

ORIGINAL

BOROUGH OF FRANKLIN  
2009  
MASTER PLAN RE-EXAMINATION  
REPORT

And  
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENTS



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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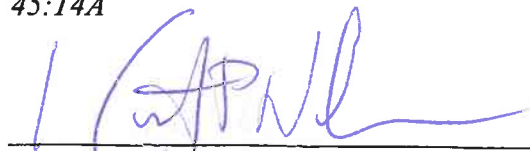
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This document was adopted by the Franklin Planning Board on

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*This copy conforms to the original of this report, which was signed and sealed by Kenneth P. Nelson PP/AICP – New Jersey Professional Planners License #1314; as required by NJSA 45:14A*



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# 1. Introduction

The Borough of Franklin is a community of approximately 4.49 square miles located in the east central portion of Sussex County. Franklin can be described as a “rural” center that owes its existence and identity to iron and zinc mining operations, which dominated the Borough’s socio economic fabric for many decades, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Borough’s identity has also been closely linked to the many fluorescent minerals that are unique to Franklin and because of which the Borough is known as the “Fluorescent Mineral Capital of the World”. However, the mining operations are no longer in existence and the Borough has been in the process of forging a new identity in recent decades. Nevertheless, part of Franklin’s identity is still and probably always will be associated with mining and the fluorescent mineral deposits. And that association is perpetuated by the historical archives, features and remnants from that industry. It should also be noted that the Borough’s past land development policies and current land use pattern were greatly influenced by how and where the actual mining occurred, who worked in the mines and who controlled them.



A FRANKLIN MINER



However, the Borough’s current land use policies were established and have been governed by a series of master plans and other planning and zoning related documents dating back to the 1960’s. The most recent comprehensive master plan for the Borough was adopted in 2003 and served as the basis for a number of zoning changes that were subsequently enacted by the Borough Council.

This document, the 2009 Master Plan Reexamination Report, is in effect a review or self assessment of the policies established by the 2003 Master Plan and is in fulfillment of the state statute (40:55D-89) which requires that a reexamination of a community’s planning policies and regulations occur every six years. The specific format that this report follows will be outlined in detail shortly. However, it needs to be emphasized, as it will again be throughout this document, that the 2003 Master Plan remains the controlling document in terms of setting the planning policies of the community. It is not being replaced by this document. It is simply being evaluated and supplemented by what is contained herein.

Returning briefly, however, to a general overview of the characteristics that make Franklin Borough what it is today, a good place to start is always with the community demographics. According to the 2000 census data, the total resident population, at that

time, was 5,160 and that number probably has increased since then by several hundred residents. The 2010 census – less than a year away – will provide new numbers that will determine how much growth has actually taken place and whether or not other demographic factors have also changed.

Since the 2003 Borough Master provides an in depth analysis of the Borough's demographics, based on the 2000 census data and earlier census information, the demographic data will only be briefly summarized here. Specifically, in terms of the total resident population, the 1990 number was 4,977 and earlier population levels were 4,486 in 1980, 4,236 in 1970 and 3,624 in 1960. However, the 1960 population represented a decrease from the population level ten years earlier and in fact the population levels in 1940 and 1930 were all higher than the 1960 number. So, the Borough's pre WW II population level steadily decreased through the 1940's, 50's and 60's, until rebounding when the 1970 census recorded more Franklin residents than anytime since 1930. Subsequently, over the next thirty years, the population of the Borough increased by approximately 17% and is now at the highest level that it has ever been. This increase, without question, has had some impact on the appearance and socio- economic characteristics of the community. The issues now facing the Borough are how much more the Borough will grow, in terms of the resident population, how will the community plan for that growth and how will it be accommodated.

As already noted, in 2003 the Franklin Borough Planning Board adopted a new master plan. Furthermore, in July of 2005 the Planning Board adopted and the Borough Council accepted the Housing Plan and Fair Share Plan, which subsequently served as the basis for the Borough's petition to the NJ Council On Affordable Housing (COAH) for substantive certification. Finally, since 2005, amendments to the 2003 Master Plan have been enacted which include the Main Street Revitalization Plan (2006), a land use strategy for the Munsonhurst section of the Borough (2007) and recommendations related to the Borough's Quarry Zone (2008).

As illustrated by the preceding paragraph, Franklin, in recent years, has taken its planning related responsibilities seriously. The next step in this ongoing municipal planning process involves the self assessment process mentioned earlier. This document, The 2009 Master Plan Reexamination Report – which includes amendments to the 2003 Borough Master Plan and in effect becomes a component of that document - is in fulfillment of the specific requirement established by N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 which, in part, states 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...” N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 also stipulates the format which a reexamination report must follow. In short, a reexamination report shall include:

- A. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the last reexamination report.

- B. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to that date.
- C. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumption, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised.
- 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. Recommendations concerning the incorporation of any adopted redevelopment plans into the land use element of the Master Plan.

In addressing the components of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89, a municipality has the opportunity and responsibility to consider, as part of its self assessment, the various factors that relate to the physical and socio-economic character of the community. Each reexamination report, although required to follow a standard format, should be tailored to the specific conditions and issues associated with the community for which the report is prepared. Consequently, the aforementioned statute does not require that any specific action be taken to change a municipality's planning policies or regulations. That decision strictly belongs to the municipality itself, specifically, the planning board and governing body of the community. Finally, a reexamination report can also be viewed as a scorecard in connection with how well a municipality identified the planning issues of the day and how well the community has responded to them.

As already noted, Franklin has historically has been a "center". It is a community with an established developed core area, which includes the older part of the Borough in the vicinity of Main Street, as well as the more recent development that has occurred near and adjacent to Route 23.



MAIN STREET - EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

However, the Borough also has some developable land left, plus the community still has available sewage disposal capacity and an adequate water supply. Clearly, some of the undeveloped acreage in the Borough will be the subject of some change in the future but

even the “developed” areas may be susceptible to some change, as well. However, as that change occurs, it may be more subtle and almost imperceptible. In order to prepare the Borough, then, for the change that will occur – the subtle as well as the more dramatic - it is important to look first at what has been happening in the Borough in recent years, both in connection with the developed and undeveloped areas, as a way of anticipating what may happen in the future.

This document, The 2009 Master Plan Reexamination Report, is intended to help Franklin focus on a number of things related to the anticipated change that we know is on the horizon. Specifically, we must first consider the issues and problems that were identified in the 2003 Master Plan and what the response has been to them. Also, the issues and problems that have arisen since 2003, which have affected the community and / or are affecting the municipality now, and in the years ahead, must be evaluated as well.

Given the aforementioned comments, however, it must be emphasized again that this document, by itself, is not intended to be a new Borough Master Plan. It will, however, identify certain changes to the Borough Master Plan to be adopted now and other planning related tasks that should be undertaken in the future.

In summary, this document’s primary purpose is to bring the Borough into full compliance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89. And in doing so, the planning issues specific to Franklin Borough will be addressed and decisions made about what efforts are needed now and in the future concerning each.

## **2. The Major Land Use Problems, Issues, Goals and Objectives Identified In The Last Master Plan Or Master Plan Reexamination Report**

The 2003 Master Plan is a comprehensive document, which makes it clear at the very beginning, what the details of its “foundation” are. Specifically, it is stated that the 2003 Master Plan is:

*“...based upon a set of goals and objectives that have been developed over time by the Borough of Franklin and its citizens. The Master Plan Goals represent an evaluation and refinement of previous Master Plans. New goals have been introduced in response to present conditions”.*

Examining the goals associated with a community master plan is the most reliable way of determining what issues were of the greatest concern to a municipality at the time that the master plan was produced. The aforementioned goals, then, in effect identified the major issues of importance to the Borough in 2003 and also referenced to a lesser extent the issues which had been identified in previous planning documents. Furthermore, the goals are organized in accordance with the various elements that comprise the master plan, and this organizational structure will serve as a way to organize and present those issues which the 2003 Master Plan identified as being of concern. The full text of the goals and objectives, together with a Vision Statement for the Borough, are included in the 2003 Master Plan document.

As just noted, the format used to identify the Borough’s planning goals in 2003, follows the same format used to organize the 2003 Master Plan itself. That format can be summarized as follows:

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Community Facilities
- Parks and Recreation
- Conservation
- Utilities
- Historic Preservation
- Relationship To Other Plans

An analysis of the goals, plus a review of specific language in other parts of the 2003 Master Plan, results in a comprehensive set of conclusions about the issues and problems that were of concern at that time. Those conclusions, using the language of the 2003 Master Plan itself, plus supplementary statements where appropriate, are presented and grouped as follows:



## LAND USE

- It was determined that the established residential character of the Borough needed to be protected and enhanced, especially with respect to “scale and style”, via the regulation of building and site design.
- The vacant environmentally constrained area in the vicinity of Munsonhurst Rd (Route 517) was considered to no longer be appropriate for industrial use and should be designated for low density residential purposes instead.
- More commercial and office development needed to be encouraged along the Route 23 corridor and all commercial districts in the Borough needed to be strengthened by encouraging a mix of uses that would provide a variety of employment opportunities and services
- The Main Street area and the Zinc Mine site were seen as demanding specific attention. The goal was to create a new “downtown” for the Borough using various techniques, such as the establishment of an ‘Open Market Area”. It was also determined that it might be necessary to designate portions of the Main St area and adjoining properties as “Areas In Need of Redevelopment “ in order to facilitate this revitalization goal
- Encouraging the re-occupancy of vacant non residential buildings was identified as something that needed to be pursued, which obviously had some relationship to the Main Street / Zinc Mine site focus, as well as Route 23 and other areas of the Borough.
- A density concern was identified in connection with the amount of potential development allowed by the Planned Development Zone and a specific rezoning action was identified as the solution.
- Establishing a zoning district that better reflected the realities of the existing golf courses in the Borough was identified as a matter to pursue
- Promoting Smart Growth principles was identified as a major goal that presumably was to be applied to as many of the Borough’s planning policies as possible and as practicable.
- The former hospital site was identified as an area to be developed for residential purposes and the environmentally sensitive portions of the site needed to be protected
- The rezoning of the area in the vicinity of Scott Road from residential to industrial was recommended as being something that would be consistent with the existing land development pattern
- The industrially zoned property at the north end of the Borough was seen as having too many environmental constraints for an intensive type of development and most of the acreage was to be designated for low density residential use

## CIRCULATION

- A concern about the community “gateways” was raised and the need was seen to enhance the appearance of potential gateway locations, as well as to provide a more direct link and sense of entry from Route 23 to Main Street
- Enhancing vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle safety was seen as important, as was the need to improve signage in the Borough in order to facilitate circulation
- The mitigation of the impacts of regional traffic traversing the Borough was identified as important. Various steps would be involved in this effort
- Increasing the supply of parking spaces in the vicinity of Main Street was seen as being essential to the future revitalization of that area

## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- Being able to maintain the high level of community facilities and services was a concern and investigating shared services with other communities might be a way to do so.
- Improving the availability of handicapped accessible meeting facilities was identified as something that needed to be pursued

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

- The preservation of the Borough's park and recreation system, plus its expansion was seen as necessary in order to enhance the recreational opportunities for community residents
- Stronger pedestrian connections were also seen as being an important part of the Borough's park and recreation network

## **CONSERVATION**

- The protection of environmentally sensitive lands in the Borough, using a variety of "tools", was identified as an important priority.
- The environmental sensitivity of the well head area in the southern part of the Borough was specifically identified as something to examine

## **UTILITIES**

- The extension / expansion of infrastructure elements, related to sewage disposal and water supply, was seen as something to be viewed as a growth management "tool" that would be used to direct development into the most appropriate locations in the Borough.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

- Encouraging the awareness of the Franklin's history, among the residents of the Borough, was seen as a worthy pursuit that could produce results important to the visual appearance of neighborhoods, as well as economic vitality of the community
- Supporting the efforts of the Franklin Historical Society was seen as important, including support for its museum. It was also suggested that the possibility of a more comprehensive museum should be investigated that would be dedicated to the history of Franklin, its people and their cultures.
- The nomination of additional properties to be included on the State and National Registers was considered something that should be pursued along with respecting the historic nature of the Zinc Mine site.
- The creation of a municipal Historic Preservation Commission was recommended as a way to formalize the role of historic preservation, in connection with the local community planning and land development approval efforts

## **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS**

- It was emphasized that the Borough needs to consider its land use policies with respect to their impact on the region.
- Although previous attempts to designate the Borough as a "center" had failed, it was recommended that another effort should be undertaken to do so

There is obviously an interrelationship between many of the aforementioned items. The next section looks at how the Borough has addressed each one. In some cases one action or activity may actually address more than one item. And in a number of cases, a particular issue / problem may not have received any attention, either because of lack of time or resources or the difficulty in doing so.

### **3. The Extent To Which The Problems, Issues, Goals And Objectives Have Or Have Not Been Addressed**

Evaluating how well any municipality addresses the planning problems and issues which have been identified is somewhat of a subjective exercise but it is a valuable and an essential part of the planning process. Section 2 of this document identified those problems and issues by category and this section will attempt to identify in what way the municipality did or did not address them.

It should also be noted that no attempt will be made here to quantify a success or failure rate for several reasons. First, such quantification would require each item be “weighted” since some of the problems and issues identified were more significant than others, thereby requiring a higher level of resources to address them, while others were of less concern, demanding less time and effort. Secondly, a municipality shouldn’t be penalized for being overly ambitious by identifying more issues and problems than could be reasonably addressed. Finally, many municipal issues and problems are beyond the ability of the municipality to solve by itself. The municipality can be the coordinator in an attempt to find a solution but not necessarily the sole problem solver.

What follows is an evaluation of how Franklin Borough has responded in the preceding six years to the issues and problems identified in the 2003 Master Plan and listed herein in Section 2. There have been many accomplishments but also a number of missed opportunities. The responses are listed by category, just as the issues and problems were, but in no particular order of importance or priority. Also, since a response often involves more than one issue or problem, the responses have not been specifically connected to the individual issues and problems listed in Section 2.

#### **LAND USE**

- New land development regulations were enacted by the Borough Council in 2006, along with a new zoning map, which implemented many of the recommendations contained in the 2003 Master Plan.
- A Main Street Revitalization Plan was adopted by the Planning Board in 2006
- The Planning Board recommended that the Main St area be designated as an “Area In Need of Redevelopment” but the Borough Council declined to do so.
- A Redevelopment Committee was established by Mayor Crowley in 2008 to look at the various redevelopment alternatives available to the Borough with respect to the Main Street area in particular. The committee is still in the process of investigating this issue. In addition, the Borough’s Economic Development Committee formed a sub committee to look again at the issues related to the revitalization of Main Street. A report was issued by the sub committee in early 2009.
- The approval and completion of the “Franklin House Senior Apartments” – an age restricted, mid rise building - and the Miner’s Cove townhouse project, now under construction, represent the first significant new construction to have occurred in many years in the vicinity of Main Street and is consistent with the Borough’s goal of increasing the level of activity in the Main Street area by first increasing the residential base and then encouraging new non residential development that will service the increased residential population.

- The former hospital site was rezoned to allow for multi family residential development and a site plan approval was granted by the Planning Board which will permit the development of a 111 unit multi family residential complex at this location .
- A number of development applications were approved during the last several years that have a direct relationship to many of the goals and objectives in the 2003 Master Plan with respect to economic development, the Borough's ratable base and the development of the Route 23 corridor. Those development applications / projects include but are not limited to the following:

- |                    |                 |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| - Group 5          | - Commerce Bank | - Rumours Salon |
| - Franklin Village | - Quick Chek    | - D. T. Company |
| - Starbucks        | - Blockbuster   |                 |

Some but not all of the aforementioned projects have been built.

- The previously mentioned senior housing complex is an affordable housing project It is important in connection with addressing the Borough's affordable housing issues, as well as the revitalization of Main Street.
- The Borough has been pursuing substantive certification from COAH and will be submitting a revised Housing Plan to COAH before the end of 2010.
- Several changes to the Master Plan, Land Development Regulations or both, subsequent to 2006, were enacted which involved zone changes related to the Munsonhurst portion of the Borough, the Quarry Zone and the Borough's sign regulations

## **CIRCULATION**

- NJDOT has partnered with the Borough to undertake a comprehensive Corridor Study of Route 23 as it traverses the Borough
- Property has been acquired in connection with the High street extension project
- In connection with the Starbucks project, an agreement was reached with the applicant which will allow the Rutherford Ave South / Route 23 intersection to be realigned.
- The Route 23 / Rutherford Ave North intersection was reconstructed to prevent access to Rutherford Ave from Route 23. However, the Franklin Village project, which was recently approved, provides for the redesign of this intersection to once again allow for access from Route 23.
- In connection with the Group 5 application for a 200,000 sq ft "Big Box" project, an agreement was reached to construct part of the "bypass road", that would extend approximately from the Route 23 / Route 517 intersection, at the south end of the Borough, northward past Weiss Markets, Wal Mart and other commercial properties that currently rely solely on Route 23 for access. In addition, a traffic light will be installed at the intersection of Route 23 and the entrance to the Weiss Markets store.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

- The Borough entered into a shared services agreement regarding the Construction Dept functions for the Borough, thereby realizing some cost savings that will ultimately help maintain other community services and facilities to the levels required and expected.
- An expansion of Temple Shalom was approved which will result in a larger meeting room and additional space for religious instruction.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

- Some improvements have been made at the Franklin Pond recreation area in order to make that facility even more of an asset to the community

## **CONSERVATION**

- In connection with several projects, a significant amount of environmentally constrained lands will be protected as permanent open space, although not accessible for public use. The applicable projects include: Group 5 (wetlands, steep slopes) ; Franklin Village (wetlands) ; Lake Ridge (steep slopes).
- The settlement agreement reached in connection with the rezoning of the Munsonhurst portion of the Borough, also resulted in an agreement by the prospective developer to transfer the title to the Borough of a substantial amount of acreage in the vicinity of the Borough's wells in that area, which will serve to protect that water source in perpetuity.

## **UTILITIES**

- The Borough has been engaged in a dialogue with NJDEP and Sussex County regarding the future Sewer Service Area map for the Borough. This map will have as great an influence on the future growth of the community as the land development regulations of the Borough will.
- The aforementioned settlement agreement involving the Munsonhurst portion of the Borough, also resulted in the commitment by the prospective developer to drill a new well for the Borough that it is anticipated will produce as much as 280,000 gallons per day.
- Omnipoint Communications received approval to locate cellular antennas on the Borough water tank, thereby improving cell phone communications within the Borough.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

- The relocation of the Edison Schoolhouse / Hungarian Church was approved by the Planning Board and the structure has been relocated but the project has not been completed.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS**

- The Borough is pursuing Plan Endorsement and a pre-petition meeting has been held with the NJ Office of Smart Growth for that purpose.
- The Borough has agreed to investigate the possibility of bringing the Borough's planning policies into conformance with the Highlands Council Regional Master Plan. This undertaking is known as Plan Conformance and the Borough has completed the first step (Module 1) in that process.

## 4 Significant Changes In The Assumptions, Policies And Objectives Forming The Basis Of The Master Plan

Since 2003, there have been a variety of changes, both locally, regionally and statewide that have had the potential to impact the planning policies of Franklin Borough. The following list briefly identifies those items that need to be taken into consideration as part this master plan reexamination / self assessment effort. Some of the items on the list will have a direct relationship to the recommendations contained in the next section of this document.

### A) NON - LOCAL CHANGES

#### 1. THE HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN

The NJ State Legislature created the NJ Highlands Council in 2004. Subsequently, the Highlands Council adopted the Highlands Regional Master Plan (The RMP) in 2008. The Highlands Region is divided into two categories – The Preservation Area, where the provisions of the RMP are mandatory and the Planning Area, where the RMP provisions are voluntary. Franklin is in the Planning Area category. However, the provisions of the RMP are being used by other state agencies to guide their policies and decisions. Consequently, Franklin may find that the provisions of the RMP must be addressed as part of the Borough’s planning efforts

#### 2. THE NJ STATE PLAN, CROSS ACCEPTANCE, PLAN ENDORSEMENT AND THE RELATED COMMUNITY “VISIONING” REQUIREMENTS

The NJ State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) is currently in the process of being updated by the NJ State Planning Commission (SPC). The staff to the SPC, the Office of Smart Growth (OSG), is responsible for guiding that effort. The State Plan was last revised and readopted in 2001. In 2004, the SPC, as required by law, released The Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan for review and discussion purposes. As part of this updating effort, municipalities have been able to offer input via the “Cross Acceptance” process. Furthermore, municipalities are encouraged to participate in what is known as the “Plan Endorsement” process, with the end product of that process intended to make local and state planning policies consistent with one another. A component of the Plan Endorsement process is a requirement for municipalities to engage in a “visioning” effort in order to produce a “community vision statement” As of the date of this document it is not known when the SPC will readopt the SDRP or to what extent it will be revised.

#### 3. COAH’S REVISED THIRD ROUND RULES AND GROWTH SHARE PROVISIONS

The NJ Council On Affordable Housing (COAH), after lengthy litigation and an extensive public hearing process, issued a new set of rules governing the affordable housing planning process in 2008. Known as the revised Third Round Rules, these regulations have modified the housing rehabilitation requirements for most municipalities, generally increased what is known as the prior round obligation and have included another requirement known as the “Growth Share” obligation, which is based on the amount of residential and non residential development that a municipality is expected to absorb by the year 2018.

#### 4. THE ROUTE 23 CORRIDOR STUDY

The NJ Dept. of Transportation (NJDOT), at the request of Franklin Borough, has undertaken a study of the Route 23 Corridor as it traverses the Borough. The study contains a number of recommendations that are expected to be implemented in the years ahead, with some being the responsibility of NJDOT and others being the responsibility of the Borough.

## **5. MORE STRINGENT ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS**

The State of New Jersey, principally through the NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), has imposed a number of new and / or revised set of regulations on land development activities, which significantly impact the amount of development that can occur in certain areas. Included among these controls are wetlands regulations, stormwater management and stream buffer requirements, as well as potential reductions in the geographic areas that can include central sewage collection and disposal systems.

## **6. NJMLUL AMENDMENTS**

The NJ State Legislature has enacted a number of amendments to the NJ Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) during the last several years. The amendments which have a direct bearing on the planning process at the local level can be summarized as follows:

- A Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) provision has been included in the MLUL which now can be used by all municipalities at their discretion. TDR is a planning tool that can be useful in connection with open space planning and preservation efforts.
- Zoning Boards of Adjustment are now permitted to have up to four alternate members in addition to the seven full members authorized by the MLUL
- Municipalities can choose to exempt certain non profit applicants from various fees associated with development applications and must exempt Boards of Education from such fees
- Most Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment members are now required to take educational courses related to their responsibilities as board members
- Due to the current state of the economy, the Legislature has enacted a permit / approval extension provision that under most situations relieves an applicant from having to return to the municipality for several years in order to have development application approvals extended.
- There is now a provision in the NJMLUL that allows municipalities to enact "Form Based Codes" at their discretion

## **7. SMART GROWTH / GREEN BUILDINGS**

Although not entirely new, the planning and development concepts, related to the efficient use of resources, have gained substantial momentum since the adoption of the 2003 Master Plan. The term "Smart Growth" is generally understood to mean that municipalities should be discouraging the type of "sprawl development" which characterized most development in New Jersey and nationwide since the post World War II period until the last five to ten years. Instead "Smart Growth" encourages more compact "sustainable" development. Part of the smart growth approach is to also encourage the construction of "Green Buildings". Such buildings can achieve that goal by using a variety of materials, design techniques and infrastructure components that can meet various levels of sustainability..... or to use another phrase to reduce a building's "carbon footprint". In connection with this movement, The U.S. Green Building Council has developed a program known as The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system by which building sustainability can be measured. LEED certifications have different levels depending on the extent to which a building is considered to be "Green".

## **8. THE SUSSEX COUNTY STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN**

The Sussex County Planning Board, in 2006, adopted a Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) for Sussex County. Although this document does not have the same force of law that the Borough land use regulations and master plan have or the mandatory compliance provisions of various state regulations, it is nevertheless an important document. It has also been endorsed by the NJ State Planning

Commission in 2007. The SGP envisions Franklin as a "center" where growth should be directed but also identifies some environmentally sensitive features that need to be protected

## **9. THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN AND ITS LONG TERM EFFECTS**

At the time that this document is being prepared, New Jersey and the entire country is experiencing a severe economic downturn that is having significant negative impacts. It is uncertain how long this downturn will last or what impact it will have on the planning goals and objectives of the Borough. Of particular concern is whether or not a primary goal of the community, the revitalization of Main Street, will be delayed because of the inability of the private sector to move forward with development projects that could be the catalyst for this revitalization.

## **10. "MCMANSIONS / TEARDOWNS"**

This issue has almost become a non issue in the last year or two because of the downturn of the economy and the collapse of the housing market. However, in the earlier part of this decade and peaking during the 2004 to 2007 time frame, the controversies associated with the replacement of small homes on small lots in established neighborhoods, with structures sometimes double or triple in size, was something experienced by many municipalities throughout New Jersey. It is unclear whether or not this issue may again reappear soon or if it will simply prove to be a short lived phenomenon of the past. It is something, however, that most municipalities would be wise to address in the future if it does reappear, because of the negative impact that "oversized" homes can have on established neighborhoods.

## **11. ADULT / AGE RESTRICTED COOMUNITIES**

For a decade or more adult or age restricted communities, where residents below the age of 55 are not permitted to live, were being approved and built throughout northern New Jersey. However, within the last two years, in conjunction with the overall downturn in the real estate market, it has become apparent that this type of housing complex has reached a saturation point. Consequently, the feasibility and marketability of such housing is now in question and it is uncertain when market conditions will change to again favor this type of housing.

## **B) LOCAL CHANGES**

### **1. THE REEVALUATION OF THE MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION STRATEGY**

The future of Main Street has been an ongoing concern of the Borough. The 2003 Master Plan references that concern and subsequent recommendations contained in a 2006 study have attempted to move this effort along toward a successful conclusion. As this document is being written, a committee appointed by the current mayor is reevaluating the direction for Main Street and this issue will be discussed in some detail in the next section of this document.

### **2. ZONING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS.**

Each municipal zoning board is required by law to issue an annual report regarding its activities. Those reports can be helpful in identifying changes that should be considered in connection with a master plan reexamination report and / or the updating of a master plan. Highlights from the Franklin Zoning Board reports follow:

- A use variance request for a two family structure in the Borough's R-3 Zone, which was denied, has generated some discussion about whether or not two family structures should be allowed somewhere in Franklin as a permitted use. Currently, they are not allowed in any zone. The companion question is whether or not "mother / daughter" structures should be allowed and where ?



- The current zoning regulations require that any commercial establishment with a drive thru facility must have a minimum lot size of 5 acres. Since a drive thru facility is a conditional use, if this acreage minimum can't be met it necessitates a "D" variance. Consequently, a number of commercial uses in the Highway Commercial (HC) Zone, with drive thru facilities, have had to seek approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment, since the Planning Board does not have jurisdiction in connection with "D" variances
- An application for the relocation of an auto repair facility, from a B-2 Zone location to a site in the Industrial ( I ) Zone required a "D" variance. Auto repair facilities are permitted in the HC Zone but not in the I Zone. The reasons for this restriction should be reviewed.

### 3. ZONING MAP AND / OR LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATION ISSUES

During the course of the review of various development applications and / or the observations made by the Borough's professional staff, consultants, elected officials and / or appointed officials, a number of items have been identified which relate to changing conditions and / or priorities. A description of each follows:

- **BIG BOX DESIGN ISSUES** – A recent application for a "Big Box" commercial establishment has generated discussion about how to make these large commercially structures visually appealing by enacting some design guidelines. The use of a form based code could be helpful in this situation.
- **A REEVALUATION OF THE ZONING FOR THE OPEN CUT MINE AREA** – The area in the center of the Borough, known as the "Open Cut Mine" is currently in the R-3 and OS/GU zones. Given its proximity to Main Street the rezoning of a portion of this area might assist with the efforts to revitalize Main Street
- **MISC. ZONING MAP "CORRECTIVE" CHANGES** – Several minor changes are needed to the Zoning Map to either reflect "interpretation" actions taken by the Zoning Board of Adjustment or from an analysis done by the Borough staff and consultants. Those changes will be listed in the next section of this document.
- **THE ROUTE 517 NC ZONE** – In connection with the Munsonhurst District Master Plan Amendment that was done in connection with the establishment of the MAAH Zone, it was also recommended that a Neighborhood Commercial (NC) Zone be established along Route 517. The provisions of that zone were never established and that zone has not been enacted
- **THE HARDYSTON SCHOOL SITE ZONING** – The Hardyston Township Board of Education owns and operates an elementary school that is actually located in Franklin Borough. It is in a prime location with direct access to Route 23. There has been some discussion about that facility being replaced by a new school presumably to be built in Hardyston. It has been suggested that the Borough begin to consider alternate uses for this property.
- **BUFFER ISSUES** – There is a continuing concern about the impact that commercial properties can have on residential neighborhoods and in connection with this concern the adequacy of the Borough's buffer requirements has been questioned.
- **UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES** – There are a number of older properties in the Borough, primarily along Route 23 that have been vacant for long periods of time. The specific reasons for these vacancies is unknown and may very well vary from property to property. .

### 4. CHANGES IN THE BOROUGH'S EXISTING LAND USE PATTERN

The Borough's existing land use pattern has changed since 2003, based on the amount of development activity that is known to have occurred. Furthermore, it is expected to change even more, based on the number of development applications that have been approved. However, the 2003 Master Plan did not contain an in depth analysis of the existing land use pattern, at that time, or a detailed "existing land use map". Consequently, documenting how the Borough has changed in this regard is not currently possible.

## **5. HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

Franklin has a long history and one that is usually identified with its mining past. However, Franklin's history is much more than the community having been just a "mining town". In particular, the architectural and historic value of many of the existing residences in the Borough is significant. In recent years, historic preservation has come to the forefront as an integral part of community planning and should be integrated into the Franklin community planning efforts in the future.

## **6. THE QUARRY ZONE EXPANSION AND THE INCREASE IN QUARRYING ACTIVITY**

The Borough enacted a master plan amendment and a zone change that will allow for the expansion of the existing quarry operation located in the vicinity of Cork Hill Rd. The changes to the Quarry Zone also ensure that the Borough will have greater control over how the quarry will be operated in the future.

## **7. THE MUNSONHURST DISTRICT LITIGATION AND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT**

In the 2003 Master Plan a substantial portion of the Borough (exceeding several hundred acres), in the vicinity of Munsonhurst Road (Route 517), was designated for low density residential development. In addition, the zoning for this area was changed in order to implement the provisions of the Master Plan. Subsequent to this change, litigation was initiated by the property owners / developers associated with this acreage. The court ultimately ruled in favor of the owners / developers and ordered the Borough to enact a master plan amendment and zone change which would permit the development of this acreage with multi family residential structures. This was done in 2007 via the creation of the Mixed Active Adult Housing (MAAH) Zone. To date, no development applications have been submitted for this acreage but the zoning remains in place and must be allowed to remain for at least several more years.

## 5 Master Plan Amendments, Other Recommended Changes And Future Planning Efforts

In the previous sections of this document, the planning problems and issues that existed at the time of the 2003 Master Plan were reviewed and evaluated and a variety of changes that have occurred since 2003, which potentially could affect the basis of the 2003 Master Plan, were also reviewed and discussed. This section builds on the foundation established in these other sections and includes a number of observations, recommendations and immediate master plan amendments for consideration and / or adoption.

A master plan reexamination report can be a relatively brief document, if the master plan or development regulations still fully meet the needs of the community. However, more often than not, a reexamination report identifies deficiencies that need to be corrected and may also include specific planning policies that were not contemplated when the master plan was originally adopted.

In the case of the Franklin Borough Master Plan and accompanying land development regulations, for the most part, they are still on target. In fact, this Master Plan Reexamination Report readopts, by reference, the 2003 Master Plan - subject to the specific amendments contained herein. Furthermore, this document identifies a number of steps that need to be taken in the future, in response to the changing New Jersey, Sussex County and Franklin Borough landscape, with respect to a number of applicable land use planning issues.

As previously identified and stated in other sections of this document, the primary issues and concerns that need to be addressed herein can be summarized as follows:

- THE HIGHLANDS REGIONAL MASTER PLAN
- THE STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN
- COAH'S REVISED THIRD ROUND RULES
- THE ROUTE 23 CORRIDOR STUDY AND RELATED TRAFFIC CIRCULATION ISSUES
- THE INCREASINGLY STRINGENT NJDEP REGULATIONS
- THE SUSSEX COUNTY STRATEGIC GROWTH PLAN
- THE BOROUGH'S MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION STRATEGY
- VARIOUS ZONING MAP CHANGES
- VARIOUS LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATION CHANGES
- HISTORIC PRESERVATION ISSUES
- THE MUSONHURST DISTRICT SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

The aforementioned list will serve as the guide for the remainder of this document.

## **A) MASTER PLAN AMENDMENTS**

The following section includes specific amendments to the Borough's 2003 Master Plan. As already stated, the 2003 Master Plan is being readopted here, subject to the following amendments / revisions:

### **1. THE CIRCULATION PLAN – A SUMMARY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This document is the Circulation Plan Element (CPE) of the Franklin Borough Master Plan. It replaces, in its entirety, the section of the 2003 Master Plan, prepared by Heyer and Gruel, entitled "Circulation". The CPE is presented here in a summary format, with most of the CPE material contained in a separate document entitled The Franklin Borough Transportation Vision Plan (TVP) dated April 2009. The TVP was a cooperative effort between the Borough and NJ DOT, with Urban Engineers and Heyer and Gruel, providing professional consulting expertise in connection with the production of that document. Due to the length of the TVP, it was decided to prepare this CPE summary, which draws on some of the material contained in the "Circulation" segment of the 2003 Master Plan and also includes the key points contained in the TVP. It must be emphasized however, that all of the material contained in the TVP is part of the Borough Master Plan, not just the portions summarized herein. This CPE summary and the TVP then, together constitute the full Circulation Plan Element of the Franklin Borough Master Plan

The primary purpose of the full CPE of the Borough Master Plan is to outline a strategy for the movement of people and vehicles throughout the community, now and well into the future. It identifies problems and recommends solutions. It is also pragmatic and does not offer solutions that can't be achieved.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Mobility within Franklin Borough is achieved primarily via the private automobile and other motorized vehicles. The existing road network that facilitates this mobility consists primarily of two lane roads that are grouped within several classifications. Those classifications are as follows:

##### **ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS**

- \* Urban Principal Arterial – Route 23
- \* Urban Minor Arterial – Route 517 (Munsonhurst Rd)
- \* Urban Collector – Route 631 (Franklin Ave)
- \* Local Collector – Davis Rd., Maple Rd., Wildcat Rd.,  
Corkhill Rd., Buckwheat Rd., High St.  
Junction St., Main St. Scott Rd. and  
Rutherford Ave.
- \* Local Streets - All other Borough streets

This road network connects the Borough to a regional transportation system that consists of a number of interstate and state arteries, such as Route 287, Route 80, Route 84, Route 46, Route 94, Route 206 and a variety of less heavily traveled county roads that connect with these major transportation routes. In addition, there are air and rail travel facilities in the general area that serve the Borough. Among these facilities are Newark International Airport and Stewart International Airport (Newburg, NY) which handle commercial traffic and Sussex Airport and a smaller airport in the vicinity of Newton that service only private aircraft. Rail transportation is available via NJ Transit, with the closest

stations at least a half hour away in Dover and Mount Arlington. Bus service is only available locally via The Sussex County Transit system but other regional bus service, provided by Lakeland Bus Lines, is available in Hardyston and Sparta. Rail freight traffic also traverses Franklin via the New York, Susequehanna and Western Railroad but at this time there is no actual freight service provided in the Borough.

Pedestrian and bicycle activity within the Borough are limited because of the lack of an interconnected network of bike trails and sidewalks. Where sidewalks do exist and where the concentration of people is significant, there is pedestrian activity. However, a separate comprehensive study and plan is needed to determine how to facilitate more pedestrian and biking activity. Suffice it to say, that in the meantime it will be important for the Borough Planning Board and Zoning Board, when reviewing development applications, to add to the community's pedestrian network, whenever and wherever it is practical to do so.

In terms of the condition and the capacities of the Borough's road network, as already noted, the network is exclusively a two lane (one lane in each direction) system, supplemented by a few turning lanes. Capacity has been reached or exceeded in certain locations – primarily along Route 23 – but for the most part the Borough road network is adequate to service residents and visitors to the Borough. With respect to the capacity issues, current traffic counts are presented in the TVP. A review of the traffic counts presented in the 2003 Master Plan indicate that the level of vehicular activity, on the Borough roads, has not changed significantly in the last 6 years. Route 23 is the most heavily traveled road in the Borough and on an average day carries 20,000 to 25,000 vehicles.

It must also be noted here, with respect to Route 23, that at certain times of the day the level of service rankings, at certain key intersections, reach Level "F". Traffic congestion is a serious concern and delays have become routine but nevertheless still unacceptable. On many evenings northbound traffic on Route 23 routinely backs up Hamburg Mountain for a half mile or more into Hardyston. The Route 23 concerns prompted the Borough to engage in the cooperative effort with NJDOT to study the Route 23 corridor through Franklin and the contents and recommendations of the resulting TVP offer a reasonable strategy in terms of dealing with the problems associated with Route 23 and several adjoining roads. However, as will be seen in a review of the TVP, there is no possibility that Route 23 will ever again be the free flowing regional transportation route, during most of the day, which it once was. Route 23 in effect has become a dual purpose roadway. It is still the only north / south route through the eastern part of Sussex County. However, it is also a local collector road servicing the resident population in Franklin and the immediate environs. The level of development that has taken place alongside Route 23 and the population growth that has occurred north and south of Franklin, as already noted, have resulted in roadway that slows to a crawl during many times of the day. The TVP is aimed at implementing improvements and practices that will prevent the further worsening of traffic conditions along this corridor and will achieve some actual improvement, in terms of traffic flow, at certain locations. As stated earlier, however, budget constraints, state planning policies, right of way limitations and other factors will not be able to reinvent Route 23, so that transient traffic can move at 50 or 60 mph through Franklin at all times. However, it is essential to understand that although travel speeds will continue to be modest, the strategy outlined in the TVP will solve the mobility difficulties associated with selected problem areas and traffic safety will be enhanced as well.

The condition of the roads that comprise the Borough road network vary but most have pavement widths of 20' to 30' and most are in good to excellent condition. In terms of the Franklin road network pattern, it is difficult to offer any one particular description. There are locations in the Borough where there is a semi grid pattern of streets but for the most part the network is more of a free form pattern, having apparently been influenced by topographic conditions and other natural, as well as man made features, such as the railroad right of way that traverses the Borough in a north / south direction. Consequently, navigating a vehicle through Franklin can be somewhat confusing unless one is very familiar with the layout of the network

## THE GATEWAYS CONCEPT

In the 2003 Master Plan, “The Gateways Concept” was presented, which identified six significant entry points to the Borough, deserving of some discussion and analysis. Basically, these gateways are important in terms of attracting travelers into the community. The specific language in the 2003 Master Plan said of these gateways: “They can assist in marketing efforts by delineating the routes to major destinations in the Borough and helping Franklin develop a unique identity”. This concept, which originated in 2003, is still valid today and is reaffirmed by its inclusion herein.

The six gateways are identified as follows:

### GATEWAYS

- \* **Route 23 South** (at the Route 517 intersection)
- \* **Main Street** (at the intersection with Parker Street)
- \* **Route 23 North** (at the Hamburg boundary)
- \* **Franklin Pond** (at the intersection of Route 631 & Cork Hill Rd)
- \* **High Street** (at the intersection with Route 23)
- \* **North Church Rd / Route 631** (near the Davis Rd intersection)

The recommendations for each gateway in the 2003 Master Plan was, for the most part, very general in nature. The generalized suggestions involved landscaping, signage, streetscape improvements and the control / upgrading of adjacent land uses. One specific recommendation that was offered, however, involved undertaking a study to determine the feasibility of making High Street the main means of access from Route 23 to the Main Street area. Some specific steps have already been done in connection with this gateway. In order to develop specific plans for the other gateways, however, further study is needed in connection with each of these gateways to determine what specific improvements are appropriate, the costs involved, a timetable and how the improvements should be prioritized.

In addition to the aforementioned gateways and the idea of connecting Route 23 to Main St., via High St., another concept that will require further study involves the construction of a new road that would parallel Sterling St. to the west. This road would extend from the North Church Rd. area, through the Zinc Mine and Horsehead Industries properties and connect with Route 23 through the currently vacant Rowley Lumberyard site. This new road would partly serve as a Main St. connector but would also make accessible, over 30 acres of underutilized acreage located between Sterling St. and the railroad ROW.

## THE TRANSPORTATION VISION PLAN

As noted earlier the Franklin Borough Transportation Vision Plan (TVP) was a cooperative effort between the Borough and NJDOT. It is a comprehensive document that has the Route 23 corridor as its primary focus but also includes data and recommendations that relate to other portions of the Borough as well. It is incorporated into the 2003 Franklin Borough Master Plan by reference and is an essential component in terms of establishing the transportation related planning policies of the Borough.

The TVP is divided into five Chapters as follows:

- Chapter 1: Project Background and Context
- Chapter 2: Base Condition
- Chapter 3: Public Process
- Chapter 4: Recommended Concepts
- Chapter 5: Recommended Action / Implementation Plan

The TVP also contains an Executive Summary, as well as a series of graphic figures and tables and Three appendices: A) Traffic Volume Summaries ; B) Meeting Materials ; C) Roundabout Operations

The theme of the TVP can be summarized in one word and that is **CONNECTIVITY**. Since there is no chance of Route 23 being widened or relocated, so that it is more of a limited access roadway, the Borough must find a way to divert as much traffic from route 23 as possible. This can be done and the TVP offers specific ideas about how to develop a network of roads in the vicinity of Route 23 that can separate the more local traffic from the traffic using route 23 to reach destinations north and south of the Borough. Actually the Borough has been pursuing this strategy for a number of years now and the aforementioned network already partly exists.

However, in order for this interconnected network to really have an impact more components need to be implemented. One of the key components of this network is the north / south bypass road (The Munsonhurst Road Extension) that would be located near and parallel to the eastern boundary, which the Borough shares with Hardyston Township. This road is envisioned as a public road from Route 517 (Munsonhurst Road) to Weis Markets entrance. This bypass road would allow traffic heading north from the Route 23 / Route 517 intersection to travel a considerable distance parallel to Route 23 and access various commercial and other destination points along this route without having to access Route 23. This road would obviously also allow for return trips in a southerly direction. The bypass road would stop short of paralleling Route 23 through the entire Borough but it would extend nearly a mile, once fully constructed, before traffic would have to reenter Route 23.

Another key feature of the TVP is the idea of utilizing “Roundabouts” at several locations along Route 23, as well as other non Route 23 locations. Roundabouts are fully described in the TVP and are not to be confused with “Traffic Circles” that were once common throughout New Jersey. Roundabouts are engineered differently than traffic circles, generally have a smaller diameter and allow for the free flow of traffic, which signalized intersections do not. Roundabouts are in wide use throughout this country and worldwide and this suggestion is not radical by any means. However, the implementation of roundabouts along the Route 23 corridor will have to be done carefully and must involve a public outreach effort to ensure that all concerns are addressed. It is also not certain at this point whether or not a roundabout implementation program should involve all of the recommended roundabouts at once or if it would be better to construct one roundabout first and study its effectiveness before proceeding with the others. Regardless of which approach will be better, the circulation planning policies of the Franklin Borough now include the potential use of roundabouts to help minimize traffic congestion along the Route 23 corridor and the enhance safe and efficient flow of traffic elsewhere in the Borough as well.

The TVP also includes specific recommendations regarding a new center turning lane along most of the Route 23 corridor in order to facilitate turning movements. This will then make Route 23 a three lane roadway through the Borough. However, it must again be emphasized that the TVP does not include the construction of any new Route 23 travel lanes, although dedicated turning lane traffic should improve the rate of flow in the travel lanes.

Furthermore, the TVP also includes recommendations about various intersection improvements, with and without roundabouts and traffic calming features, as well as access management and site circulation concepts. Pedestrian network improvements are also part of the TVP, as are alternative transportation modes, including encouraging the increased use of bicycles, advocating reestablishing commuter bus service and constructing one or more park and ride facilities

Finally, the Action Plan chapter provides a detailed list of transportation enhancement projects by category, which governmental agency would take the lead on each project and general costs associated with each. This chapter also identifies the funding sources for these projects. However, the TVP does not suggest the establishment of a Transportation Improvement District, which is something that might be worth considering but which will require a serious public outreach effort before any consideration could be given to actually implementing it.

In summary, the TVP takes a comprehensive look at the Franklin Borough transportation picture and offers a variety of recommendations, which if implemented within the next five to ten years, can enhance Franklin's mobility. If none of the recommendations are pursued, it is a certainty that mobility will be reduced and with it the quality of life of many Franklin residents.

#### **LAND USE CONSIDERATIONS**

Although this is the Circulation Plan Element of the Franklin Borough Master Plan and not the Land Use Element, the two elements are integrally tied together. Consequently, it is appropriate to mention an important issue related to land use here. Specifically, the land use pattern along the Route 23 corridor in the Borough is primarily commercial in nature. Lately larger retail stores have become an important part of the commercial mix and it is possible that the Route 23 corridor will attract more of these types of commercial uses. Although larger retail stores have certain positives associated with them, they also bring a number of negatives with them as well, such as minimal aesthetic qualities and the often unfair competitive advantage they have relative to smaller commercial uses. Nevertheless, larger retail commercial uses are not something that Franklin wants to prohibit. Instead, the Borough should explore how these types of commercial facilities can be better incorporated into the Route 23 commercial corridor by the use of more creative design standards.

Consideration should also be given to revising the Borough land use regulations in order to establish more of a mixed use land use pattern, which would consist of a variety of retail commercial, office and residential uses. However, any such change should be careful not to intensify the level of activity along the Route 23 corridor and adjoining connecting roads in such a way as to offset the benefits that the Borough's "connectivity" strategy seeks to establish. The TVP then sets the stage for the Borough to take the next step needed, which will be to undertake a detailed analysis of the land use policies related to the Route 23 corridor and what specific changes should be made not only to the Land Use Plan Element but to the Land Use Regulations of the Borough as well.

## **2. THE FRANKLIN BOROUGH 2009 VISION STATEMENT**

The 2003 Franklin Borough Master Plan contains a brief "Vision Statement" which has been the subject of much discussion during this master plan reexamination effort. Based on the discussions that occurred at numerous meetings, the 2003 Vision Statement is being replaced by a new one which better reflects Franklin's view of its future, as of 2009. The new Vision Statement follows

FRANKLIN BOROUGH, IN THE YEAR 2030, WILL HAVE ESTABLISHED ITSELF AS THE CORE OF A REGIONAL CENTER, WHICH WILL ALSO INCLUDE HAMBURG AND PARTS OF HARDYSTON TOWNSHIP AND WHICH WILL BE THE FOCAL POINT OF A LARGE PORTION OF THE EASTERN SUSSEX COUNTY AREA.

THE BOROUGH WILL ATTRACT VISITORS FROM THROUGHOUT SUSSEX COUNTY AND OTHER AREAS AS WELL. THE RESIDENT POPULATION WILL HAVE INCREASED TO 8,000 PEOPLE, WITH MANY OF THE NEW RESIDENTS CLUSTERED IN THE VICINITY OF MAIN STREET.

THE ROUTE 23 CORRIDOR WILL HAVE ACHIEVED A BALANCE BETWEEN BEING A REGIONAL ARTERIAL ROADWAY, CARRYING TRAVELERS THROUGH FRANKLIN TO OTHER DESTINATIONS, AND SERVING ITS OTHER FUNCTION AS A SECOND "MAIN STREET", BY BEING THE PRIMARY ACCESS TO THE MANY BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO THIS TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR. THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY APPROPRIATE IMPROVEMENTS TO ROUTE 23 ITSELF, AS WELL AS VIA AN INTERCONNECTED NETWORK OF BYPASS AND CONNECTOR ROADS, SUPPLEMENTED BY AN EXTENSIVE PEDESTRIAN / BICYCLE NETWORK. THE VIBRANT "MIXED USE" ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL BE CREATED IN THIS AREA WILL MAKE THE ROUTE 23 CORRIDOR A MORE DIVERSE, DYNAMIC AND INTERESTING PART OF THE BOROUGH THAN IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

THE BOROUGH'S "ORIGINAL" MAIN STREET, BY 2030, WILL HAVE UNDERGONE A TRANSFORMATION MAKING IT AGAIN A FOCAL POINT OF THE COMMUNITY, ALBEIT A DIFFERENT TYPE OF FOCAL POINT THAN IT WAS ORIGINALLY. NEW RESIDENTS AND COMMERCIAL USES WILL INCREASE THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY IN THIS PART OF THE BOROUGH, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE COMPACT, WALKABLE ENVIRONMENT THAT BY



2030 WILL BE ENHANCED AND EXPANDED. THE NEW COMMERCIAL USES WILL SERVE THE RESIDENTS IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA BUT WILL ALSO INCLUDE NICHE, SPECIALITY USES THAT WILL DRAW CUSTOMERS FROM OTHER AREAS AS WELL. THE HISTORICAL CHARACTER AND RESOURCES OF THIS AREA WILL BE ENHANCED AND WILL ALSO BE COMPLEMENTED BY ANY NEW DEVELOPMENT.

SPRAWL WILL HAVE BEEN CONTAINED, BY ENCOURAGING CLUSTER AND INFILL DEVELOPMENT OF SUFFICIENT DENSITIES, BOTH IN THE MAIN STREET AREA, AS WELL AS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY, IN ORDER TO SUPPORT AND JUSTIFY THE COMMERCIAL USES AND THE EXTENSIVE PEDSTRIAN NETWORK THAT WILL EXIST. THE CONTAINMENT OF SPRAWL WILL MEAN THAT THE BOROUGH'S REMAINING ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES WILL BE PROTECTED AND PRESERVED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, THEREBY ACHIEVING THE ECOLOGICAL BALANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE FOR BOROUGH RESIDENTS

IN SUMMARY, FRANKLIN BOROUGH, IN THE YEAR 2030, WILL HAVE EVOLVED INTO A COMMUNITY, SIMILAR IN MANY RESPECTS TO THE FRANKLIN BOROUGH OF THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY, BUT BETTER POSITIONED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES OF THE MIDDLE PART OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY AND BEYOND.

### **3. THE 2006 MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION PLAN**

The revitalization of Main Street is an issue of great concern to the Borough and has been the subject of much discussion and planning for many years. In fact, in 2006 the Planning Board prepared and adopted a detailed study of the Main street area, with the Zinc Mine site being the focal point of that study. For a number of reasons that study was not adopted as part of the Borough Master Plan. The contents of that Plan are for the most part still valid, especially with respect to 1) The analysis of the existing Main St area conditions, 2) The recommendations that pertain to the goals and objectives for this part of Franklin, 3) "Infill and reuse" proposals, 4) Design standards and 5) Vehicular and pedestrian connections. However, the specific proposals for the Zinc Mine site have become problematic because of changing market conditions, as well as continuing concerns about contamination issues related to the property. Nevertheless, the Board has chosen, as part of this document to adopt The 2006 Main Street Revitalization Plan, as part of the Borough Master Plan, in order to help guide the revitalization efforts now underway. However, the future land use proposals related to the Zinc Mine site, that are contained in the Plan, especially with respect to the permitted density and the limitation of age restricted housing, will require more study and possibly significant revision. So, the Plan is being adopted with respect to those provisions that do not specifically relate to the future of the Zinc Mine site. Furthermore, once the committee that has been established by the mayor to investigate the Main St issue, presents its recommendations, and once the Planning Board further considers this issue, it will then be important to revisit the 2006 Main Street Revitalization Plan and adopt any specific changes that are warranted.

## **B) RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **ZONING MAP MODIFICATIONS AND CHANGES TO THE LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

This section includes a list of zoning map and land development regulation changes considered by the Planning Board during this Master Plan Reexamination Report process. The following list identifies each proposed zoning map change that was considered and the recommended action to be forwarded to the Borough Council. Appendix A contains maps depicting each change

**ZONE CHANGE ISSUES**

<u>Location</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
a) Block 45 Lot 15	As a result of a subdivision, this property is now split between the OS-GU and the R-3 Zone	Include entire lot in the R-3 Zone
b) Block 70 Lot 70.02	This lot includes the clubhouse and other facilities associated with the Black Bear Golf course. The current Zoning Map depicts part of the lot in the Golf Course Zone and a portion in the HC - Highway Commercial Zone	Include all of the lot in the Golf Course Zone
c) Block 3 Lot 14.01 and Lot 14.03	These lots are part of the Franklin Village hopping center project recently approved by the Planning Board. A small part of the site is in the R-1 Zone. The balance of the site is in the HC Zone.	Include all of the site in HC Zone
d) Block 54 Lot 1	This lot is zoned R-3 but is adjacent to the the HC Zone. In order to establish a more uniformly configured commercial lot, the owner has requested that this lot be zoned HC	Include in HC
e) Block 66 Lots 1,2,3 4, 17.02, 1703 and 17.04 and Block 74 Lot 23	This area along the west side of Munsonhurst Road (Route 517) was included in a new zoning district, the NC – Neighborhood Commercial Zone, in a Master Plan Amendment enacted in 2007. That zone change has not yet been approved by the Borough Council. However, the 2007 Master Plan Amendment also included a small area on the east side of Route 517 to be included in the NC Zone. That Property has been purchased by the State of NJ and will remain as permanent open space	Rezone the lots indicated, on the west side of Route 517, as proposed.
f) Block 45 Lot 8	This lot was acquired by the Borough in connection with its water supply operations. It is currently zoned R-3 but should be zoned OS-GU	Rezone as proposed
g) Block 25 Lot 1	This lot is zoned R-4 but is adjacent to the HC Zone. The property owner has requested That it be zoned HC	Include in HC
h) Block 70 Lot 13	This property currently accommodates the Hardyston Elementary School and it is in the R-1 Zone. At the moment there are no plans to relocate the school. However, in looking ahead to that possibility, it has been suggested that consideration be given to locating this property in a commercial zone	This requires further study, with the possibility that this site and others may be included in the NC Zone

<u>Location</u>	<u>Issue</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
i) Block 52 Lots 32 and 33	These lots are to the rear of the Gulf Station on Route 23. They are in the R-3 Zone. In order to facilitate the redevelopment of the Gulf Station property, which is in the HC Zone, the property owner has asked that the two adjacent lots be zoned HC	Include in the HC
j) Block 33 Lot 8	Corner of junction and High St Change from R-3 to B-1	Proposed change rejected
k) Block 45 Lot 1.02	Firemen's field – Change from R-3 to OSGU	Include in OSGU
l) Block 45 Lot 1.01	Open Pit Mine – Currently OSGU Should portion be rezoned so that it can contribute to Main St. revitalization	Will require further study
m) Block 51 Lot 2 Block 52 Lot 43	Board of Education / School property Should this be zoned OSGU. Should schools be a conditional use in residential zones	Include in OSGU Consider allowing schools as a conditional use in residential zones
n) Block 16 Lot 78	Currently in the Zinc Mine Zone property owner (Patire) request a rezoning to allow development of upper portion of property	This will require further study. Request tentatively rejected

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Land Development Regulation Issues

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
1. Allow auto body repair facilities in I Zone	Allow automotive repair only
2. Allow auctions in I Zone, B-1 and B-2 Zones	Consider allowing on a limited basis as a conditional use. Will also require a definition of auction
3. Min. lot size HC Zone	Leave as 5 acres
4. Drive Thru requirements in HC Zone	Change current conditions So that they are less restrictive
5. NC Zone	Proceed with the requirements for this zone

In addition to the aforementioned items, there was also a discussion by the Planning Board about the zoning of properties along Route 23. Specifically, the issue was raised as to whether or not more properties, within the Route 23 Corridor (both immediately adjacent to that road, as well as in close proximity to it), should be zoned for commercial use. The reason for doing so would be to encourage the creation of more jobs within the Borough, as well as to strengthen the Borough's tax base.

A review of the existing zoning and existing land use patterns, along Route 23, reveals a very diverse situation that reflects a variety of influences that have shaped this part of the municipality. A large percentage of the Route 23 frontage is already zoned for commercial use but a substantial portion is not. This fact can be traced to residential development occurring in close proximity to Route 23 and in some cases directly adjacent to it, before Route 23 became the heavily traveled road that it is today.

In terms of some specific numbers, Route 23 has about 28,000 linear feet of frontage through Franklin, with approximately 50% of the frontage on each side of the road. On the east side, approximately 9,600' is in the HC Zone, with the balance zoned R-1 or R-4. On the west side, by comparison, the amount of frontage in the HC Zone is approximately 12,000', with the balance in the R-1, R-3 and R-4 zones. So, of the 28,000' of Route 23 frontage, 77% is already zoned for commercial purposes. However, although the east side has considerably less HC frontage than the west side, the depth of the HC Zone on the east side is far greater. In fact, in many locations along the west side of Route 23, the depth of the HC Zone is only 100' to 200'.

A cursory review of the Route 23 Corridor zoning, did not reveal any obvious locations that should be zoned for commercial purposes. A more detailed investigation of this issue would include the actual amount of acreage zoned for commercial purposes, the amount already developed and / or approved for development and the remaining acreage available for future development. In addition, an analysis of the amount of acreage already developed that might be available for redevelopment purposes would need to be explored as well. Finally, the proximity of existing single family residential neighborhoods and how they would be impacted by commercial intrusions requires a more in depth study.

Furthermore, with respect to this issue there is also some concern about the future viability of the retail and service commercial sector, within the Route 23 Corridor. Changing buying habits, the current economic slowdown, the continuing concern about how the Route 23 commercial sector will impact the revitalization of the Main Street area and how the redevelopment of Main St could affect Route 23, all call into question the advisability of rezoning additional acreage, at this time, for commercial use along Route 23. In addition, it has been suggested by NJDOT, that the Borough should attempt to create "mixed use" environments within the Route 23 Corridor that would establish "walkable" neighborhoods, which would incorporate residential and commercial land uses into the same location. Such an approach if it is to be pursued will require substantial changes to the Borough's land development regulations.

In summary, based on the aforementioned general observations, it is not recommended that any additional acreage in the Route 23 Corridor be rezoned for commercial use at this time. However, further discussion and analysis should be undertaken to answer more fully the important questions that have been raised regarding this part of the community.

### **C. FUTURE PLANNING EFFORTS**

Land Use planning is a continuing process that must respond to changing conditions and to the changing goals and objectives of the community. In the months and the years ahead, it is the intent of the Planning Board to pursue a number of issues and conduct a number of studies that will be aimed at making Franklin Borough a dynamic community and preparing it for the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Among the work and activities that will be on the Planning Board's agenda are the following:

- Preparing a current Existing Land Use Map of the Borough
- Preparing an analysis of the need and advisability of allowing two family structures, as a permitted or conditional use, within certain sections of the Borough
- Proceeding ahead with Plan Endorsement, as per the requirements of the NJ State Planning Commission

- Finalizing a new zoning map for adoption by the Borough Council
- Expanding the Historic Preservation Plan Element of the Master Plan
- Assisting the Borough Council, as needed, with any efforts to identify and designate Redevelopment Areas or Rehabilitation Areas within the Borough.
- Moving ahead with the specifics relative to the recommendations contained in subsection 5 B herein.
- Investigating the best possible use of the existing rail line that traverses Franklin Borough
- Responding to the “underutilized properties” and “buffer” issues mentioned in Section 4 herein.
- Updating the Main Street Revitalization as required by new and more detailed information that is made available regarding this matter
- Continuing the ongoing effort of determining whether or not to complete the Highlands “Plan Conformance” process and amending the Borough Master Plan and land development regulations accordingly.
- Completing COAH’s substantive certification process by adopting a revised Housing Plan and Fair Share plan for the Borough

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This concludes the 2009 Franklin Borough Master Plan Reexamination, which via its adoption by the Planning Board, now becomes part of the Borough’s Master Plan documents.

## APPENDIX A