

TOWNSHIP OF LONG HILL

MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS REEXAMINATION REPORT

Adopted 25 November 2003

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LONG HILL TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Municipal Land Use Law requires planning boards to reexamine their master plans and the municipal development regulations at least every six years; and,

WHEREAS, The last Master Plan report was adopted in 1996; and,

WHEREAS, The Long Hill Township Planning Board has prepared a new reexamination report with the assistance of Township Planner Kevin O'Brien which has been the subject of discussion at eight Planning Board meetings; and,

WHEREAS, a subcommittee was appointed to contribute expertise to the Reexamination effort, said subcommittee meeting three times and performing numerous specific tasks to prepare the Reexamination Report; and,

WHEREAS, the Planning Board is of the opinion that the document referred to herein adequately addresses the matters to be covered in a reexamination report, as required by N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Long Hill Township Planning Board hereby adopts the November 25, 2003 Reexamination of the Master Plan and Development Regulations, as referenced above; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Planning Board Administrator/Secretary be directed to send a copy of the adopted report with this resolution to the Morris County Planning Board and to the clerks of each adjoining municipality.

I, Dawn V. Wolfe, Administrator/Secretary to the Planning Board of the Township of Long Hill in the County of Morris, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Planning Board at a regular meeting held on the 25th day of November, 2003.

Dawn V. Wolfe
Administrator/Secretary

INTRODUCTION

Long Hill Township is situated in the southernmost section of Morris County and occupies an area of approximately twelve square miles. It is roughly rectangular in shape – spanning 28,000 feet across its widest east-west axis and 15,000 feet along a north-south axis.

The municipality's boundaries are formed by five municipalities in two other counties: Harding and Chatham Townships (also in Morris County) to the north and east; Berkeley Heights Township in Union County to the southeast; and, to the west and south, Warren and Bernards Townships in Somerset County.

Much of the northern part of the Township is occupied by the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge while the Passaic River and its flood plain meander along Long Hill's western and southern boundaries. These two natural resource areas account for approximately 42% of the Township's area.

Several major transportation routes link Long Hill Township to the larger region. Interstate Route 78, a primary east-west transportation corridor, is accessed from King George Road in Bernards Township and from Hillcrest Road in Warren Township. Valley Road (Morris County Route 512) and Long Hill Road (Morris County Route 657) traverse the community in an east-west direction. Interstate 287, located to the west in Bernards Township, provides north/south access, as do New Vernon Road (Morris County Route 604), Plainfield Road (Morris County Route 606) and King George Road (Somerset County Route 527).

New Jersey Transit provides rush hour rail service to Newark and New York from passenger stations at Millington, Stirling and Gillette. Lakeland Bus Company provides bus service to the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City from the Township.

TOWNSHIP HISTORY

Originally occupied by the Lenni-Lenape tribe of Native Americans, the area in which Long Hill Township is located was settled by Europeans in the 1600's. By 1769 the region was known as Long Hill. An act of the State Legislature in 1866 established the Township of Passaic in Morris County and, recalling its history, a 1992 referendum changed the name to Long Hill Township.

Until around 1930 Long Hill was considered a sleepy, rural community. Growth then accelerated due to automobile and train access and suburbanization and some industrialization occurred. In 1950 there were 3,429 people living in the Township and, fifty years later, the US Census Bureau counted 8,777 inhabitants during the 2000 census. The Bureau estimates that the Township's population was 8,768 on 1 July 2002.

THE REEXAMINATION REPORT

The purpose of the municipal Master Plan document is to "guide the use of lands within the municipality in a manner which protects public health and safety and promotes the general welfare" (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28a). The key elements in a reexamination of the master plan and development regulations for a municipality focus on an analysis of these documents to determine whether they are designed to effectuate the goals of the Planning Board in guiding the use of lands within the municipality. A comprehensive master plan is a statement of policy and of the physical plan. It is a long-range plan which sets forth the future, or vision, for the Township.

When the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40-55D- I et seq.) was adopted in August 1976, the enabling legislation which governed municipal planning and zoning in all New Jersey municipalities was completely revised. One of the major changes was a provision that required the reexamination of master plans and development regulations every six years. This report constitutes the Master Plan Reexamination mandated by the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, specifically N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89.

CONTENTS OF THE REEXAMINATION REPORT

The law requires that each municipality's Planning Board prepare a report covering the following five elements:

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in Long Hill at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
- b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to 1996.
- c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.
- d. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.
- e. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," 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.

Long Hill Township's last Master Plan report was prepared in 1996. Per the state statute noted above, this prior report provides the starting point for documenting any changes that may have occurred subsequent to its adoption.

AN OVERVIEW OF LONG HILL TOWNSHIP'S MASTER PLAN

The Planning Board of Long Hill Township was established in 1944 and charged with exercising those powers pertaining to municipal growth and development, including the preparation and maintenance of a Township Master Plan. Although zoning was first adopted in the Township in 1937, the first Master Plan was not completed until 1958. A new plan was prepared in 1964 and revisions were made in 1967 and 1972. Fifteen years later, in 1987, the plan was further revised and a Reexamination Report was adopted in 1994.

In 1995 the Township Planning Board undertook a major overhaul of the Master Plan, holding multiple hearings with input from all areas of the community. Adopted on April 23, 1996, the Master Plan contained sections on:

Introduction; Goals of the Master Plan; Land Use Plan Element; Housing Plan Element; Circulation and Sidewalk Plan Element; Utilities Service Plan Element; Community Facilities and Recreation Plan Element; Conservation Plan Element; Historic Preservation Plan Element; Recycling Plan Element; Millington Development Plan; Meyersville Development Plan; Gillette Development Plan; Stirling Development Plan; and Valley Road Business District Plan.

In addition, the Master Plan contains background studies on:

Population, Housing and Employment Characteristics; Existing Land Use; Circulation; Community Facility and Services; Natural Resources; Housing; Area Planning Considerations; Water and Sewer Service; Planning Issues; and Summary of Background Studies.

The Township's interest in this reexamination report is not only to satisfy the statutory requirements of the reexamination process, but to use the process as a starting point for further analysis and refinement of the Township's zoning ordinances. It is anticipated that the Township will be augmenting and

revising its plans, as necessary, in order to chart a clearly identified course for the future development of the community.

PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES IN 1996

The 1996 Master Plan was the last comprehensive planning undertaking by the Township. As noted above, this was a comprehensive look at the Township at that time and contained numerous studies demonstrating the land use characteristics of the town. This report constitutes the Township's first reexamination report since that Herculean effort. Therefore, it examines the major problems and objectives relating to land development in the Township at the time of the adoption of the last master plan report.

The 1996 Master Plan provided specific goals and objectives for land use development in the Township. These goals and objectives are listed below.

OVERALL MASTER PLAN GOALS

Long Hill Township is a rural and low density residential community characterized by large tracts of open space, attractive single-family residential neighborhoods, tree lined streets and a general absence of large non-residential land uses. Its commercial development is anchored by the Valley Road business district and four neighborhood business districts. Overall, the Township is one of the least dense and most scenic municipalities in Morris County.

In many ways, Long Hill Township is a rural oasis in a region otherwise characterized by suburban residential tract development, highway commercial uses, corporate offices and interstate highways. When juxtaposed against these neighboring land uses, Long Hill's vast open space network, its tree canopied streets, wetland areas, river corridor and sweeping topographical characteristics combine with its secluded residential areas and varied commercial districts to form a municipality unique in the region.

It is the express purpose of this Master Plan Reexamination to preserve and enhance these unique characteristics of the Township through the following overall Master Plan goals:

- To conserve and enhance the essential rural and residential character of Long Hill Township in order to best provide for the health, safety and general welfare of all Township residents.
- To maintain the Township's identity as a fundamentally low density residential community and insure that future development is compatible with, and sensitive to, existing residential areas and established neighborhoods.
- To insure that new commercial development within the Township is in scale with and oriented to the shopping, service, and other needs of Township residents both in terms of design and use.
- To insure that street improvements along County and Township roadways are limited to those that address existing traffic safety problems and are undertaken in ways that strongly support the overall goals of this Master Plan and preserve and enhance the tree-lined roads that help create the desired rural character of the Township.
- To develop a trail system throughout the Township that will provide circulatory links to the Township's residential, business, recreational, and open spaces areas and enhance local appreciation of, and recreation in, the Township's many natural resources.
- To preserve, protect and enhance the natural resources of the Township and to make environmental issues a central part of the planning process in Long Hill.
- To establish a sound long-range planning program that merges major Township buildings, storm and sanitary sewers, natural trails and open spaces, recreational areas, community services, residential areas and roadways into an infrastructure that is resident and pedestrian friendly, and which supports the goal of preserving the Township's rural character.

This Master Plan embraces the following goals for each of its individual plan elements:

LAND USE AND HOUSING

- To conserve and enhance the essential rural and residential character of Long Hill Township in order to provide for the health, safety and general welfare of all Township residents.
- To maintain the Township's identity as a fundamentally low density residential community and insure that future development is compatible with, and sensitive to, existing residential areas and established neighborhoods.
- To insure that new commercial development within the Township is in scale with and oriented to the shopping, service, and other needs of Township residents both in terms of design and use.
- To encourage neighborhood oriented land uses in the village business districts of Gillette, Meyersville, Millington and Stirling and to insure that such development does not encroach upon surrounding residential areas and established neighborhoods.
- To prohibit additional multifamily residential development in the Township unless so required by the New Jersey Council On Affordable Housing.
- To uniformly encourage the upgrading and beautification of nonresidential properties throughout the Township, including improved building design, landscaping, signage, screening and other site improvements.

CIRCULATION

- To insure that street improvements along County and Township roadways are limited to those that address existing traffic safety problems and are undertaken in ways that strongly support the

overall goals of this Master Plan and preserve and enhance the tree-lined roads that help create the desired rural character of the Township.

- To insure that the design of new roads and the upgrading of existing roads are undertaken in a manner that is sensitive to the environment, existing streetscapes and rural character of the Township.
- To encourage the development of new sidewalks in areas of relatively high pedestrian traffic and to encourage the use of creative sidewalk design wherever appropriate to honor the Township's treed corridors and rural streetscapes.
- To develop a trail system throughout the Township that will provide circulatory links to the Township's residential, business, recreational, and open space areas and enhance local appreciation of, and recreation in, the Township's many natural resources.

UTILITY SERVICE

- To discourage further expansion of the sewerage treatment plant.
- To discourage major sewer line extensions unless needed to reach areas of significant septic dysfunction.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

- To develop uniform storm water management requirements aimed at providing comprehensive qualitative and quantitative controls over storm water runoff in the Township.
- To insure that storm water runoff impacts from new land development do not threaten the Township's natural resources or the Great Swamp.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND RECREATION

- To establish a sound long-range planning program that merges major Township buildings, storm and sanitary sewers, natural trails and open spaces, recreational areas, community services, residential areas and roadways into an infrastructure that is resident and pedestrian friendly, and which supports the goal of preserving the Township's rural character.
- To support the development of a centralized municipal complex.
- To augment existing recreational facilities with the development of additional facilities, including ballfields, soccer fields, trails and other facilities designed for the benefit of all segments of the Township population.
- To continue the development of Township pocket parks.
- To support the development of a senior citizen community center either in a new municipal complex or as a freestanding facility.
- To cooperate with the Board of Education in its school expansion program.

CONSERVATION

- To conserve, protect and enhance the natural resources of the Township and to make environmental issues a central part of the planning process in Long Hill.
- To preserve the scenic value of the Township's natural resources, including its open space areas and treed corridors.
- To establish a detailed environmental assessment procedure for all major land development proposals in the Township in accordance with the Township's Environmental Impact Statement Ordinance.
- To prohibit, to the greatest extent possible on the municipal level, land development in the Township's critical areas and to

periodically review local critical area regulations to assess their ongoing appropriateness in protecting the natural resources of the Township.

- To encourage the ongoing acquisition of open space by governmental agencies.
- To encourage greater tree preservation and planting efforts in the Township through more stringent tree removal regulations, the formation of a tree bank and street tree planting programs and the continuation of development review procedures aimed at tree preservation.
- To actively cooperate with regional efforts aimed at protecting the Great Swamp.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- To promote the preservation of historic structures, sites, districts, valuable historic resources, cultural/historic landscapes (land and buildings) and particular places of historic happenings.
- To establish a Historic Preservation Commission which will have among its charges the preparation and maintenance of a historic site and streetscapes inventory; the preparation of recommendations to the Planning Board on the subject of the historic plan element of the Master Plan and other plan elements affecting historic sites and streetscapes; the preparation of advice on the inclusion of historic sites and streetscapes in the Township's capital improvement program; the preparation of advice on development applications before the Township; the preparation of written reports on the application of the zoning ordinance on historic preservation matters, and other advisory, educational and informational functions relating to historic preservation.

RECYCLING

- To continue and expand the Township's ongoing recycling efforts and to explore the possibility of a new recycling depot for the Township.

CHANGES IN PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES SINCE 1996

Since the adoption of the 1996 Master Plan there have been very few changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan or Development Regulations.

Recent development within Long Hill Township makes the vast majority of the goals and objectives cited in the 1996 Master Plan still relevant today. While development pressures continue to result in the creation of new residential subdivisions, it appears that the most desirable land within the Township has reached build-out. Development today is located in the more environmentally sensitive areas of the Township and in areas that are less accessible. Infill development is also occurring more frequently. Locally there is a growing perception that further development is less than advantageous given the need to retain the desirable characteristics of the Township, to preserve open space, to protect plant and wildlife habitats including streams, lakes, rivers, woodland and hills from the adverse impacts of development.

Pressure continues to be exerted on the Township's infrastructure, particularly sanitary sewers. A voluntary ban on sewer hookups has led again to a reliance on septic systems for new development. Environmental constraints also remain a major issue.

The need for additional recreational lands and open space for both active and passive recreation is being addressed at the municipal level. The Township has recently added athletic fields and a senior center, both of which will provide much needed active and passive recreational opportunities for Township residents.

The recently opened Town Hall on Valley Road will address many of the needs of the community for the foreseeable future. Ongoing discussion on the future of the old Town Hall will presumably result in a low impact yet beneficial use for the facility that will take advantage of the existing infrastructure.

External changes that have an effect on planning in Long Hill are enumerated below.

STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

In June of 1992 the State Development and Redevelopment Plan was adopted. The plan divides the State into planning areas and establishes numerous policies with respect to where development should take place, where infrastructure should be provided and how State funds should be appropriated. After much deliberation with the County as part of the "Cross Acceptance" process, the Township received the designation of an Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (Planning Area 5), described by the plan as "large contiguous land areas with valuable ecosystems and wildlife habitats." In addition to the Planning Area 5 designation, four "centers" were identified in the Township. The State Plan recommends that, if appropriate, higher density development be located in such centers, rather than in the surrounding environmentally sensitive areas. For Long Hill Township, the four centers include three existing villages: Gillette, Millington and Stirling, and one existing hamlet: Meyersville.

On March 1, 2001 the New Jersey State Planning Commission adopted a revised New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan that included a State Plan Policy Map that continues to place Long Hill Township in an Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (Planning Area 5).

RESIDENTIAL SITE IMPROVEMENT STANDARDS

On January 6, 1997, the New Jersey Residential Site Improvement Standards were adopted. Effective on June 3, 1997, these standards supercede local site plan regulations with respect to residential subdivisions and site plans. The state promulgated standards specify public right-of-way improvements and storm water detention facility standards that are uniform throughout the state. The Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) also provide parking ratios for different types of residential development. These standards also supercede local zoning standards.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The affordable housing obligation for 1987 – 1999 in Long Hill has been set as zero. With the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) deliberating new guidelines on affordable housing, the township should keep aware of the ongoing discussion. At present, the proposed new COAH guidelines called for municipalities to add to their affordable housing stock as they grow. Towns are to set 10% of new development aside for affordable units, as well as one affordable unit for every 30 new jobs created by commercial development.

The possibility of development at the few open sites on Valley Road will have to be monitored by the Planning Board for impact on the Township's future affordable housing obligations.

NJ TRANSIT (MIDTOWN DIRECT)

Morris and Essex (M&E) Line commuters to New York City from Long Hill formerly switched to PATH trains or ferries at Hoboken to reach Manhattan. The Midtown Direct Project of NJ Transit, completed in 1996, allowed trains from the M&E to access Amtrak's Northeast Corridor line, providing direct access from Long Hill to Penn Station in midtown Manhattan.

NJ Transit expectations of about 3,000 new M&E riders as a result of this connection were woefully understated. Ridership jumped over 10% in the first year and has continued to grow since. A growth rate of 1 to 3 percent per year for the next ten years may be expected to continue. The new Township Master Plan should examine the potential impact of this further anticipated growth on the three Township rail stations, and particularly the possible need for additional parking facilities.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES SINCE 1996

Following adoption of the 1996 Master Plan, the Township has periodically amended its Zoning Ordinance to address concerns raised by the 1996 plan as well as the new issues that have arisen. The changes can be characterized as minor modifications which are intended to reinforce the integrity of the established zones.

RECOMMENDED MASTER PLAN CHANGES

The Long Hill Township Master Plan, adopted in 1996, has proven to be a sound planning document and the Planning Board takes pride in reaffirming that document and its goals. Nonetheless, the following recommendations are offered as an agenda for future planning studies:

LAND USE AND HOUSING

To reaffirm our belief that new commercial development within the Township is in scale with and oriented to the shopping, service and other needs of Township residents both in terms of design and use. The Township's policy, calling for a traditional design for new commercial development, and especially for that along the entire Valley Road corridor, has been steadfastly and consistently adhered to and implemented by the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment in their review of applications for development. The Planning Board reaffirms the Board's policy that building

design as described in Section 152 of the Zoning Ordinance is a desirable way to enhance the appearance of new development in the Township as well as contributing to a harmony of design that is pleasing to the eye, maintains the identity of Long Hill as a low density rural and residential oasis and presents a traditional appearance in building design.

To reaffirm the Board's policy of encouraging the upgrading and beautification of nonresidential properties throughout the Township, including improved traditional building design, landscaping, signage, screening and other site improvements.

UTILITY SERVICE

There is a need to study the further expansion and improvement of the sewer treatment plant in view of the self imposed sewer ban.

To discourage sewer line extensions unless needed to reach areas of significant septic dysfunction.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT

To embrace the new state rules enunciated in the Municipal Storm Water Regulation Program which promotes storm water infiltration to the groundwater.

To continue to develop and improve the uniform storm water management requirements aimed at providing comprehensive qualitative and quantitative controls over storm water runoff in the Township.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND RECREATION

To continue to centralize municipal facilities at the new Town Hall on Valley Road.

To recognize the new senior citizen center as the hub of activity for seniors in the Township and to further consolidate services to seniors at this facility.

CONSERVATION

To support the continuance of the Township Open Space Trust Fund of \$.02 per \$100 of assessed value. The \$250,319 anticipated to be raised during 2003 would help the Township maintain its quality of life and reinforce the sense of Long Hill as a rural oasis.

To continue use of the Open Space Advisory Committee to make recommendations for utilization of the Trust Fund to the Township Committee.

To attempt to purchase additional property for both active and passive recreation and for open space.

To pursue the development of trails along the Passaic River in partnership with Morris County and utilizing easements to gain access to privately owned lands.

To continue to support compliance with the Township's Environmental Impact Statement Ordinance.

To encourage Open Space Conservation easements in critical areas through the subdivision and development processes of both land use boards.

To establish an Inventory of Open Space in the Township.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

To establish and support a Historic Preservation Advisory Committee which will have among its charges the preparation and maintenance of a historic site and streetscapes inventory; the preparation of recommendations to the Planning Board on the

subject of the historic plan element of the Master Plan and other plan elements affecting historic sites and streetscapes; the preparation of advice on the inclusion of historic sites and streetscapes in the Township's capital improvement program; the preparation of advice on development applications before the Township; the preparation of written reports on the application of the zoning ordinance on historic preservation matters, and other advisory, educational and informational functions relating to historic preservation.

RECYCLING

To continue and expand the Township's ongoing recycling efforts.

RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT REGULATION CHANGES

Items to be studied and potentially to result in amendments to the Long Hill Township Zoning Ordinance include the following:

Revise the Valley Road corridor height standards in the O Zone from 1 ½ stories and 25 feet to 2 ½ stories and 35 feet.

Allow small boutique or village type stores to open in the O Zone along Valley Road.

Review the Ordinance concerning parking in front yards to make it clear that no parking is allowed in the front yard setback of any commercial property.

To allow an increase in Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in the O Zone along Valley Road to .50 with a maximum lot coverage of 50%. Allow a bonus of 60% FAR in the O Zone along Valley Road when 50% leaf coverage is provided within 5 years.

Review sign policy to allow directory signs on corner lots to face the minor street.

To encourage the move of the Stirling Post Office to Main Avenue.

To encourage the establishment of a bicycle trail from Stirling to Gillette.

To encourage the establishment of sidewalks from Valley Road to the Gillette and Millington train stations.

To encourage the adoption of a municipal tree ordinance that would restrict the indiscriminate removal of trees on residential properties and provide for the replacement of downed trees.

Address the continuing problem of grass paver type of cover for parking areas and devise a formula which would allow a degree of perviousness.

To revise Section 124.4 (dealing with garages for dwellings) to include all residential zones.

To revise Section 124.6 g to allow the base of Satellite Earth Station Antenna heights to be measured from the roof line of a commercial building.

To revise the Ordinance to provide for the application of zone setback requirements to detention basins and to provide for their maintenance.

Bulk standards should be analyzed in light of the recent trend for the demolition of single-family homes and construction of a larger replacement dwelling. Protections should be explored that assure that replacement homes do not disrupt the character of an established neighborhood in terms of its size, existing buffering and landscaping.

To consider whether to expand the B-3 Zone to Magnolia Avenue, currently in the R-4 Zone.

To consider whether to expand the C Zone to the area of Warren Avenue and Union Street.

To consider expanding the C Zone to include some of the larger properties in the R-2 Zone along Valley Road.

REDEVELOPMENT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Township of Long Hill does not anticipate the designation of any areas as “areas in need of redevelopment” nor does it anticipate the adoption of a redevelopment plan pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, N.J.S.A. 40A: 12A et seq.

CONCLUSION

The planning goals and objectives of Long Hill Township which are set forth in the 1996 Master Plan have served the municipality well. They highlight the character of the community and articulate the nature and quality of development which should be allowed in this nearly built-out municipality. Except as specifically recommended in this Reexamination Report, the Planning Board expressly re-affirms the Goals and Objectives for Long Hill Township contained in the 1996 Master Plan.