

**REPORT  
ON THE  
REEXAMINATION  
OF THE  
MASTER PLAN  
AND  
DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

Borough of Somerville Planning Board

Assisted by  
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The original of this report was signed and  
sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Municipal Land Use Law (C. 291, P.L. 1975, N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1, et seq.) serves as the fundamental legal basis for municipal planning and regulation of land development. The statute recognizes the importance of land use planning as an on-going and continual function of municipal government by mandating the periodic reexamination of municipal master plans and development regulations. Specifically, Section 76 of the statute (C. 40:55D-89), as most recently amended, provides the following:

*"The governing body shall, at least every six years, provide for a general reexamination of its master plan and development regulations by the planning board, which shall prepare and adopt by resolution a report on the findings of such reexamination..."*

and,

*"The reexamination report shall state:*

*a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.*

*b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.*

*c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.*

*d. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.*

*e. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law", P.L. 1992, C.79 (c.40a:12a-1 et seq.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality."*

Reexamination Report  
Master Plan & Development Regulations

August 5, 1998

The current Master Plan for the Borough consists of three documents. The primary document, entitled Master Plan, Borough of Somerville, New Jersey, was adopted on July 11, 1990. This plan contains various elements and sub-plans, including a statement of goals and policies, a land use plan, a circulation analysis, a community facilities plan, a housing plan and a regional overview. A separate housing element was adopted on September 26, 1990, and subsequently amended on April 10, 1996, which addresses the Borough's housing needs, with an emphasis on the need for affordable housing. On October 23, 1991, the Planning Board adopted the third Master Plan document, entitled Downtown Somerville Vision Plan, which provides a more detailed long-term vision of the planned future for the Borough's central business district.

After the Master Plan was adopted, the Borough enacted a comprehensive revision to the Land Use Ordinance. Periodic revisions to the ordinance have been made since the original adoption. During this period, the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment have reviewed numerous development applications; some of these have revealed aspects of the Master Plan and development regulations which need to be amended. There have also been various changes in the law and in court decisions which affect the Master Plan and development regulations. Finally, new information and changing conditions have resulted in the need to reexamine and revise the plan and regulations.

As indicated above, municipal land use planning is a continuing process. The purpose of this report is to document the Planning Board's reexamination of the current Master Plan and development regulations and to identify those changes which are recommended.

**MAJOR PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES RELATING TO LAND DEVELOPMENT IN THE MUNICIPALITY AT THE TIME OF THE ADOPTION OF THE LAST REEXAMINATION REPORT AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN REDUCED OR HAVE INCREASED SUBSEQUENT TO SUCH DATE**

The Master Plan contains numerous statements concerning the problems and objectives relating to land development in the Borough. In response to the problems and opportunities facing the Borough, a series of goals and policies were developed and included within the plan report. In the following pages, these goals and policies are printed in italics, *thus*, and the current status of same are discussed.

**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.*

As noted in the Master Plan, opportunities for new housing construction are limited, due to the highly developed nature of the Borough. Changes in the R-3 district boundaries and regulations, however, have increased the opportunities for new housing development. In addition, various zoning regulations have been adopted with the intent of preserving existing residential areas.

*Policies:*

*Evaluate existing regulations to ensure the preservation of established residential areas.*

This policy was intended to prevent further conversion of residential properties to non-residential use in established residential neighborhoods, to ensure adequate buffering of residential uses adjacent to non-residential uses. Particular areas of concern in the Master Plan include: 1) professional office conversions north of Main Street, 2) conversion/demolition of dwellings for medical office use near the Somerset Medical Center, 3) Hamilton Street, 4) Second Street and 5) near Fairview Avenue.

Subsequent to the Master Plan adoption, the Land Use Ordinance was amended to replace the P-1 and P-2 professional office zones with a new PO-R professional office-residential zone, which is designed to be compatible with existing residences. The boundaries of the district were also changed to better protect residential areas. In the Master Plan, properties along the north side of Cliff Street between Ross Street and the easterly side of Grove Street are planned primarily for office use, with a small area west of Bridge Street planned for residential use. Subsequent more detailed studies are reflected in the current zoning ordinance, which places most of this area within a single-family residential zone, and places the area west of Bridge Street in a professional office-residential zone.

In the Land Use Ordinance, a new H-Hospital Zone was also created, designed not only recognize the existing Somerset Medical Center, but also to limit the medical center's expansion and to better protect surrounding residential areas from hospital-related activities. In the course of reviewing Master Plan, it was determined that the area planned for development as part of the Somerset Medical Center extends in the north from Lincoln Avenue to the lots facing Grant Avenue. The current zoning ordinance excludes those properties on Lincoln Avenue from the H-Hospital zone, as well as one site on Grant Avenue. It is the Planning Board's conclusion that the zoning ordinance better reflects the intent of the plan, and that the plan should be amended to avoid confusion.

In the new ordinance, Hamilton Street residences were placed in the R-3 Zone, whereas they had formerly been placed in a mixed use business district.

The properties on the north side of Second Street were also rezoned in the new ordinance, from a commercial zone to the R-3 Zone. The existing non-residential uses in this area, however, have continued in operation.

In the Master Plan, properties along Fairview Avenue and South Gaston Avenue west of Loeser Avenue are planned for office use north of Fairview and industrial use south of Fairview. The zoning ordinance adopted after the Master Plan, however, designates all of this area as a residential district. It is the conclusion of the Planning Board that the Master Plan should be amended to conform substantially with current zoning policy, in order to better protect existing residences.

In the same area, the James Street industrial tract is planned in the Master Plan for residential use, with light industry as an alternative. The current zoning ordinance, however, permits only residential use on this tract. As with the situation in the preceding paragraph, the Planning Board intends to amend the Master Plan to delete the industrial use alternative, as it is felt that such use is incompatible with the adjacent residential neighborhood.

Finally, the Land Use Ordinance includes specific buffer requirements to separate residential and non-residential use.

*Locate housing in selected locations within and around the Central Business District to stimulate business and retail activity beyond traditional work hours.*

This policy recognizes the benefit that local residents can have to the downtown businesses. It remains a valid objective. The change to R-3 zoning in portions of the easterly end of the central business district, along with designation of the housing

project on Meadow Street in the housing element, are efforts in this regard. The Land Use Ordinance also permits residential use on the upper floors in the central business district.

The foregoing policy should not be construed as promoting the development of housing in the non-residential zones, except for limited residential development on the upper floors of commercial buildings. Residential use in these areas is intended to support, and not displace, non-residential uses. The Planning Board intends to amend the Master Plan and to recommend changes of the development regulations to make this clear.

*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.*

This remains a valid and continuing objective.

*Increase the opportunities for households to obtain satisfactory housing at affordable prices by supporting the Mount Laurel II decision.*

In 1990, the Borough receive substantive certification of its housing plan from the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). The plan called for the development of 10 affordable housing units on Oak Terrace. This site has not yet developed as planned. In 1996, the Borough amended the housing element to include a Meadow Street property, which would consist of 32 affordable housing units. A petition for amended substantive certification was not acted upon by COAH before the original certification expired, however. In 1993, COAH issued revised affordable housing obligations for municipalities for the period 1987-1999. The Borough's calculated need has been determined to be 205 affordable housing units, including the rehabilitation of 61 existing substandard units, and the construction of 144 new units. Due to the shortage of suitable vacant land, opportunities to address this obligation are limited. The Borough is currently studying this issue and preparing an amended housing element.

In the Master Plan, the site of the proposed Meadow Street housing project is planned for up to 32 affordable housing units. After adoption of the housing element, an application was made in 19?? for this project by Community Caring for its Own, a non-profit organization, but on a smaller tract than envisioned in the housing element. The application was subsequently withdrawn for unknown reasons prior to any action being taken, and has not been resubmitted. In view of this situation, the housing element proposal for the Meadow Street site needs to be reconsidered. The Planning Board recognizes the need to amend both the housing element and zoning ordinance so as to provide a realistic opportunity for affordable housing in appropriate locations..

*The Vision Plan proposes the preservation and enhancement of the residential neighborhoods at the east end of the CBD through new residential infill development. The Vision Plan specifically supports the Meadow Street housing project proposed by Community Caring for its Own. The Vision Plan also identifies opportunities for new multi-family residential development relating to existing neighborhoods. The Vision Plan also encourages the continued adaptive reuse of the upper levels of existing commercial structures in the CBD for residential uses.*

As noted above, portions of the easterly end of the central business district have been changed to an R-3 zone district designation, and the Meadow Street housing project, discussed more fully above, has been included within the housing element. The R-3 zone regulations also include a planned residential development option, designed to allow higher density housing if properly planned. The zoning regulations in the central business district permit adaptive reuse of the upper floors for residential use. The Planning Board believes that all of these policies continue to be valid, although development of the Meadow Street site for affordable housing should be studied further in light of the failure of this site to develop as planned.

#### **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.*

This goal continues to be appropriate, not only for fiscal reasons, but also for the provision of goods, services and employment to residents of the Borough and the region, for the retention of the historic character of the Borough, and for numerous other benefits to the overall community. The phrase "in designated areas" remains key, since in development of non-residential uses in inappropriate locations can have a deleterious affect.

Issues that this goal responds to include: 1) competition from other business uses in the region, including businesses located on Routes 22, 202 and 206, the Bridgewater Commons shopping center, and future business development on the landfill site and in other communities, 2) the need for an appropriate mix of uses and concentration of uses in the central business district, and 3) the on-going need to maintain and/or restore commercial properties and buildings.

It is recognized that competition from existing commercial development in the region has redefined the role of Somerville's historic downtown area. It is also anticipated that such competition will continue, and is likely to increase, based upon projections. Within the Borough, the proposed Somerville Square shopping center on the landfill site will also compete to a certain extent with existing downtown uses. It is also expected, however, that the shopping center will attract more shoppers to the central business district and that there will be some positive

benefits through the creation of additional demand for retail use in the downtown. In order for this to occur, the shopping center must be strongly linked with the downtown, through street and pedestrian connections and with other design features, and an appropriate mix of uses must be provided in both the downtown and the shopping center.

The Borough has taken steps to encourage appropriate non-residential development, both within the downtown and in other areas. These steps include the creation of a Special Improvement District and District Management Corporation in the central business district, and the construction of streetscape improvements. The Borough Council has also recently adopted a redevelopment plan for the landfill property, and development on the first phase is expected to proceed in the near future. Various revisions to the Land Use Ordinance are also intended to encourage appropriate non-residential development.

*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.*

As noted above, the Borough has designated portions of the central business district as a Special Improvement District, within which the District Management Corporation plays an important role in promoting a suitable business environment. Within the district, the Borough has undertaken an active improvement program, which includes new sidewalks, benches, lighting and landscaping, and better linkages between Main Street and the public parking areas. Creation of an Architectural Review Board and revision of the sign regulations are additional measures designed to promote these policies.

*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.*

The Planning Board has reviewed the purpose of the B-4 Retail Business District, and has determined that the intent of the district as a neighborhood commercial area designed to be sensitive to existing residential uses in the district and adjacent areas needs to be reinforced, not only on Gaston Avenue but in all of the existing B-4 district areas. It is proposed to rename the district as the B-R Business-Residential District, and to revise the zoning regulations to reflect the existing mixed use patterns in this district and to ensure that the needs of residences in this district are given greater consideration.

In the new Land Use Ordinance, properties along Gaston Avenue formerly in the R-2 Zone were rezoned to a PO-R professional office-residential zone designation. The boundaries of both the PO-R Zone and the B-4 Zone to the north continue to limit non-residential use to properties with frontage on Gaston Avenue. In general, this remains a valid policy. In two locations, however, a deviation from this policy is warranted.

First, the property on the south side of William Street immediately west of North Gaston Avenue (Block 74, Lot 16) has been reviewed and it has been determined that it is more compatible in character with the adjacent non-residential properties on Gaston Avenue. It is proposed to amend the Master Plan to be consistent with the current zoning ordinance, which permits both commercial and residential use on these properties.

Second, the new Zoning Map placed several properties on the south side of Union Avenue (all of Block 40.01 and Block 43, Lots 24 through 31) in the PO-R professional office - residential district. The development pattern of this area is heavily influenced by the adjacent B-4 district to the west and north, however. Due to this influence, and the small area of the PO-R zone in this area, the Planning Board is of the opinion that the PO-R zone portion should be changed back to its prior B-4 designation (proposed to be renamed as the B-R zone). The regulations of the new B-R Zone are to be designed to prevent undue impacts upon adjacent residential properties.

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

This continues to be a valid policy, and is in fact current practice, as set forth in the Land Use Ordinance.

*The Vision Plan proposes that the economic vitality of the Central Business District be enhanced through the revitalization of existing commercial uses and structures, and through the development or redevelopment of key sites as commercial anchors. New development and redevelopment should actively encourage employment opportunities for Borough residents. The Vision Plan recognizes that this goal can only be accomplished by the combined efforts and cooperation of the Borough of Somerville, the District Management Corporation, the Somerville Business and Professional Association, and individual property owners, tenants, and developers, as well as the Somerset Alliance for the Future.*

All of the foregoing remain valid policies. Development or redevelopment of the key commercial anchor sites designated in the vision plan has not yet occurred, and is best seen as a long-term goal, requiring substantial land assembly and coordinated public-private actions.

In the Master Plan, the location of the existing bank at the northwest corner of High and North Bridge Streets is currently planned as a major financial/office center, with a transition between the County offices to the southeast and residential areas to the northwest. After reconsidering this policy, the Planning Board has concluded that a more intense development on this site would be too detrimental to the nearby residential areas, and would create excessive traffic on local streets. The Board proposes to amend the Master Plan and development regulations to limit the scale and types of offices, to prohibit banks altogether, and to ensure that any development is more sensitive to nearby residential areas.

### 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.*

This is and will continue to be a worthy goal. Although various improvements have been made to the Borough's park and recreation system, there have been no major changes in the amount or location of parklands and open space systems.

#### *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.*

This remains an appropriate policy. As of this writing, some natural areas along the Raritan River need to be acquired or conservation/access easements obtained in order for this policy to be fully implemented.

*Improve Borough-owned land where possible and as necessary for recreational purposes.*

*Provide recreational 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.*

As noted above, various improvements have been made. This continues to be a valid policy. Although it is not always possible to avoid any adverse effects upon adjacent property owners, especially in a highly developed community, minimization of negative effects from park facilities will always be a desirable policy.

The Master Plan proposes the acquisition and/or development of several parcels for recreation and open space purposes. These recommendations remain valid, with one exception. The property on Prospect Street (Block 141, Lot 1.01), which is proposed for acquisition as a mini-park in the Master Plan, has been developed as a single family dwelling and such acquisition is no longer recommended. The Planning Board is also now recommending a study of the Mastogen Drive park in order to determine the feasibility and appropriateness of changing its use from passive recreation to active recreation, such as a tennis court or courts.

*The Vision Plan recognizes the importance of the existing park and open space system to the development of the CBD and to the Borough. The park system along Peters Brook provides an edge and gateway to downtown from the east, and provides an important amenity for the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Other important existing open spaces in downtown include the Court House Green, and the Borough Hall grounds and Veterans Memorial. The Vision Plan supports the development of the streetscape as a pedestrian amenity and as the site of the Tour of Somerville, street fairs, parades, etc. In addition the Vision Plan proposes the development of public or semi-public open spaces within the major anchor developments developed around the winter garden and quadrangle concepts.*

Improvements have been made to the Main Street streetscape, as discussed above. In addition, the County has made improvements to the open space area within the Court House complex. The importance of the other public open space areas also remains unchanged. The development of major anchors in the downtown has not occurred, but the policy concept of public or semi-public open spaces as part of these developments when they occur remains appropriate.

#### Circulation Goal and Policies

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

In the Master Plan, the primary limitation toward achieving this goal is the highly developed character of the Borough. This has not changed. The focus of the Master Plan was on operational improvements to existing streets, and on orienting through traffic toward the perimeter, rather than through, the central business district. This remains the case. Two significant roadway improvements have been completed since the Master Plan was adopted: the extension of Urban Drive (now Veterans Memorial Drive) to East Main Street, and the completion of the grade separation at the Somerville circle. In addition, the State has partially completed widening improvements on Routes 202-206. All of these improvements were anticipated by the Master Plan.

*Policies:*

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

This policy continues to be appropriate, given the developed nature of the Borough. Various improvements are proposed in the Master Plan; many remain to be implemented, but no changes are recommended in these proposals at this time.

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

This is a continuing need, and the policy is still valid.

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

As noted previously, there have been various improvements to the sidewalks in the central business, and some pedestrian connections between parking areas and Main Street have been improved. There has not been any substantial development of additional off-street parking since the Master Plan was adopted. This remains an appropriate policy.

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

This improvement has been completed.

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

To the extent feasible, this is a valid policy.

*The Vision Plan endorses the extension of Urban Drive to Vanderveer Parkway and the extension of South Doughty Avenue to Route 206 as the landfill site is developed, as well as other roadway and intersection improvements identified in the Master Plan. The Vision Plan would also encourage major employers to work with the newly formed Somerset Alliance/Transportation Management Association (Ridewise) to implement traffic management programs to reduce peak hour congestion on Borough streets. The Vision Plan also recognizes that the traffic impact of major development projects will require study and review as projects are proposed, and that the mitigation of traffic impacts will be a cooperative effort between the developers and the Borough and others.*

As stated above, the Urban Drive (Veterans Memorial Drive) extension has been completed. The extension of South Doughty Avenue to Route 206 to link the proposed Somerville Square shopping center with the downtown no longer appears practical, due to the presence of wetlands along the intended route; an alternative link further to the east along Veterans Memorial Drive appears to be possible, however. The use of South Bridge Street for this purpose is also important. Any use of Bridge Street in linking the shopping center with the downtown needs to be carefully studied to avoid adding substantial through traffic to Second Street and other residential streets in the area. All of the other statements in this policy continue to be appropriate.

### 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.*

This goal developed from a continuing concern over the economic performance and physical condition of the downtown. Significant improvement has been made in the viability of the central business district, through the efforts of many entities and individuals. The district, like many older town centers, continues to evolve from its historic function toward developing a new role and identity. This policy is, and will continue to be, extremely important to the Borough.

#### *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.*

This policy is still valid. The Land Use Ordinance regulations, which encourage vertical expansion, limit retail use primarily to the B-1 and B-2 districts, and which delineate the districts and district boundaries, are intended to implement this policy.

*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.*

This is still a valid objective. In the Master Plan and Vision Plan, office uses are either prohibited or discouraged on the ground floor in the central business district. It is proposed to amend the Master Plan to be consistent with the current zoning policy, which permits offices on the ground floor.

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

As stated above, improvements have been made to pedestrian connections between public parking facilities and Main Street, and the walkways within Main Street have also been upgraded. This policy continues to be appropriate.

*Encourage architectural compatibility within the Central Business District.*

This is an on-going policy. The establishment of the Architectural Review Board and official design guidelines has helped to promote this policy.

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

The eastern portion of the district continues to have problems involving underutilization of various sites, environmental contamination from prior industrial development, a deleterious mix of uses and physical dilapidation of structures. The completion of the Veterans Memorial Drive, the designation of the Meadow Street housing site, and the revised zone regulations and district boundaries are all intended to promote this policy. In certain areas, redevelopment plans and programs pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law may be necessary to effect redevelopment. The Borough has recently initiated a redevelopment study for the eastern portion of the central business district, with assistance from Somerset County.

In one part of the Master Plan, the East Main Street revitalization area is planned as a single mixed-use zone, permitting a variety of public, office, retail and residential uses. In the Vision Plan portion of the Master Plan, a somewhat different mixed-use scheme is planned. The current zoning ordinance places this area within four separate zone districts, permitting public, retail, service and residential uses. Until a redevelopment plan is adopted for the area, it is proposed to amend the Master Plan to be generally consistent with separate zoning districts, similar to which now exists. The plan is proposed to also acknowledge that at such time as land assembly and coordinated development is possible, that a single mixed-use scheme such as proposed currently in the plan may be appropriate.

The Planning Board has reviewed the B-3 Central Business District regulations, and recommends changes in the zoning regulations to reflect the policy of encouraging office and service uses. The district is also proposed to be renamed as the B-S Business-Services District.

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

This remains a valid policy. Redevelopment area designation and plans may be necessary and should be studied. As noted above, the Borough has recently initiated a redevelopment study for the eastern portion of the central business district.

*This goal is the impetus for the entire Vision Plan. The basis for the Vision Plan is the maintenance and enhancement of key assets including existing uses and activities, and the existing built environment through the development of the streetscape program, a facade improvement program, infill development, and the development of key anchor sites. Public, community and cultural uses are also important components of the development program. The ultimate goal of the Vision Plan is to enhance the viability of Somerville as a place to live, work and shop, and to improve the CBD's position as a regional attraction. As previously stated the Vision Plan recognizes that the accomplishments of this goal will be result of the combined efforts and cooperation of the Borough of Somerville, the District Management Corporation, the Somerville Business and Professional Association, and individual property owners, tenants, and developers, as well as the Somerset Alliance for the Future.*

In addition to the above Master Plan Goals, the Master Plan identified four objectives for the development of the CBD. The intent of the Vision Plan is to accomplish these four objectives:

*Objective 1: To revitalize and enhance Somerville's downtown commercial district as a shopping area.*

*Objective 2: To create high value, high amenity mixed-use developments which provide competitive office space, in-town housing, specialty retail and public amenities.*

*Objective 3: To attract and contain professional offices within the CBD (and transitional areas) to prevent further conversion of residential properties within neighborhood settings.*

*Objective 4: To create a destination place through cultural and entertainment offerings which enhance the quality of life within the Borough and which draw "day tourists" from throughout the County for shopping and leisure activities.*

These goals and objectives remain part of the vision for the central business district.

#### **Design Goal and Policies**

*Goal: Improve the visual appearance of the business areas while protecting residential neighborhoods from encroachment and ensure improvements are made which respect the architectural character of the Borough.*

*Policies:*

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

As discussed above, the Borough has made significant improvements, including landscaping, within the central business district. The Land Use Ordinance requires street trees and other improvements within the right-of-way at the time private development occurs.

*Encourage attractive site appearance, consistency and good design.*

As stated previously, the Architectural Review Board, official design guidelines, and specific regulations in the Land Use Ordinance are all designed to further this policy.

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

Various such regulations in the Land Use Ordinance are intended to achieve this objective. The Planning Board has also considered the needs of cemetery users to be buffered from adjacent incompatible uses, and recommends that buffering of cemeteries from non-residential and multi-family residential uses be required for any new development.

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

The Land Use Ordinance contains specific regulations concerning this policy, which continues to be valid.

*Downtown Somerville contains the most significant collection of 19th century and early 20th century commercial architecture in Somerset County. The Vision Plan recognizes the importance of the unique physical characteristics of the CBD and supports the maintenance and enhancement of the existing character through the streetscape program and facade improvement program. New developments, small infill projects and major anchor developments, should be designed to be compatible in design and scale to the context of the existing built environment.*

This policy repeats many earlier policy statements above. Establishment of the Special Improvement District, the District Management Corporation, the Architectural Review Board and specific design guidelines, all are designed with this policy in mind.

**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.*

As noted above, a new H-Hospital Zone has been created in the Land Use Ordinance, designed not only recognize the existing Somerset Medical Center, but also to limit the medical center's expansion and to better protect surrounding residential areas from hospital-related activities. Also as stated above, the Board is recommending a minor Master Plan revision to change the boundaries of this district in the plan.

*The Vision Plan identifies the site bounded by East Main Street, North Bridge Street, East High Street and Mechanic Street as the county campus.*

Subsequent to the adoption of the Master Plan, a new CG County Government district was established, designed to reflect the use and future development plans of the Somerset County administration complex. In reviewing the Master Plan, the Planning Board observed that two properties on the north side of Main Street east of Grove Street are planned for expansion of the County administrative complex, whereas the current zoning ordinance places these properties in the B-2 central business district, which is not designed for the County administrative complex. The Master Plan should be amended to be substantially consistent with the current zoning policies for this area.

**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.*

Other than the establishment of the Architectural Review Board and design guidelines, along with a required substantial buffer between the Somerville Square shopping center development and the Washington Place neighborhood, there has been no significant action in this regard. The establishment of a historic preservation commission is felt to be essential to the establishment of not only such a district, but to appropriate regulatory and administrative measures.

*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.*

These remain appropriate policies.

**SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE ASSUMPTIONS, POLICIES, AND OBJECTIVES FORMING THE BASIS FOR THE MASTER PLAN OR DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS AS LAST REVISED AND SPECIFIC CHANGES RECOMMENDED FOR THE MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

The current Master Plan and development regulations for the Borough are based upon assumptions, policies and objectives which, for the most part, remain valid. There have been some situations, however, which call for reevaluating the Borough's development policies and for changing the Master Plan and Land Use Ordinance. This section presents the statutorily mandated review of assumptions, policies and objectives which form the basis for the Master Plan and Land Use Ordinance, and indicates additional recommended changes to the plan and ordinance not already discussed above.

**Density and Distribution of Population**

The density and population distribution of the Borough is fairly stable, and has not changed significantly since 1990. The 1990 Census reported the Borough's population as 11,632 persons. According to N.J. Department of Labor statistics, the population of the Borough in 1994 was 12,193 persons, whereas the Somerset County Planning Board estimated a population of only 11,196 persons for this date. The County Planning Board population estimate for January 1, 1996 is 11,225 persons. Regardless of which estimate is used, the population levels have not changed dramatically since 1990. Both sources of population estimates indicate the Borough's population as less than the 13,652 persons reported in the 1970 census. This situation is due to a variety of factors, but the most prominent are the declining household size and the shortage of vacant developable land. These factors have not changed significantly since 1990. The average household size in 1990 was reported to be 2.45 persons by the Census. The County Planning Board estimates the household size for the Borough in 1996 to be 2.44 persons.

Since population is directly related to population density, it is not surprising that a similar stable situation exists with the population density of the Borough. In 1990, the Borough contained 7.71 persons per acre (4,908 persons per square mile). As noted above, the population estimates from the State and County differ; therefore, depending upon the estimate source, population density has either increased slightly or decreased slightly. Using 1994 estimates from the State, the Borough's density is 8.08 and 5,145 persons per acre and square mile, respectively. Using 1996 estimates from the County, the Borough's density is 7.44 and 4,736 persons per acre and square mile, respectively.

### Density and Distribution of Land Uses

For the most part, the Borough's land use pattern is well established and has not changed significantly since 1990. One of the reasons for this is that very little land is vacant and readily developable. Redevelopment is hindered by various factors, including environmental contamination, unsuitable property configuration or location, and market factors.

During the period of 1990 to 1995 inclusive, only 20 new dwelling units were authorized by building permits. 18 of these 20 were for single family homes. Over this same period, however, 20 residential demolitions were also authorized by building permit, indicating no net change in housing units over this period, assuming all permits were acted upon. The County Planning Board has estimated an increase of 16 housing units between 1990 and 1996, an average of less than 3 per year.

Non-residential development has mostly been redevelopment of existing non-residential buildings and properties, along with a few new non-residential developments. No large scale non-residential projects have been developed since the Master Plan was adopted. County Planning Board statistics show the following proposed non-residential development during the period of 1990-1995:

<u>Commercial</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Industrial</u>
21,942 sf	21,797 sf	52,020 sf

These figures do not necessarily reflect non-residential development actually constructed, nor demolition or conversion of non-residential space.

### Housing Conditions

Housing conditions remain relatively unchanged since 1990. As noted above, there has been no substantial change in the number or type of dwelling units. New housing development that has occurred consists primarily of single family dwellings. Also as discussed previously, however, COAH has issued revised affordable housing obligations for the period from 1987 to 1999. This new obligation, along with options to address same, is currently being studied by the Planning Board. Finally, the 1996 regional center designation report calls for various housing policy actions and evaluations.

### Circulation

Several significant improvements, along with various minor improvements, have been made to the circulation system. The major improvements, as noted previously, include the completion of the grade separation at the Somerville circle, completion of the Urban Drive (Veterans Memorial Drive) extension, and partial

widening of Routes 202-206. The regional center designation report calls for various policies and actions concerning roadway, traffic and mass transit. Finally, minor changes are noted above in the review of the Master Plan circulation goals and policies. Except for the foregoing, there are no significant changes in the master plan assumptions, policies and objectives.

### Community Facilities

In the regional center designation report, various policies and actions have been set forth concerning recreation and open space issues. In addition, minor changes in policies and assumptions are noted above in the review of the Master Plan goals and policies. Otherwise, there have been no substantial changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives related to community facilities which formed the basis for the current master plan.

### Conservation of Energy and Natural Resources

The only changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives related to conservation of energy and natural resources are the proposals in the planning and implementation agenda in the regional center designation report. Most of these are not changes, but repetitions of existing policy.

### Collection, Disposition and Recycling of Designated Recyclable Materials

In response to New Jersey's Solid Waste Management Act, the Borough has implemented a recycling program. The Borough's Land Use Ordinance has been amended to require new development to provide for the recycling of recyclable materials as part of the development approval.

### Changes in State, County and Municipal Policies and Objectives

Since the adoption of the 1990 Master Plan, there have been various changes in the policies and objectives of the State, Somerset County and municipalities. The significant changes and their affect upon Somerville Borough's Master Plan and development regulations are discussed in this section.

1. **New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP).** The State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP), adopted on June 12, 1992, placed most of Somerville in the Metropolitan Planning Area, or Planning Area 1 (PA1), except for a small area along the Raritan River, which is located within the Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area, Planning Area 5 (PA5). Subsequently, in 1996, the Borough, along with Raritan and part of Bridgewater, was designated a regional center by the State Planning Commission.

The Somerset County Regional Center Designation Report, dated April, 1996, includes a planning and implementation agenda. Many of the items on this agenda reflect existing policy. The Municipal Land Use Law requires a statement indicating the relationship of local planning policies to the State Plan. The Master Plan should be amended to comply with this requirement. The Planning Board also recognizes that the Master Plan should be revised to better reflect the designation of the Borough as part of a regional center in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan and to make the Master Plan and regulations more consistent with such designation.

2. **Council on Affordable Housing (C.O.A.H.) Affordable Housing Reallocation.** As mentioned above, the Borough has been given a revised allocation of affordable housing units for which it is obligated to provide a realistic opportunity. The Borough is presently preparing a housing element to address this allocation.
3. **Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL).** The MLUL has undergone numerous revisions since 1990, and there have been a number of court decisions which have clarified or changed interpretations of this statute. Some, but not all, of the revisions are incorporated or reflected in the Borough's Land Use Ordinance, which combines the zoning, subdivision and site plan ordinances authorized by the MLUL. The Master Plan and/or ordinance should be amended to incorporate or reference such revisions, and to eliminate inconsistencies with the current MLUL. The Planning Board is preparing a comprehensive revision to the Land Use Ordinance which addresses these changes in the law.
4. **Other Laws and Regulations.** Among the various other laws and regulations which have been adopted or amended since the prior Master Plan reexamination, the provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 should be reflected in amendments to the land use ordinance. This act has established limits upon local regulation of wireless communication facilities, including cellular phone antennas, and has restricted local regulation of dish antennas. The draft comprehensive revision of the Land Use Ordinance being prepared by the Planning Board includes provisions intended to respond to this law.
5. **Proposed Draft Comprehensive Revision of the Land Use Ordinance.** As stated previously, the Planning Board is preparing a comprehensive revision of the Land Use Ordinance.

The broad intent of the ordinance revision is as follows:

- a. make the ordinance more clear and less difficult to use for citizens, applicants and those who administer the ordinance;
- b. improve procedures and to ensure that procedures are consistent with the intent and actual practice of the boards and officials charged with administering the ordinance;
- c. eliminate inconsistencies, omissions and ambiguities;
- d. eliminate inconsistencies between the ordinance and the Municipal Land Use Law, other laws and various court decisions and to add certain provisions from such laws and decisions; and
- e. implement certain limited land use and development policy changes. The more significant proposed changes include the following:
  - (1) The definition of "minor site plan" has been broadened to include a greater range of development activity. This proposal is intended to streamline the procedural requirements for minor development activity.
  - (2) The filing fees and deposits for professional services have been revised to reflect current costs.
  - (3) The existing ordinance provisions concerning the expiration of variances have been revised to apply to all variances granted by both the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment, to clarify that variances do not expire in the case of subdivisions filed with the County recording officer, and to establish the procedures to be followed. The purpose of this proposal is to ensure that undeveloped projects with variances do not impair future planning efforts.
  - (4) The ordinance has been amended to require that final site plan and subdivision approval must be obtained prior to the issuance of permits. This proposal is intended to clarify what is understood to already be the law.
  - (5) The list of improvements which are exempt from the requirement to obtain site plan approval has been expanded and clarified, in order to streamline the procedures for minor development activity.

- (6) Time periods within which conditions of approval must be met have been added. A failure to meet the conditions within the time period specified will result in expiration of the approval. This is intended to avoid the problems when conditions remain unresolved over extended time periods.
- (7) The checklists of submission requirements for various types of applications have been completely revised, in order to ensure adequate plan information.
- (8) The ordinance provisions for minimum number of parking spaces have been revised to base the requirements upon both zone district and use, whichever is more restrictive. Currently, the requirement is based only upon use, which does not adequately prevent problems when the use changes.
- (9) The standards for parking area illumination have been revised in accordance with recommendations of the Illuminating Engineering Society. The new standards provide a greater level of safety and greater specificity.
- (10) Four of the non-residential zone districts have been renamed. The name of the B-3 Central Business District has been changed to the B-S Business-Services District, along with changes in the zoning regulations to reflect the policy of encouraging office and service uses. The name of the B-4 Retail Business District has been changed to the B-R Business-Residential District, again to better reflect the zone intent. The name of the B-5 Highway Business District has been changed to the B-3 Highway Business District and the name of the B-6 Shopping Center Business District has been changed to the B-4 Shopping Center Business District. These last two changes are proposed simply to keep a sequential numbering of the B- districts.
- (11) The lists of principal, accessory, conditional and prohibited uses in the regulations for the various zone districts have been replaced by a single schedule which provides a much more detailed listing of specific uses. The definition of most of the non-residential uses in the schedule are based upon the Standard Industrial Classification Manual, 1987 Edition.
- (12) In the G Garden Apartment District, one- and two-family dwellings have been added as permitted uses, and specific lot, bulk and intensity of

development standards have been added for these uses. This is proposed to recognize existing one- and two-family dwellings in this zone.

- (13) In the existing B-4 Retail Business District (name proposed to be changed to the B-R Business-Residential District), one- and two-family dwellings have been added as permitted uses. This change is intended to reflect the existing mixed use patterns in this district, and to ensure that the needs of residences in this district are considered.
- (14) The following lots in the existing B-4 Retail Business District (name to be changed to the B-R Business-Residential District), all of which have frontage upon Route 206, have been placed in the B-3 Highway Business District (currently named the B-5 Highway Business District) (block and lot numbers are from the Borough Tax Map):

Block 126, Lot 1

Block 127, Lots 10 (part), 20 (part) and 23

In the Master Plan, these properties are planned for retail and service uses. The current zoning ordinance classifies this area as a neighborhood business district. The revised ordinance proposes to change this policy in recognition of the highway orientation of these properties, their size and shape, and the use pattern in this area. The Master Plan should be revised to be consistent with this proposal.

- (15) Commercial communications antennas have been added as a conditional use in the I-1 zone district. This is in response to the growing proliferation of antennas, particularly cellular telephone antennas, and legislation and court decisions which have given these antennas preferential status.
- (16) A minimum lot depth requirement has been added for most types of development in the residential zone districts and in the PO-R district. This proposal is intended to ensure that adequate space for a building envelope is provided on any lot.
- (17) The lot, bulk and intensity of development standards in the R-3 zone district have been amended to reflect development by two-family dwellings other than duplexes. In the same zone, the maximum floor area ratio and improvement coverage limits for

one-family detached dwellings have been increased. These changes better reflect current development patterns and are more logical and consistent.

- (18) The lot, bulk and intensity of development standards for the various types of dwellings in a planned residential development in the R-3 zone district have been revised to better reflect the nature of the various dwelling types.
- (19) A maximum floor area ratio standard has been added in the G and SC zone districts, in recognition of the intensity of the permitted uses in these zones.
- (20) The setback requirements for accessory buildings have been revised to provide different and separate requirements for buildings lesser and greater than 500 square feet of floor area. This change is designed to clarify the original ordinance intent of having lesser setbacks for accessory buildings.

6. **Other Changes to the Master Plan or Development Regulations.** In the process of reviewing the Master Plan and Land Use Ordinance, the Planning Board has determined that the following additional changes to these documents are recommended:

Changes to the Land Use Plan Map or Zoning Map

- a. In the Master Plan, properties along the east side of Routes 202/206 north of Arlyne Drive are planned for retail and service uses. The current zoning ordinance places all of these properties in a highway commercial district, except that the rear half of Block 153, Lot 17 is placed within a single family residential zone. The zoning map should be amended to place all of these properties in the B-5 (proposed to be renamed as the B-3) highway commercial district, including the rear half of Block 153, Lot 17, due to the problem in providing access to residential development the rear of this lot. Adequate buffering of the residential properties on Arlyne Drive and Prospect Drive should be required as part of this change.
- b. In the Master Plan, the area near the intersection of Second Street and South Bridge Street is planned for multi-family residential use. The current zoning ordinance places some of these properties in a neighborhood business district and some in a shopping center business district. The Master Plan should be amended to place those properties on the east side of South Bridge Street in the B-4 (proposed to be renamed the B-R) neighborhood business district, and the properties on

the west side of South Bridge Street in the B-6 (proposed to be renamed the B-4) shopping center business district, consistent with current zoning.

- c. In the Master Plan, the site of Immaculata High School (Block 151, Lots 1 and 1A) reflects the existing school use. The current zoning ordinance divides this site into a highway commercial zone in the northerly portion and a residential zone in the southerly portion. The zoning map should be amended to place the entire site in the adjacent R-2 residential zone, and to permit schools with special conditions in this zone.
- d. In the Master Plan, the land on Mountain Avenue occupied by Immaculate Conception Church (Block 136, Lot 12) is planned for residential and professional use. The current zoning ordinance designates most of this site as a residential zone, with a small area as a professional office-residential zone on the south. The zoning map should be revised to place all of this site in a residential zone, with special regulations for houses of worship.
- e. In one part of the Master Plan, the East Main Street revitalization area is planned as a single mixed-use zone, permitting a variety of public, office, retail and residential uses. In the Vision Plan portion of the Master Plan, a somewhat different mixed-use scheme is planned. The current zoning ordinance places this area within four separate zone districts, permitting public, retail, service and residential uses. The Master Plan should be amended to be generally consistent with separate zoning districts, similar to which now exists. The plan should acknowledge that at such time as land assembly and coordinated development is possible, that a single mixed-use scheme such as proposed currently in the plan may be appropriate. The Borough has recently initiated redevelopment studies for this area, which will eventually lead to a redevelopment plan and revised development regulations.
- f. The R-3 Zone is proposed to be extended further west along the south side of Veterans Memorial Drive, west of Hamilton Street, to include Lots 14, 15 and 16 in Block 63. This change will balance the properties currently zoned R-3 on the north side of Veterans Memorial Drive.
- g. The area along South Bridge Street north of the railroad and along Franklin Street between South Bridge and Warren Streets is proposed to be changed to a PO-R professional office - residential zone. On the Tax Map, these properties are identified as Block 62, Lots 2 through 13; Block 119, Lots 10 through 14; and Block

- 120, Lots 2 through 10. Currently, these properties are located in the B-3 (proposed to be renamed the B-S) zone. This change is proposed to better reflect development conditions in this area.
- h. The B-2 zone is proposed to be extended to include the properties containing the Post Office and Post Office Plaza (Block 117, Lots 1.01 and 2; and Block 120, Lot 1). Currently, these properties are located in the B-3 (proposed to be renamed the B-S) zone. The zone change along Bridge Street discussed above results in a small B-3 zone area isolated from the balance of the zone located to the east of Bridge Street. This change would place these properties in the same zone as the contiguous properties to the west, and is consistent with their current development.
  - i. In the Master Plan, two properties on the north side of Main Street east of Grove Street (Block 69, Lots 1 and 33) are planned for expansion of the County administrative complex. The current zoning ordinance places these properties in the B-2 central business district, which is not designed for County uses. Although it is doubtful that the Master Plan ever intended to include these properties as part of the County complex, the Master Plan should be amended to clarify this situation and to be substantially consistent with the current zoning policies for this area.
  - j. The boundary of the R-2 zone district should be changed to include Block 53, Lots 1 through 5 and Block 55, Lots 4 through 6, which are presently in the I-2 zone district. Most of these properties front on South Bridge Street and are developed for residential use. They are also too small for industrial use. Changing the zone boundary means that additions or alterations to these existing dwellings, or even new dwellings, will not require a use variance.
  - k. The boundary of the PO-R zone should be changed to include Block 129, Lot 39. This property received approval to expand the parking area for the Somerset Valley Bank on West End Avenue. Continuing the R-2 residential zone designation on this property is therefore no longer appropriate.
  - l. The boundary between the R-1 and R-2 zone districts should be relocated to follow the lot line between Lots 30 and 31 in Block 41. A recent lot line relocation resulted in one of the properties being split by the zone boundary.

Other Changes

- m. The Master Plan and Land Use Ordinance should be revised to permit a wider range of home office uses, particularly in view of the trends in telecommunications which enable a greater number of persons to conduct business activity out of their homes. Any change must be careful to ensure that home business activity does not negatively affect residential properties in the vicinity.
- n. The Land Use Ordinance should be reviewed and possibly amended to minimize excessive illumination and sky reflected glare. Also, the ordinance should be revised so as to prevent glare and excessive illumination from one- and two-family residences.
- o. The Board of Adjustment, in its 1997 annual report, has recommended several revisions, or studies of such revisions, to the zoning ordinance. These should be incorporated into the master plan and/or zoning ordinance, as appropriate.
- p. The properties within the I-1 Industrial District having frontage on Route 206 should be restudied to determine the most appropriate development policies. In the Master Plan, properties along the west side of Route 206 are planned for a conservation area in the northerly portion, and industrial use in the southerly portion. The current zoning ordinance places all of this area in the I-1 Industrial district, and encourages a conservation easement along the Raritan River.

The development options on these properties are severely limited due to floodplain and wetlands conditions and other factors. In addition, with the recent adoption of a redevelopment plan for the landfill area across Route 206 to the east and north, industrial development may not be the most appropriate development for this location.

**RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE INCORPORATION OF REDEVELOPMENT PLANS INTO THE LAND USE PLAN ELEMENT OF THE MASTER PLAN**

In March, 1998, Somerville Borough adopted a redevelopment plan for the area including the Borough landfill and several adjacent properties pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law", P.L. 1992, C.79 (c.40a:12a-1 et seq.). The redevelopment plan resulted in the adoption of various regulations, including revised regulations for the B-6 Shopping Center District, and placed the entire redevelopment area within the B-6 district. The Planning Board prepared the redevelopment plan and intends to amend the land use element of the Borough master plan to be consistent with the zoning. The landfill area redevelopment plan proposes that some, but not all of the privately-owned properties within the redevelopment area be acquired to allow for coordinated development of a shopping center. Two properties in the north-west portion of the redevelopment area have not been proposed for acquisition, however. The Planning Board recommends that the master plan and zoning regulations be amended to include policies and regulations appropriate for conventional development on each of these properties, compatible with the overall shopping center use, but designed to reflect the characteristics of the individual lots.

In addition, the Borough Council has recently authorized the Planning Board to conduct a study to determine whether various properties in the eastern portion of the central business district meet the criteria for designation as an area in need of redevelopment. Pending the result of such study, and pending the adoption of a redevelopment plan, the Planning Board intends to adopt recommendations concerning the incorporation of the redevelopment plan into the land use element of the Master Plan.

There may be additional opportunities in the future for the Borough to utilize the authority established by the statute, inasmuch as the law streamlines the process of redevelopment and expands municipal powers to improve areas in need of redevelopment. The application of the statute may have specific application in efforts to redevelop various abandoned or underutilized properties, which properties are not likely to be improved or developed solely through the instrumentality of private capital. Furthermore, potential exists for funding of economic development planning in these areas. A preliminary list of areas of the Borough which may be contaminated or which may contain obsolescent or deleterious uses and structures includes the following, subject, of course, to formal studies and designation:

1. the balance of the central business district along Main Street and side streets; and
2. the non-residential areas along South Bridge Street south of the N.J. Transit railroad line not included within the landfill redevelopment area.

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