

# GENERAL REEXAMINATION OF THE MASTER PLAN

## BOROUGH OF COLLINGSWOOD

Camden County, New Jersey

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Borough of Collingswood was ranked as the 176<sup>th</sup> largest municipality in New Jersey by population. It is located within the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington (PA-NJ-DE-MD) Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) whose population exceeds 6 million. According to the U.S. Census, the Borough's population grew nearly continuously until peaking at 17,422 in 1970. Since then, it has gradually declined, and as of 2017, it is estimated at just under 14,000. Collingswood has easy access to the Interstate Highway System via U.S. Routes 30 and 130, and its PATCO train station connects it with the regional passenger rail network. The Borough provides a diversity of housing types as well as a vibrant downtown with specialty shops, restaurants and mixed-use development.

Pursuant to Section 40:55D-89 of the Municipal Land Use Law, municipal master plans and development regulations are to be re-examined at least once every ten years to determine continued viability and the need for amendments. Consideration should be given to the emergence of land use issues and external influences such as statutory mandates which might impact the underlying bases of the master plan. The reexamination is intended to result in the articulation of planning policy issues which need to be addressed to ensure that the municipality's pre-eminent planning policy document, which serves as the foundation for development regulation, has continued applicability. Failure to undertake the periodic reexamination constitutes, under the law, a rebuttable presumption that the development regulations are no longer reasonable.

In accordance with the above citation, this Reexamination is to address:

- a. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last Reexamination Report.
- b. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
- c. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.
- d. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.
- e. The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C. 40A:12-1 et al.) 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. (L. 1975, c. 291, s. 76; amended 1980, c. 146, s. 6; 1985, c. 516, s. 18; 1987, c. 102, s. 29; 1992, c. 79, s. 50.)

The Collingswood Reexamination dated May 1, 2008, herein examined, consists of the following: 1) Review of Past Conditions and Changes in Goals and Objectives, 2) Significant Changes in the Master Plan, 3) Recommended Changes to the Master Plan and Development regulations, 4) Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans, and 5) Additional Recommendations. While the Borough completed a Master Plan Reexamination in 2008, the need for the 2019 Reexamination is driven by the statutory requirement to undertake such a reexamination as well as a desire to keep long-range planning up-to-date and ensure that the Master Plan remains valid. The 2019 Reexamination Report recommends minor changes in order to fine tune and synthesize existing planning concepts and goals. Specifically, the focus of this Reexamination is to provide an opportunity to ensure the long-term viability of the Borough by focusing on land use and development goals that would enhance its livability and vitality. The last full master plan, which included a wide range of topic elements, was completed in 1999 and has not been amended since then. The 2008 Reexamination is the only reexamination of the original Master Plan.

Regarding format, this reexamination report addresses, in the same sequence, the elements outlined within subsections “a” through “e” of the aforementioned Municipal Land Use Law citation.

## II. **REEXAMINATION REPORT FINDINGS**

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

The statutory charge for this aspect of the reexamination is to identify problems and objectives identified in the most recent Reexamination. As this is the second Reexamination of the 1999 Master Plan, the charge then becomes one of establishing, from the 2008 Reexamination, specific problems to the extent discussed or, in the alternative, to the extent which can be deduced from the language of the goals and objectives. Specific problems as identified in the 2008 Reexamination are summarized and outlined as follows:

#### 1. **Major problems/objectives existing at the time of the 2008 Reexamination**

##### a) **Homes along major thoroughfares**

Because a municipality’s major roads often attract commercial and similar intense uses, the presence of single-family dwellings along busy streets like Collings Ave., Haddon Ave., the White Horse Pike and Route 130 has resulted in land use conflicts caused by incompatible physical relationships as well as safety problems and a host of environmental nuisances.

##### b) **Blight from decline in on-site management of low-density housing**

A considerable number of one- and two-unit residential properties are owned by absentee landlords. In addition, some properties classified by tax records as one- and two-unit homes actually contain three or more units. The absence of on-site management, either by property owner or resident

manager, as well as the overcrowding of some of these properties, can have a blighting effect on the surrounding neighborhood.

**c) Uncoordinated development/redevelopment of Central Business District**

Development and redevelopment initiatives in the Borough's downtown appear to emanate from various private and public sources that lack coordination and collaboration. In addition, the portion of the central business district that has been designated as a redevelopment area is too small to cover the total area that is deserving of such designation.

**d) Underutilized/inadequate public and quasi-public uses**

There is a lack of off-street shared parking for patrons of downtown businesses and municipal services, particularly in the Haddon Ave. commercial corridor. Additionally, the Municipal Building has inadequate space to meet both the needs of the police department and municipal court. Moreover, school district services are scattered throughout the Borough and lack a central address. There is also a shortage of recreational facilities that are available to the residents of the Borough, and the ones that are available, are underutilized because they are underdeveloped or unimproved.

**e) Inadequacy of stormwater management facilities on Route 130**

Frequent flooding along Route 130 in the Borough is a persistent problem. Additional improvements to the stormwater management facilities along the roadway will be required to mitigate flooding. Flood-prone lands that could be used for such improvements are taken up by residential properties in the corridor.

**2. Goals and objectives as identified in the 2008 Reexamination.**

The 2008 Reexamination carried forward specific goals and objectives as stated in the 1999 Master Plan (determining which goals and objectives no longer applied). The following goals and objectives describe various facets and policies for articulating the community's vision and are presented as they were in the 2008 Reexamination.

**Objectives relating to Land Use**

- a) Provide for strong regulations to ensure compatible land uses throughout the Borough
- b) Support the development of a strong Central Business District
- c) Promote a strong housing program with the goals of renovating, upgrading, and transforming the previously converted multi-family housing back to their original single-family form
- d) Establish areas within the Borough which are appropriate for, and support, industrial and intensive commercial uses

- e) Encourage pedestrian friendly routes, particularly in the CBD and West Collingswood, through the use of appropriate design solutions and regulations

### **Objectives relating Housing**

- a) Expand and enhance the current building code enforcement program to promote a well-maintained residential housing base
- b) Promote ongoing rehabilitation and upgrading of existing housing, both single and multi-family
- c) Promote the owner occupancy of existing multi-family conversions in appropriate locations
- d) Promote the conversion of multi-family units to single-family units in areas of predominantly single-family homes
- e) Continue to provide a variety of affordable housing to citizens of the community

### **Objectives relating to Economic Development**

- a) Establish strategic redevelopment districts throughout the Borough to take advantage of redevelopment designation benefits that can be utilized to attract commercial and industrial businesses to locate/relocate within the community.
- b) Support the implementation of a Special Improvement District (SID) within business, industrial and highway commercial areas.
- c) Financially support the recruitment and attraction of specialty businesses, including markets, restaurants, and retail chains
- d) Encourage the creative re-use of existing residential buildings along commercial corridors.

### **Objectives relating to Community Facilities**

- a) Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public officials and employees through the provision of adequate facilities.
- b) Continue to support the creative re-use of the Excelsior Scottish Rite Temple as a theater and as a cultural center to create a focal point within the community.
- c) Encourage the redesign of Knight Park to include a variety of unique programming and environmental features.
- d) Coordinate with the local Board of Education to allow for the school playgrounds to be used as active neighborhood recreational centers
- e) Continue to upgrade and improve the Newton Creek and Cooper River Parks through active coordination with Camden County Park Department
- f) Capitalize on the Borough's remaining vacant parcels as well as the yards of homeowners to promote the preservation of open space and passive recreational opportunities.

### **Objectives relating to Infrastructure and Utilities**

- a) Improve road and storm water management systems to prevent flooding.
- b) Continue to upgrade and improve the current sewer and water systems

### **Objectives relating to Circulation**

- a) Promote walking and bicycle use throughout the Borough.
- b) Through the redevelopment process, work with the business owners in the downtown areas to develop areas for public parking.
- c) Continue to coordinate with state and county agencies to fund and implement road improvement projects.

### **Objectives relating to Recycling**

- a) Decrease the amount of trash disposed by residents by increasing the amount of recycling.

### **Objectives relating to Conservation**

- a) Preserve and better use the existing open spaces within the Borough.
- b) Explore the possibility of creating wetlands mitigation sites in key locations in the Borough for preservation of open spaces, education, and revenue sources.

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

The objectives and problems indicated in the 2008 Reexamination remain largely relevant. Since such time as the 2008 Reexamination, the Borough has continued efforts to address all relevant problems and objectives.

1. **Major problems existing at the time of the 2008 Reexamination**

**a) Homes along major thoroughfares**

The existence of single-family homes along major thoroughfares like Collings Ave., Haddon Ave., the White Horse Pike and Route 130 continues to pose problems for the Borough since these dwellings are increasingly interspersed with commercial establishments and other incompatible non-residential uses. The land use conflicts between residences and businesses continue to pose safety problems and environmental nuisances for the residents along these busy streets.

**b) Blight from decline in on-site management of low-density housing**

The absence of on-site management of low-density housing and the overcrowding of dwellings originally designed for one-and two-family occupancy are no longer of a no longer concerns. Collingswood's participation in the Neighborhood Preservation Program from 2008 to 2013, coupled with the Borough's program to encourage and finance conversions of duplexes and triplexes, has adequately addressed this issue and restored those properties to single family form.

**c) Uncoordinated development/redevelopment of CBD**

That the lack of coordinated development is less of an issue than it was at the time of the last reexamination is evident from the public-private partnership resulting in the Lumberyard redevelopment. The prospect of another significant public-private initiative in redeveloping the parcel to be freed up from the demolition of the existing police building and garage is another indication that this is less of a concern.

**d) Underutilized and inadequate public and quasi-public uses**

With its increasing popularity as a performance theatre, the Excelsior Scottish Rite Temple has emerged as a focal point of culture and entertainment in the community. The planned consolidation of the fire department and police station in a shared building will not only mean closer integration of the Borough's emergency services and greater efficiencies in their delivery, but it will also free up space behind Haddon Ave. for much-needed off-street parking or other uses. Other upgrades of public facilities, including a major renovation of Roberts Pool and improvements to Knight Park, have taken place since the last reexamination.

**e) Inadequacy of stormwater management facilities on Route 130**

Since the last Reexamination, Route 130 in Collingswood underwent a major widening project which also included an upgrade of stormwater management facilities, installation of a pump station and continued purchase of private dwellings in flood-prone areas. These measures have mitigated but not completely eliminated flooding along this arterial.

2. **Goals and Objectives from the 2008 Reexamination.**

The goals and objectives from the 2008 Reexamination Report are as follows, and for those that remain viable, the Borough should continue to seek methods for full implementation. Our comments regarding their continued applicability *are in italics.*



### **Objectives relating to Land Use**

- a) Provide for strong regulations to ensure compatible land uses throughout the Borough. *This goal is still applicable.*
- b) Support the development of a strong Central Business District. *Although a tighter CBD that will increase walkability is preferred, this goal is still valid.*
- c) Promote a strong housing program with the goals of renovating, upgrading and transforming the previously converted multi-family housing back to their original single-family form. *As the Borough recently completed an effective program which addressed this issue, this goal is no longer valid.*
- d) Establish areas within the Borough which are appropriate for, and support, industrial and intensive commercial uses. *This goal is still applicable.*
- e) Encourage pedestrian friendly routes, particularly in the CBD and West Collingswood, using appropriate design solutions and regulations. *With the Borough's commitment to enhancing walkability, this goal is being addressed and is still valid.*

### **Objectives relating Housing**

- a) Expand and enhance the current building code enforcement program to promote a well-maintained residential housing base. *This goal is still valid.*
- b) Promote ongoing rehabilitation and upgrading of existing housing, both single- and multi-family. *This goal is still applicable.*
- c) Promote the owner occupancy of existing multi-family conversions in appropriate locations. *This goal is still valid.*
- d) Promote the conversion of multi-family units to single-family units in areas of predominantly single-family homes. *This goal is no longer valid.*
- e) Continue to provide a variety of affordable housing to citizens of the community *This goal is still valid*

### **Objectives relating to Economic Development**

- a) Establish strategic redevelopment districts throughout the Borough to take advantage of redevelopment designation benefits that can be utilized to attract commercial and industrial businesses to locate/relocate within the community. *This goal is still applicable.*
- b) Support the implementation of a Special Improvement District (SID) within business, industrial and highway commercial areas. *This goal is still valid.*
- c) Financially support the recruitment and attraction of specialty businesses, including markets, restaurants and retail chains. *This goal is still applicable.*
- d) Encourage the creative re-use of existing residential buildings along commercial corridors. *This goal is still valid.*

### **Objectives relating to Community Facilities**

- a) Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public officials and employees through the provision of adequate facilities With the future move of public works to a new facility on Route 130 and the imminent move of fire and police in a new shared building, this goal is being addressed and is still valid.
- b) Continue to support the creative re-use of the Excelsior Scottish Rite Temple as a theater and cultural center to create a focal point within the community. This goal is still valid.
- c) Encourage the redesign of Knight Park to include a variety of unique programming and environmental features This goal is still applicable
- d) Coordinate with the local Board of Education to allow for the school playgrounds to be used as active neighborhood recreational centers. This goal is still valid.
- e) Continue to upgrade and improve the Newton Creek and Cooper River Parks through active coordination with Camden County Parks Department. With the Borough's commitment to the Cooper River and Cross Camden County Trails, this goal is being addressed and is still valid.
- f) Capitalize on the Borough's remaining vacant parcels as well as the yards of homeowners to promote the preservation of open space and passive recreational opportunities. This goal is still applicable.

### **Objectives relating to Infrastructure and Utilities**

- a) Improve road and stormwater management systems to prevent flooding. Although the Route 130 widening project reduced flooding in that corridor, this goal is still valid due to the persistence of periodic flooding elsewhere in the Borough.
- b) Continue to upgrade and improve the current sewer and water systems. This goal is still applicable.

### **Objectives relating to Circulation**

- a) Promote walking and bicycle use throughout the Borough. With the commitment to implementing the Bicycle and Pedestrian Enhancements Master Plan and promoting the Cooper River and Cross Camden County Trails through the Borough, this goal is being addressed and is still valid.
- b) Through the redevelopment process, work with the business owners in the downtown areas to develop areas for public parking. With the planned relocation of fire and police to free up space for parking behind Haddon Ave., this goal is being addressed and is still valid.
- c) Continue to coordinate with state and county agencies to fund and implement road improvement projects. This goal is still applicable.

## Objectives relating to Recycling

- a) Decrease the amount of trash disposed by residents by increasing the amount of recycling. With the recent narrowing of acceptable recycling plastics and the decrease in markets for recycled materials, this goal will need to be reassessed.

## Objectives relating to Conservation

- a) Preserve and better use the existing open spaces within the Borough. This goal is still applicable.
- b) Explore the possibility of creating wetlands mitigation sites in key locations in the Borough for preservation of open spaces, education, and revenue sources. Due to limited resources and the lack of appropriate sites, this goal is no longer applicable.

- 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.***

## Changes in Local Conditions

### 1. Approval of Redevelopment Areas

Under Resolution 6-186, the entire Borough was deemed an “Area in Need of Rehabilitation”. With this Borough-wide declaration in place, Collingswood can develop and implement plans for the redevelopment and rehabilitation of areas throughout the municipality. Since the last Master Plan Reexamination, the municipality has adopted a new Redevelopment Plan (434 Haddon Avenue) and amended three others (Central Haddon Avenue, North Atlantic Avenue, and Haddon Avenue & Cuthbert Road).

### 2. Affordable Housing

In 2008, Collingswood adopted its first Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. On August 1, 2016, the Board of Commissioners adopted Chapter 85 of the Municipal Code. This chapter implemented and incorporated the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan and addressed the requirements of N.J.A.C. 5:93-1 et seq., as amended and supplemented, N.J.A.C. 5:80-26.1 et seq. as amended and supplemented, and the New Jersey Fair Housing Act of 1985. Chapter 85 provides assurances that low- and moderate-income units are created with controls on affordability over time and that low- and moderate-income households shall occupy those units. These actions, along with an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance adding an Affordable Housing

Overlay District, addressed the Borough's constitutional obligation to provide for its fair share of low- and moderate-income housing, as directed by the Superior Court.

3. Neighborhood Preservation Program

The Neighborhood Preservation Program (NPP) encourages private investment in some of the State's hard-pressed communities by awarding grants to strengthen the economic vigor of their threatened but viable neighborhoods. Earlier this year, Collingswood was cited by the State's Department of Community Affairs which administers the program as an "NPP Success Story". To date, the NPP has provided \$650,000 in rehabilitation assistance to 192 individual aging homes in the Borough. Combined with funding from other government and private sources, \$60 million has been invested in the municipality on redevelopment projects since the NPP began funding such projects. The Borough has continued to pursue this goal through its Rehabilitation Plan.

4. Abandoned Properties Rehabilitation Act

In the summer of 2019, Collingswood relied upon the powers afforded by the State's Abandoned Properties Rehabilitation Act (APRA) to begin the process of acquiring 12 of the Borough's 90 abandoned and foreclosed properties. This effort is part of a multi-community initiative to address this persistent problem which can contribute to urban blight. The APRA enables communities to take control of neglected properties with a plan for their rehabilitation. The Borough has seen the successful rehabilitation of more than 80 properties through implementation of the Act.

5. Census Analysis

As indicated in Figure 1 below, the 2013-2017 American Community Survey (ACS) estimate reveals that since the year 2000, the Borough witnessed modest decreases in both population and housing units, thereby continuing trends that were identified in the 2008 Master Plan Reexamination. While the pace of decline in the percentage of owner-occupied units has appeared to slow, vacancy rates have increased substantially, at 9% and 30%, respectively. More significant, however, was the increase in the median housing value during this 17-year time period by 69%, from \$153,564 to \$259,200, albeit a decline since its 2010 peak of \$282,755. Notwithstanding that the increase in property values accompanying such a jump is generally viewed positively since it reflects the success of the Borough's efforts to make Collingswood a more desirable place to live, it also means that low income families who are seeking homeownership in Collingswood are being priced out of the market. The Borough's efforts to provide affordable housing options is meant to address this issue. It should be additionally noted that the 2017 ACS figure is merely an estimate and has a range of +/- \$10,237.

The significant increase in the vacancy rate since 2010 and the decline in median housing value from that year are both areas of concern and should be closely monitored by the Borough.

**Figure 1: Population and Housing Changes**

	2000	2010	2017 Estimate	2000-2017 % Change
<b>Persons</b>	14,326	13,926	13,904	-3%
<b>Households</b>	6,263	6,299	6,023	-4%
<b>Median Housing Value</b>	\$153,564*	\$282,755*	\$259,200	69%
<b>Housing Units</b>	6,866	6,822	6,807	-1%
<b>Occupied</b>	6,263 (91.22%)	6,299 (92.33%)	6,023 (88.48%)	-4%
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	3,435 (54.85%)	3,331 (52.88%)	3,124 (51.87%)	-9%
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	2,828 (45.16%)	2,968 (47.12%)	2,899 (48.13%)	3%
<b>Vacant</b>	603 (8.78%)	523 (7.67%)	784 (11.51%)	30%
<b>Persons per Owner- Occupied unit</b>	2.66	2.53	2.71	2%

Source: 2000 Census, 2010 Census, 2013-2017 American Community Survey

\*Adjusted for inflation. Indicated in 2019 dollars.

As indicated in Figure 2 below, significant losses in land devoted to commercial services occurred during the 20-year period ending in 2010. This loss was largely offset by a substantial increase in land devoted to transportation. In terms of acreage, gains and losses in the other land use classifications were less significant. It is anticipated that, given the conversion of low-density multi-family units to single-family dwellings and the completion of the Lumberyard complex since 2010,

**Figure 2: Land Use by Acres**

	<b>1990</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Single Family</b>	560	530	-5%
<b>Multi Family</b>	88	72	-9%
<b>Industrial</b>	--	4	N/A
<b>Transportation</b>	234	292	25%
<b>Utility</b>	5	5	3%
<b>Commercial</b>	101	67	-34%
<b>Community Services</b>	31	41	32%
<b>Recreation</b>	130	124	-5%
<b>Agriculture</b>	--	--	N/A
<b>Wooded</b>	28	16	-43%
<b>Vacant</b>	--	18	N/A
<b>Water</b>	67	70	4%
<b>Total</b>	1,244	1,237	-1%

Source: DVRPC Municipal Data Navigator

acreage devoted to both single family and multi-family units in the Borough have increased. If this assumption is borne out, it will mean that declines in both classifications from 1990 to 2010 will have been reversed.

The number of housing units authorized by building permits is one of the many economic indicators used nationally. In fact, the housing market is a sector that is considered a leading indicator of changing economic conditions. As illustrated in Figure 3 below, building data from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) indicate that starting in 2010, few building permits for housing units were issued until 2013, at which time there was a large spike, followed by a resumption of the pre-2013 pace. A plausible explanation for the spike is the issuance of permits for new units in the Lumberyard complex.

**Figure 3: Building Permits Issued**

<b>Year</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Avg.</b>
<b>Building Permits Issued</b>	0	2	1	105	0	1	4	0	14

Source: NJDCA Construction Reporter, Building Permits, Yearly Summary Data, and Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits for New Construction

## **Changes in County Conditions**

### **1. Camden County Master Plan**

Camden County updated its 40-year old Master Plan in 2014. The updated Plan presents a regional perspective on land use, growth and changing conditions and provides guidance to the County's 37 municipalities, including Collingswood, until the year 2040. Similar to the Borough, the County is largely built out, with most remaining parcels already preserved for open space. In recognition of PATCO's train station in the Borough, the Plan identifies Collingswood as an existing "Transit Center" whose stated policy goal is to "Encourage active transit corridors by clustering growth, development, and a vibrant mix of uses within a walkable distance of transit stations". It also recognizes Haddon Ave. and the PATCO corridor along it as a "Main Street" whose stated policy goal is to "Support the vitality of neighborhood main streets as anchors of the local community".

### **2. Camden County Sustainability Plan**

In 2018, the Camden County Board of Freeholders adopted the County's first long-range sustainability plan. It builds on the 2007 County Green Initiative which emerged from the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Under the current plan, new initiatives have been established to achieve the vision of a Sustainable Camden County, encompassing 11 broad actions and 63 initiatives. Much of the focus is on County-owned properties, in particular green buildings and the environment, sustainable purchasing, support of local farms, and community outreach. This document is very much in line with the green strategies that Collingswood is working to implement.

Among the Green Community Spotlights contained in the Plan is Collingswood's Bike Share Program which is the first in Camden County. The County has undertaken its own Bike Share program modeled after the Borough's. The Plan also cites Collingswood's Farmers' Market as an exemplary operation that furthers the Plan's goal of increasing access to locally grown food throughout the County.

### **3. Cross Camden County Trail Feasibility Plan**

In 2017, the Board of Freeholders published the final draft of the Cross Camden County Trail Feasibility Plan. The Plan evaluates the feasibility of constructing a bicycle and pedestrian trail across the entire length of the County, beginning at the Delaware River waterfront and extending to the southeastern county line, a distance of 33 miles. This trail will act as the backbone of the future county-wide trail and bike lane network that was recently planned in conjunction with the DVRPC. For a summary of the segments of the trail that are proposed for Collingswood, please see the section on the DVRPC below.

4. Camden County Municipal Utility Authority (CCMUA) – Sustainable Infrastructure

Since the last Reexamination, across public agencies in New Jersey, including the CCMUA, there has been an emphasis on building sustainable communities. The Authority has employed the US Environmental Protection Agency’s Climate Evaluation and Awareness Tool which assists utility entities in identifying potential climate change threats and assessing their risks in order to determine how utility operations will be impacted. In an effort to reduce the rate of infiltration/inflow from groundwater intrusion into the wastewater management system, the CCMUA encourages the municipalities it serves, including Collingswood, to make needed repairs in their local collection systems. These repairs will reduce pumping requirements and, correspondingly, electricity costs. If passed onto its ratepayers, these cost savings will constrain future rate increases for Collingswood’s property owners.

**Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)**

1. DVRPC Highway Plan Element and TIP

In order to keep pace with changes expected by 2040, the DVRPC in 2017 prepared a Highway Plan Element Update which sets the long-term direction for the County route network. It identifies a number of projects slated for Collingswood, including corridor-wide intersection improvements for Haddon Ave., the White Horse Pike (Route 30), Lakeshore Drive, Browning Road, Park Drive, Collins Avenue, Fern Avenue and Bettewood Avenue. These projects focus on improving level of service, traffic signal timing, turning movements, overall safety for non-motorized users, complete streets investigations, ADA compliance and improved air quality.

DVRPC’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is an agreed-upon list of specific, shorter-term priority projects required for the region. It lists all projects that intend to use federal funds, along with non-federally funded projects that are regionally significant. Although the 2018 Transportation Improvement Program does not contain any projects specifically for Collingswood, there are a number of roadway improvement projects slated for the neighboring municipalities of Haddon Township, Camden, Pennsauken and Oaklyn.

2. Regional Trails Program

In 2011, DVRPC unveiled its Regional Trails Program by awarding its first grants for the design and construction of trails to complete the Circuit, Greater Philadelphia’s 800-mile network of multi-use trails. The Circuit Trail system repurposes unused rail corridors and utilizes linear parks along waterways to build and connect trails across the region and provide bicycle and pedestrian access to these parks and water courses. In addition, the Circuit will serve as a backbone for



a network of “bicycling highways” that will allow safe and efficient travel by bicycle between homes, businesses, parks, schools and institutions free from motorized traffic. In 2015, DVRPC published its Camden County Bicycling & Multi-Use Trails Plan which outlined plans for a comprehensive multi-use trail network throughout the County.

Two of the Circuit’s trails go through Collingswood. A segment of the existing Cooper River South Trail along S. Park Drive connects to the Cooper River North Trail and the recently opened Gateway Park in Pennsauken. When completed, it will link Collingswood to the Benjamin Franklin Bridge and Philadelphia. The planned Cross Camden County Trail, with segments along Browning Road, Collings Avenue and Champion Avenue, will link the Cooper River South Trail, Knight Park and Newton Lake Park with the trail’s main Conrail rail-with-trail segment. This 33-mile trail through the Borough, from Camden City to the Atlantic County line in Winslow Township, will link Collingswood with the Camden Greenway and Shore trails. A spur of this trail, the East Atlantic Bikeway, is proposed along Champion Avenue and the active Conrail freight line on the Borough’s southwestern boundary. It connects Camden City and Woodlynne with Collingswood and links up with the Cross Camden County Trail at Collings Avenue.

### 3. Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

The DVRPC has identified Haddon Avenue in Collingswood and neighboring Haddon Township as a significant bicycle and pedestrian corridor. Under its Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) grant program, the Commission provided funding to a partnership of Haddon Township and the Borough for the preparation of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The Plan develops a bicycle and pedestrian network that helps further connect the two communities with a specific focus on travel to and through the Haddon Avenue corridor. Additionally, the plan maximizes multimodal connections through various forms of transit options.

## **Changes in State Conditions**

A lot has changed in New Jersey over the past eleven years. While far from an exhaustive list, below are some of the more significant updates and amendments that impact planning and land use at all levels of government.

1. Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) - Along with the extension of the Municipal Master Plan time frame for amendment from six years to ten years, the MLUL was updated to enable municipalities to incorporate inherently beneficial uses into their land development regulations. An example is the 2010 law exempting solar panels from impervious cover requirements.

2. Time of Decision Rule - In 2011, New Jersey enacted a law prohibiting the application of the judicially created Time of Decision rule to “applications for development”. Specifically, the Time of Application Law provides “those development regulations which are in effect on the date of submission of an application for development shall govern the review of that application for development, and any decision made with regard to that application for development”.
3. Affordable Housing Rules - In 2004, five years after the end of the Second Round Substantive Rules of the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing in 1999, the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) adopted the first version of the Third Round Substantive Rules. After various legal challenges to COAH regulations a 2010 Appellate Division decision directing COAH to use a methodology similar to those previously used in the First and Second Rounds (the decision did affirm certain Third Round Substantive Rules). COAH finally approved draft Third Round Substantive Rules in 2014 but deadlocked 3-3 in voting, thus failing to adopt the draft rules. The failure of COAH to adopt new regulations led to additional litigation and ultimately the Supreme Court’s 2015 ruling now known as Mt. Laurel IV, which transferred review and approval responsibility from COAH to designated Mt. Laurel trial judges.
4. Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL) - The LRHL, P.L. 1 992,c.79 (C.40A: 1 2A-1 et seq.) was amended in 2013 to eliminate potential obstacles to redevelopment related to condemnation and eminent domain for public purposes and changed qualifying conditions whereby an area in need of redevelopment is determined. This amendment also allows municipalities to maximize their redevelopment powers. Future redevelopment investigation studies and amendments to existing redevelopment plans in Collingswood will need to meet the new procedures.
5. State Grants awarded to Collingswood - Since the last Master Plan Reexamination, the State has expanded the number and size of grants awarded to the Borough. Below is a sampling of the more recent significant State grants awarded to Collingswood.
  - **Safe Streets to Transit Program (SSTT)** provides funding to municipalities to improve access to transit facilities and all nodes of public transportation. In 2016, SSTT funded the installation of a pedestrian bump-out at the intersection of Homestead & Haddon Avenues.
  - **Safe Routes to School Program (SRSP)** assists communities with implementing projects to encourage walking and biking to and from school as a safe, daily activity. In 2019, NJDOT awarded Collingswood another in a series of annual grants to participate in this program.

- **Safe and Secure Communities Program (SSCP)** provides municipalities with funding to add law enforcement personnel vital to effective police operations and other crime-related strategies. In 2019, the Department of Law & Public Safety awarded Collingswood another in a series of annual grants to participate in this program.
- **Transportation and Community Development Initiative Program** funded the aforementioned Haddon Ave. Corridor Study and Bicycle and Pedestrian Enhancements Master Plan.
- **Neighborhood Preservation Program** funded rehabilitation and redevelopment projects in the Borough as discussed earlier in this Report.
- **Abandoned Properties Rehabilitation Act** funded the acquisition and rehabilitation of abandoned properties in the Borough as discussed earlier in this Report.

*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.*

1. **Master Plan Recommendations** - The current Master Plan was adopted by the Planning Board in 1999. It remains valid and continues to further the land use and planning goals of the Borough. This report is the second Reexamination of the Plan, the first having been completed in 2008. The 2008 Reexamination Report recommended numerous updates and revisions to the Master Plan, including updates to the goals and objectives.

This Reexamination Report recommends that the Borough consider amending the Master Plan to include a Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Plan Element. This document can serve as a policy guideline for future regulations regarding renewable energy, passive solar design, greenhouse gas emissions, natural resource and wildlife protection, sustainable practices and green building construction. Additionally, inclusion of this optional element will increase the likelihood of securing certain competitive grants under the Sustainable Jersey<sup>1</sup> certification program. In 2013 and 2016, Collingswood was certified by the program at the Bronze level. Due to ongoing efforts and the desire to create a more sustainable community, in 2019 the Borough was certified Silver. The Borough gained approval of 37 actions through 14 categories including, but not limited, to energy efficiency, alternative transportation, animals in the community, woodlands/forestry management, health and wellness.

Further Master Plan actions to consider include adopting the draft Environment Resource Inventory (ERI) as an appendix to the Master Plan, obtaining a grant to

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<sup>1</sup> A private organization that provides tools, training and financial incentives to support communities pursuing sustainability programs.

create public electric charging stations and amending the Historic Preservation Element of the Master Plan.

In light of recent changes in State regulations regarding Affordable Housing, the Borough should also consider adopting a new Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. This adoption is necessitated by changes in State regulations. The new Element and Plan would reflect these changes and enable the municipality to be compliant with the State's current standards.

Furthermore, as development interest in the Borough continues to increase, the Borough's goals and objectives should be revised to reflect a desire to maintain the municipalities traditional built form. This Master Plan amendment hereby adds the following objective relating to housing:

- Maintain and enhance the existing character of residential neighborhoods through the preservation of existing housing typologies.

2. **Implementation of Complete Streets Policy** - "Complete Streets" refers to the means by which safe access is provided by designing and operating a comprehensive, integrated, connected multimodal network of transportation options. planning, design, construction and maintenance of roads to meet the needs of all users. Earlier this year, the Borough took its first step toward adopting a Complete Streets Policy when the Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution expressing its commitment to implementing a Complete Streets policy through the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of new and retrofit transportation facilities to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicle users and motorists of all ages and abilities. It is recommended that the Borough implement this commitment by amending the Municipal Code to reflect a Complete Streets Policy.
3. **Provide more parking in the CBD** - In response to the shortage of parking in the downtown business district, the Borough should explore solutions for increasing parking availability on both public and private lots.
4. **Zoning district boundary revisions** - There are a number of changes to the configurations of zoning districts that are recommended below. They are a result of changing conditions in the Borough and will require the redrawing of certain zoning district lines.
  - a) The over-extension of the Central Business District (CBD) has resulted in urban sprawl whereby active business uses become interspersed with non-commercial uses and vacant properties. This has created gaps in the continuity of street-level active storefronts and conflicts with the Borough's goal of increasing the downtown's walkability. Consequently, the CBD should be tightened to a strip bounded by Fern Avenue on the east and Harvard Avenue on the west.

- b) The Professional Office District (POD) should be extended to incorporate the blocks that would no longer be included in the CBD as a result of the CBD's tightening.

5. **Development Regulation Recommendations** - Development regulations generally allow for ease of administration and the ability of the Borough to meet its needs. Changes as stated below should be considered.

- a) **Restrict residential uses in the POD** - To promote a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly downtown, exclusion of single-family detached homes from Haddon Avenue in the POD should be considered. This will serve to encourage the location, maintenance and expansion of the other uses permitted in the POD. The desired result would be a reduction in the interruption of continuous office uses along downtown's major thoroughfare.
- b) **Address unregulated uses** – There are a number of unregulated uses that are either prohibited or not explicitly permitted in the Borough. A comprehensive review of the Zoning Code and Map should be undertaken to determine if it would be appropriate for certain districts to accommodate uses including but not limited to, tattoo shops, medical marijuana facilities, arcades, and short-term residential rentals.
- c) **Change of Use** - Due to the Borough's development regulations requiring the use of SIC codes in applications for change in use, there are instances where inconsequential changes require a hearing before the Planning Board. The Borough should consider removing reference to SIC codes from both the definition of "change in use" and Section 141-25, and revising appropriately.
- d) **Adjust bulk requirements for small lots** - The bulk requirements in certain small-lot single-family residential zones like the SF-D2 and SF-D3 districts are so restrictive that applications for minor improvements and accessory structures, such as small decks and sheds, often require variances. Minimum side and rear yard setbacks in these districts should be critically examined and adjusted where appropriate so as to reduce the need for variances without adversely impacting neighboring properties.
- e) **Require Green Stormwater Infrastructure** - Much of Collingswood is taken up with impervious coverage, and when combined with the Borough's many buried underground streams, the result is periodic flooding of streets and basements during and immediately after rainstorm episodes. This combination has strained the storm sewer collection systems in the municipality. Requiring new single-family residential construction to install such green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) as dry wells and vegetated

swales and incentivizing more widespread use of rain barrels by existing dwellings are just a few measures that can lessen the impact of storms and promote Collingswood's sustainability.

- f) **Update and refine Definitions** - It is important to consider the definition of words and confirm that the purpose of the ordinance is being satisfied. If additional classifications or standards are added to the Zoning Ordinance, the definition section should be updated accordingly. A definition should be provided for all verbiage which might otherwise leave room for interpretation. For example, the definition of "fast food restaurants" in the Ordinance should be worded more precisely to avoid the inclusion under this definition of establishments which are clearly not fast food restaurants.
  
- g) **Exempt uses from impervious cover requirements** – State law now exempts porous paving and concrete from maximum impervious cover limitations. In the interests of promoting greater sustainability, Collingswood could take full advantage of this provision by amending the Municipal Code to exempt porous paving from impervious cover requirements.
  
- h) **Consolidate design standards for signs** – Article IX of the General Code contains design standards that apply to all signs in the Borough. However, Article VIII sets forth separate design standards for signs associated with certain specific uses, namely automotive service stations and convenience stores. It would make more sense to consolidate all design standards for signs in Article IX which is devoted in its entirety to regulating signs.
  
- i) **Reassess limited breweries in the CBD** – The Zoning Ordinance permits "limited breweries" in the CBD. According to current State regulations, this type of brewery can produce up to 300,000 bbl. annually which essentially means that a beer manufacturing facility could locate downtown. Instead, consideration should be given to allowing a "restricted brewery" in the CBD. This type of brewery is more appropriate in a downtown since it can only produce up to 10,000 bbl. per year and, unlike a limited brewery, it can operate in conjunction with an adjoining restaurant. Limited breweries are also permitted in the Highway Business zone where they are more appropriate.
  
- j) **Revise residential zoning standards** - Each residential neighborhood in Collingswood has a distinct aesthetic and character. Under current residential zoning standards, there is little incentive, outside of the historic preservation districts, for new construction or redevelopment to conform to the existing neighborhood character. Consideration should be given to revising residential zoning standards to more accurately represent existing development patterns.

- e. *The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law,” P.L. 1992, c. 79 (C. 40A:12-1 et al.) 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. (L. 1975, c. 291, s. 76; amended 1980, c. 146, s. 6; 1985, c. 516, s. 18; 1987, c. 102, s. 29; 1992, c. 79, s. 50.)*

The Borough of Collingswood has employed redevelopment planning pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq. as a mechanism to stimulate growth and has designated various areas to be in need of redevelopment. Since the last Reexamination, a number of redevelopment plans were adopted and amended. They include the following:

1. **Amendment to the North Atlantic Redevelopment Plan** – In 2012, the Borough amended the Redevelopment Plan for the North Atlantic Redevelopment Area to enable the expansion of the Lumberyard mixed use development. The amendment encompasses a parcel at the corner of Haddon Avenue and Powell Lane on a block bounded by Haddon Avenue to the north, Powell Lane and N. Atlantic Avenue to the east, the PATCO High Speed Line to the south and W. Knight Avenue to the west. The original Plan, which was adopted in 1999, limited development to permitted and conditional uses within the central business district. The amendment expanded the list of permitted uses to include the apartments, condominiums, offices, retail and structured parking that make up the Lumberyard complex.
2. **Amendment to Central Haddon Ave. Redevelopment Plan** – In 2015, the Board of Commissioners amended the Central Haddon Avenue Redevelopment Plan to provide that all newly constructed buildings or renovations to existing buildings within the Redevelopment Zone be restricted to one-story structures. The original Plan was adopted in 2001.
3. **Amendment to Haddon Ave. & Cuthbert Rd. Redevelopment Plan** - Also in 2015, the Borough amended the Redevelopment Plan for Haddon Avenue & Cuthbert Road. The amendment expands the range of permitted uses under the Plan to include banks and allows for multiple principal uses in a single building. The Redevelopment Zone encompasses Lots 2 and 2.01 of Block 59. The original Plan was adopted in 1998.
4. **Haddon Ave. Redevelopment Plan** - Earlier this year, the Borough adopted a Redevelopment Plan for the parcel at 434 Haddon Avenue. The parcel is on a block bounded by Haddon Avenue to the north, W. Zane Avenue to the east, Wallace Avenue to the south and W. Summerfield Avenue to the west. The Plan will enable the construction of a public safety building combining municipal police and fire prevention services. By superseding the underlying zoning for this parcel, the Plan obviates the need to amend the underlying zoning in order to make minor change.

Additional land which should also be considered for potential redevelopment is the Bible Presbyterian Church, which occupies the corner of Cuthbert Boulevard and Haddon Avenue. The Church is located on Block 61, Lots 7, 8, 9, 9.01, 9.02, and 9.04. The location of these lots in relation to Haddon Avenue and the Borough's commercial corridor presents a significant opportunity for redevelopment.

The Borough has adopted a Plan for Rehabilitation for the entirety of the Borough. While this plan provides for the implementation of a rehabilitation program and associated funds to be utilized for property maintenance and upkeep, this plan should be amended to incorporate and effectuate, where appropriate, the Borough's desire to maintain the residential character of a neighborhood and to encourage construction to maintain scale and aesthetics from the surrounding neighborhood.

Further, additional areas may be deemed in need of redevelopment or rehabilitation given the applicability of certain criteria and undertaking of appropriate procedures outlined in the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law. If the study area is deemed an area in need of redevelopment or rehabilitation, this would then permit the preparation and execution of a redevelopment plan, and – should the plan call for such action – the acquisition of buildings and land through condemnation, the leasing or selling of property without public bidding, and allow the area to qualify for financial incentives.

### III. **CONCLUSION**

This Reexamination Report concludes that the 1999 Master Plan, with subsequent Reexaminations and amendments as proposed herein, remains a viable document for the advancement of planning policy necessary for guiding the future development and redevelopment of land in the Borough. This report further concludes that the goals and objectives of the Master Plan, which include efficient land consumption, protection and preservation of historic resources and existing community character, should be retained and reassessed as included in this report. Finally, it is concluded that this Reexamination Report should be considered at the same time as an amendment to the Master Plan.