

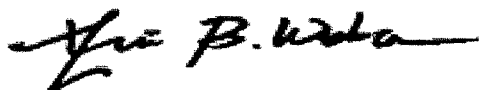
TOWN OF HAMMONTON
2011 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT

ATLANTIC COUNTY, NJ

**Prepared by the
Hammonton Planning Board
with assistance from
Brown & Keener Urban Design**



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Acknowledgements

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Introduction to Hammonton

Hammonton is a 41 square mile town in Atlantic County, New Jersey, centrally situated between Atlantic City to the east and the City of Philadelphia to the west. Referred to as both the “Blueberry Capital of the World” and “Hub of Southern New Jersey”, the Town of Hammonton includes a traditional main street downtown district, three highway corridors and large areas of productive farmland.

The Town of Hammonton is entirely located in the Pinelands National Reserve with three distinct management designations per the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. Hammonton’s downtown district is designated a Pinelands Town, which permits virtually all uses at moderate densities. Outside of the Pinelands Town district is the Agricultural Production Area. This is an area of active agricultural uses with generally upland field agriculture and row crops. Farm-related housing on 10 acres and non-farm housing on 40 acres are allowed. The only non-residential uses permitted in this district are agricultural commercial and roadside retail within 300 feet of preexisting commercial uses. Small patches of Forest Area are also outside of the Pinelands Town. These are relatively undeveloped areas with high quality water resources and wetlands. Residential development is permitted at one unit per 28 acres.

Hammonton’s traditional “Main Street” downtown districts include the municipal offices and a wide variety of retail, residential and other commercial and industrial uses. An active NJ Transit rail station is located at the edge of the downtown district along the Atlantic City Rail Line. A non-profit organization, MainStreet Hammonton, manages the overall revitalization of the district through events planning, marketing and grantsmanship.

US Route 30, more commonly known as White Horse Pike, bisects the Town in a east-west direction and includes the larger lot commercial and institutional uses in the community. State Route 54 travels in a north-south direction and passes directly through the middle of the downtown and then turns into US Route 206 after crossing White Horse Pike. Route 54 is a primary connection to and from points north and south via Route 206 and the Atlantic City Expressway.

I. Purpose and Components of the Re-Examination Report

A Reexamination Report is the analysis of a municipality's previously adopted master plan¹ and development regulations to determine whether the policies and regulatory framework are still valid. In New Jersey, municipalities are required to prepare a Reexamination Report at a minimum of every six years in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law, *NJSA 40:55D-89*. The purpose of the Report is to identify any conflicts or inconsistencies between current physical conditions and the master plan goals and objectives and the development regulations.

A Reexamination Report must include the following five components in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law:

- The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last Reexamination report.
- The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
- 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.
- 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.
- The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommend changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

¹ A master plan is a collection of goals, objectives and policies that lay the foundation for future growth in a community and provide the basis for zoning and development regulations. The master plan is authorized by the Municipal Land Use Law and is prepared and adopted by a municipal Planning Board.

II. Major Problems & Objectives Related to Land Development in 2004

The most recent Reexamination Report in Hammonton was prepared in 2004 and adopted in 2005. The major problems and objectives relating to land development at the time of adoption of the Report are as follows:

Master Plan and Land Use Regulations

The 2004 Reexamination Report recommended that an assortment of planning documents be revised to reflect current conditions and contemporary land use strategies. Foremost on the list was the need to update or replace the 1966 Town Master Plan and its constituent elements. The Report also identified the need to update certain development regulations, create a new Official Map and prepare a curb and sidewalk plan.

Agriculture and land preservation

The 2004 Reexamination Report discussed the conflict between residential uses and agricultural uses, largely due to spraying and other agricultural externalities. The Report discussed several options to protect farmers and productive farmland, including participation in the NJ Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program, increasing buffers between conflicting uses and requesting assistance from the Pineland Commission.

Redevelopment Areas

At the time of the 2004 Reexamination Report, eleven Areas had been identified as an Area of Need of Redevelopment pursuant to the NJ *Local Redevelopment and Housing Law* (C.40A:12A-1 et al.) and a Redevelopment Plan had been prepared for each area. Another seven areas had been identified as a potential area in need.

Infrastructure

The 2004 Reexamination Report discussed the need to limit the extension of public infrastructure to minimize sprawl in the Town. Notwithstanding that recommendation, the Report discussed two areas that might be appropriate for water and sewer extension – the Hammonton Airport and on roads where the sewers line just one side of the road. The Report also identified the need for more efficient waste management and pollution control.

Housing

The 2004 Reexamination Report identified a potential need for age-restricted affordable housing and anticipated the future adoption of a Housing Plan revision to comply with the third round rules.

Parking and Circulation

Truck traffic on Route 54 traveling through the heart of the downtown district continued to be a problem in 2004 because of its impact on the downtown district and the lack of alternative routes. Parking for local institutions and home offices was also a concern that needed to be addressed in the downtown districts.

Land Uses

The 2004 Reexamination Report identified several areas to review for possible future land use changes, including the White Horse Pike corridor and additional lands for a school and park expansion. The Report also identified the need to continue marketing the airport.

III. Reduction or Increase in Major Problems & Objectives

The following section discusses how the major problems and objectives identified in the 2004 Report have been reduced or increase as of 2011. The 2004 problems and objectives are noted in *italics*.

1. Master Plan Goals

The 2004 Reexamination Report reaffirmed the appropriateness of Hammonton's 1966 Master Plan Goals as included in its original Master Plan and noted below. The Report also reaffirmed the recommendation of the 1998 Re-Examination Report to include an additional ten Master Plan goals, also noted below.

GENERAL MASTER PLAN GOALS *(1966 Master Plan)*

- 1. To provide for a steadily increasing population.*
- 2. To guide overall development of the Town in a manner that will maintain its existing desirability as a place to live and work, while taking advantage of the potential for growth, which is inherent in the Atlantic-Camden County region.*
- 3. Generally, to maintain the existing medium density residential pattern while extending the range of types of accommodations available.*
- 4. To recognize the basic division of the Town into urban and rural segments and to provide for further development in a manner which will not disrupt the agricultural economy of the area.*
- 5. To create compatible land use groupings.*

MUNICIPAL PLANNING GOALS *(1998 and 2004 Reexamination Reports)*

- 1. Maintain community character and improve the quality of life through the existing and future development of the Town.*
- 2. Preserve and enhance the existing tax base while enhancing economic development opportunities and increasing employment opportunities.*
- 3. Guide the development of vacant lands to ensure the best possible final product for the residents and the Town.*
- 4. Ensure that community facilities and services are utilized to meet the needs of the Town within the limits of the available resources.*
- 5. Promote the adequate improvements to public infrastructure, community facilities and services to meet the needs of the residents and the Town.*

6. *Monitor the development intensity and the subsequent impacts on population of the Town to ensure that the preservation of the overall character and feel of the Town is maintained.*
7. *Encourage the identification and conservation of historic sites, districts, open space areas, energy resources, and valuable natural resources.*
8. *Ensure that adequate and appropriate affordable housing options are available and continue to promote and encourage existing viable residential neighborhoods.*
9. *Encourage economic development through traditional methods as well as through the approved Redevelopment Areas located within the Central Business District to revitalize the downtown center of the Town.*
10. *Ensure that appropriate and compatible commercial development occurs in relationship to existing residential areas of the Town.*

2. Master Plan Elements and Studies

a. The Hammonton Master Plan has not undergone a comprehensive update since 1966 and the Town should prepare an entirely new Plan.

2011 UPDATE: Given the current state of the economy and the severe reduction in resources for public purposes, the Hammonton Town Council elected to postpone the preparation of a new Master Plan, as recommended in 2004. However, the Board is currently reviewing master plan amendments for a downtown urban design plan and may offer additional master plan amendments as a result of this Re-Examination Report.

b. Prepare a curb and sidewalk plan.

2011 UPDATE: Since the preparation of the 2004 Reexamination Report substantial improvements to downtown curbs and sidewalks crosswalks and streetscape have been completed. An ordinance has been introduced by Town Council that now requires site plan and subdivision applicants to install curbs and sidewalks.

3. Agriculture

a. Commercial agricultural activities are becoming difficult to operate with the nearby new construction and residential development. The Town and Pinelands Commission should discuss how to resolve this issue.

2011 UPDATE: There has not yet been any formal action by the Town to address this problem. However, the Town has a Right to Farm ordinance that affords some degree of protection to farmers. Town land use ordinances require larger buffers between residential and agricultural zones and even larger buffers between residential properties and areas of active agriculture.

b. Refine Pinelands Management Area boundary delineation to acknowledge agricultural production practices.

There are some portions of Pinelands Management Areas within the agricultural production zoning district where agricultural processes are becoming increasingly more difficult due to the surrounding new construction and close proximity of adjacent land uses within the residential

zoning districts. An evaluation of existing agricultural lands being impacted should be conducted and discussions between the town of Hammonton and the Pinelands Commission are encouraged in order to work towards effective resolution of this issue. Of specific note is the increasing difficulty in aerial spraying for farming purposes when fragmented residential developments impede this critical process of farming.

2011 UPDATE: No specific actions have been taken to date. Commercial farms have some degree of protection under the Town's Right to Farm ordinance, which includes a rebuttable presumption that no commercial farm that operates in compliance with state agricultural management practices "shall constitute a public or private nuisance, nor shall any such operation, activity or structure be deemed to otherwise invade or interfere with the use and enjoyment of any other land or property."

c. The Town should consider pursuing a transfer of development rights program (TDR).

2011 UPDATE: Hammonton has not pursued a municipal transfer of development rights program, but may consider it in the future. The TDR program has historically been a costly and time-consuming program. The rules and regulations of the program were recently reviewed by a statewide taskforce, which recommended changes to the program to minimize red tape and a costly process. Hammonton will monitor any changes to the program and may revisit the concept at a later date.

4. Redevelopment Areas

a. Hammonton has identified and approved eleven Redevelopment Areas as viable Areas in Need of Rehabilitation and Redevelopment. An additional seven areas have been referenced in the Reexamination Report and require further analysis.

2011 UPDATE: Redevelopment plans have been prepared and adopted by the Hammonton Town Council for the eleven Areas in Need of Rehabilitation and Redevelopment. Two of the plans, referred to as Redevelopment Area B and C, were involved in litigation and a settlement agreement requires strict adherence to the Plans. The other nine Redevelopment Plans should be reviewed for their consistency with the pending master plan changes for the downtown districts.

No other studies have been initiated for the seven other areas referenced in the 2004 Reexamination Report.

5. Infrastructure

a. Manage sewer and water infrastructure so as not to foster haphazard growth.

2011 UPDATE: The infrastructure has been limited to the town area to avoid sprawl development.

b. Shift Pinelands Management Area boundary delineation so that streets are not "one-sided".

2011 UPDATE: From time-to-time the Hammonton Planning Board has discussed requesting an adjustment to the existing Pinelands Town areas to allow sanitary sewer extensions along the center line of streets where there may currently be sewers on only one side of the street. This initiative would provide for equal sewer service to both sides of the street and eliminate existing septic sewer systems. This is still a current issue and should be addressed in the 2011 Report.

c. Complete the sewage treatment plant extension.

2011 UPDATE: According to the 2004 Reexamination Report, substantial future compact development or expansion of facilities is likely to require additional wastewater treatment capacity. Designing for additional capacity, along with several alternative scenarios has since been discussed. The most favored was a water-conservation perspective that includes surface-irrigation over a reserved land area using treated wastewater. Yet the project is stalled and the surface-irrigation approach has been reevaluated by the US Geological Survey (USGS). The USGS report, titled the *U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report*, analyzed the performance of surface infiltration to assess the safety of a new Hammonton Land Application Facility. USGS concluded that the soils at the proposed facility do not provide satisfactory level of infiltration, making it difficult to comply with Pinelands Commission requirements for groundwater recharge of treated effluent. This matter is still pending before the Pinelands Commission.

6. Circulation

a. Consider alternative truck routes to avoid drive-thru traffic on Route 54.

2011 UPDATE: Route 54 is a conduit for both local and regional truck traffic, which disrupts the flow of traffic and quality of life in the downtown district. A by-pass had been discussed at one time, but the Town decided that removing traffic completely from downtown would hurt the local businesses. The 2004 Reexamination Report recommended that the Town explore alternative routes for the regional truck traffic. In the years since 2004, alternative alignments for large load through-trucks have been discussed at Planning Board meetings. During that time, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has evaluated potential streets to divert truck traffic to – but no improvements have been made. This remains an active issue. Local officials should continue to explore an alternative truck route alignment with NJDOT. The Town should recommend goals, objectives, and criteria for NJDOT to consider in their evaluation of route alternatives.

7. Land Use

a. The Town has a need for affordable senior housing because of the dramatic increase in the housing and property values.

2011 UPDATE: Age-restricted housing has been addressed in the Town's Housing Plan.

b. Improve Columbia Road and pursue a corridor study and related improvements to White Horse Pike.

2011 UPDATE: The Columbia Road improvements were related to the expansion of the airport runway and have not been made. No plans are intended for the Columbia Road at this time. The White Horse Pike corridor study has not been done either. However, an analysis of the corridor would be important to study the land use patterns along the highway and evaluate new planning and zoning opportunities.

c. Continue to support improvements to the small craft airport north of downtown to ensure its longevity.

2011 UPDATE: The Town supports efforts to market and improve the airport.

d. Acquisition of land for future elementary school.

2011 UPDATE: The 2004 Re-Examination Report suggests acquiring approximately 40 acres across from Fairview Avenue from the junior high school for future elementary school. However, there is no longer a need for a new school or expansion of the existing schools.

e. Expand park and recreation area around Hammonton Lake.

2011 UPDATE: The 2004 Re-Examination suggested that the Town “Negotiate a land swap, rezoning land around Hammonton Lake to recreation in exchange for expanding the boundaries of the Pinelands town area of Hammonton to provide, over time, additional recreation resources the Hammonton Lake.” A senior citizen center has since been developed on the edge of the Lake and trails have been planned for public access. No other improvements or land swaps are contemplated at this time.

f. Interior Lot Development

The Town recognizes the need to provide comprehensive standards for interior lot development which does not comply with existing zoning standards. The Town has adopted a flag lot ordinance to set forth the standards for interior lot development. The flag lot ordinance restricts the number of housing units that can be constructed on interior lots.

IV. Extent of Significant Changes in Assumptions, Policies & Objectives

Demographic Changes

Over the past decade, Hammonton experienced a 17% increase in population from 2000 to 2010 due to new residential construction. According to the US Census, the Town's population grew from 12,604 persons in 2000 to 14,791 persons in 2010. The population increase is attributed to new construction, including an age-restricted single-family development, assisted living units and various other residential subdivisions. The total number of housing units increased from 4,843 units in 2000 to 5,715 units in 2010, with a net of 872 new units. Most of this development has occurred since the 2004 Reexamination Report.

Highway Corridor Development

With the closing of the William B. Kessler Memorial Hospital on the White Horse Pike in 2009, Hammonton lost one of its largest ratables and employers. Until its closing, the hospital had been considered an anchor for what could be a cluster of health and medical businesses along the highway. But even with the absence of Kessler, the cluster of health and medical uses still remains a practical and potentially viable vision. AtlantiCare has opened a Satellite Emergency Department (SED) in the former Kessler Hospital and is nearing completion of their new \$20,000,000 SED and Medical Center at the intersection of the White Horse Pike and Fairview Avenue. The former Kessler Hospital is currently being marketed by a real estate agency for medical-related uses. An existing assisted living center and adult day care center are also within close proximity to the ER facility. These combined medical and health uses provide the core of a potential district of complementary uses and services from just west of Route 206 to Old Forks Road.

The White Horse Pike corridor further west is in a state of transition from an agricultural and industrial area to what now appears to be commercial and institutional.

Downtown Hammonton

MainStreet Hammonton has been successful in bringing new businesses to town and leveraging monies and resources for growth and infrastructure. However, the zoning framework for the downtown area has become outdated by not recognizing changes in physical conditions, new uses and the need for a vibrant public realm. To study these issues in further detail, Hammonton was awarded a grant in 2009 from the Municipal Land Use Center (MLUC) of the College of New Jersey to conduct a visioning process and possible rezoning of the downtown districts.

Visioning Process

The visioning process included public workshops, surveys and a facilitated bus tour called "Envision Downtown: A Code Talker's Tour". The written surveys revealed issues that participants felt strongly about in the downtown and White Horse Pike area. These issues are ranked in order of importance as follows:

- Traffic congestion
- Nighttime lighting
- The general appearance of buildings
- The ability to get from store to store without getting back on the White Horse Pike

- The appearance of the streetscape/landscape
- The appearance of shop fronts and signs
- A "gateway" to downtown
- The mix of stores on the Pike
- The appearance of parking lots
- The ability to find parking.

The workshop meeting consisted of community members at tables of randomly selected groups, worked with topic-based "Trading Cards." The Town's consultant facilitated the event by reviewing the process, explaining the topics of each "trading card" and then allowing time for rankings and comments to be written by the participants. The facilitator then lead the group in a brief discussion of what they felt the most important 2-3 topics were, and what their comments were for each. Finally, a spokesperson chosen by the group had an opportunity to summarize their observations and concerns to the entire room.

The results of this workshop revealed that that participants strongly supported maintaining the pedestrian-friendly character of downtown, preferred pedestrian-scaled signage, large shop windows, and narrow setbacks from the street, and viewed easy access to parking as important. Interestingly, participants also thought that street-front entrances and large shop windows were desirable on the White Horse Pike. There was strong sentiment that large, blank walls were inappropriate in both the downtown and on the Pike. Finally, participants thought it was very important that buildings "fit in" with their surroundings and that they not be too tall or too wide.

The comments generated during the workshop and opinion survey led to the development of the following principles for future growth and development in the downtown area:

- *Downtown is the center, the meeting place, of the entire community — and it should remain that way.*
- *A mix of uses — civic places, shopping places housing and offices — knit together by green, walkable streets are the building blocks of Hammonton's downtown center.*
- *The downtown is framed by transitional "gateway districts," where the approach and arrival to downtown play an important role in marketing and promoting Downtown businesses to visitors.*
- *Downtown's valued places and buildings have the special scale of a town, not a city or a suburb, and speak vividly of Hammonton's accumulated history.*
- *The urban and architectural character of downtown is diverse, and it varies almost on a block-by-block basis. This is a quality that should be reflected in development regulations.*
- *Pedestrian life, not vehicular traffic, should be dominant.*
- *Downtown is an appropriate place for more housing, including affordable housing, that will provide diverse, transit- accessible, non-auto-dependent housing opportunities and increase the vitality of the downtown area after business hours.*
- *Neighborhoods adjacent to downtown should be respected and their character should be conserved.*

Retail Market Analysis

As part of the background analysis, a retail market analysis was prepared (Urban Partners, January 2010). The purpose of the study was to determine what retail types are supportable downtown and how they might relate to the existing and potential retail markets on White Horse Pike, or Route 30.

The market analysis identified opportunities for downtown retail based on an assumed % capture rate

of all total retail purchases made by area residents. The study concluded that opportunities exist to expand retail offerings in various categories in both the downtown area and White Horse Pike. The downtown area is suitable for community-serving goods & services, restaurants, apparel stores, furniture stores and other related retail uses. The White Horse Pike could also accommodate additional retail if the Town was to be interested in pursuing highway-oriented commercial uses. The market for such uses includes apparel and furniture stores, restaurants, dollar stores, auto parts store, home furnishings and specialty goods.

Downtown Rezoning and Master Plan Amendment

A master plan amendment to consider these recommendations is currently underway.

Land Use Issues carried over from 2004

Three land issues mentioned in the 2004 Reexamination Report remain valid considerations for Hammonton in 2011 and are repeated below:

- Truck traffic on Route 54 through the downtown districts continues to be a problem because of the traffic, fumes, noise and weight on the road. Although the Town has had discussions with state officials on possible alternate routes, there has been no resolution of the problem and the matter remains active.
- The Hammonton Airport is a municipally owned facility that offers a flight school and soaring lessons. Currently underutilized, the Town seeks to redevelop the facility and/or improve upon its marketing.
- Route 54 south of Chew Road was identified in the 2004 Report as a potential southern gateway to the Hammonton downtown district. The area is currently within the Highway Business (B-2) and Industrial (M-1) zoning districts, which, if unmanaged, could create unsightly strip development and industrial buildings. The Town continues to look at this area for alternative uses, such as a future Campus Office District and a Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District. It is also the vicinity of a new southern gateway district to downtown Hammonton.

Housing Plan Element

On November 18, 1998, the Town of Hammonton Planning Board adopted a Housing Element and Fair Share Plan to comply with the New Jersey Fair Share Housing Act. The Housing Plan was amended in 2011.

Sustainability

Hammonton launched a community-wide sustainability program in 2008 led by the Town's Green Committee, a sub-group of the Environmental Commission. In 2010, the Town was designated a Sustainable Jersey Bronze Certified municipality by the state's Sustainable Jersey program. The sustainability projects include a solar and wind energy ordinance that provides criteria for determining suitable locations for these energy efficient facilities, a rain garden, a public outreach including among many others the Green Day Festival and Live Green-Be Healthy seminar, and a greenhouse gas emission study.

V. Changes Recommended to Master Plan and Development Regulations

1. Sanitary Sewer Extension

Several roads on the edge of the Pinelands Town designation include sanitary sewers servicing only one side of the road. The Town should review the advantages of expanding the boundary of the Pinelands Town area to both edges of the right-of-way so that the public sewers could be extended to residences on the other side of the road with septic systems. If the benefits are significant, a request for boundary adjustment should be filed with the Pinelands Commission and if approved, any necessary master plan and zoning changes should be prepared and adopted.

2. White Horse Pike Corridor Study

The White Horse Pike corridor has experienced many changes over the past decade including two new regional retail developments and new medical and health related uses. While the Planning Board supports a cluster of professional health and medical uses generally east of Route 206, the highway corridor west of this area is still fragmented and lacks a vision. The 2004 Reexamination Report offered several new zoning classifications for the White Horse Pike corridor. However, with the recent change in uses and property ownership, the entire corridor should be further studied for a comprehensive vision. The study should start with a build-out analysis, followed by an assessment of 1) the economic viability of corridor uses compared to the downtown businesses using the Urban Partners study; 2) the pedestrian and bicycle needs for corridor travel and connectivity to neighborhoods; 3) the cluster(s) of complementary uses along the corridor; 4) the visual impact of current development with any recommendations for the future; 5) the overall need for site development regulations, such landscaping, buffers and site amenities; and, 6) assessing traffic flows and access management, working in conjunction with the NJDOT so that the land use and design elements of a new or reinvigorated corridor vision can successfully mesh with the state highway.. Upon its completion, the report may be adopted by the Planning Board as a master plan amendment, which could provide the basis for future zoning changes.

3. Downtown Principles and Rezoning

The 2009 visioning process reiterated the Town's overall vision for a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use and walkable downtown and offered a set of guiding principles that would implement the vision. Many of the planning and design elements in these principles had not been previously contemplated and are not permitted under the current zoning ordinances. The downtown zoning districts should therefore be revised so that they are compatible with the guiding principles, thereby increasing the capacity to implement the desired vision.

The downtown principles cover three major themes or issues that should be incorporated into the revised zoning ordinances. The first theme is about gateways and the need to define two specific areas on Route 54 that would serve as a north and south gateway to downtown. In these areas, future development and public investment should recognize the need to provide an attractive and memorable entry that signals the arrival to a unique destination place - downtown Hammonton.

Another major theme is the recognition of the diversity of the downtown neighborhoods and the importance of building types and forms on the streetscape experience. The principles suggest that the character of some of these areas differs on a block by block basis in some instances. While a block may be a small delineation for a zoning district, it is important that individual neighborhoods or character areas are assigned their own zoning district so that the ordinance specifications are unique to both existing and desirable conditions.

The third theme reiterates the need to provide for additional housing in the downtown areas to liven the streets, provide housing closer to shops and transit, and to provide “eyes on the street.” While apartments are currently permitted in some zones as conditional uses on second and third floors, additional provisions may be appropriate to increase downtown housing opportunities.

The nature of the visioning principles and above themes suggest the need for a new planning approach to downtown Hammonton with less emphasis on the “use” of the land, and more attention given to the balance of land use, building form and the quality of the public realm. Accordingly, the following changes are recommended to the zoning and development regulations:

Recommended Downtown Zoning District Changes

1. The current downtown districts should be broken down into smaller districts that share similar building and streetscape characteristics. Each district should recognize the building types, form and spatial qualities that define the area’s character. These qualities should be included in the zoning and development regulations to guide the construction of new, enlarged or reconstructed buildings.
2. Two new districts should be created as a south gateway and north gateway to downtown. The uses and development regulations should provide an attractive setting and provide unhindered walking paths to downtown.
3. Predominantly residential blocks should be removed from the downtown districts. Where appropriate, transition districts should be considered that provide a gradient in densities and uses.
4. The second and third floor residential apartments in the downtown districts should be principally permitted uses, rather than conditional uses. Additional housing types should be permitted in the downtown districts where lot sizes permit.

The attached conceptual land use map provides new zoning boundaries that address these recommendations.

4. Signage

The sign ordinances for the downtown districts should be revised so that they are more compatible with the downtown development patterns. Both the size and height of the signs should be reduced for the pedestrian commercial environment. Pylon signs should be limited to certain uses to avoid cluttering the streetscape.

5. Route 54 Corridor Development

The Planning Board should study the Route 54 corridor for future campus office zoning and a smaller neighborhood commercial district. Portions of this area should also be rezoned as a southern gateway.

6. Truck Traffic and Circulation

The Planning Board should seek the assistance of the Town Council and collaborate with NJ Department of Transportation on re-routing regional trucking around the 12th street/Bellevue corridor in a manner that does not compromise local commerce.

7. Health and Medical Office Cluster

Health and medical related uses should be encouraged in the vicinity of the new satellite AtlantiCare Medical Center. The Planning Board may want to consider future zoning changes that would facilitate a cluster of these types of complementary uses.

8. Airport Marketing

The Planning Board and/or Town Council should evaluate a potential swap of Pinelands designations between the airport property, which is designated Agricultural Production, and lands within the Pinelands Town designation.

9. Master Plan Goals

The additional master plan goals recommended in the 1998 and 2004 Reexamination Reports should be formally adopted by the Planning Board as a master plan amendment. These goals should be combined with the original 1966 master plan goals, rather than separated as was presented in the Reexamination Reports.

10. Housing Plan

The Planning Board should continue to monitor the regulatory changes of the New Jersey affordable housing program and file any necessary changes or revision to the Housing Plan, if needed.

11. Sustainability Initiatives

The Town should continue to pursue its sustainability program by encouraging green buildings, walkable and bike-friendly neighborhoods, and hosting educational programs on the many benefits of sustainability practices. The Planning Board's Downtown Master Plan amendment promotes these sustainability concepts through recommended streetscape improvements. Future initiatives may include green building ordinances, a revised landscaping ordinance that requires drought-resistant and native plantings, alternative stormwater management systems such as rain gardens, bio-retention basins and grass swales, and the use of water conservation measures to the greatest extent practicable.

VI. Incorporation of Recommended Adopted Redevelopment Plans

1. Review of Redevelopment Areas

With the exception of Redevelopment Areas B and C, the Planning Board should review all adopted Redevelopment Plans for consistency with the recommendations in this Reexamination Report and the pending master plan amendment concerning the downtown districts.

2. Additional Redevelopment Areas

Hammonton previously identified seven potential redevelopment areas in the 2004 Reexamination Report. No further action is recommended on those seven areas.