions of the zone which are presently vacant land or industrial buildings shall be developed for residential use; however, in the event residential development proves to be inappropriate, then non-residential development shall be given secondary consideration.

This area is predominantly residential in character and should continue to be so in the future. Therefore, the following land use policy recommendations related to this area are identified:

- Maintain single family residential character of the area and introduce limited multi-family development south of Fairview Avenue.

- Consider appropriate buffering between any residential and existing non-residential uses in the area.

- Target the James Street industrial tract for housing development. If housing is ultimately proven not to be feasible, low intensity light industrial development with limited trucking could be considered as an alternative use. Warehousing, distribution, or heavy manufacturing should not be permitted.

Area 8:

Area 8 consists primarily of the frontage properties along North Gaston Avenue between Union Avenue and Main Street. This area, which was predominantly residential in character, is now becoming a mixed use area with the introduction of professional office and commercial/services uses.

While the majority of the area is zoned residential, the office zone to the south and the commercial/service zone to the north has led to the infiltration of some office and commercial service development in the area.

The focus of the following policy directions is not on preventing limited mixed use development along parcels that front North Gaston Avenue,but on preventing negative impacts associated with poorly planned office and commercial service establishments:

- Develop stringent bulk standards for any infill development or redevelopment of existing properties.

- Permit office conversions of principal buildings that do not increase the existing floor area.

- Allow only office conversions of principal buildings that have the minimum required lot size for the existing zone and can provide the necessary parking on-site within the confines of established yard and setback areas.

- Develop greater landscape treatment standards and screening techniques for non-residential uses, particularly where they abut residential uses.

- Encourage coordinated vehicular access together with interconnected rear parking areas. Prohibit front yard parking.

Area 9:

Area 9 is located around the Somerset Medical Center and extends from Union Avenue to Main street. The zoning in this area is R-1 and R-2 residential with the frontage properties along Main Street zoned for professional offices.

Situated in Area 9 is the Somerset Medical Center and single-family residences with offices along Main Street. Since these uses are established, stable land uses, the following policies seek to promote this land use pattern:

- Create a Hospital Service Zone that incorporates and integrates the existing hospital facilities with future hospital expansion. As part of this new zone a long range development plan including a master parking plan would be required as part of any subsequent major site plan submissions by the hospital. (See Improvement Plan section for detailed Hospital Service Zone boundaries and guidelines.)

- Evaluate the long-term benefit to Somerville if Hospital Service Zone is eventually extended to Union Avenue.

- Prohibit conversions of existing residences to office uses in the surrounding area.

Area 10:

Area 10 is best described as a significant historical area. The Dutch Parsonage and the Wallace House are two historically important structures in this area as evidenced by their National Register status. It is envisioned that the area should be maintained as a historical area. This concept is elaborated on in the historic preservation improvement section.

To accomplish the preservation of these structures and the enhancement of the area as a tourist attraction, the following policy recommendation is identified:

- Create a Historic Conservation Zone for the area with appropriate screening from the proposed shopping mall south of the area.

Area 11:

The area serves as a gateway to the borough's downtown from the west where major regional road connections to I-287/78, State Routes 206 and 22 are possible. Its boundaries include Altamont Street to the north, Mountain Avenue to the east, Cornell Boulevard to the west, and Somerset Street and Bell Avenue to the south.

Residential, professional office, service related, and public uses are located in the area. Zoning for the area consists of Professional Office, Residential, and Business Zones.

While no one land use dominates the area, it is clear that several of the residences in the area are being converted to office uses. This trend is likely to continue. However, as seen in other areas of Somerville, it is important to provide the necessary conversion standards so that the conversions are properly planned and are in keeping with the aesthetic and traditional character of the area.

To accomplish this purpose and maintain the importance of an elegant gateway entrance to the main downtown area of the borough, the following policy recommendations are established:

- Develop stringent bulk standards for any infill or redevelopment. Establish and maintain a prescribed front yard setback along West End Avenue that reinforces a gateway entry road.

- Permit office and residential conversions of a principal building that do not increase the existing floor area.

- Require that parking for the converted office should be on-site rather than on-street.

- Develop greater landscape treatment standards and screening techniques for non-residential uses. Establish special street tree planting and spacing requirements for West End Avenue that enhance a gateway road image.

- Encourage coordinated vehicular access together with interconnected rear parking areas.

- Establish stringent sign controls with the possible phase-out of non-conforming signage according to a prescribed sign replacement amortization program.

C. Circulation Analysis

1. General Survey

In a developed community such as Somerville, circulation proposals need to recognize the constraints imposed by an established pattern of roadways. To a large extent, with the exception of the Urban Drive Extension and the South Doughty Avenue extension, the thrust of Somerville's circulation plan is geared toward operational improvements designed to increase capacity of the existing road network. Such improvements include upgrading intersections, new or revised signalization, turning lane additions, road closures and the possible introduction of one-way street systems in limited locations.

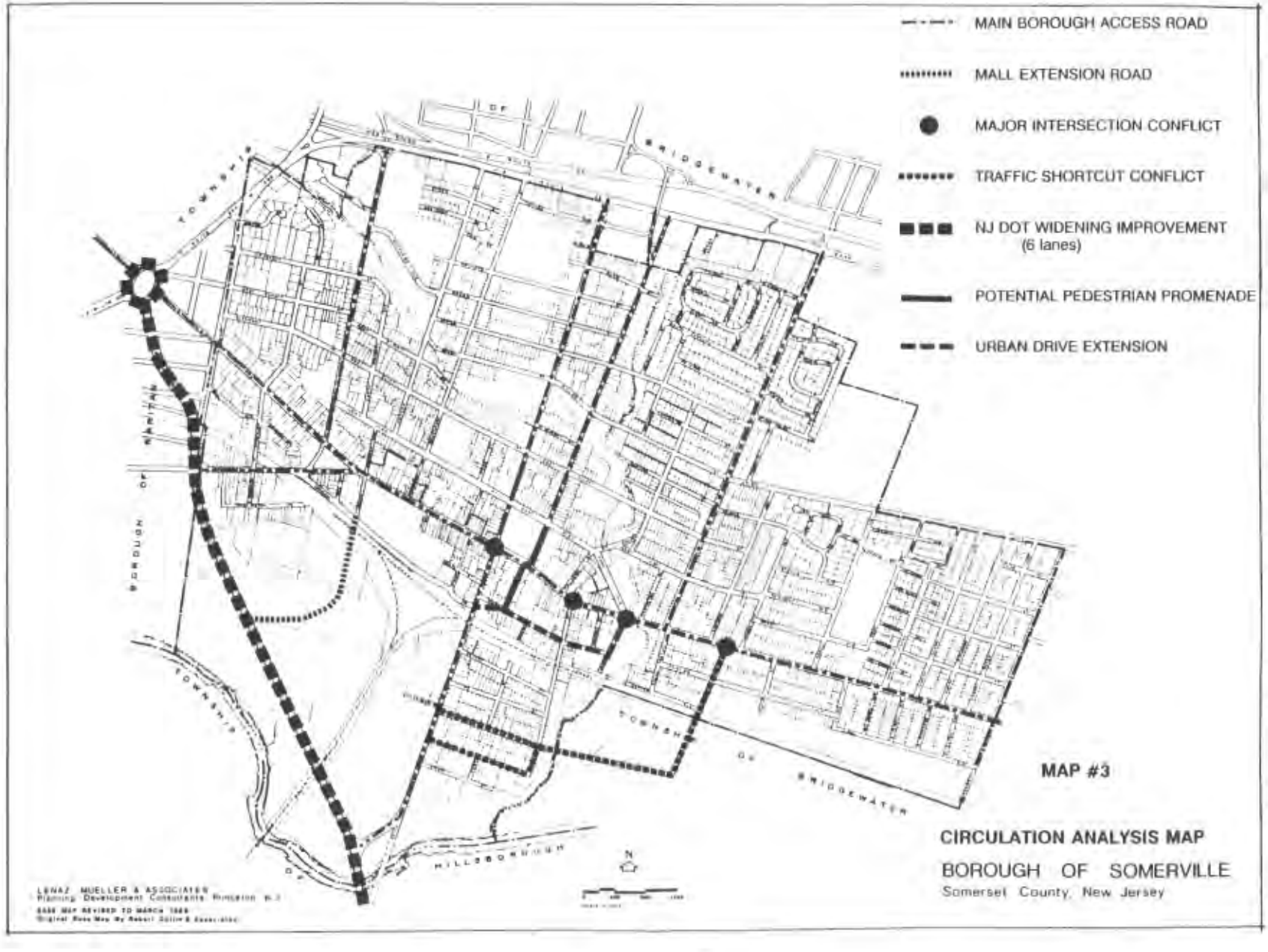
Various traffic reports were reviewed in the context of preparing this updated circulation plan. Also, from a regional perspective the county's circulation plan studies were examined. The Circulation Analysis Map depicts the information used to determine borough residents' circulation patterns.

2. Vehicular Transportation

Today, the primary means of transportation in Somerville are cars and trucks. The 1980 census reported that over 85% of Somerville Borough's workers drove to work or utilized car pools. In addition to local workers, persons from other municipalities pass through the borough on their way to work in other parts of the region. Most of the commercial establishments in Somerville are dependent on trucking for shipment of materials and goods. Also, the borough is surrounded by routes which carry regional truck and automobile traffic. The highway system is a vital transportation facility for the borough.

3. Traffic Circulation Concept

The current traffic circulation pattern within the Borough of Somerville is focused on Main Street for east-west travel and Bridge Street for north-south travel. Other parallel streets, such as High Street, Urban Drive, Mountain Avenue, Grove Street and Gaston Avenue serve as alternates, but their effectiveness is diminished by the fact that they tie back to either Main Street or Bridge Street. The intersection geometry and levels of congestion along either corridor then dictate the effectiveness of the alternate routes to



MAP #3

CIRCULATION ANALYSIS MAP

BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE

Somerset County, New Jersey

serve as east-west or north-south by-passes. For example, Urban Drive as it exists today is not an effective alternative to Main Street for through traffic flow. However, once it is extended, the benefits to Main Street will be more pronounced.

Several key roadway links and extensions have been studied previously and roadway improvements have been identified which will benefit the borough's downtown area. These include the following proposed improvements:

- The roadway widenings and upgrading of intersections along U.S. 206, including a grade separation at the Somerville Circle.

- The connection of Urban Drive and U.S. 206 through a proposed roadway extending from S. Doughty Avenue to Orlando Drive.

These improvements will provide additional roadway capacity at locations away from the core area of Main and Bridge Streets. They will serve as new or upgraded alternate routes for through traffic as well as that destined to specific sections of the downtown area.

The concept of pulling through traffic from the core area and orienting it to a perimeter system should continue to be a primary objective of the borough's overall circulation plan. By making it easier for through traffic to by-pass the downtown's core area, the Main Street and Bridge Street corridors can be oriented to improving access for shopping and work destinations in the main commercial center of the borough. Such a perimeter access is similar to a loop road serving a major shopping mall whereby traffic can easily circulate about the downtown and enter main activity nodes at designated internal access locations. This traffic pattern will ease traffic congestion within the core area and enhance the area's economic marketability.

Other roadway and intersection improvements to support and compliment this perimeter traffic concept have also been identified and are discussed in detail in Section III E. Improvement Sub-Plans of this Master Plan report. Although they deal with more site specific actions, when considered in total they represent a significant contribution to the overall circulation concept.

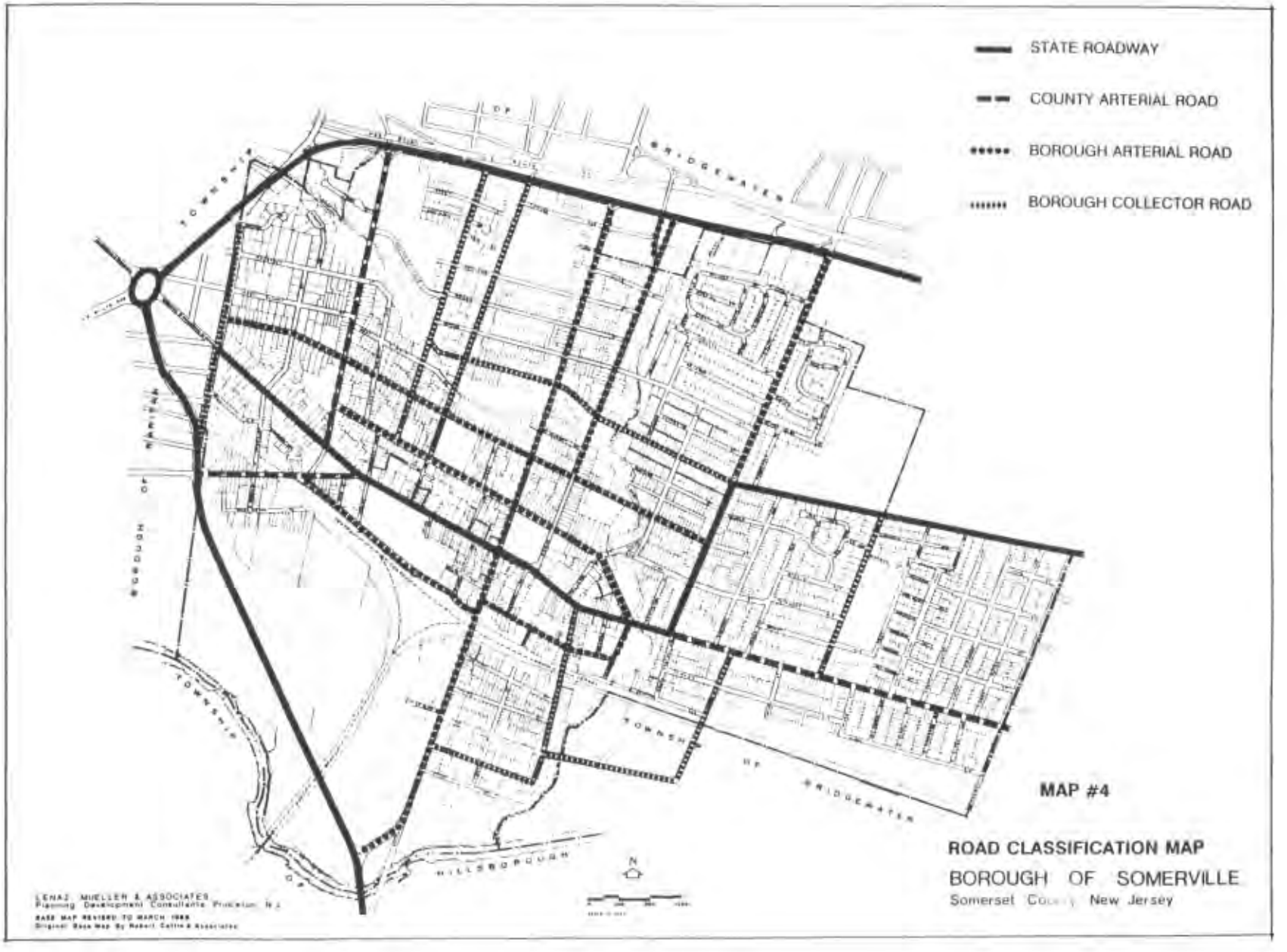
way, the collector system, which in turn distributes traffic to a local road giving individual property access.

In practical application within a developed community, it is not possible in all instances to achieve such a circulation principle; however, a close approximation is possible in Somerville. With respect to right-of-way designation, due to the built environment and historic resource sensitivities that may be adversely affected if a direct application of the roadway classification system were to occur, adjustments in the roadway design criteria will be necessary on a case by case basis where existing conditions dictate such modification.

5. **Roadway Improvement Proposals**

Described below are the various functional roadway classifications which are illustrated on Map #4, "Road Classification Map." They have been advanced in recognition of future traffic volumes potentially possible from the various land use and redevelopment proposals contained in other sections of this report.

- State Roadways - These roadways link important population centers with one another or with other regional roadways. The state roadways in Somerville include Route 206, a small portion of Route 202 in the northwestern corner of the borough, and Route 28 which consists of Main Street to Gaston Avenue to Union Avenue. These roads carry heavy traffic volumes and serve to carry commuter traffic. Road rights-of-way are as defined by the state for the particular road way maintained in their jurisdiction. They range from 80-120 feet.


STATE ROADWAY
COUNTY ARTERIAL ROAD
BOROUGH ARTERIAL ROAD
BOROUGH COLLECTOR ROAD
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
BOROUGH OF MANVILLE
TOWNSHIP OF HILLSBOROUGH
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
N
MAP #4
ROAD CLASSIFICATION MAP
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
Somerset County New Jersey
LENAZ, MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning Development Consultants Princeton, N.J.
BASE MAP REVISED TO MARCH 1988
Original Base Map By Robert Collins & Associates

- County Arterial Roads - These roads include Mountain Avenue from Somerset Street to Route 22, East Main Street from Gaston Avenue to Bridgewater Township line, and Somerset Street from Main Street to Route 206. County arterials carry medium to heavy volumes of traffic and direct traffic onto the regional roadway network.

- Borough Arterials Roads - The majority of Somerville's major roads are in this category. Due to the developed nature along most of the roads, the typical right-of-way (ROW) suggested ranges from 60 to 66 feet. Cartway widths would vary depending on existing conditions. However, a cartway width for these roads should be a minimum of 30 feet. However, widths do vary to 40 feet. Borough arterial roads should be designed to carry medium to heavy volumes of traffic through the borough and connect into the regional road network. Borough arterial roadways include: Urban Drive and Extension Road, Bridge Street, Cliff Street, High Street, Park Avenue, Somerville Mall Connector Road, and Grove Street from High Street to Route 22.

- Borough Collector Roads - Collector roads provide connection between local residential development, employment centers and downtown commercial center and higher order roads such as Route 206, Route 22, and county and borough arterial roads. Typically,these roads have only two lanes of varying rights-of-way carrying low to moderate volumes of traffic at moderate speeds. Because of the grid pattern of Somerville, local traffic is spread evenly throughout the borough. Collector streets in the borough are: Rehill Avenue, Loeser Avenue, William Street, Green Street, Davenport Street, Mercer Street, Cornell Boulevard/Hillcrest Avenue, and Hamilton Street. Rights-of-way range from 50 to 60 feet with corresponding variation in cartway widths from 24 to 36 feet.

- Local Streets - The remaining town roads fall within this classification. These streets are residential streets designed to provide direct access to properties and are expected to carry low volumes of local traffic to higher order roadways. Rights-of-way are typically 50 feet with 30 foot cartway widths.

D. Community Facilities Plan

Community facilities such as parks, conservation areas, schools, libraries, firehouses, and municipal buildings provide services vital to Somerville's needs as a regional service center. These are also essential ingredients of a community that enhance the quality of life in the borough.

In order to strengthen the image of Somerville as a major service center, the borough's Community Facilities Plan is generally oriented toward:

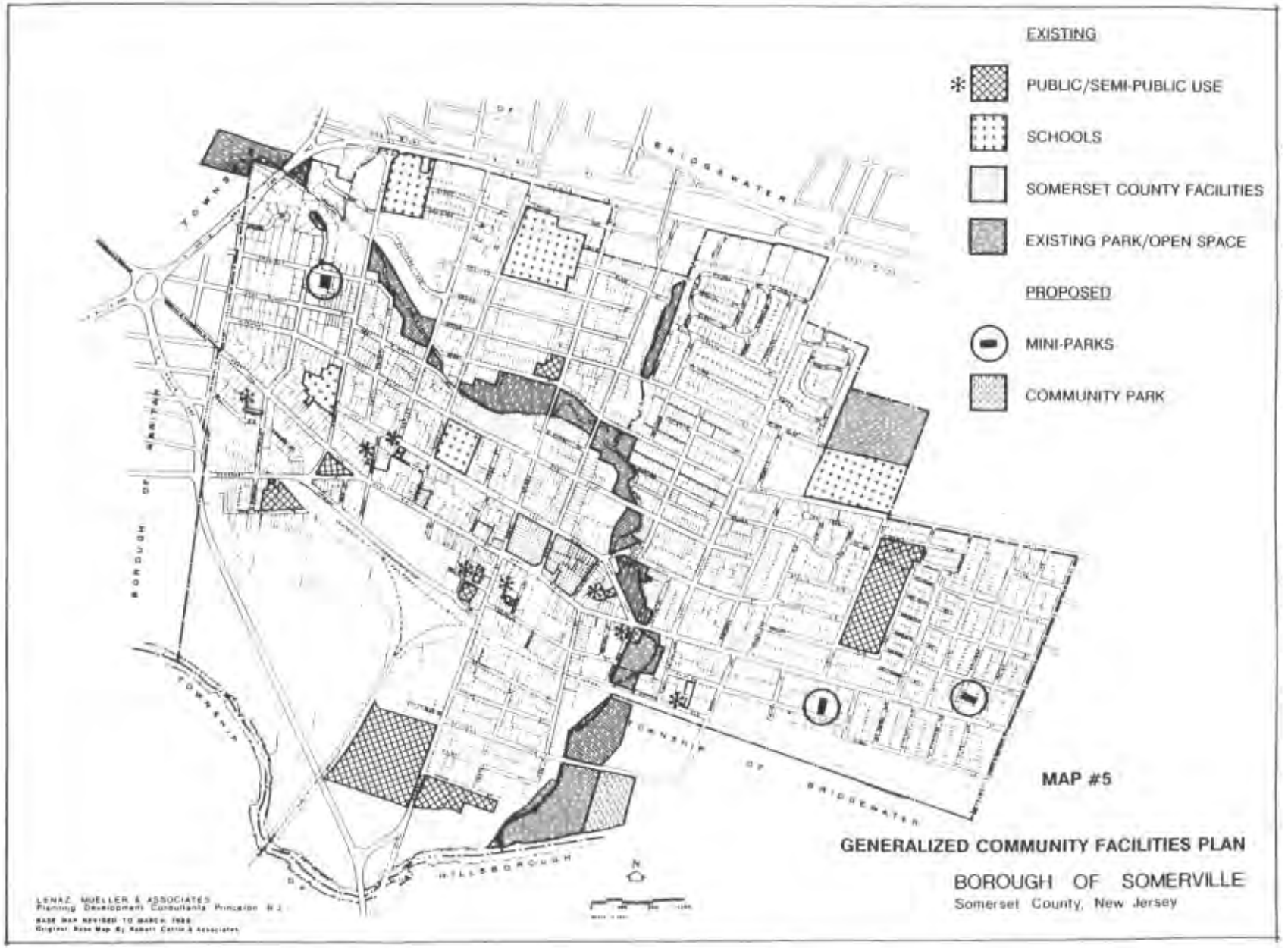
- the recognition of the Somerset Medical Center and County Complex as beneficial facilities to borough residents and the region;
- the provision of new facilities to service residents in parts of the borough where there are deficiencies;
- the relocation of certain existing community facilities into parts of the borough best suited for those particular facilities.

Major facility proposals are depicted on Map #5, "Generalized Community Facilities Plan." A summary of these proposals is highlighted below.

1. Recreation/Conservation

Included in Chapter IV - Background Considerations/Study Analysis is a detailed inventory and evaluation of the borough's existing recreational facilities. Detailed recommendations are given in Chapter III - Improvement Sub-Plans of this plan. The key recommendations include:

- Creation of a new community park facility at Southside Avenue/Loeser Avenue.
- Key pedestrian walkway linkages between schools, the municipal building and downtown shopping areas are also suggested. These are recommended to be specially landscaped walkways (trees, shrubs, signs, street furniture) primarily utilizing selected existing sidewalks.
- Suggested for conservation are major environmentally sensitive areas. These are located primarily along the Raritan River and encompass recognized flood hazard and national wetland areas.


EXISTING
PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC USE
SCHOOLS
SOMERSET COUNTY FACILITIES
EXISTING PARK/OPEN SPACE
PROPOSED
MINI-PARKS
COMMUNITY PARK
BRIDGEWATER
TOWN
BOROUGH OF RARITAN
TOWNSHIP
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
HILLSBOROUGH
N
MAP #5
GENERALIZED COMMUNITY FACILITIES PLAN
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
Somerset County, New Jersey
LENAZ, MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning Development Consultants Princeton N.J.

- Coordination of recreation usage of Vanderveer School recreation facilities with borough facilities is also advanced to maximize the benefit that sharing of such existing facilities can provide.

- New recreation facilities in the eastern and northwestern portion of the borough are seen as mini-park additions to serve the surrounding neighborhoods.

- A comprehensive street shade tree program along major roadways within the borough, such as Union Avenue, Bridge Street, and Gaston Avenue, in order to enhance the image and environmental quality of these road corridors is recommended.

2. Public Facilities

Since the last Master Plan and Reexamination Report completed for the borough in 1969 and 1985, completion of a new public works building on Fifth Street, a new police headquarters building on South Bridge Street, a new school on Davenport Street, and repair of the Municipal Building from fire damage have solved the most pressing public safety and municipal government space shortages. These facility improvements will be adequate to serve the expected borough population for at least the next decade.

Other public/semi-public facilities of the town shown on the Community Facilities Plan Map to include firehouses, Rescue Squad, senior citizen center, YMCA, West End Museum, and Post Office are encouraged to continue as valuable assets to community life in Somerville.

Over time, consideration should be given to providing a community facilities center to provide social services and indoor recreation/craft activities for segments of the borough's population requiring such services.

A new library facility should also be considered to meet the growing needs of Somerville residents. The library's present location on West End Avenue does not appear to allow for expansion; therefore, an analysis should be undertaken to determine the space needs of the library and the most appropriate location for a future library facility.

It is also apparent that the location of certain fire stations needs to be reexamined. The existing fire stations are generally located in areas where both access and space are limited. While it may not be necessary to address this situation in the short term, a long-term solution may be to relocate the fire stations out of the central business district into a peripheral area better suited for the stations. Further study would be needed before a determination is made to relocate these facilities. Priority treatment should be given to the Division Street fire station.

3. Other Community Facilities

Certain key facilities which add to the community structure of Somerville are not provided by municipal government: Somerset Medical Center, and various county legal, social service and judicial functions. These facilities also serve the regional population.

This Master Plan supports the continuation and intensification of such facilities and services with the borough as they contribute to the importance of its regional service center role. As specific expansion plans are prepared for such facilities, they should be cooperatively reviewed to insure compatibility with other aspects of this plan, so that their integration within the community fabric is accomplished in a harmonious fashion. Other sections of this plan provide policy guidance with respect to the future expansion of these facilities.

Also noted are certain special facilities which include cemeteries, state historic structures, and the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Inspection Station. While these facilities are an integral part of the community and should continue to be, the Motor Vehicle Inspection Station is poorly located and its access patterns have contributed to a deterioration of the surrounding neighborhood by adding to the traffic congestion in this area. Clearly, the relocation of the inspection station to a more appropriate location should be encouraged by the borough and acted on by the State.

E. Housing Plan

1. General

The borough has made significant strides in encouraging a balanced housing stock which caters to a variety of age and income levels. Because of its virtually developed nature, opportunities for new housing construction are limited. In addition, introducing significantly large scale and higher density housing development could dramatically alter established neighborhood patterns and cause an imbalance in the community's social and public service network.

Accordingly, this master plan addresses both the need to encourage future affordable housing opportunities in line with the mandates of the State Council on Affordable Housing as well as confronting the changing needs of existing households and future households to be attracted by proposed mixed use commercial developments elsewhere in the borough. This latter housing need should be oriented toward middle income households and generally would be attractive to empty nesters, young professionals, and upwardly mobile childless couples. In this fashion, existing residential neighborhood housing stock would be preserved as the main source of family oriented residential supply. This would allow the natural market forces of filtering family households that have gotten smaller as children leave home, into new in town townhouses and rental or condo units that may be constructed as part of an infill or redevelopment program. Similarly, children of established families in the borough could still remain hereby if they so choose.

2. Background History

In October 1986, the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing notified the borough that Somerville's pre-credited affordable housing obligation was 336 units. Of this total, 309 units were to be provided by new construction within inclusionary development (prospective need) and 27 units were existing units requiring rehabilitation (existing need). The Housing Element and Fair Share Plan for the borough, completed in December 1986, requested an adjustment to the affordable housing obligation from 336 units to 0 units. This request was based upon employment adjustments (discounting those jobs noted as Somerville-based, when, in fact, such jobs were located in adjoining municipalities), credits through use of on-going housing rehabilitation programs and the lack of developable land.

Upon review by COAH, the borough's fair share obligation was adjusted to 107 units. After numerous meetings and discussions with COAH representatives, it was determined that the existing need component (27 units) should be reduced to zero, making the new fair share obligation 80 units. It should be noted that COAH is in the process of determining if the fair share obligation can be further reduced based on lack of vacant developable land to accommodate this number.

It is likely that, based on COAH rule NJAS 5:9-1.3, which states that vacant land must be in excess of 2 acres in size in order to be mandated for inclusionary zoning and development, COAH may make an additional adjustment in the borough's fair share obligation to coincide with the practical yield achievable from the one available site which complies with the vacant land rule.

3. Housing Certification Element

There is one site which meets the "vacant land" criteria established by COAH. This site, known as the Oak Terrace tract, consists of block 153, lots 4-s and 4-r and totals approximately 3 acres. Although the site is heavily wooded, it does have sewer and water service and is developable for total housing. A detailed site analysis would be required to determine the number of affordable units that could be constructed on the site as part of an inclusionary project requiring a 20% set-aside of affordable dwellings.

By including this site for affordable housing, the borough will be able to meet its designated fair share obligation as determined by COAH. It should be noted that if additional sites are developed in the future as part of a redevelopment program with an affordable housing component, such as the three sites which are identified later in this chapter, housing credit should be given to the borough by COAH in order to meet a future fair share housing obligation which COAH will determine in 1993.

4. New Housing Opportunities Through Redevelopment and Infill Construction

The borough recognizes the need to provide both middle income and affordable housing opportunities for residents of Somerville. Therefore, a long term solution to providing both income levels of housing has been considered.

Three possible areas within the borough have been identified as being appropriate sites for a housing development as part of a redevelopment plan for the borough. Map # #6, "Housing Plan", identifies these areas.

The first site is the Meadow Street site. The tract is located within close proximity to mass transit opportunities and is within walking distance of county services, the downtown commercial center and borough employment areas. In addition, the site is vacant and therefore would require no building demolition.

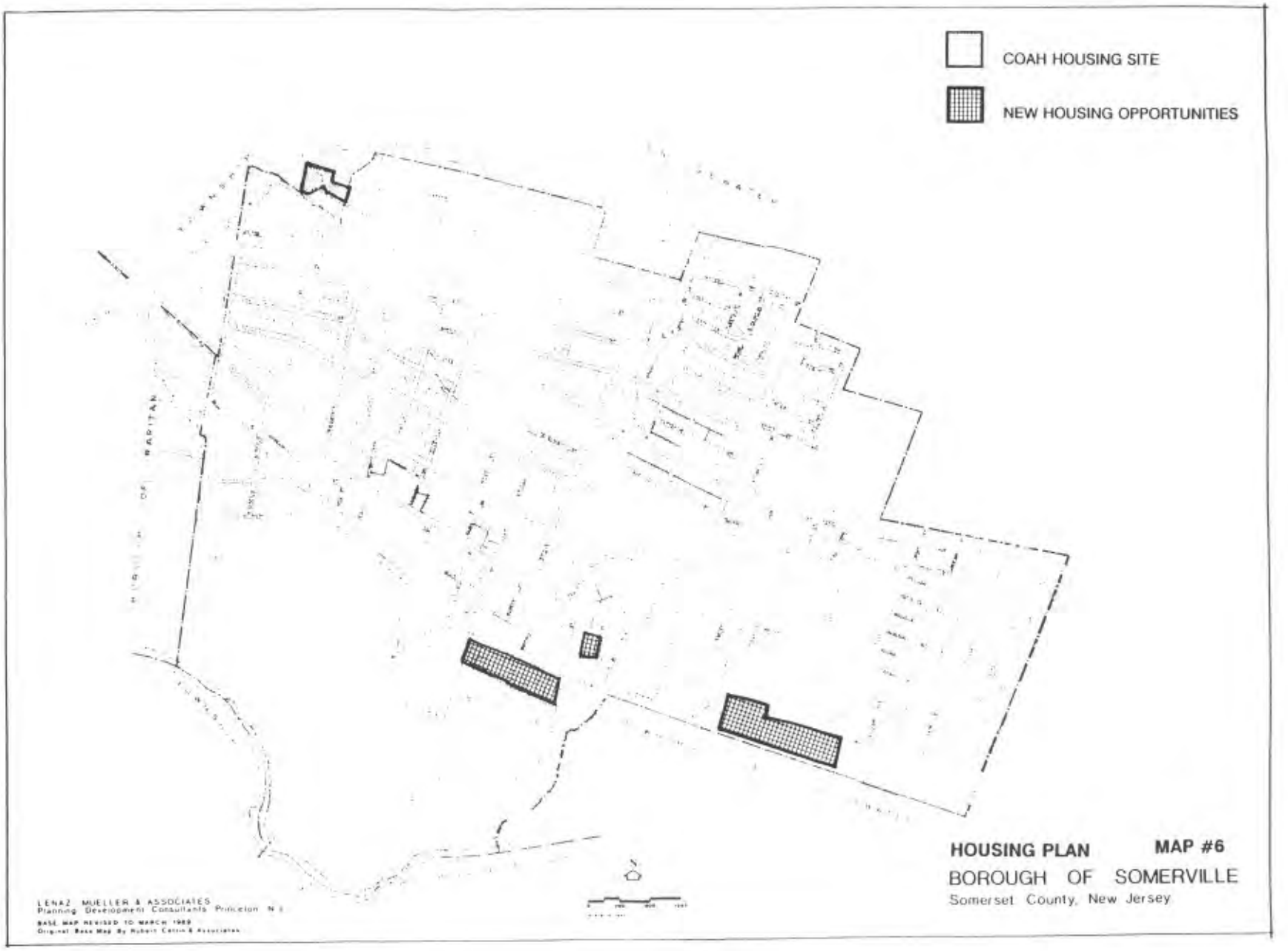
A 34-unit affordable housing development has been proposed by a non-profit organization on this site and several variances have been granted by the Board of Adjustment relating to the requested use.

The second area is located in the eastern portion of the borough. A 7.1 acre site is available. It is bordered to the south by the railroad tracks, to the east by Haynes Street, to the west by James Street, and to the north by Fairview Avenue. The borough tax maps identify this site as Block 50, Lots 3, 4, 13, and 14. Zoning for the tract is I-Industrial which permits limited manufacturing and industrial operations. Specifically prohibited in the zone is residential construction or conversion.

Currently, a large industrial factory structure exists on the site in a dilapidated condition. A conceptual site plan has been submitted by a developer to the borough which proposes a 72-unit townhouse development on the tract. It is possible that, if the zoning were changed and the project approved, some of the townhouse units could be set aside for low/moderate income housing. In addition, there may be some environmental clean-up needed on the site before it can be developed. As a result, the economic feasibility of a residential project, with an affordable housing element, on this site could be jeopardized given the potential for a costly environmental site clean-up.

The third area considered for housing is in the southern portion of Somerville known as the Second Street area. The area is bordered to the west by South Bridge Street, to the north by the railroad tracks, to the east by Hamilton Street and to the south by Second Street. Land uses in this area are residential, commercial and light industrial.

The Second Street area is located within close proximity to mass transportation, is within walking distance of the downtown, and, most importantly, is located on the periphery of an established residential area.


COAH HOUSING SITE
NEW HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES
RARITAN
HOUSING PLAN
MAP #6
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
Somerset County, New Jersey
LENAZ MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning Development Consultants Princeton N.J.
BASE MAP REVISED TO MARCH 1989
Original Base Map By Robert Cotter & Associates

As a long-term solution to providing new in-town housing opportunities, this block appears to the most suitable for a mix of middle income and affordable housing in the context of the borough's redevelopment plans previously described elsewhere in the plan. By encouraging residential development in this area, the borough is not only providing greater housing opportunities but is also alleviating an encroachment of non-residential uses in an established residential neighborhood. Short term realization of this area for new housing is dependent on the availability of public and private funds to enable the assemblage of a suitable land area for an appropriate residential development. Also included as part of the short term solution is the continuation of code enforcements and housing rehabilitation programs to ensure that the existing affordable housing stock is maintained.

As a general policy, additional infill housing opportunity could be created through conversion and/or rehabilitation of existing structures within or abutting the downtown area. The ability to require an affordable housing component of such smaller scale projects without jeopardizing project feasibility would have to be evaluated on a case by case basis.

F. Regional Overview

The adjoining municipalities' plans and ordinances were examined with regard to land uses abutting Somerville. In relation to this Master Plan, no inconsistencies in use exist, although there may be differences in density or levels of use.

A substantial portion of Somerville is bounded by major roadways or natural features such as the Raritan River. Since these boundaries are so defined, the effect of Somerville's future land use pattern on adjoining municipalities is somewhat negated by these buffers. The Raritan River separates Somerville from Hillsborough Township; Peter's Brook separates the southern portion of the borough from Bridgewater; and Routes 206, 202 and 22 effectively buffer the western and northern portions of Somerville from Raritan Borough and Bridgewater Township.

A brief overview of Somerville Borough's land use proposals in relation to its adjoining municipalities follows:

- Hillsborough Township - Somerville and Hillsborough are divided by the Raritan River. In addition, this Master Plan envisions a greenbelt along the river banks that runs the length of Somerville's southern border. This greenbelt is compatible with the Duke Estate's Agricultural and Open Space Preserve that is located along the Raritan River banks in Hillsborough.

- Raritan Borough - Compatible residential and mixed-use commercial/office development exist along the common boundary. To some extent, these uses are separated by Route 206, which has lead to the varied land uses existing in this area.

- Bridgewater Township - Compatible land uses exist along the common boundary. Generally, low residential uses exist along the eastern common boundary. However, there is a non-residential complex (Johnson & Johnson) adjacent to Chambres Park. The complex is well screened and buffered from the park which lessens any negative impact on existing or proposed parks in this area. Along Route 22, which generally serves as the northern common boundary, compatible mixed uses are located.

The borough's Master Plan has been reviewed in relation to the Somerset County Master Plan and the preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan and no major inconsistencies exist with the development objectives advanced by such guide plans.

The 1987 County Master Plan represents a guide for future growth in Somerset County. This plan is purposely broad in nature and is not intended to delineate particular parcels for individual uses. The plan addresses issues, such as the road system, from a regional viewpoint rather than from a local viewpoint which is more narrow in scope.

According to the Land Use Management Plan included in the County's Master Plan, Somerville Borough is labelled a "regional county center." A regional county center is described as a place where major concentrations of mixed use, commercial activity and mass transit centers should be focused. Clearly, the borough meets this description. The Somerville Master Plan supports this designation through encouraging continued non-residential growth in designated areas while still preserving the existing residential character of the borough.

At the writing of this plan, the State Preliminary Development and Redevelopment Plan has not been adopted by the State Planning Commission. The plan would replace the existing State Development Guide. However, the revisions to the existing guide are still being identified and a final State Plan is not expected to be complete before 1991. At this point, the borough is designated as a Tier 1 community which is consistent in land use and density guidelines to the existing nature of the borough. The plan proposals are consistent with the Tier 1 designations recommendations of the State Plan.

Close monitoring of the Revised State Plan is necessary by the Planning Board to ensure consistency between the goals and policies of the borough's Master Plan with the growth objectives contained in a Revised State Development and Redevelopment Plan. Even though the State Plan will be a broad based policy guide which recommends where future growth should be concentrated within the state, it is important to realize that the policies developed in the State Plan will, beyond land use concerns, affect funding opportunities from the state to the borough.

III. IMPROVEMENT SUB-PLANS

The following suggestions have been made in order to enhance the local park and recreation system by providing additional passive and active recreational/open space opportunities to all borough residents and are identified on Map #7, "Park/Open Space System."

1. Acquire two vacant properties (Block 8, Lot 4 and Block 49, Lot 11A) in the eastern portion of the borough for use as mini-parks.

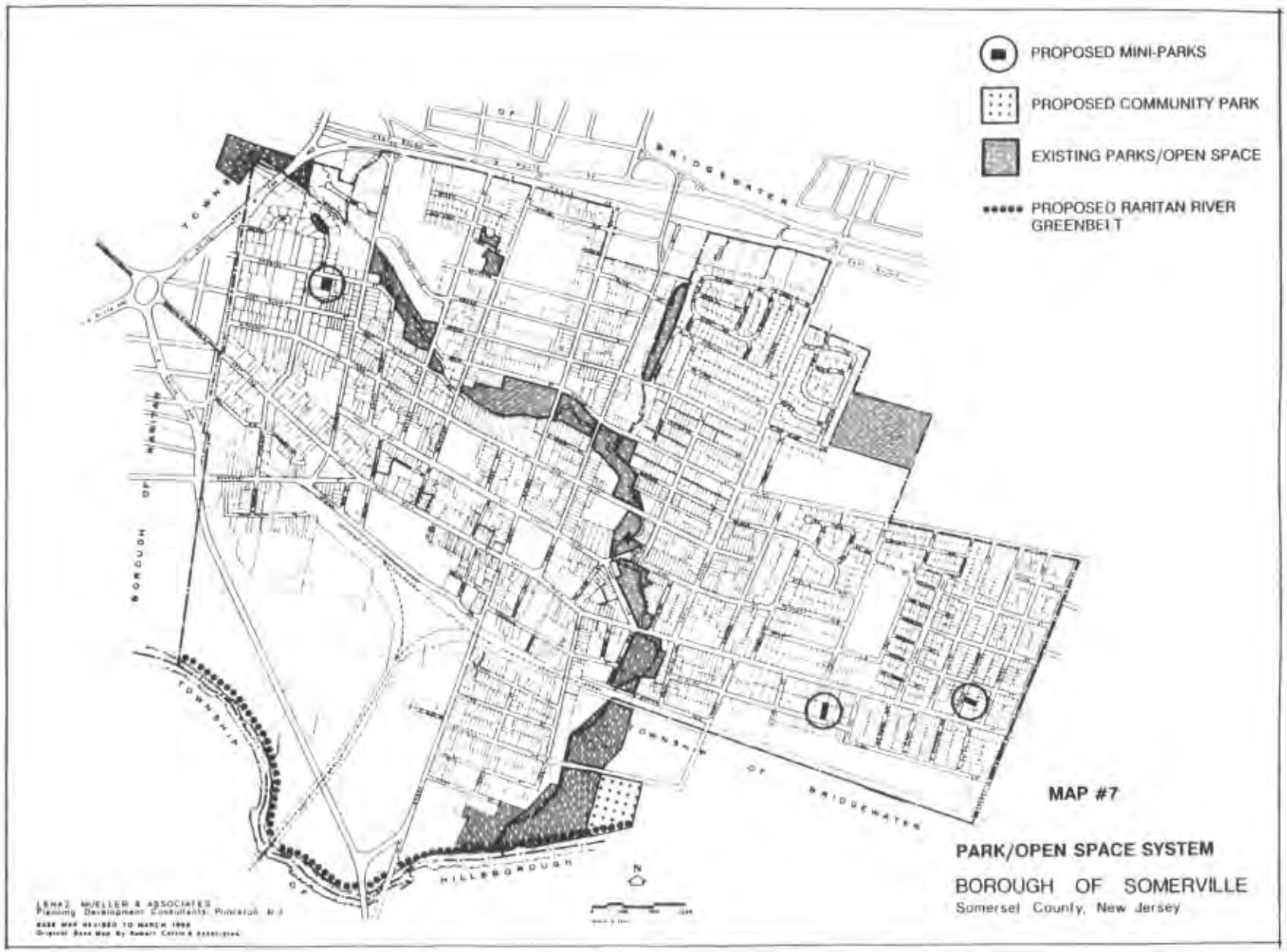
2. Consider acquisition of a parcel (Block 141, Lot 1.1) on Prospect Street for development as a mini-park.

3. Repair and upgrade all existing neighborhood park facilities so that they can be better utilized for active recreational activities. Existing inventories and facility upgrade needs have been identified by the borough's recreation commission. These inventories should be used as the basis for compiling a comprehensive capital improvement program for existing park areas.

4. Acquire property along Southside Avenue (Loeser Avenue) in Bridgewater Township for development as a community park. Particular attention should be given to the development of active recreation facilities, such as ball fields and a possible community swimming pool, on the site.

5. Develop, through a dedicated easement process, a greenbelt along the Raritan River extending the entire length of the borough's southern border. At a minimum, the 100 year flood hazard area should constitute the greenbelt area.

6. Develop a passive natural trail system on the Clarks Woods tract which capitalizes on the unique features of the site.


PROPOSED MINI-PARKS
PROPOSED COMMUNITY PARK
EXISTING PARKS/OPEN SPACE
PROPOSED RARITAN RIVER GREENBELT
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
BOROUGH OF MANVILLE
TOWNSHIP OF HILLSBOROUGH
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
N
MAP #7
PARK/OPEN SPACE SYSTEM
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
Somerset County, New Jersey
LENKZ, MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning Development Consultants, Princeton, N.J.

7. Prepare a long-range recreational development plan for Clarks Woods which explores various access options to the site.

8. Rezone property located along Route 206, owned by Raritan Borough, from an I-Industrial Zone to a C-Conservation Zone to protect the site's natural resources.

9. Rezone property located on the western side of Route 206 below Somerset Street from its existing I-Industrial zoning classification to a lower intensity industrial zone.

10. Once Culver Street (at East High Street intersection) is closed, the street bed and right-of-way should be included as part of the borough's greenbelt area.

11. Support the borough's Shade Tree Commission's efforts to provide shade trees on major roadways within the community, such as Union Avenue, Bridge Street, and Gaston Avenue, in order to enhance the image and environmental quality of these areas.

B. Historic Preservation Recommendations

An analysis of historical documentation and a reconnaissance survey of Somerville revealed many existing structures of historical, cultural, and architectural interest. Although at least a few resources can be found in almost every section of the borough, most lie south and west of Peter's Brook. Nineteenth century maps, including Beers, Comstock, and Cline's 1873 Atlas of Somerset County, show that this area was well developed by the end of the century, whereas the land east of the brook was only sparsely populated.

Nineteenth century development was most highly concentrated along Main Street, gradually thinning as one traveled away from the Central Business District. Following Somerville's incorporation as a borough in 1909, and throughout the first few decades of this century, this area continued to develop, so that the land beyond the commercial center and encompassed by Peter's Brook was virtually filled with residential architecture by mid-century.

Because of Somerville's prominence as the seat of government of a largely rural county, the borough has the most significant collection of nineteenth and early twentieth century architecture in all of Somerset County. Its unparalleled collection of commercial, civic, and ecclesiastical architecture includes examples of Italianate, Richardsonian Romanesque, and Neo-Classical styles, as well as several others. Outstanding examples can be found in the Somerset County Court House, the railroad station, many commercial buildings, and several banks and churches.

Existing residential architecture could very well provide textbook examples of virtually every architectural style built between 1820 and 1940. Excellent examples of Greek Revival and Gothic Revival architecture represent the earlier period. Later nineteenth century Somerville architecture includes Italian Villa, Italianate, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Shingle, Neo-Classical and Colonial Revival styles. These were joined in the present century by a variety of suburban architectural types. Much of the commercial and residential architecture of this area has been identified by the recent Somerset County Historic Sites Survey (1989).

The following recommendations have been made to preserve and enhance the wealth of historic structures in Somerville:

1. Formally adopt the "Reconnaissance Level Inventory - Somerville Borough" (Research & Archaeological Management, Inc.; 1989) as

tures. It does not include a grid of a few blocks south of the railroad, also developed in the nineteenth century, due to the extent of infill and the general loss of integrity. Otherwise, it represents the historical boundaries of the town, circa 1873.

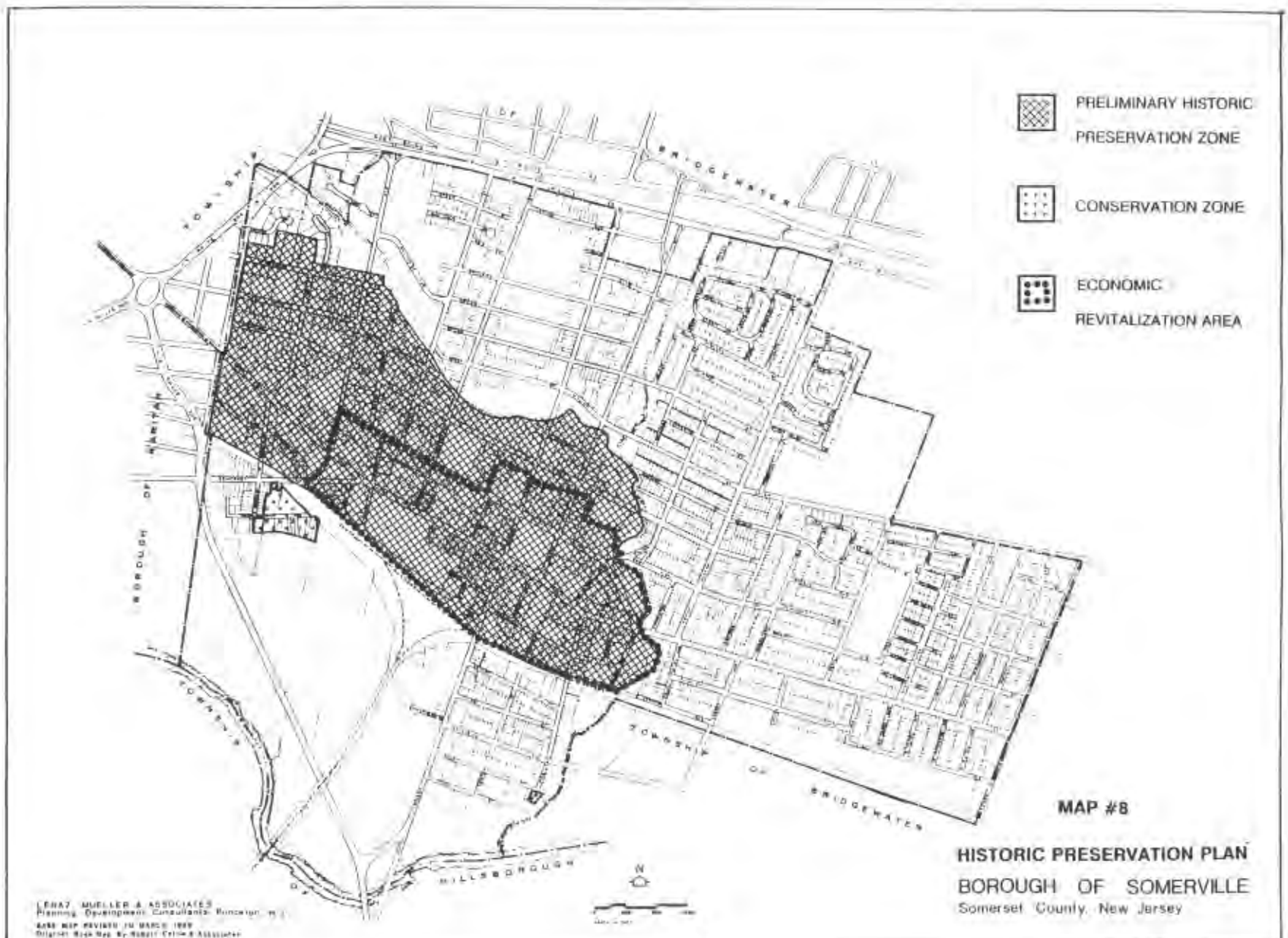
3. Establish a Conservation District in the Washington Place neighborhood. Washington Place lies in a triangle bordered by the Central Railroad of New Jersey and Route 206. To the south of Washington Place is a former landfill site. Although the street's houses are fairly well maintained, its proximity to the landfill, highway and railroad have caused it to suffer from a somewhat negative image. Yet Washington Place is an area that holds exceptional architectural and historical importance.

4. Provide a 100 foot or greater buffer on the southern boundary of Washington Place. The buffer is intended to lessen the impact of the proposed Somerville Mall on the adjacent property.

5. Coordinate, with the Department of Environmental Protection, Divisions of Parks and Forestry, plans to further develop the Washington Place areas as a major tourist attraction.

6. Protect the small 18th century cemetery on Fourth Street at Hamilton Street by designating it a historic site and a conservation district.

The technique recommended for the preservation of the original borough settlement area described above is through the creation of a local historic district as an overlay to the current borough zoning map. In order to implement a local historic district through zoning, it is necessary, by law, to create a borough "historic preservation commission." The commission serves in an advisory capacity to the planning board in the review of certain types of development applications for land use changes


PRELIMINARY HISTORIC PRESERVATION ZONE
CONSERVATION ZONE
ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION AREA
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
BOROUGH OF NARITAN
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
HILLSBOROUGH
N
LERAZ, MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning, Development Consultants, Princeton, N.J.
MAP #8
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
Somerset County, New Jersey

created through infill development on odd vacant lots or through redevelopment within an historic district. In concept, the commission would review and offer recommendations on applicable development applications similar in process to other borough boards/agencies involved in land use development of the borough. The commission also reviews permit applications for existing buildings within the designated district.

The establishment of an historic district by local zoning represents recognition by the borough of the need to preserve an historically or culturally significant environment for the continued welfare of the community. Historic district zoning helps to maintain and enhance the identity of the borough's rich past, assists to retain or enhance property values in areas subject to change and provides a sense of stability and continuity for those who live in the larger community, as well as for those who live in the designated district.

Standards and design guidelines for the review of development applications within the district can be as strict or as lenient as may be desired to insure implementation of overall master plan objectives for the borough.

In order to achieve the goals and policies specifically related to the local economy without compromising the historic preservation goals of the borough, a balance is reached by designating an area within the local historic district as an economic revitalization area. This economic revitalization area, shown on Historic Preservation Map will be subject to standards and design guidelines that are tailored to commercial development efforts. Review of development projects within the economic revitalization area may be the role of a sub-committee of a Historic Preservation Commission or delegated to the architectural review committee of the District Management Corporation. The precise administrative and review procedures would be clarified during the ordinance preparation phase, which is needed to implement this historic preservation program.

C. Professional Office Use Recommendations (P-1 and P-2 Zones)

Portions of the Borough of Somerville have become an attractive area for professional office development. The Somerset County Complex is located in the center of town. A prestigious hospital (Somerset Medical Center) is also situated in Somerville. The borough is located within minutes of major roadways. The high cost of raw land and the limited amount of such land within proximity to the borough have increased the desirability for professional office conversions and infill development within certain areas of the borough.

However, these factors have also contributed to some of the development-related problems that have arisen through professional office conversions and infill office construction. Some of the major concerns are in regard to traffic flow and congestion, incompatible uses, and the whittling away of the borough's existing housing stock.

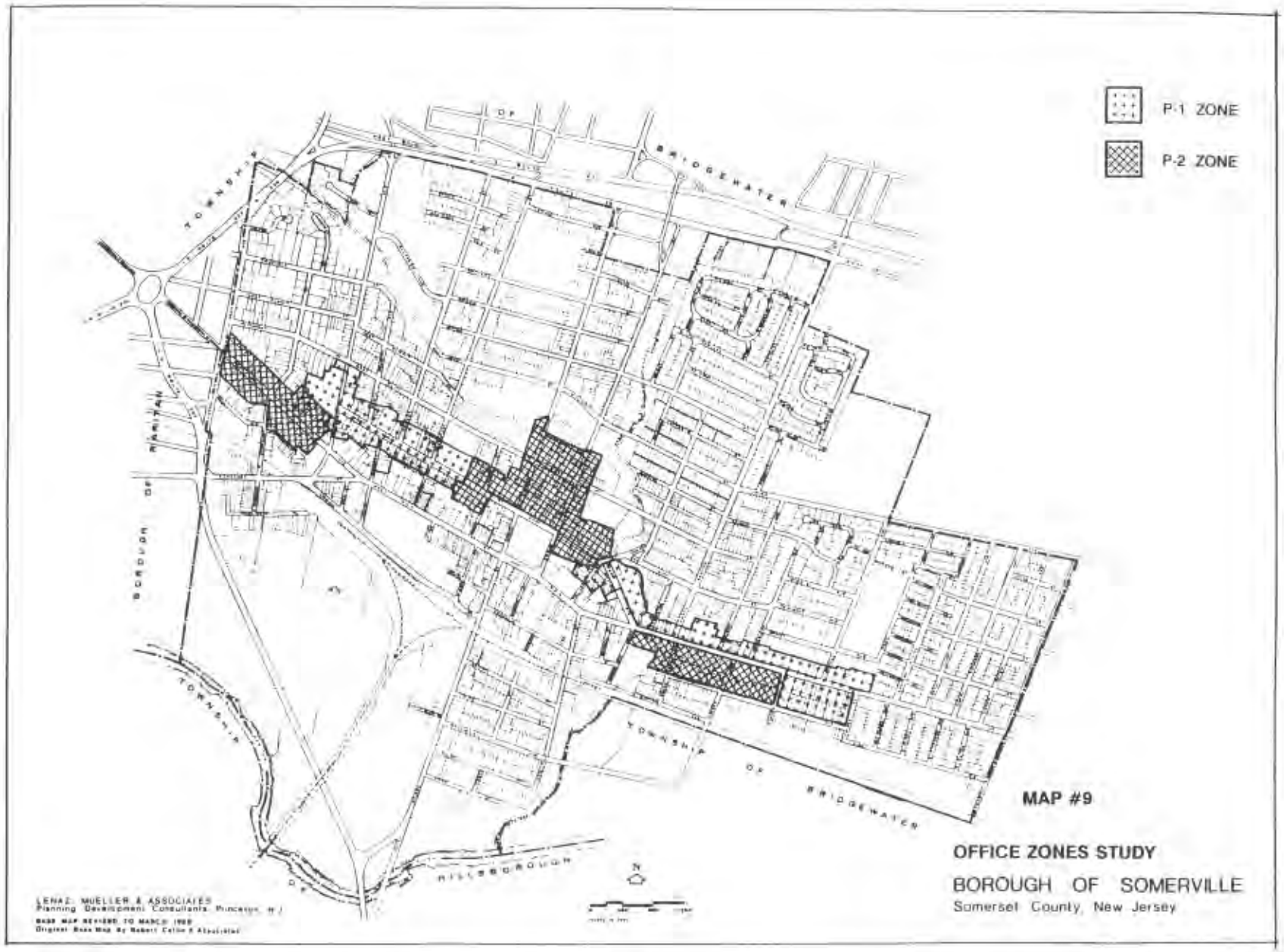
The following suggestions have been made to enhance the physical appearance and function of the existing P-1 and P-2 zones shown on the "Office Zones Study Map."

1. Establish stringent bulk standards for new infill development. Discourage existing parcel assemblage and demolition of existing buildings by redirecting, instead, this market demand to predetermined redevelopment areas located within the downtown and Central Business District retail area.

2. Permit conversions of principal buildings that do not increase existing floor area. Prohibit use of accessory structures for office use.

3. Encourage coordinated vehicular access together with interconnected rear parking areas for conversions of new construction in the professional office zones. Prohibitions of on-street parking to be counted as meeting part or all of the new parking demand that could be guaranteed by a proposed conversion.

4. Reduce substantially the permitted 10-story building height in the P-2 district to allow up to a three story building height. Maintain the established building height limitations of the immediately abutting residential district.


P-1 ZONE
P-2 ZONE
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
BOROUGH OF RARITAN
TOWNSHIP OF HILLSBOROUGH
N
MAP #9
OFFICE ZONES STUDY
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
Somerset County, New Jersey
LENAZ, MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning Development Consultants, Princeton, N.J.

5. Develop greater landscape treatment standards and screening techniques for non-residential uses where they abut residential lots or a public street.

6. If not achievable on-site or as an additional buffering technique, screen objectionable views located on converted parcels by requiring landscaping on adjoining off-site property with that abutting property owner's consent.

7. Create a local historic preservation overlay zone, as described in the Historic Preservation section of the Master Plan. This new zone would govern the areas most susceptible to continued professional office development and conversion providing an added measure of design sensitivity to guide future construction.

D. East Main Street Revitalization Area

This master plan has focused a planning effort on a portion of the borough's downtown located on either side of East Main Street. This area encompasses the county complex and adjacent block to the east, new or pending office developments, the Urban Drive extension, and the Franklin Street neighborhood. In this area a transition of land uses is occurring and opportunities for rehabilitation of selected existing sound structures and redevelopment are the greatest. Substantial economic development opportunities will be realized in this area to complement the existing downtown area located along West Main Street. This area's revitalization program would also tie into other mixed-use development opportunities that have been identified elsewhere in this report's land use plan.

During the course of various public hearings on the draft master plan, it was concluded that an additional three block area north of East High Street to Cliff Street and extending from Peter's Brook to Ross Street should be planned as an integral part of the East Main Street revitalization area. The land use plan element of this report identifies this additional study area as Area 3A and provides policy guidelines for its future development.

Redevelopment Strategy

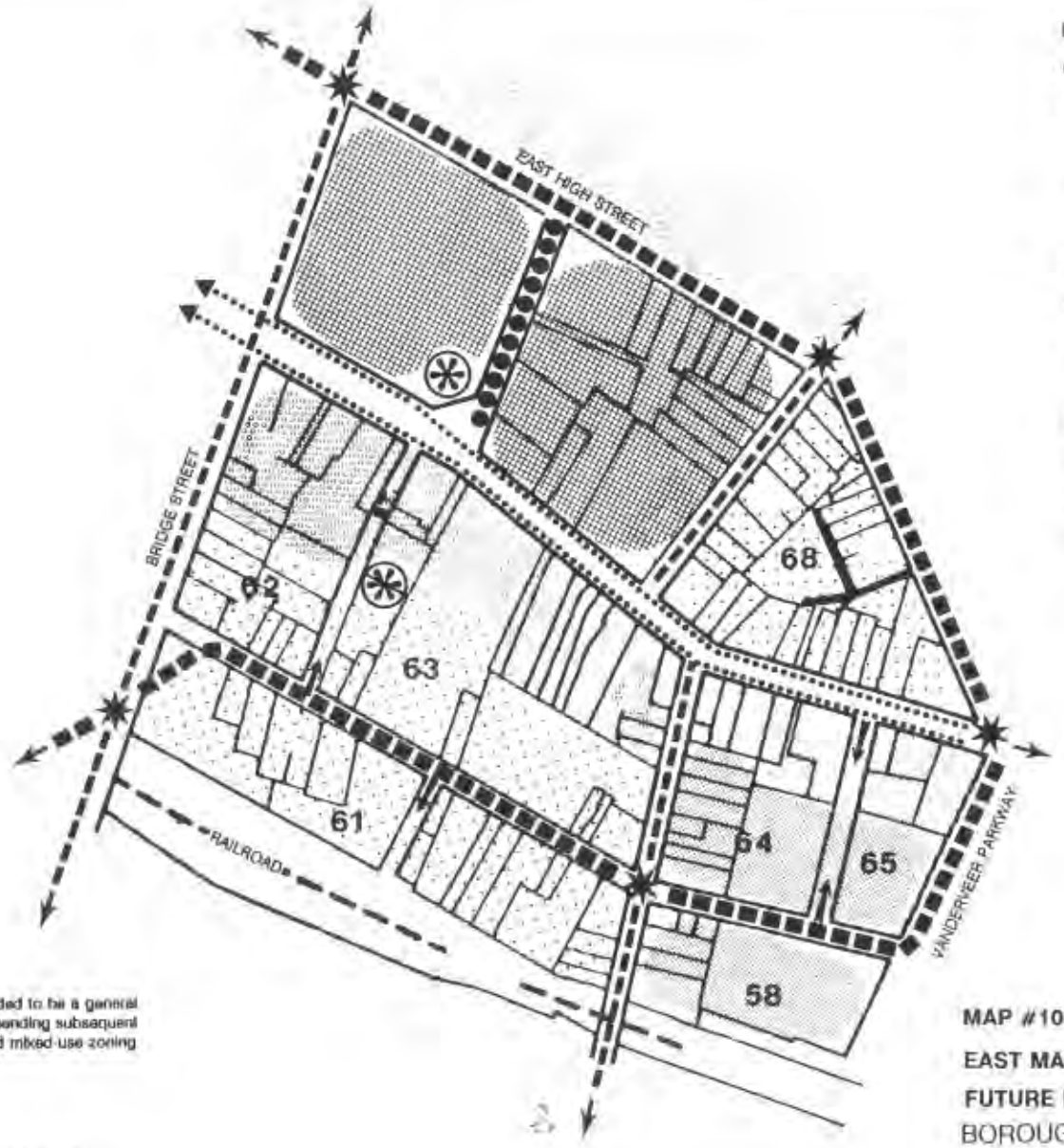
The basic redevelopment strategy for the East Main Street Revitalization area is to capitalize on the presence of the County Complex and the economic vitality and service strengths offered by the Central Business District area on Main Street. By concentrating redevelopment within a seven block area east of North Bridge Street, directly east of the main Central Business District, a revitalization area of new mixed office, retail and residential activity is envisioned. The study area is intended to incorporate a mixed-use zoning scheme for the entire area. Improved access to this revitalization area through the planned extension of Urban Drive allows for better distribution of future traffic that would be generated by redevelopment to more intense uses in the core area.

By encouraging the concentration of mixed uses with emphasis on office activity in the revitalization area, increased pedestrian linkages to the County Complex and CBD retail area is possible. Such increased pedestrian activity will foster greater marketability of existing retail activity in the CBD as well as other support uses in the downtown.

In order to minimize the extent of public subsidy required within the redevelopment area, a form of public/private development corporation is required. Such a management entity would enable the assemblage of properties according to a prescribed redevelopment plan. Tax revenues to be generated through new private development can be used to offset the initial cost of site assembly and preparation which may need to be advanced by public entity. Ideally, prospective users/redevelopers can be identified by the borough who would advance funds in a quid pro quo recognition of limited public tax incentives, use of eminent domain powers to acquire/assemble property and provision of certain infrastructure improvements such as road and drainage facilities.

Map #10 indicates the generalized future land use plan for each block in the East Main Street Revitalization Area that advances the above redevelopment strategy. It is not intended that these land use patterns would be the basis of individual zoning districts, but rather broad policies that would be incorporated within an overall single mixed-use zone concept for the entire area.

To assist in further refining this broad brush future land use plan and to aid the area's availability for greater economic development opportunities, the following suggestions are advanced with respect to the revitalization area:



CBD LOOP ROAD

CBD MAIN ACCESS

LIMITED BLOCK ACCESS

63 STUDY BLOCKS

GATEWAY FEATURE

PEDESTRIAN PROMENADE

LANDSCAPED WALKWAY

TOWN CENTER PLAZA

COUNTY COMPLEX

RETAIL/OFFICE

OFFICE

RESIDENTIAL

SEE LAND USE PLAN (AREA 3A) TEXT FOR FUTURE LAND USE POLICIES ON THIS ADDITIONAL 3 BLOCK AREA

* Patterns on this plan intended to be a general guide to future land uses pending subsequent detailed design studies and mixed-use zoning ordinance preparation.

LENAZ, MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning, Development Consultants, Princeton, N.J.

BASE MAP REVISED TO MARCH 1988
Original Base Map By Robert Carter & Associates

MAP #10

EAST MAIN STREET

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE

Somerset County, New Jersey

1. Encourage retail/service-oriented business on Main Street frontage properties with office uses located on upper floors.

2. Limit county expansion to a two-block area.

3. Create pedestrian promenade along Grove Street once the Urban Drive extension is completed.

4. Encourage the rehabilitation and recycling of the historic Somerset Hotel.

5. Create town center green plazas in close proximity to East Main Street and tied into the proposed Grove Street pedestrian promenade.

6. Require greater landscaping of existing and future parking areas.

7. Encourage service and mixed use development which includes residential, office, and commercial uses within the economic revitalization area.

8. Support the extension of Urban Drive as part of the central business district circulation loop.

9. Consider the ability for existing public and semi-public uses, such as churches, to expand and be incorporated within any future revitalization for the larger area.

In addition, the following individual block recommendations are suggested to aid in the transformation of the area:

<u>Block 61</u>

- Encourage multi-story office development. A range of 3 to 5 stories in envisioned in order to generate sufficient tax revenue necessary to offset public investment in site assemblage and public infrastructure improvement.

- Prohibit commercial or residential development within the block.

- Close Center Street and include its right-of-way area within abutting parcels for redevelopment use.

- Coordinate parking, lighting, signage, access and landscaping for redevelopment.

Block 62

- Consider relocation of the Fire Station to a peripheral location to the CBD/downtown area.
- Encourage multi-story retail/office development along Main Street frontage properties with office activity restricted to upper floors.
- Develop properties not fronting on Main Street with mixed uses oriented towards service/office development.
- Seek coordinated parking, lighting, signage, landscaping and access on this block.
- Limit curb cuts along Bridge Street and Urban Drive Extension.
- Prohibit curb cuts along Main Street.
- Consider closing Warren Street to through traffic and limiting it for internal block access and emergency accessibility.

Block 63

- Encourage multi-story retail/office development along Main Street frontage properties with office uses and/or apartments restricted to upper floors.
- Develop a small scale town center plaza along Warren Street.
- Encourage multi-story office development to continue along Franklin Street.
- Insure that mixed use development along Warren Street is compatible with future office development.
- Coordinate parking, lighting, signage, access and landscaping for development within this block.
- Limit curb cuts along Main Street.

Blocks 64, 65, 58

- Encourage redevelopment for medium density townhouse and multi-family residential development in blocks 58, 64, and 65. In addition, use of low interest loans and grants for rehabilitation of existing housing stock in this area should be encouraged. It should be noted that within block 64 an affordable housing project is being considered.

- Consider the eventual closure of Meadow Street.

- Portions of block 64 and 65 whose lots front onto East Main Street should be reserved for retail/service uses.

- Coordinate parking, lighting, signage, access and landscape treatment for redevelopment on these blocks.

Block 68

- Encourage mixed use development that is oriented towards professional office uses.

- Encourage neighborhood commercial and personal service uses along East Main Street. Seek to discourage automobile or highway commercial uses on East Main Street frontage properties.

- Consider relocating the borough's library within this block.

- Consider possible relocation of the Somerville Rescue Squad.

Upon adoption of the Master Plan, consideration should be given to the preparation of a detailed urban plan that would further clarify land use policies and design standards for this as well as the downtown CBD. The design plan should also identify site and building design criteria that would be comparable with the borough's historic resources and character. Once such an urban design element is reviewed and approved by the Planning Board, it should be adopted as part of this master plan. Following this design plan further consideration should be given to preparing a redevelopment plan according to the criteria established by New Jersey's Redevelopment Agencies Law (C40:55C-1 et seq.) Such a plan will enable the borough or its designated agent to formally proceed with the redevelopment process under the laws allowing for redevelopment in New Jersey. Such a formal redevelopment plan will also allow the borough to consider use of Fox-Lance and similar tax abatement schemes on a limited basis. As appropriate, such schemes are to be

considered as possible incentives to accelerate the redevelopment program envisioned by this plan.

E. Circulation Recommendations

In order to establish a more efficient CBD access plan that would accommodate the previously described downtown redevelopment plan, improve borough traffic patterns entering and exiting Somerville and enhance pedestrian circulation, the following improvements identified in the following Circulation Improvement Map #11 are suggested:

1. **Urban Drive Extension** -- The extension of Urban Drive through Franklin Street and Vanderveer Parkway will complete the southerly by-pass to Main Street and divert additional traffic.

2. **East Main Street, Park Avenue and Vanderveer Parkway Intersection** -- Signalize and add left turn lanes to facilitate the movement of traffic from Park Avenue and the Urban Drive Extension.

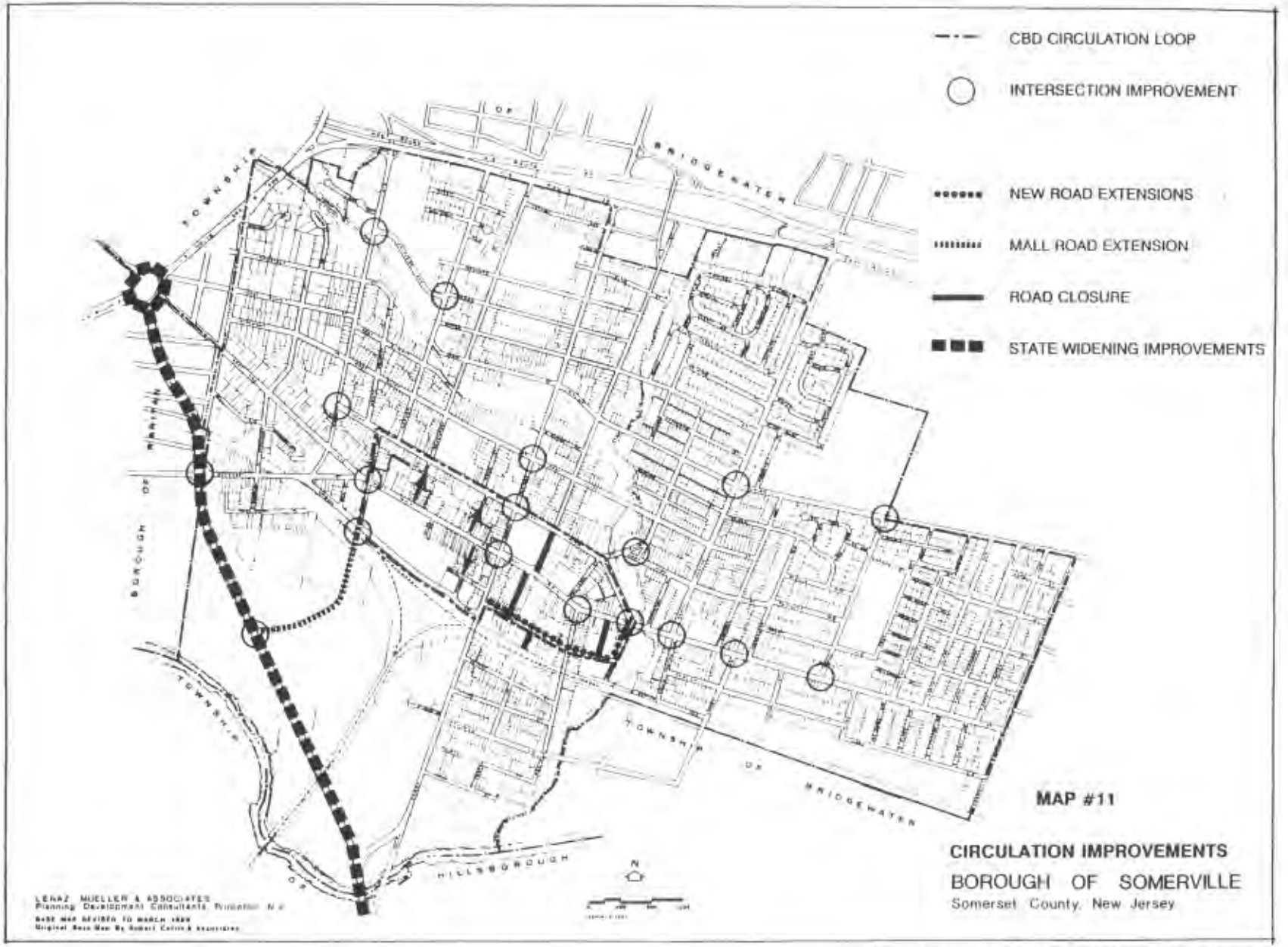
3. **East High Street, Park Avenue, and Mechanic Street Intersection** -- The relocation of the stop sign from Park Avenue to westbound High Street will compliment the use of Park Avenue and High Street as a northerly by-pass to Main Street.

4. **West High Street and Mountain Avenue** -- Signalization of this intersection and provision of a southbound left turn lane on Mountain Avenue should be considered as a means of dealing with traffic exiting West High Street.

5. **Urban Drive and South Doughty Avenue** -- Signalization of this intersection will facilitate the flow of traffic from Main Street onto Urban Drive. With the extension of Urban Drive east of Bridge Street, this traffic volume will increase significantly. Additional left turn lanes on Urban Drive may also be necessary with the South Doughty Avenue extension. This latter item may be accomplished with the removal of on-street (south side) parking.

6. **South Doughty Avenue between West High Street and West Main Street** -- The designation of this section as a one-way northbound street would aid in maximizing the capacity of the Main Street intersection by reducing conflicting turning and through movements. This action could also assist in focusing traffic flows from the north onto Mountain Avenue to access Urban Drive.

7. **Grove Street between East High Street and East Main Street** -- Closure of this segment to traffic and its use as a pedestrian street



MAP #11

CIRCULATION IMPROVEMENTS

BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE

Somerset County, New Jersey

* Revised to reflect removal of Fourth St. extension and addition of various intersection improvements.

is considered reasonable in that it would encourage traffic to use High Street in place of Main Street. The present intersection of East Main Street and Grove Street is configured poorly and lacks adequate traffic controls. At the East High Street intersection, pedestrian signals may also be appropriate. Closure of this street should occur after the Urban Drive extension is completed.

8. **Warren Street and Meadow Street between East Main Street and Franklin Street** -- These two street segments are not critical to the overall downtown circulation pattern. In the long term, their removal would benefit East Main Street by eliminating two intersections and their conflicting turning movements.

9. **East Main Street and South Gaston Avenue** -- This intersection could be improved in three ways:

   - Realign South Gaston Avenue opposite North Gaston Avenue;

   - Operate South Gaston Avenue as a separate and actuated signal phase from North Gaston Avenue;

   - Change South Gaston Avenue to one-way southbound.

   This third option may be the most effective in terms of traffic operations.

10. **North Bridge Street and Cliff Street** -- Signalization of this intersection would improve conditions for Cliff Street traffic and reduce the impact of the sight distance restriction on the northwest side of North Bridge Street.

11. **North Bridge Street and Green Street/William Street** -- The current installation of a traffic signal will alleviate most problems being experienced at this intersection.

12. **Traffic Management Techniques** -- Of particular importance to effective transportation planning is the encouragement of traffic management techniques that require little or no capital funding. Such techniques include staggered work hours, flex-time, as well as van and car pools for large borough employers. The concept behind traffic management techniques is focusing on the dispersion of peak hour traffic movements. Such dispersion allows for better utilization of existing road systems.

Generally larger employers such as the Somerset County and Somerset Medical Center, to the extent that they do not already do so, could be encouraged to prepare traffic management plans that concentrate on reducing the amount of peak hour traffic generated by these employers.

13. **Pedestrian linkage to Bridgewater Commons Mall** -- A pedestrian linkage over Route 22 from Somerville borough to the mall area should be encouraged. This linkage should be for pedestrians only and be accomplished through state, county, Bridgewater, and Somerville cooperation.

F. Somerset County Complex/Medical Center Recommendations

1. Somerset County Complex

According to 1986 Somerset County Planning Board population projections, the county has experienced about a 14% increase in population over the last 10 years and county population increases of approximately 10% are estimated for the next decade. Clearly, as the county's population grows, the demand for adequate services increases. Thus, it is necessary for Somerset County services to expand to meet these growing needs.

A space study that was prepared for Somerset County in 1988 concluded that, in order for county services to expand to meet the growing population, new facilities rather than renovation of existing facilities were necessary.

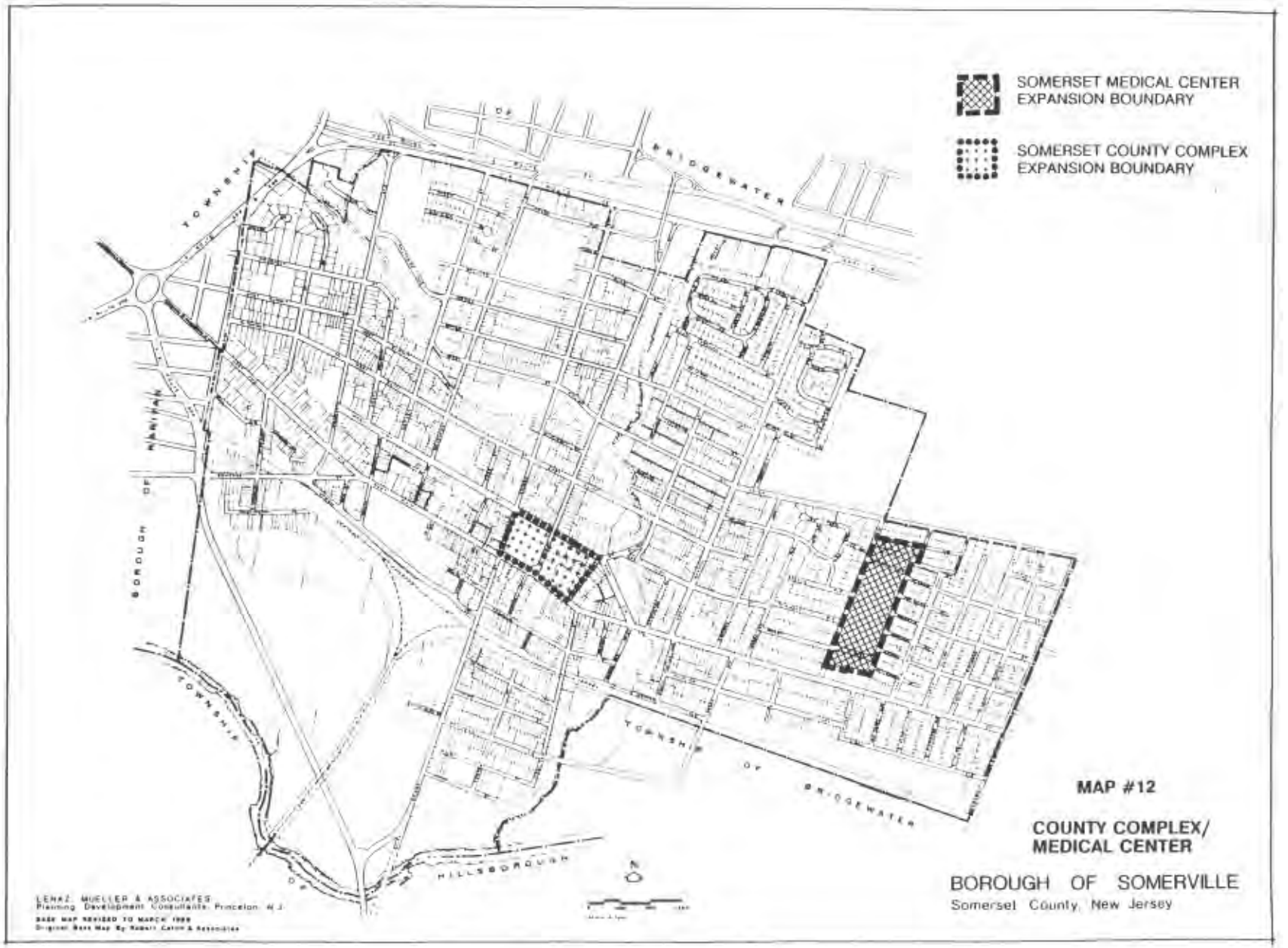
Even before that study was completed, the county had started to expand. A new courthouse opened in 1986 which provided seven new courtrooms and space for court related support services. Currently, a new detention facility is being completed to replace the present jail built in 1907. In 1987, a 700 car parking garage was constructed to accommodate Somerset County employee parking needs.

At the present time, the county has proposed to build a new administration complex on Grove Street. The approximately 90,000 square foot building would accommodate the future growth anticipated by county administrative departments.

In order to achieve a balance between county facilities expansion needs, retention of the borough's character, and the creation of downtown redevelopment opportunities, the following recommendations are put forth:

- Limit Somerset County facilities expansion to a two block area bounded by East High, Bridge and Mechanics Streets. This area is shown on Map #12.

- Encourage greater cooperation between the County and the borough concerning development issues that affect both entities.


SOMERSET MEDICAL CENTER
EXPANSION BOUNDARY
SOMERSET COUNTY COMPLEX
EXPANSION BOUNDARY
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
BOROUGH OF MANVILLE
TOWNSHIP OF HILLSBOROUGH
TOWNSHIP OF BRIDGEWATER
MAP #12
COUNTY COMPLEX/
MEDICAL CENTER
BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE
Somerset County, New Jersey
LENAZ, MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning Development Consultants, Princeton, N.J.

While the Medical Center is an important part of Somerville's image as a regional center, careful planning is necessary to insure that the goals of both the borough and Medical Center as it seeks to expand its services and facilities are consistent with one another. To achieve this consistency, the following recommendations are advanced:

a. Development of a Hospital Zone to properly regulate and provide more specific bulk controls regarding future hospital expansion is advanced. This new zone would generally cover the area of the existing hospital complex and is shown on Map #12, "County Complex/Medical Center."

b. Consider the following standards and requirements for the proposed Hospital Zone:

- Require submission of a long range development plan for future hospital expansion. The long range development plan, including a master parking plan element, would be required when site plans for expansion of existing facilities are submitted to the Planning Board for review and approval. The master parking plan element should explore various parking alternatives, specifically, a decked parking scheme, while ensuring that there is no proliferation of scattered off-site parking areas.

- Require submission of a traffic impact study for the long range development plan.

- Include hospital definition in zoning ordinance.

- Establish maximum building (FAR) and site improvement coverage limits.

- Provide for ancillary uses (pharmacies, gift shops) in hospital zone.

- Offset height impact of buildings or abutting residential properties by requiring greater setbacks.

- Enhance buffering between hospital zone and residential uses.

- Require improved landscape treatment of all parking areas.

- Require the development of a comprehensive signage plan.

- Require an overall internal circulation plan.

c. Abutting areas north and south of the proposed hospital zone may lend themselves to the creation of medically related office and service facilities. In the long term, as the Medical Center begins to develop its long range expansion program, it may be appropriate to re-examine the residential zone pattern that abuts the hospital property at its northern and southern ends. At this time, however, this plan recommends continuation of the existing residential uses in these areas.

IV. BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS/STUDY ANALYSIS

IV. Background Considerations/Study Analysis

A. Historical, Regional and Physical Characteristics

1. Borough History

According to local histories, the land on which Somerville is situated was acquired through grants from the proprietors and purchases from the Leni-Lenape Indians. The earliest settlers were Dutch, who established a Dutch Reformed Church by 1700. One Dutch clergyman was the Reverend John Frelinghuysen, who hoped to establish a seminary. Although he died before realizing his ambition, his dream was fulfilled by Jacob Hardenbergh, who married Frelinghuysen's widow and founded a seminary in their home, now known as the Old Dutch Parsonage. This institution eventually evolved into what is now Rutgers University.

In 1734, Tunison's Tavern was constructed on the Great, or Old York, Road. This early meeting place, now the site of the Somerset Hotel, became a focal point for development, especially when its owner, through a gift of adjacent land, caused the Somerset County Court House to be built opposite the inn in 1799.

By 1812, there were about 42 buildings, including two stores and a jail, in addition to the court house. The completion of the Elizabethtown and Somerville Railroad (Central Railroad of New Jersey) in the 1840's facilitated further growth, so that by the final quarter of the nineteenth century, Somerville was a thriving business center for a large surrounding, mostly rural area. The town had many conveniences of a city, including gas and electric companies, waterworks, churches, schools, numerous business establishments, sidewalks, good roads, and 24 trains daily in each direction. It was laid out in an ever-expanding grid which gradually consumed the farmland of the earlier settlers. The population included a cross-section of social and income levels, with the bulk of the population in the middle range. Although a few manufacturing firms were located in Somerville, for the most part industrial activity was found in nearby Raritan, so that Somerville maintained the image of a white collar business community.

The turn of the century brought additional progress to the community. The original court house was demolished in 1905 and replaced by a larger structure. In 1909, seeking more independence and better services, townspeople voted for incorporation as a

been demolished.

The role of government makes a strong statement in modern Somerville. A contemporary court house addition reminds passers-by that government is the borough's largest business. However, at the opposite end of Main Street, the borough's sensitive adaptive re-use of a grand old mansion as a municipal building gives testimony to the fact that the cultural heritage of the community is still important to the people of Somerville, and that the old and the new will continue to co-exist for many years to come.

2. Regional Location

The Borough of Somerville is strategically located between two major cities, Philadelphia and New York. Somerville is within minutes of major transportation routes such as the Garden State Parkway, New Jersey Turnpike, I-78, Route 22, Route 1, Route 206 and I-287.

In addition, there is regular bus service to New York City, New Brunswick and Newark. Train service is also available for Somerville residents to Newark and Hoboken, where the PATH service takes passengers to the World Trade Center, 33rd Street and Pennsylvania Station.

Air transportation for residents is accomplished through use of Newark International Airport or one of three smaller airports in the region: Kupper, Princeton and Somerset.

Clearly, Somerville's accessibility to the region's resources and transportation network makes the borough attractive to both prospective residents and businesses.

3. Physical Characteristics

Somerville Borough's terrain is relatively level except for the north-eastern and northwestern sections of the community which exhibit moderately sloping terrain. The terrain slopes toward the Raritan River which serves as the southern border of the borough.

Peter's Brook is the main watercourse within borough limits. The brook runs from Prospect Drive in the north to Hamilton Street in the south. Mac's Brook, near Oak Terrace, and Ross Brook, near Riviera Drive, drain into Peter's Brook. Peter's Brook and its tributaries serve as a visual amenity to borough residents. To capitalize on its visual attractiveness, the borough has provided a continuous greenbelt area along the banks of the brook.

B. Recreation/Open Space Analysis

Recreation and open space enhance the quality of life in Somerville Borough. They also serve a number of important functions. Open space can make an environment a more attractive place to live in and, as a result, can help to enhance property values. Reservation of open space areas helps in preserving natural resources, stream channels, woodlands and floodplains from encroachment of development.

In the borough, the quality of life is greatly enhanced by a continuous greenbelt through the center of town. The greenbelt also provides a natural buffer to Peter's Brook as well as provides active and passive recreational opportunities along its banks.

Somerville Borough has approximately 107 acres of existing recreation/open space areas for use by borough residents. The existing park system is generally located along Peter's Brook. Table 1, "Existing Recreation Facilities," identifies the existing parks, type of facility, ownership and approximate acreage.

1. Existing Parks

Different levels of recreation activity geared towards varied population ages and interests suggest the need for a variety of park areas. These areas would range from the very small mini-parks, which serve a special part of a neighborhood oriented toward younger children or the elderly, to a community park which would serve the entire borough and contain a variety of specialized recreation facilities.

TABLE 1

Existing Recreation Facilities

NAME	ACREAGE	TYPE OF FACILITY	OWNERSHIP
Clarks Woods	35	undeveloped land	public
John Long Park	2.86	active recreation	public
Flockhart Park	1	passive recreation	public
Kugler Park	.87	active recreation	public
Exchange Field	8.27	active recreation	public
Ellsworth Van Fleet Gardens	1	passive recreation	public
Walck Park	3.56	active recreation	public
Michael Lepp Park	5.34	active recreation	public
Vanderveer Parkway	6.76	active recreation	public
Chambres Park	24.84	active recreation	public
Somerville H S*	12±	school fields	private
Vanderveer Element. School Property	17±	school fields	public
Mastogen Drive Park	.87	passive recreation	public

Mini Park acreage = 3.74 acres
Neighborhood Park acreage = 18.52 acres
Community Park acreage = 85.11 acres
107.37 acres

* Not included in park acreage calculations since access to school facilities is limited.

Park facilities in Somerville can be classified in three categories: mini-park, neighborhood park and community park. By using these categories, a comparison can be made with recognized standards derived by the National Park and Recreation Association and Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in regard to community parks, neighborhood parks and mini-parks. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate these comparisons.

a. **Mini-Parks**

Mini-parks are small specialized facilities that serve a concentrated or limited population. Typical activities generally serve the needs of younger children, but can also provide recreational opportunities for the elderly. The borough's mini-parks are located along Peter Brook in the center of the borough. The service area for a mini-park is about 1/8 to 1/4 mile, depending on the density of the area. The desirable size of a mini-park is 1/4 to 2 acres and the recommended total acreage needed is .25 to .5 acres per 1,000 population. Applying these standards to Somerville Borough can reveal whether or not adequate land is currently available for use as mini-parks. Guidelines used to evaluate the adequacy of local facilities and acreage have excluded any facilities that are not under borough control, since the use of certain school facilities and private facilities can be denied to the public at any time.

TABLE 2

SPECIFIC PUBLIC, NON-SCHOOL-OWNED RECREATION FACILITIES: EXISTING AND NEEDED FOR SOMERVILLE BOROUGH

Type of Facility	Standard (Facilities/Pop)	Existing Boro Facilities	Facilities Needed
Baseball	1/5000	5	2
Softball	1/3000	2	3-4
Soccer	1/10000	1	1-2
Football	1/10000	1	1-2
Basketball	1/5000	6	2-3
Tennis	1/2000	4	6-8
Swimming	1/20000	*	1
¼ Mile Track	1/20000	Somerville HS	1
Field Hockey	1/10000	**	1-2
Hardball	1/10000	–	1
Volleyball	1/3000	**	4-5
Play Equip.	1/2000	3	6-8
Picnic Area	1/6000	3	2-4

* The borough does not have any outdoor swimming facilities for school age children, young adults, or adults. The existing pools are less than 4 feet deep and are designed as wading pools.

** The activities, while not specifically planned for, can utilize various multi-purpose fields that exist in the borough.

TABLE 3

Recreation

Park Land: Existing & Needed

TYPE OF PARK AND IDEAL SIZE	STANDARD (ACRES/POP)	SERVICE AREA	EXISTING BORO PARKS	LOCAL ACREAGE NEEDED	TYPICAL FACILITIES
Mini-park (¼-½ ac)	.25-.5 ac/ 1,000 people	1/8-1/4 mi	3.7 acres	3-6 acres	tot lot, preschool activities, benches, court games & dense landscape treatment
Neighborhood Park (5-20 acres)	1-2 ac/ 1,000 people	1/2 mi	18.52 acres	12-23 acres	playground apparatus, picnicking, field sports informal and court games
Community Park (10-100 acres)	4-5 ac/ 1,000 people	1½-2 mi	85.11 acres	47-58 acres	ball fields, walking and sitting areas, swimming pool, tennis and passive recreation

The standards included in this table are derived by the National Park & Recreation Association and Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. The acreage figures include all public parks within the borough.

The total acreage in mini-park use is approximately 3.74 acres. Mini-park specifications for the 1980 borough population of 11,973 residents indicate that appropriate land for mini-parks is about 3 to 6 acres, based on .25 to .50 acres per 1,000 population. Since the 1990 Somerset County population estimate for the borough is 11,650 residents, there is virtually no change in the recommended land area needed for mini-parks.

Since the Borough of Somerville consists of many single-family detached dwellings, the back or side yard often functions as a mini-park; therefore, the lower acreage figure (3 acres) seems more appropriate. However, the existing mini-parks (Flockhart Park, Mastogen Drive Park, Kugler Park and Ellsworth Van Fleet Gardens) are located in the central portion of the borough. As a result, their use is limited to the neighborhoods in the center of Somerville and does not serve residents outside this neighborhood.

It is recommended that the borough consider the acquisition of land for mini-parks spread throughout Somerville in an effort to make these parks more accessible to a larger portion of the borough residents. Of particular importance is the significant portion of Somerville's population that is considered elderly. The elderly use mini-parks as a primary source for recreational use. Development of mini-parks should include facilities for the elderly, such as benches, sitting areas, and table court games.

An examination of the types of facilities currently available at each existing mini-park indicates limited passive recreational opportunities are available. However, additional benches and improved landscaping would make these parks more attractive and useful areas.

It appears that additional mini-parks should be acquired to service the needs of a larger segment of the borough's residents. The absence of mini-parks in the eastern portion of Somerville is somewhat alleviated by the residents' use of their private yards. However, the acquisition of one or two vacant parcels in this area for mini-parks would adequately service this area's residents.

After an analysis of the vacant properties in the eastern portion of the borough, approximately 6 vacant properties were determined to be adequate in size for a mini-park. From these six properties, further analysis concluded that two vacant properties were best suited for mini-park acquisition based on neighborhood demographics, size, and location. These properties are located on North Richards Avenue between Main Street and Adams Street (Block 8, Lot 4),and on Fairview Avenue between James and Haynes Streets (Block 49, Lot 11A).

While the eastern portion of the borough would be adequately served by acquisition of one or both of these vacant parcels, the possibility of acquiring vacant parcels in other parts of Somerville was explored, and these parcels evaluated for use as mini-parks. As a result, a parcel (Block 141, Lot 1.1) on Prospect Street between Middaugh Street and Mountain Avenue is the best candidate for acquisition and use as a mini-park in the rest of the borough because of its neighborhood demographics, land suitability and proximity to other recreation opportunities. However, priority for acquisition of mini-parks should be with the vacant parcels in the eastern portion of the borough.

b. **Neighborhood Parks**

The neighborhood park is an area for intense recreational activities such as field games, court games, playground apparatus, skating, picnicking, and wading pools. These parks are designed to serve an area one-half mile in radius, with a population of up to 5,000 people. The recommended size is 5 to 20 acres, with 1 to 2 acres per 1,000 residents. Actual park size can depend on location and adjacent residential density service areas.

In Somerville's case, Michael Lepp Park and Vanderveer Parkway fit the general description of neighborhood parks. Areas such as Walck Park and John Long Park can be classified as neighborhood parks, even though their acreage is less than what is recommended for these types of parks. Since the surrounding residential density and its location make these parks heavily used, classification as neighborhood parks is appropriate.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

The combined area of these existing neighborhood parks is 18.52 acres. Using National Park and Recreation Standards (1-2 acres per 1,000 people) the recommended acreage for neighborhood parks in Somerville is between 12 and 23 acres.

While Somerville does have the recommended acreage for neighborhood parks, discussions with the Borough Recreation Director and field observations indicate that many of the park facilities need refurbishing and various site improvements, such as regrading fields. Once these improvements are complete, residents will be better able to fully utilize these neighborhood parks.

c. **Community Parks**

A community park is defined as an area of diverse environmental quality which may include areas of intense recreational activity, such as athletic complexes and a large swimming pool, together with ball fields and various court games. Community parks can also be areas of natural beauty for more passive outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, sitting, and picnicking.

Chambres Park, Exchange Field, Clarks Woods and Vanderveer School Fields fit the description of community parks. Community parks are generally 10 to 100 acres in size, although surrounding residential density and location can reduce its size. The recommended standard for community parks is 4 to 5 acres per 1,000 people, which generates 47 to 58 acres of local park land.

Currently, the Borough of Somerville has approximately 85.11 acres of community park land. As a result, it appears that the borough's recreational needs at the community park level are being met by the existing parks. However, existing acreage is somewhat misleading since Clarks Woods is under-utilized at the present time and it is located outside the borough. In addition, Chambres Park is also located outside borough limits. Therefore, pressures to use these facilities in an informal manner by neighboring communities detract from the availability of these facilities for the exclusive use of borough residents. Also, the Vanderveer

School Fields have not been fully developed. Therefore, their inclusion as a community park may be premature.

2. **Possible additions to recreation/open space system**

a. **Route 206 Site**

Site Description:

This site is located on the western side of Route 206. The site consists of 5 lots comprising approximately 53.14 acres. The site is zoned as an I-Industrial district. The majority of the site is vacant, the exception being a privately-owned gas station on a 5 acre parcel in the center of the site.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency Maps, the eastern site is within the 100 year floodplain. In addition, about 75% of the site is classified as wetlands by the National Wetland Inventory Maps.

Feasibility:

This site is a contiguous tract consisting of about 53.14 acres that is largely undeveloped. The assemblage of such a large undeveloped tract in Somerville cannot be duplicated in any other portion of the borough. In addition, the site is potentially more attractive for development since it has direct access to Route 206 and borders the Raritan river.

However, there are several problems which severely diminish the potential of the site being acquired for recreation purposes. There are 5 lots, all with different property owners, that make up this site. Therefore, to develop the entire 53 acre tract, agreements would need to be obtained from 5 different parties. As stated earlier, floodplains and wetland areas are prevalent on the tract which will limit the site's development potential. The tract is physically separated from the borough by Route 206 which the DOT plans to widen to six lanes in the future. Therefore, pedestrian access to the site from the borough would not be possible. Another problem with this tract is that possible environmental cleanup may be needed on at least one of the lots.

Finally, the site is remote from residential neighborhoods which could limit the usability of the tract for borough recreation purposes.

After weighing the benefits and problems with possible acquisition of this site by the borough, it can be concluded that acquisition is not a feasible option.

However, the borough should consider a change in zoning of this environmentally sensitive site from an I-Industrial zoning classification to a lower intensity zone. This rezoning will be more consistent with current state and federal floodplain and wetland regulations; will help to preserve a significant environmental resource such as the Raritan River banks; and, will better protect the river's water quality.

The portion of the site owned by Raritan Borough (Block 123.03, Lot 1.06) should be rezoned from I-Industrial to a Conservation zone to protect the site's natural resources. In addition, since the parcel is publicly owned, development of this site for industrial purposes is unlikely.

b. **Clarks Woods**

Site Description:

Clarks Woods consists of approximately 33.07 acres of undeveloped land. The tract is located north of Somerville Circle along Route 206. The site is adjacent to the Somerset Shopping Center. Clarks Woods is primarily located in Bridgewater Township (32.74 acres) with about .33 acres located in Somerville Borough.

The portion of the Woods that is located in Bridgewater is zoned for commercial uses and the land in Somerville Borough is zoned as a B-1 Business district.

Clarks Woods is traversed by two tributaries of Peter's Brook which run east/west across the site. The tract is characterized by large wooded areas that cover most of the site. However, the front portion of the site near Route 206 consists of an open meadow area of about 6 acres. A variety of wildlife live in Clarks Woods, such as musk rat,

deer and other similar wildlife. In addition, significant portions of Clarks Woods are wetland and flood prone areas.

Feasibility:

Clarks Woods is currently owned by the Borough of Somerville. The borough's Recreation Department uses the site to host special events, such as circuses, fairs, and camp-outs for local youth organizations.

Clarks Woods was deeded over to the borough through the generosity of a few private citizens. The agreement which the borough entered into with these private citizens restricts the use of Clarks Woods to public park purposes. Since Somerville owns this property, it is appropriate to discuss the development feasibility for Clarks Woods.

Clarks Woods represents a unique opportunity to Somerville residents. No other area of the borough can offer such a natural, pristine wildlife habitat of such large magnitude to residents for their enjoyment. As discussed earlier, there are many significant natural resources on this 33.04 acre tract which contribute to the site's attractiveness for such activities as nature walks, hiking and picnicking. In addition, the meadow on the tract could offer residents active recreational opportunities. In fact, this area is already used informally by residents for field games.

The major problem in developing Clarks Woods as a regular active recreational facility is access. At the present time, pedestrian access to the site is virtually impossible unless pedestrians informally cross the four-lane Route 206. Obviously, this situation is dangerous and should not be encouraged. Vehicular access is also a concern since access to Clarks Woods would probably require vehicles to backtrack along Route 206 to access the site. In addition, any vehicular movement north on Route 206 would have to go around Somerville Circle which is a congested area.

Consideration was given to engaging in a land swap with Somerset County or Bridgewater Township. The swap would involve exchanging Clarks Woods with land of comparable value in Bridgewater Township, or alternatively giving Clarks Woods to Somerset County in exchange for

funding to acquire land of comparable value in the surrounding area.

It would be extremely difficult to find property in Bridgewater Township of similar recreation value as Clarks Woods in proximity to Somerville. The swap with the county is not feasible because of the lack of county funds available for recreational purposes.

Even though there is no easy access for borough residents to the site, the value of Clarks Woods as a recreational resource is too great to dismiss. It was concluded that Somerville retain ownership of Clarks Woods and prepare a long range site development plan which pays particular attention to site access. The development plan should follow these guidelines:

- Retain the natural resources on the site;
- Restrict the clearing of the property to the meadow area;
- Develop a passive natural trail system that capitalizes on the unique features of the site;
- Prohibit the development of active recreational facilities on the site until improvements to Somerville Circle are complete.
- Evaluate access alternatives, including appropriate signage, to clearly delineate a preferred traffic flow pattern to the site for borough residents.

c. **Southside Avenue Site**

Site Description:

The site is located in Bridgewater Township along Southside Avenue, adjacent to Chambres Park and south of the Johnson & Johnson complex. The parcel is approximately 9.05 acres, is privately owned, and is currently zoned for general manufacturing uses.

Significant natural resources exist on the tract. The 9.05 acre parcel is partially within the 100 year floodplain and contains a wetlands area located along the banks of the Raritan River. In addition, the vacant site is heavily wooded.

Feasibility:

The site is immediately adjacent to the borough's existing parking area for Chambres Park visitors. If the site were acquired, development on the site would be a logical extension to the existing recreational opportunities that are afforded by the existing park.

As stated earlier, the tract is 9.05 acres. The size of this undeveloped parcel can not be found elsewhere in the borough and limited sites along the borough's boundaries exist that could favorably compare with the development potential of this site. In addition, Chambres Park is already used very heavily by borough residents and residents of other municipalities. The expansion of the existing park could meet the needs of the expanded population of residents who use the park and the needs of future residents.

The Southside Avenue site appears to be a good location for borough active recreation facilities. However, acquisition of the Southside Avenue site may be a costly proposition. For this reason, the borough should consider possible joint ownership of the site with Bridgewater Township, whose expanding population will require additional recreational facilities. One funding source that may be available to be used to help acquire and develop the site is the state's Green Acres Funding Program.

d. **Greenbelt**

Site Description:

The Borough of Somerville has developed a greenbelt along the banks of Peter's and Ross Brooks. These brooks run through the center of Somerville and feed into the Raritan River. Most of the existing greenbelt is within wetland and floodplain areas.

The existing greenbelt provides an opportunity to link residential areas with local parks, recreation areas, and the central business district. The greenbelt provides physical and visual relief from the built environment and serves as a natural buffer from more intensive non-residential uses. This relief is particularly important in Somerville since it is almost fully developed.

Feasibility:

It has been suggested that the borough's existing greenbelt be expanded to provide linkage to a possible greenbelt along the Raritan River. The proposed greenbelt would follow the banks of the Raritan River along the southern portion of the borough. The proposed greenbelt is entirely within the 100 year floodplain. Therefore, its development potential is extremely limited, making passive recreational use appropriate in this location. The linkage to the existing greenbelt system would be provided where Peter's Brook runs into the Raritan River (Chambres Park).

Ownership of the property designated for a proposed greenbelt consists mostly of borough owned land east of Route 206. On the western side of Route 206 private ownership is prevalent. However, the land needed to provide a greenbelt is within the 100 year floodplain and carries little, if any, development value.

By providing a greenbelt along the Raritan River, Somerville will have a continuous open space system through the borough. This feature can only enhance the attractiveness of the borough as a place to live, shop and work. In essence, the quality of life in Somerville would benefit from additions to the existing greenbelt system.

In order to provide a greenbelt along the Raritan River, the borough will need to acquire or receive donated easements through private property on the western side of Route 206, ensure continuous access along the river banks, and remove all obstacles that interrupt the greenbelt system. It would also be beneficial to Somerville to contact Bridgewater Township and Raritan Township to discuss a continuation of the greenbelt along the Raritan River in these adjoining municipalities.

C. Historic Preservation Analysis

The character of an established community is fragile and therefore easy to destroy. Individual buildings, local curiosities, streetscapes of vernacular buildings, and scenic vistas represent patterns of community development, and at the same time illustrate its heritage and establish its identity. Although a community may contain several outstanding structures, as is the case in Somerville, more often the character of a town is created by collections--or streetscapes and districts--of buildings rather than by individual landmarks. For that reason, local character can be eroded gradually with the loss or defacement of contributing buildings over time, because the community is not aware of the important contribution to the whole made by each individual structure.

A municipality such as Somerville, which has abundant historic resources, should officially incorporate historic preservation into its planning and zoning process. This includes the designation of historic resources in the municipal master plan, the establishment of a historic preservation commission, and the designation and regulation of historic districts and landmarks.

1. Historic Districts

A zoning ordinance may "designate historic sites or districts, regulate them and provide design criteria and guidelines for this regulation. Designation and regulation...shall be in addition to such designation and regulation as the zoning ordinance may otherwise provide." Therefore, historic districts are overlaid on the zoning map and historic preservation regulations are imposed in addition to existing zoning regulations. Historic districts and landmarks that are protected by such an ordinance must be formally designated in the municipal master plan.

The regulation of designated districts and landmarks is based on locally adopted standards and guidelines which are administered by an appointed historic preservation commission. Both the standards and guidelines and the historic preservation commission, as well as the historic districts and landmarks are established by ordinance.

The historic preservation commission advises the planning board and board of adjustment on applications for development within the districts. In addition, all applications for issuance of permits pertaining to landmarks or buildings within a historic district are

reviewed by the historic preservation commission, using the adopted standards and guidelines. The commission then votes to approve the application, to approve the application with conditions or to deny the application. This review, which includes counseling and a public hearing, affects all actions requiring a permit and thus prevents inappropriate alteration or the demolition of contributing structures in designated districts in most cases.

Permitted and Prohibited Action in Historic Districts

Although historic preservation ordinances vary, depending on community goals, most include certain basic restrictions. On facades that are visible from the street, owners are required to retain original architectural features. If original features must be removed due to deterioration, they must be replaced with replicas of the original. This requirement prevents the alteration or removal of the distinguishing architectural features that are characteristic of a building's style. In most cases, parts of the building that are not visible from the street, such as the rear facade, are excluded from regulation. When an addition to a building is proposed, its proportions, materials, and fenestration must be compatible with the existing structure.

Changing the architectural style of a building is not permitted. An owner would be prohibited from altering a building by applying the features of a different architectural period. For example, the owner of a Queen Anne building would not be permitted to apply the stucco and false half-timbering of the Tudor Revival style.

In most instances, demolitions of contributing buildings in historic districts is discouraged, with certain exceptions, so that the character of the district is not eroded by gaps in the streetscape or intrusive infill.

An historic preservation ordinance does not regulate the style of new buildings and new additions to older buildings. Infill structures and additions may be designed in contemporary styles, but must be compatible with the height, mass, and scale of surrounding structures or the existing building.

Finally, an historic preservation ordinance does not force an owner to restore an already altered building.

Although historic districts impose additional regulations, these controls benefit property owners by protecting neighborhood characteristics that make real estate values stable, and benefit the entire community by protecting and enhancing the character and identity of the municipality. A property owner is assured that the value of his investment will not be diminished by the degradation of the surrounding environment.

2. **Conservation Districts**

The establishment of a conservation district is another method of protecting sensitive areas that contain historic resources. Unlike an historic district, a conservation district does not usually regulate alterations to existing structures. However, its designation reflects public policy regarding a specified area and seeks to avoid actions that would be detrimental to the environment, such as road widenings, loss of trees, and intensive development. When there is intent to conserve the environment, ordinances relating to use and density should be tailored to fit the area's special needs. The district may be targeted for public improvements, such as landscaping and buffering, or a facade improvement grant or loan program. Fragile resources within the district may be protected by requiring the buffering of adjacent, incompatible uses.

Washington Place Analysis

As a result of a reconnaissance survey and analysis of various historical documentation, it can be concluded that the collection of historical buildings in the borough is unsurpassed in Somerset County. The borough boasts structures of several architectural styles including Italianate, Richardsonian Romanesque, Neo-Classical, Italian Villa, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Shingle, Colonial Revival, Greek Revival and Gothic Revival. Examples of these styles, while generally located south of Peter's Brook, can be found throughout the community. A detailed survey of Somerville's historical structures has been identified by a recent Somerset County Historic Sites Survey completed earlier this year.

Perhaps the most significant historic area in the borough is the Washington Place neighborhood. In this area, three of Somerset County's most historic structures are located. It is for this reason that these three specific structures are identified:

- Middaugh-Mann House (c. 1680/1810):

  This house was built by Dirck Middaugh, an early Dutch settler. The 1743 "tripartite line," the division of East Jersey and West Jersey ran through this property. This house, which is privately owned, is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, although it is most certainly eligible.

- Old Dutch Parsonage (c. 1751):

  Built of Holland bricks, this house was constructed by the Reverend John Frelinghuysen whose widow married Jacob Hardenbergh. A seminary, founded at the house by Hardenbergh, was a forerunner of Queen's Classical and Divinity College (later Rutgers). The house is listed on the National Register and is owned by the State.

- Wallace House (c. 1778):

  This house was built for William Wallace of Philadelphia. George and Martha Washington spent the winter of 1778, during the American Revolution, in this house. It is listed on the National Register and is owned by the State.

Because two of these properties are State-owned and open to the public, they are a tourist attraction, even though they draw only a limited number of visitors per year. Since Route 206 provides the most convenient access to the sites, that small area of the borough may provide visitors with their only impression of Somerville. The Division of Parks and Forestry, Department of Environmental Protection, is currently preparing a ten-year, long range development plan for the Washington Place site. The plan would incorporate the needs of site development, including archaeology and further site interpretation of the Wallace farm. Therefore, increased visitation should be anticipated.

Although there are a few vernacular 19th century structures on Washington Place, there is an overriding interest in preserving the 18th century property, which is extremely important at both the state and local levels. This includes preservation of the setting. Therefore, a conservation zone would be advisable. It would serve to protect the three buildings by preserving their surroundings. It would also help to prevent probable archaeological resources from being disturbed. Although the northern district

boundary would consist of the rear lot lines of properties on that side of the street, the southern boundary should include a buffer of at least 100 feet beyond the rear lot lines of properties on that side of the street. This would soften the impact of proposed commercial development to the south. A heavily wooded buffer might be advisable.

In view of the potential for significant archaeological sites in the area, it would be advisable to limit excavation for construction. No construction requiring a foundation should be allowed unless that addition is a documented reconstruction of a portion of one of the historic buildings. Foundation excavation could disturb possible sites. It would also be advisable to retain the current density of use.

The future of Washington Place should be extremely important to the community since it is tied to the early Dutch heritage of Somerville, George Washington, and Revolutionary War history.

D. East Main Street Revitalization

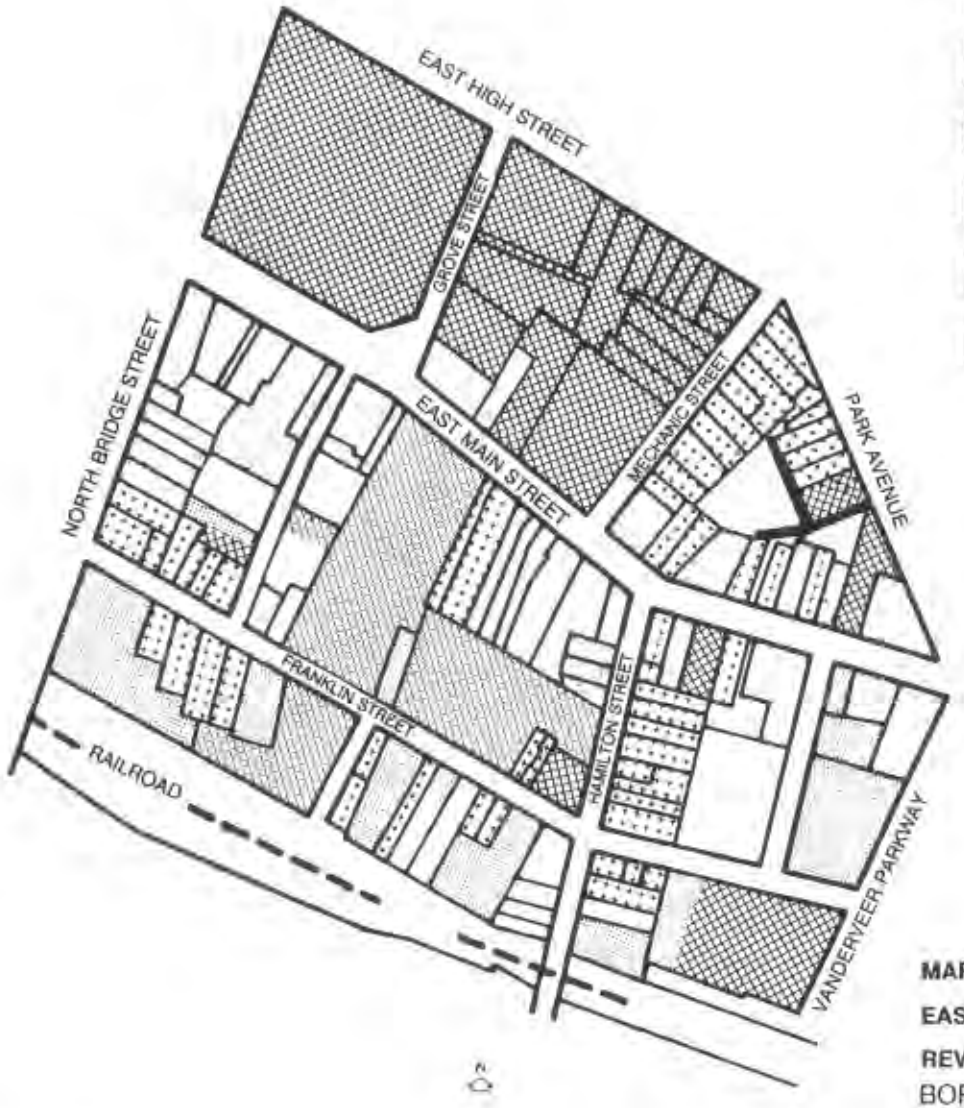
The East Main Street Revitalization area, as defined in the generalized existing land use map, represents the most appropriate area for redevelopment opportunities. The East Main Street area has not developed in the same manner as West Main Street commercial area. The area has not developed in any consistent land use pattern; instead, several different and somewhat incompatible land uses dominate this area. Private redevelopment in the form of office facilities has been able to occur in portions of the study area, but those efforts are not related to any larger comprehensive plan for the area. Map #3 "East Main Street Revitalization Area Analysis" shows the existing land use pattern of the area.

It is the borough's intention to provide a framework within which redevelopment opportunities can be realized consistent with the overall goals established for community development as outlined in other parts of this Master Plan.

To assist in the transition of this area, it is necessary to determine the extent and scale of economic development opportunities that could be established in this target area if redevelopment occurred. On the assumption that public involvement will be necessary to realize comprehensive redevelopment, it is important to determine whether or not such redevelopment will produce enough tax revenue to cover those public costs traditionally associated with a redevelopment program. These costs have been identified in this analysis as bonding costs associated with acquiring and preparing a downtown site for new redevelopment. This determination can be made through an order of magnitude development impact analysis that looks at current market conditions, expected site yields under varying zoning criteria, net tax revenue to be gained from redevelopment, environmental constraints, acceptable development options and site specific considerations.

Impact Analysis

The redevelopment impact analysis consists of three steps: Estimated Site Preparation Cost Determination; Block Square Footage Yield Evaluation; and Redevelopment Feasibility Analysis. This analysis is to be considered as an order of magnitude feasibility review, so that judgements could be made as to the scope and program of square footage needs of a future redevelopment effort in the CBD. The steps involved in this analysis are outlined below:



GENERALIZED EXISTING LAND USE

- RESIDENTIAL
- OFFICE
- PUBLIC/SEMI-PUBLIC
- MIXED USE/RETAIL-SERVICE
- VACANT/PARKING
- LIGHT INDUSTRY

Field Survey August 1980

MAP #13

EAST MAIN STREET

REVITALIZATION AREA ANALYSIS

BOROUGH OF SOMERVILLE

Somerset County, New Jersey

LEHAZ MUELLER & ASSOCIATES
Planning Development Consultants Princeton, N.J.
BASE MAP REVISED TO MARCH 1986
Original Base Map by Robert Cairns & Associates

1. **Estimated Site Preparation Cost Determination**

   a. A chart was developed that indicated the assessed value of the individual lots within each block. In addition, the square footage of buildings and lots within each block was calculated using borough tax maps, field observations and aerial photographs.

   b. The building demolition cost for the target area was determined through discussions with area demolition companies and data contained in construction cost estimate books.

   c. Using the data obtained from steps a and b, a site preparation cost of each block in the target area was estimated.

2. **Block Square Footage Yield Evaluation**

   This part of the analysis was conducted to indicate how whole blocks could be redeveloped after considering market conditions, intensity of development and site plan considerations. For each block, two basic scenarios were presented and then evaluated.

   The one scenario involved a floor area ratio (FAR) of .35 with surface parking, assuming a maximum building height of three stories. The other scenario used a floor area ratio of .70 with a two story parking deck and assumed a five story building height. In determining the parking area, a standard of 1 space per 200 square feet of floor area was used.

   As a result of these calculations, it was possible to estimate if the proposed redevelopment would physically be accommodated on each block.

3. **Redevelopment Feasibility Analysis**

   This analysis was used to determine whether net tax revenue from redevelopment could cover the amount of bonding debt service needed to support redevelopment schemes on various blocks. To make this determination, the following process was followed:

   a. Calculate the site preparation cost on each block assuming public acquisition.

b. Subtract site preparation cost from the amount of money gained from a land sale of each block to a private redeveloper. This calculation represents the remaining number of dollars needed to support the redevelopment.

c. Calculate amount of money that could be bonded from the net tax revenues associated with new development.

d. Compare dollar amounts determined from steps b and c. If the step c number is greater than the step b calculation, then the redevelopment scheme for a block is considered to be a feasible undertaking.

Conclusions

- Only blocks 58 (both schemes), 61 (scheme 2), 62 (scheme 2) and 63 (scheme 2) represent feasible redevelopment projects if they are undertaken as separate projects.

- Redevelopment on blocks 63, 64 and 68 is not feasible without significant public funding subsidy assistance if they are undertaken as separate projects.

- If a comprehensive redevelopment program is initiated for the East Main Street Revitalization area, then the combination of various blocks produced a break-even program without the necessity of major public subsidy.

- Since the analysis has assumed new building heights to remain at five stories in order to achieve a two level decked parking scheme in the redevelopment area, additional floor area could be entertained. Such additional square footage would produce greater tax revenue and further reduce the extent of public bonding exposure. However, additional floor area will necessitate three to four level parking garages and dramatically increase overall project development costs. It will not be possible to add only one additional floor and still achieve a positive financial picture under the same assumptions in the previous schemes. While further analysis would be necessary, it appears that building heights in the 8-10 story range would probably be necessary to achieve a comparable level of project feasibility as described for the five story and two level parking deck scheme.

V. Implementation

Planning for a municipality is an unending process since, as circumstances change, policies and proposals must be altered accordingly. Now that the Master Plan has been completed, it is time to consider the role which planning can play in the affairs of the borough. Implementation of the plan will require effort in many directions; in the land development ordinance revision and procedures necessary to make effective application of the ordinance, and in the continuing assembly of information and data relative to change and redevelopment in the borough.

The following can be identified as specific next steps requiring the attention of the Planning Board as part of the continuing planning process:

- An analysis of the existing development regulations (zoning, subdivision, and site plan review) should be undertaken and ordinance revisions should be prepared and recommended to the Borough Council in order to implement the Land Use Plan portion of this Master Plan.

- Revise and adopt a new zoning map based on the land use plan.

- Develop a capital improvement plan and program for recreation facilities in order to improve the physical appearance and function of existing parks and to add new facilities to expand their use.

- Develop a long range site development master plan for Clarks Woods recreation area.

- Establish an Historic Preservation Commission to implement preservation efforts identified in this Master Plan. Prepare a local historic district ordinance to govern the boundaries of the proposed Historic and Conservation Districts.

- Actively explore possibilities for inter-municipal and intra-county cooperation so that planning to meet regional problems can proceed on a more effective basis than could be obtained from an unaided local effort.

- Coordinate the establishment of a Hospital Service Zone with Somerset Medical Center administrative staff to ensure well planned expansion of hospital facilities without compromising the quality of life in the community.

- Continue to encourage the physical upgrading of the downtown commercial area initiated by the District Management Corporation.

- Create a Road/Intersection Capital Improvement Program for priority roadways and intersections.

- Prepare a redevelopment plan for the East Main Street area and determine the administrative vehicle to accomplish this effort. Funding sources, such as state programs, should be actively sought to assist with the implementation of certain redevelopment plan proposals based on a formally adopted redevelopment program. Coordinate this redevelopment effort with the county's expansion plans for its administrative and judicial complex in the downtown area.

- Develop a long range Master Parking Plan for the borough's downtown areas that is coordinated with the county parking program.

- Seek to obtain COAH certification of the borough's Fair Share Housing Plan as is currently under discussion with state officials.

Continuing a review of specific programs and proposals forms an essential part of the planning process. Implementation of the policies contained in the plan and of related capital improvement programs will demand subsequent and repeated re-evaluation, addition and deletion as circumstances alter within the borough.

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In addition, without naming the numerous participants who were instrumental in shaping the master plan, special note is made of the various borough staff individuals, county and outside agencies, Somerset Medical Center, other consultants, borough residents, District Management Corporation, Molinaro/Rubin Associates, Robert Catlin and Associates, Mullins and Lonergan, and Borough Recreation Director, Frank Quinn whose assistance and input is appreciated.