

Master Plan Implementation Strategy

Qualifying Strategic Planning Areas for Redevelopment Action

Borough of Collingswood, New Jersey

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**MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
QUALIFYING STRATEGIC PLANNING AREAS FOR REDEVELOPMENT ACTION**

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MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

QUALIFYING STRATEGIC PLANNING AREAS FOR REDEVELOPMENT ACTION

I. INTRODUCTION

What the Master Plan is to the comprehensive planning process, the Redevelopment Strategies are to the Implementation of the Goals and Objectives of the Community. A Master Plan without a Strategic Implementation Strategy remains a static document that does not maximize its potential for change. In Collingswood, the redevelopment process is a vital instrument in initiating change because the Community is a built-up community in which aged and/or incompatible land use components must be separated in order to properly restructure the community. The Municipal Land Use Law serves as a tool for such implementation processes. The strategies set forth in the Master Plan process have been translated into distinct areas which will be analyzed as part of this report for qualification as redevelopment areas.

The benefits of such a redevelopment process in Collingswood is as follows:

- Provide a comprehensive and strategic approach to implementing the Borough's planning objectives as part of specifically designated redevelopment areas in the community.
- Focus the community's resources on designated redevelopment areas with specific goals, time frames and implementation strategies.
- Maximize the creative opportunity between public and private sector institutions, thus forging a bond that leads to the implementation of specific projects.
- Provide exemptions to the Borough from the many traditional municipal limitations, such as public bidding and the inability to use eminent domain.
- Permit negotiated payments in lieu of taxes for a period of 30 years based upon the value of the project to the community.
- Provide more sophisticated development opportunities for realistic project objectives based on actual market conditions.
- Provide specific Borough control of a redevelopment project based upon sound business practices.
- Allow the Municipality to enter into the marketplace to forge public/private partnerships unrestrained by traditional municipal laws.

From a practical perspective, the implementation of redevelopment strategies provide a wide range of opportunities for the Borough to function in a role of

public/private partnerships. For example, the incentives that could be provided to the Borough via redevelopment process include:

- Underwriting, either totally or partially, the cost of infrastructure.
- Prepare cooperative agreements and municipal bonding for financing where developers would pay the debt service.
- Waiving the traditional limitations required as part of the Municipal Law, such as public bidding.
- Selecting the best possible developer rather than being limited to the lowest bidder.
- Providing financial incentives, such as grants, low interest loans and tax abatements to responsible developers that make a distinct improvement in the economic vitality of the community.
- Eliminating obsolete, archaic land ownership patterns by assembling lands through direct purchase or eminent domain for designated redevelopment projects and then transferring lands to a recognized developer.
- Allowing the Borough to have infinite control over projects with respect to design, theme, phasing, financing, etc., which are part of the conditions of a redevelopment plan. Functionally, and within certain limits, the Borough can essentially act as if it were a private entity entering into a legitimate business with a private sector business partner.

The following study evaluates the eligibility of 3 areas for justification for qualifying as redevelopment areas. These areas are:

1. West Collingswood
2. Central Business District (CBD)
3. Route 130 Corridor

II. QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

Qualifying an area for redevelopment or rehabilitation action requires adherence to the criteria listed in the local Redevelopment and Housing Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:12a-1, et. al. These criteria are quoted as follows:

- A. The generality of buildings are substandard, unsanitary, dilapidated or obsolete or possess any such characteristics or are so lacking in light, air or space as to be conducive to unwholesome living or working conditions.
- B. The use of buildings previously used for commercial manufacturing or industrial purposes and the abandonment of such buildings or the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to be unusable.
- C. Public or privately owned land that has remained so for a period of 10 years prior to the adoption of the resolution, and by reason of its location, remoteness, lack of means of access to developed sections or portions of such municipality, topography or nature of the soil is not likely to be developed through private capital.
- D. Areas with buildings or improvements which, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout or any combination of these, or any other factors are detrimental to the safety, health, morals or welfare of the community.
- E. A growing or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of title, diverse ownership of real property therein or other conditions, resulting in a stagnant or not fully productive condition of land potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare.
- F. Areas in excess of 5 contiguous acres where upon buildings or improvements have been destroyed, consumed by fire, demolished or altered by action of storm, fire, cyclone, tornado, earthquake or other casualty in such a way that aggregate assessed value of the area has been materially depreciated.

In assessing these needs, the one most applicable to the Borough of Collingswood is Item D. - Areas where buildings or improvements, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty arrangement of design...deleterious land use or obsolete layout, or any combination of these...are detrimental to the safety, health, morals or welfare of the community.

On an area by area basis, the following portions of this report will identify conditions that qualify these districts for inclusion as redevelopment areas.

III. JUSTIFICATION FOR QUALIFYING AS REDEVELOPMENT AREAS

A. WEST COLLINGSWOOD

Evaluating the neighborhood business core at Collings Avenue and the White Horse Pike as a potential redevelopment area is justified based upon the following reasons:

1. The old bank building located in a key core of this area has been vacant for over 3 years. It currently exists as an "obsolete building". The vacancy of the bank impedes the development of the rest of the area. Conversely, the rebirth of the bank as some adaptive reuse would activate this business district. There exists within this area original single family residential buildings converted into multi-family units without adequate parking and proper open space. Collectively, these uses may be considered obsolete in their layout and design. In other instances, existing office buildings have been developed without regard to appropriate buffers from existing residential units. Again, these constitute a deleterious impact of traffic upon residential areas and constitute an obsolete layout.
2. Along Collings Avenue south towards Route 130 to the border of Haddon Township at Champion Avenue, there exist single family residential properties converted into multi-family dwellings and commercial properties interspersed among residential properties without adequate buffers and screening. Both constitute obsolete and improper design conditions.
3. Along the White Horse Pike from the Route 130 circle to Collings Avenue, there exist a series of mixed uses extending from converted residential properties to office buildings. Within this core also exist the Scottish Rite Temple Masonic Lodge and some office buildings. There also exist some vacant land. However, it is unclear as to whether or not this land has been vacant for over 10 years. Conditions which exist in this area are obsolete residential properties converted to multi-family and commercial properties among residential with inappropriate buffers and screening. Collectively, these areas would be best served by a combination of rehabilitation and redevelopment efforts.

B. CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD)

Within the Central Business District there currently exists a redevelopment area located along the south side of Haddon Avenue in the core of the retail commercial area. Therefore, the precedent has been set to establish an expanded redevelopment area. Generally speaking, an area from Knight Avenue to Fern Avenue represents approximately a 7-block area along either side of Haddon Avenue, which constitutes the core of the retail commercial area of Collingswood. Within this area one can find:

- Obsolete building layout
- Obsolete building types
- Lack of adequate parking which is the result of faulty arrangement or design.
- Incompatible building types that do not generate retail commercial traffic within the retail commercial corridor.

In addition to these conditions, the higher density residential concentrations at the edges of the Central Business District demonstrate overcrowding and are without adequate parking. In other instances, buildings converted from single family to multi-family units create excessive land coverage conditions. Collectively, these conditions qualify the Central Business District area for redevelopment action.

C. U.S. ROUTE 130 CORRIDOR

The U.S. Route 130 Corridor extending from the border of Camden to Woodlynne extends for a length of approximately 2,800-ft. From the Camden border to the PATCO High Speed Line, residential and commercial uses are literally at the right-of-way line of the highway. A similar situation extends throughout the Rt. 130 Corridor causing tight right-of-way conditions from adjoining land uses. The highway, which was designed for less volume and slower cars, currently generates conditions of obsolete layout, building types and a poor arrangement of buildings along its edges. Residential properties that are located along the highway frontage are subjected to noise and air quality conditions that are unacceptable. Access and egress from gas stations, car washes, diners, etc., create unsafe traffic conditions. Lastly, the relationship between commercial uses fronting along the highway but abutting residential properties along their rear property lines, do so with virtually no buffers or separation, thus creating clear conditions of obsolete layout.

Without question, the U.S. Route 130 Corridor for its length in Collingswood would clearly qualify for redevelopment action and activity.

Figures SPA-1 through SPA-3, describe highway conditions that are typical along Route 130 in Collingswood.

FIGURE SPA-1

**ROUTE 130 RIGHT-OF-WAY AREA
BOROUGH OF COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**

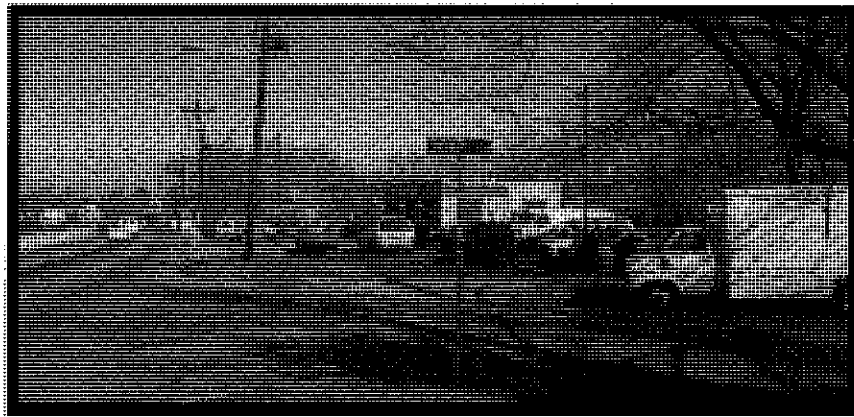


SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., 1999

Right-of-way areas that are not maximized with a planned landscape treatment

FIGURE SPA-2

**HIGHWAY USES AT ROUTE 130
BOROUGH OF COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., 1999

Highway uses at Route 130 without adequate setbacks or buffers

FIGURE SPA-3

**TYPICAL HIGHWAY CONDITIONS ALONG ROUTE 130
BOROUGH OF COLLINGSWOOD, NEW JERSEY**



SOURCE: PETER P. KARABASHIAN ASSOCIATES, INC., 1999

Typical Highway Uses Along Route 130
