

Borough of Waldwick

Master Plan Reexamination Report

Prepared for Borough of Waldwick Planning Board

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Major Problems and Objectives Relating to Land Development in the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination	3
III.	Current Status of Problems and Objectives set forth in the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination	5
IV.	Changes in Assumptions, Policies and Objectives Forming the Basis of the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination	7
V.	Recommended Changes to the Master Plan and Development Regulations	16
VI.	Relationship to Other Governmental Plans	19

I. INTRODUCTION

The Municipal Land Use Law of the State of New Jersey mandates at N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 that 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.

There are five elements which the reexamination report must include:

- 1) A section outlining the major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
- 2) A section describing the extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to that date.
- 3) A section discussing 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.
- 4) A section setting forth the recommended changes to the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.
- 5) A section setting forth the recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law" 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.

The Borough of Waldwick completed its last comprehensive master plan in

1976. A reexamination of the 1976 Master Plan was undertaken in 1982, and a subsequent master plan reexamination was prepared and adopted in 1988. Consequently, this report assesses Waldwick's 1988 Master Plan Reexamination, together with the Borough's existing development regulations, in compliance with N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89.

II. MAJOR PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES RELATING TO LAND DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1988 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION

This chapter reviews the major problems and objectives relating to land development as set forth in the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination. The 1988 document indicates that a number of the problems and objectives highlighted in the 1982 Master Plan Reexamination, including concerns relating to traffic and transportation, had been addressed and/or fulfilled in the intervening years. At the same time, the 1988 Reexamination revealed that some of the problems and objectives identified in 1982 had either remained relatively static or had actually increased over time.

The Borough's major problems and objectives as set forth in the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination may be synthesized as follows:

Encourage Compatible Land Use Relationships.

The 1988 report indicates that the planning concerns and objectives regarding the need to encourage compatible land use relationships and minimize the impact of development of vacant land upon the character of the Borough represent long-term issues which focus on the inherent character of the community and its continued image as an attractive place to live and work.

Reinforce and Improve the Borough's Economic Base.

The 1988 reexamination states that the need to reinforce and improve the Borough's economic base continues to be a substantive issue which must be continually pursued through proper planning.

Protect Environmentally-Sensitive Areas.

The 1988 report recognizes the need for the Borough to continue to protect environmentally sensitive areas within the community, including freshwater wetland areas consistent with recent State legislation.

Address the Borough's Fair Share Housing Obligation.

The 1988 reexamination reveals that a preliminary draft Housing Plan Element had been presented to the Planning Board to comply with the Fair Housing Act, and to meet the Borough's lower income housing need as established by COAH.

***Address Inconsistencies Between the
Zoning Ordinance/Map and Master Plan.***

The 1988 document highlights a number of inconsistencies that exist between the Borough's master plan and zoning which relate principally to the fact that the Borough Master Plan has not been amended to reflect zoning changes enacted in the community since 1976.

III. CURRENT STATUS OF PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES SET FORTH IN THE 1988 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION

This chapter examines the extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the 1988 master plan reexamination. For the most part, the assumptions, policies and objectives outlined in the preceding chapter are still valid today. There have been, for instance, no substantive changes in the overall development pattern within the Borough since 1988, and therefore the objective of encouraging compatible land use relationships to maintain the residential character of the Borough remains in full force in 1995.

Meanwhile, due largely to the effects of the recession and corresponding real estate slump of the late '80s and early '90s, the Borough has experienced a loss in tax ratables since its last master plan reexamination. Thus, the need to reinforce and improve the Borough's economic base through proper planning has actually increased since 1988. Although Waldwick remains a mostly developed community with little available land to accommodate significant new development, the Borough must continue to reinforce its tax base through modernization and redevelopment of existing property. In order to counter ratable losses stemming from both a community-wide revaluation and real estate tax appeals, the Borough should encourage the upgrading of commercial and industrial properties to include the renovation of retail storefronts and facades as well as the redevelopment of older commercial sites. The Borough should also facilitate, where appropriate, the conversion of single-family residences for professional office use, such as along portions of Franklin Turnpike.

The need to address the Borough's fair share housing obligation has been addressed via the adoption of a Housing Element and Fair Share Housing Plan in March 1989. At the time the 1988 Reexamination was adopted, the Planning Board was in the process of reviewing a draft fair share housing plan that was largely identical to the Plan ultimately adopted in 1989. The Borough's 1989 Housing Element and Fair Share Housing Plan acknowledged COAH's pre-credited need figure of 166 lower-income dwelling units for Waldwick, however it reduces the total obligation by 117 units principally through a vacant land adjustment (in recognition of the lack of suitable developable land within the community). The remaining 49 units are pro-

vided for via rehabilitation (22 units) and new construction on as many as 4 inclusionary housing sites (27 units).

In accordance with Waldwick's 1989 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, the Borough subsequently rezoned all 4 sites that were designated for inclusionary housing. Construction of the Greenway project on one of the four inclusionary sites has produced a total of 7 affordable dwellings to date.

The Borough has continued to respond in a positive manner to protecting environmentally sensitive areas. The Whites Pond dam project is being implemented to address a persistent flooding problem in the neighborhood adjoining Whites Pond. Meanwhile, the County of Bergen is undertaking improvements at three bridge crossings (at West Prospect Street, Hopper Avenue and Wyckoff Avenue) which are designed to stem the problem of riverbank erosion. In the areas of floodplain regulation and waste management, the Borough has amended both its floodplain and sewer use ordinances to keep them current and in conformance with applicable governmental standards. In 1992, the Borough also established an Environmental Commission, which serves in an advisory capacity and which recently completed a historic resources inventory for the Borough. Waldwick has also created the position of Environmental Officer since its last reexamination report.

Finally, many of the inconsistencies between the Borough Master Plan and zoning ordinance/map have not been addressed since the completion of the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination, and therefore these discrepancies need to be resolved either through a series of Master Plan amendments or the preparation of a new comprehensive master plan document.

IV. CHANGES IN ASSUMPTIONS, POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES FORMING THE BASIS OF THE 1988 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION

The underlying assumptions, policies and objectives establishing the basis for the Borough Master Plan remain largely relevant. A number of changes have occurred, and a number of land use concerns have arisen, which will require the Borough's attention.

Tables 1 through 4 show the extent to which demographic changes have occurred in Waldwick since the 1988 Reexamination Report. Such data continues to reflect relatively stable population and employment, and modest levels of commercial construction activity within the community. For example, the Borough's population continued its decline through the latter portion of the 1980s, but has since stabilized. Waldwick's population has actually increased slightly (by more than one percent) since 1990 based on the State's 1992 population estimates. Concurrently, residential construction activity, which was virtually non-existent during 1989 and 1990, has shown signs of life, particularly in 1993. Similarly, after having experienced no new commercial construction between 1990 and 1992, the Borough approved nearly 20,000 square feet of new commercial floor area in 1993 and another 26,000 square feet in 1994. Finally, the community's economic base has remained stable over the past decade or so, with the number of covered jobs hovering around 2,000.

Since the 1988 master plan reexamination, COAH has published new fair share housing allocations for all municipalities in the State for the period 1993 to 1999. Waldwick's fair share number for this period is actually less (pre-credited need of 91 units, 16 of which represent indigenous need) than for the 1987-1993 period, with that obligation having been addressed as part of the 1989 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan.

The 1988 Reexamination Report also recommended that the Borough amend its regulatory ordinance to provide for transition areas around wetlands. The need for any such amendment has become largely unnecessary, however, since jurisdiction over so-called "transition" areas rests with the State Department of Environmental Protection (and not with individual municipalities), and all applicants are required to comply with the State regulations where relevant. Additionally, since 1988, the Municipal Land Use

TABLE 1:

RATE OF POPULATION GROWTH, WALDWICK, NEW JERSEY, 1930 - 1992

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population of Waldwick</u>	<u>Population Change</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
1930	1,728	—	—
1940	2,475	747	43.2%
1950	3,963	1,488	60.1
1960	10,495	6,532	164.8
1970	12,313	1,818	17.3
1980	10,802	-1,511	-12.3
1990	9,757	-690	-6.6
1992 (est.)*	9,888	131	1.3

*New Jersey Department of Labor

Source: U.S. Census of Population

TABLE 2:

NUMBER OF BUILDING AND DEMOLITION PERMITS ISSUED, WALDWICK, NEW JERSEY
1980 - 1993

<u>Year</u>	<u>Residential Building Permits</u>				<u>Demolition Permits Issued</u>
	<u>Single</u>	<u>Two-Four</u>	<u>Multi</u>	<u>Total</u>	
1980	4	0	0	4	3
1981	4	0	0	4	0
1982	7	0	0	7	4
1983	18	8	0	26	0
1984	10	4	0	14	0
1985	10	2	0	12	0
1986	13	0	0	13	2
1987	4	4	0	8	1
1988	4	0	0	4	0
1989	0	0	0	0	4
1990	1	0	0	1	1
1991	3	2	0	5	2
1992	1	4	0	5	3
1993	<u>18</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	97	26	0	123	21

Source: New Jersey Residential Building Permits, New Jersey Department of Labor, 1980-1993.

TABLE 3

**NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, WALDWICK, NEW JERSEY
1980 - 1993**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Site Plan Approvals (1000's square feet)</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Commercial</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Industrial Utility and Warehouse</u>	
1980	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1981	0.0	0.0	84.6	84.6
1982	4.6	1.6	0.0	5.2
1983	.9	0.0	0.0	0.9
1984	12.8	1.2	16.9	30.9
1985	0.0	15.5	37.0	52.5
1986	2.7	0.0	0.0	2.7
1987	0.0	12.0	0.0	12.0
1988	6.3	0.3	0.0	6.6
1989	14.0	0.5	0.0	14.5
1990	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
1991	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1992	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.3
1993	<u>18.0</u>	<u>1.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>19.0</u>
TOTAL	59.6	31.2	138.5	229.3

Source: 1993 Planner's Data Book, Bergen County Planning Board.

TABLE 4**COVERED EMPLOYMENT, WALDWICK, NEW JERSEY, 1980 - 1992**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Jobs</u>
1980	1,974
1981	1,900
1982	2,030
1983	2,052
1984	2,007
1985	1,970
1986	1,750
1987	1,992
1988	1,975
1989	2,018
1990	2,047
1991	2,017
1992	2,036

Source: State of New Jersey, Department of Labor, Office of Demographic and Economic Analysis, New Jersey Covered Employment Trends (1980-1992): "Private Sector Covered Jobs, 3rd Quarter," by municipality.

Law has been amended to require conformance with the 1989 State Highway Access Management Code, for which the State Department of Transportation has developed land use regulations governing access to State highways. The Borough should review both the master plan and zoning regulations to determine whether any revisions are required to comply with the new State standards.

At the time of the 1988 Reexamination, the State of New Jersey had also released its Draft Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP), designed to serve as a framework for guiding future growth and development in the State. Under the draft document, the Borough of Waldwick had been classified as a Tier 2 Stable Suburb. In 1992, the New Jersey legislature adopted the final SDRP. The SDRP divides the State geographically into five Planning Areas, ranging from Metropolitan Planning Areas (PA-1) to Environmentally Sensitive Areas (PA-5). The geographic area into which Waldwick falls is PA-1, the Metropolitan Planning Area.

There are nine (9) major policy objectives for Metropolitan Planning Areas, which are as follows:

- 1) Land Use:** Guide new development and redevelopment to ensure efficient and beneficial utilization of scarce land while capitalizing on the inherent public facility and service efficiencies of the concentrated development patterns.
- 2) Housing:** Preserve the existing housing stock through maintenance and rehabilitation and provide a variety of housing choices through development and redevelopment.
- 3) Economic Development:** Promote economic development by encouraging redevelopment efforts such as infill and land assembly, public/private partnerships and infrastructure improvements.
- 4) Transportation:** Capitalize on the high-density settlement patterns that encourage the use of public transit systems and alternative modes of trans-

portation to improve travel among major population centers, employment centers and transportation terminals.

5) *Natural Resource Conservation:* Reclaim environmentally damaged sites and mitigate future negative impacts, particularly to waterfronts, scenic vistas, any remaining wildlife habitats and to Critical Environmental/Historic Sites generally. Give special emphasis to addressing air quality concerns; provide open space and recreational amenities.

6) *Recreation:* Provide maximum recreational opportunities by concentrating on the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing parks and open space while expanding the system through redevelopment and reclamation projects.

7) *Historic Preservation:* Integrate historic preservation with redevelopment efforts in a way that will not compromise either the historic resource or the area's need to redevelop.

8) *Public Facilities and Services:* Complete, repair or replace existing infrastructure systems to eliminate deficiencies and enable future development and redevelopment efforts.

9) *Intergovernmental Coordination:* Provide for the regionalization of as many public services as feasible and economical, and coordinate the efforts of State, County and municipal governments to ensure sound redevelopment, by encouraging private sector investment and providing supportive government regulations, innovative tax policies and other governmental policies and programs.

While the SDRP is not intended to substitute for local master plans, it is intended to guide and coordinate actions among various agencies and across all levels of government. The above policy objectives are mostly consistent with those set forth in the Borough of Waldwick Master Plan.

The 1988 Reexamination Report also recommended that the Borough con-

sider the adoption of a separate subdivision and site plan ordinance which would incorporate a number of contemporary features designed to address issues not adequately addressed in the present code. The need to adopt such an ordinance is deemed unnecessary at this time, since the Borough already has a Site Plan Review (Chapter 77) and Subdivision (Chapter 86) Ordinance, either of which can be amended independently should the need arise to reinforce existing zoning regulations.

Finally, the 1988 Reexamination Report recommended that the Borough Master Plan be amended to include a statement reflecting the Borough's recycling policy and compliance with the County Solid Waste Management Plan. The Borough has in place a mandatory recycling ordinance which requires the separation and recycling of used newspaper, aluminum and glass, food and yard waste from other solid waste. It has also recently amended its site plan ordinance to require developers to provide for the collection, disposition and recycling of such recyclable materials. Such amendments are consistent with both State Recycling Plan goals and the Bergen County Solid Waste Management Plan, and reflective of Borough recycling policy.

Since the last reexamination report, several new land use issues have arisen within the Borough's commercial district. The adequacy of parking to serve the needs of retail businesses concentrated at or near the intersections of Wyckoff Avenue and Franklin Turnpike and Wyckoff Avenue and Prospect Street has become a paramount concern as businesses turn over and new retail tenants locate in the area. A second issue relates to the need to upgrade building and site aesthetics, and a third concerns the Borough's desire to identify opportunities for redevelopment in this district.

The parking problem has been addressed to some extent through a recent ordinance amendment which requires new tenants to appear before the Planning Board as part of the development review process. An additional problem, however, relates to the location of off-street parking along the main commercial streets within the Borough. In particular, the head-on parking that exists in front of the retail stores on East Prospect Street directly across

from the municipal building represents a very undesirable condition, as parked vehicles must back up onto East Prospect Street in order to exit these spaces. To the extent that there is available land to the rear of these stores that could be used for parking, there may be an opportunity for the Borough to investigate the feasibility of having rear entrances to these retail businesses. This would also provide a means by which to affirmatively deal with concerns over the lack of setbacks and landscaped areas along the main retail commercial thoroughfares. Similarly, the Borough should consider whether there are any viable redevelopment options within the commercial core so as to bring underdeveloped properties up to standard as well. Finally, the Borough should continue to work with applicants in developing consistent architectural themes for redevelopment projects within the commercial district, being especially mindful of the Borough's historical resources.

V. RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO THE MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Based on the changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives from the last reexamination, several changes to the Waldwick Master Plan are now warranted. In addition, a number of the recommendations made as part of the 1988 reexamination report have yet to be implemented and therefore should be re-evaluated in the context of current conditions. The changes to the Master Plan and development regulations are set forth below.

1. In accordance with its 1989 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, the Borough has rezoned all four sites designated for inclusionary housing to meet its fair share obligation. The Borough should amend its Land Use Plan Map so as to be consistent with the revised zoning for these sites.
2. The boundaries of the C-3 zone at the intersection of Wyckoff and Crescent Avenues should be modified via a zoning map change so as to be consistent with the Land Use Plan Map.
3. Due to a number of outstanding concerns relating to the adequacy and location of off-street parking, retail turnover, the lack of landscaped open space and other aesthetic considerations, it is recommended that any future comprehensive master plan include a study of redevelopment options for the entire business district in an effort to address these concerns and also to determine whether any new zoning controls are necessary to accomplish the desired objectives.
4. In order to insure that construction within the Borough is contextual with existing development in the immediate neighborhood, consideration should be given to enacting design standards as part of a zoning ordinance amendment.
5. The blocks bounded generally by West Prospect Street, the railroad, Lafayette Place and Harrison Avenue comprise an area that is very much in transition. Properties within these blocks are characterized by diverse ownership, the existence of residential apartments above ground floor commercial use, some heavy commercial/manufacturing establishments, a number of substandard structures and a high turnover of uses. The Borough should,

as part of a future master plan review, undertake a detailed study of the area so as to better understand the existing development pattern and dynamics of the area, establish a reasonable and proper mix of uses and determine the need for zoning modifications to stimulate redevelopment.

6. The Borough offices, which are located along East Prospect Street just east of its intersection with Franklin Turnpike, currently accommodate the police, fire and public works departments as well as various other municipal functions. The existing facility is not only old, but is very much antiquated for many if not most of the activities housed there. Because of the lack of available land for expansion at this site, coupled with the fact that the property directly adjoins a single-family residential neighborhood, there are limited opportunities for expansion into more modern facilities at this location. Despite these constraints, Waldwick is in the process of evaluating Borough Hall to determine whether there are any alternatives for modernization, including relocation of some or all of its municipal functions to other locations and consolidating and/or upgrading certain other functions on-site.

7. The former Borough DPW plant located along Hopper Avenue directly across from Whites Pond should be considered for reuse as part of any future master plan review, and preferably for some type of recreational development and/or other Borough use or activity that would serve to complement existing recreational facilities in the immediate vicinity.

8. The Borough should consider adoption of a property maintenance code that would establish standards for the general upkeep and maintenance of buildings, sidewalks, etc. throughout the community.

9. The 1988 Reexamination Report set forth a number of inconsistencies in the Borough's master plan and zoning ordinance/map. In order to address these inconsistencies, the following master plan amendments are hereby adopted:

- *Modification of the existing Village Center boundaries to reflect the limits of the existing C-1 zone.*

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- *Elimination of the cluster option for the area along the Saddle River, where the Borough has acquired most of this acreage for open space purposes.*
 - *Elimination of the cluster option for the area southwest of Prospect and Wanamaker Avenues.*
 - *Elimination of the cluster development designation for all other sites in the Borough.*
 - *Elimination of the VC-1 Planned Residential designation to be replaced by the VC-2 Village Commercial designation.*
 - *Modification of the existing Village Residential and Limited Manufacturing-Industrial boundaries to reflect the limits of the existing Village Center zones.*