



Washington

Home Town Friendly



## INTRODUCTION

The Borough of Washington (“Borough”) is located in the southern portion of Warren County, and is surrounded by Washington Township in all four directions. The Borough is a “crossroads” community with its downtown located at the intersection of Routes 31 and 57, two major roadways in the region. The Borough’s downtown is a prominent, if underutilized, center of commercial activity, providing goods and services to several nearby municipalities.

The Borough’s location is in close proximity to several major transportation links. The Morris Canal ran along the north end of the Borough, while the Morris & Essex Railroad ran along its southern end. Much of the development of the Borough’s downtown can be attributed to the generation of a niche market in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. At that time the Borough served as a hub for the manufacturing of musical instruments, primarily organs and pianos. Several of the Borough’s Victorian style homes and public buildings were built during this period.

The automobile made the Borough more accessible to and from the Leigh High Valley and New York City. These areas gradually became employment centers for Borough residents. Several apartment complexes and residential buildings were constructed during the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to serve a growing population.

The Borough eventually faced a decline due to the development of strip shopping malls and supermarkets along major highways. In addition, rapid growth of big-box commercial stores increased automotive usage, scarcity of parking and suburban sprawl. Large commercial supermarkets are located in the immediate vicinity of the Borough, several shopping malls provide retail - shopping alternatives to the Borough’s downtown

and 2 multiplex cinemas in Mansfield Township and Pohatcong Township provide entertainment alternatives. Several big box stores are within 9 miles of the Borough and several regional malls are located within a 45 minute drive from the Borough. These local and regional alternatives provide intense competition and have negatively impacted the Borough’s downtown.

To combat the downturn of the downtown, the Borough embarked on a revitalization mission in the business district. In furtherance of that mission, the Borough produced the Downtown Revitalization Plan in 2002 that outlines a vision and action plan for revitalizing the downtown business district (“Downtown”).

This Downtown Redevelopment Plan translates prior efforts into a regulatory blueprint for the physical configuration, design and development of the various sub areas that will form the rejuvenated Downtown. This Plan combines the ideas obtained from the intensive public input process with the information and recommendations secured from previous planning efforts.

Redevelopment pursuant to this Plan presents an opportunity to enhance a traditional town center with vibrant streetscapes, quality open space, pedestrian comfort, and adequate parking. The Downtown will offer what its competition cannot: a spirit of community and inextricable charm.



## STATUTORY CRITERIA

According to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.), (“Redevelopment Law”) a redevelopment plan shall include an outline for the planning, development, redevelopment or rehabilitation of the project area sufficient to indicate:

- a. Its relationship to definitive local objectives as to appropriate land uses, density of population and improved traffic and public transportation, public utilities, recreational and community facilities and other public improvements;
- b. Proposed land uses and building requirements in the project area;
- c. Adequate provision for the temporary and permanent relocation, as necessary, of residents in the project area including an estimate of the extent to which decent, safe and sanitary dwelling units affordable to displaced residents will be available to them in the existing local housing market;

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- d. An identification of any property within the redevelopment area proposed to be acquired in accordance with the redevelopment plan;
- e. Any significant relationship of the redevelopment plan to:
  - The master plans of contiguous municipalities;
  - The master plan of the county in which the municipality is located; and
  - The State Development and Redevelopment Plan adopted pursuant to the “State Planning Act,” P.L. 1985, c.398 (N.J.S.A. 52:18A-196 et seq.).



A redevelopment plan shall also include a description of its relationship to pertinent municipal development regulations as defined in the “Municipal Land Use Law,” P.L. 1975, c.291 (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq.).

Finally, a redevelopment plan shall either be substantially consistent with the municipal master plan or designed to effectuate the master plan unless the governing body adopts the ordinance approving the redevelopment plan and affirmatively states the reasons why the redevelopment plan is inconsistent with, or not designed to effectuate, the master plan.



## REDEVELOPMENT AREA: LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The Downtown includes 6 sub areas that have been designed as an “area in need of redevelopment” A detailed list of the designed blocks and lots appears in Appendix A attached hereto describes the Redevelopment Area (as described herein). The Plan is binding and supercedes existing zoning in the Redevelopment Area.

Land uses within the Downtown are typical of most traditional downtowns and main streets. The properties fronting on Washington Avenue generally include a pedestrian-friendly mixture of retail goods and services and offices, with public and quasi-public uses. The properties surrounding

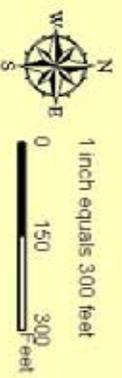
the intersection of Route 31 and Route 57 include gasoline filling stations, convenience stores, and fast-food drive-through services that are automobile-oriented. The Downtown also contains a sizeable amount of residential uses that include single-family, two-family and multi-family dwellings.

The location of the residential community surrounding the Downtown, coupled with a strong circulation system, will lend to the success of businesses in the Downtown.



Map Source: NJDEP and New Jersey Highlands Council, Washington Borough

**REDEVELOPMENT AREA MAP (MAP 1)**  
 Downtown Redevelopment Plan  
 Borough of Washington Warren County, NJ



Prepared by:  
 Heyer, Gruel & Associates



## VISION FOR THE DOWNTOWN

This Plan envisions a vibrant Downtown that includes a healthy mix of commercial and residential space within a functional and coherent architectural theme. Vibrant, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes with ornamental lighting, seating, outdoor cafes and public art will serve to attract people of all ages. Capitalizing on centralized parking areas, the Downtown will provide easy access and safe parking for residents as well as businesses. Public open spaces will be integrated into the fabric of the Downtown and will become a catalyst for economic development.

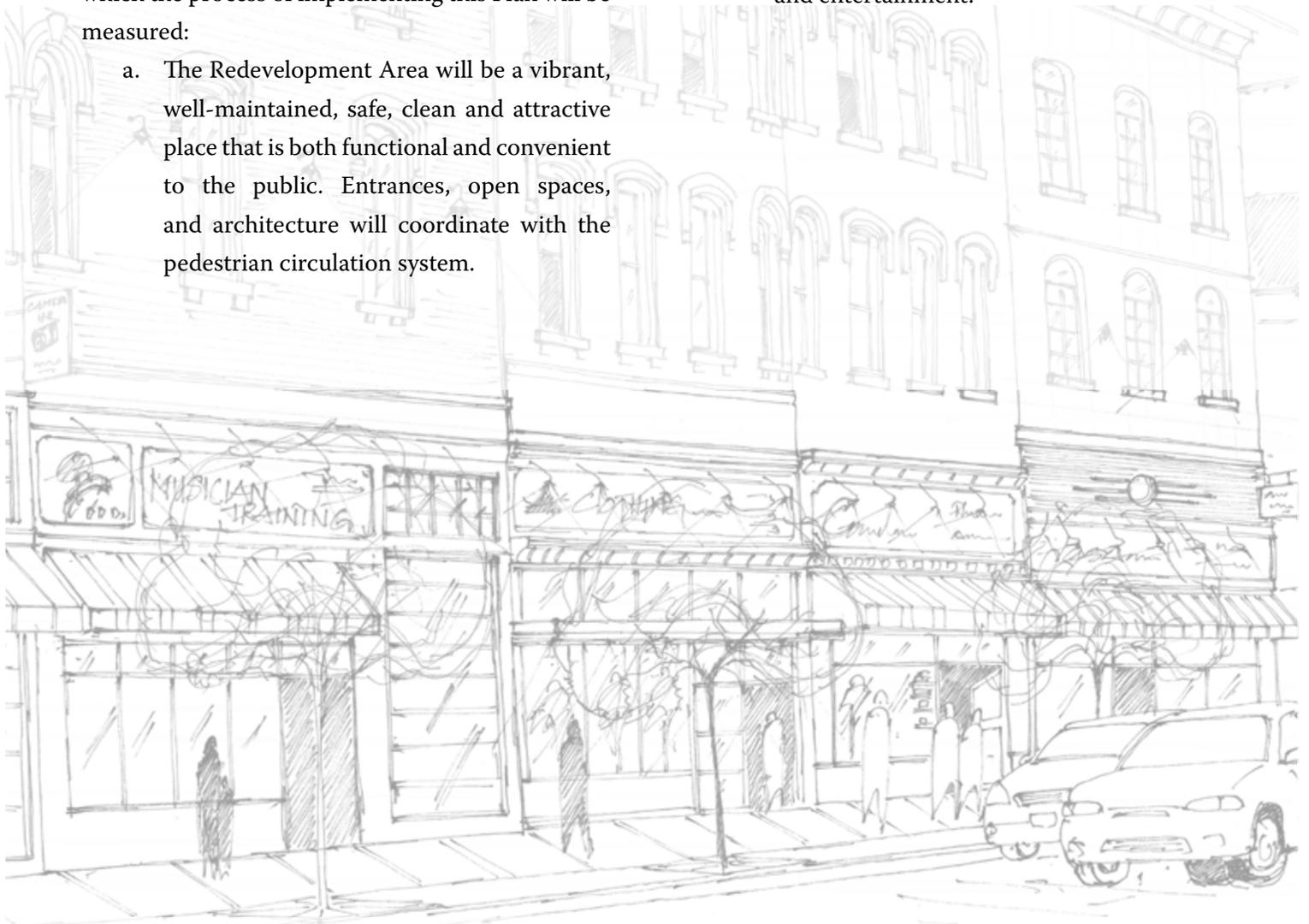
Route 31 will serve as a gateway to the Downtown with signage to indicate the same.

### Plan Principles and Vision Statements

The following principles are the benchmarks by which the process of implementing this Plan will be measured:

- a. The Redevelopment Area will be a vibrant, well-maintained, safe, clean and attractive place that is both functional and convenient to the public. Entrances, open spaces, and architecture will coordinate with the pedestrian circulation system.

- b. The Redevelopment Area will be friendly to the needs of pedestrians while providing convenient access to those who take advantage of public transportation, bicycles, and motor vehicles. The Plan includes bike racks, indoor storage facilities and locker rooms where appropriate and feasible.
- c. The Redevelopment Area will provide a unique living experience that will include higher density residential units incorporated with parks, plazas and other public spaces.
- d. The Residential Area will foster a vibrant business environment. The ground floor of each building will have mercantile and service businesses allowing for office and residential uses above.
- e. The Downtown will provide an all day experience of shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment.



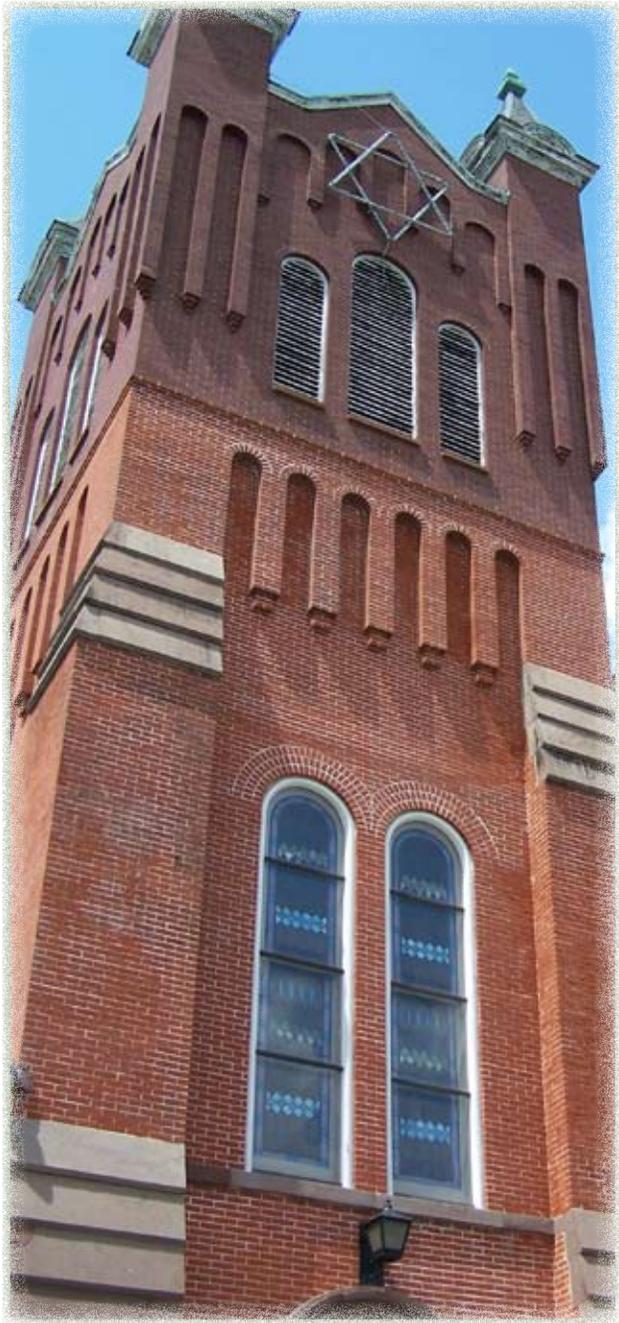


## PLAN GOALS

This Plan is substantially consistent with the Borough's Master Plan and the (revised) Downtown Revitalization Plan of 2002 to meet the following goals detailed herein .

### *a. Land Use and Design Goals:*

1. Provide incentives to update retail space in the Redevelopment Area through new construction, rehabilitation and/or redevelopment.



2. Ensure that new retail space caters to consumer needs not yet met by existing, viable businesses.
3. Maintain Washington Avenue orientation of the existing Downtown to enhance the function and character of the area.
4. Extend the dense pedestrian scaled development of the Redevelopment Areas in the Downtown to Route 31.
5. Create a contrasting gateway at the intersection of Route 31 and Route 57 to identify the Downtown.
6. Design a seamless edge of storefronts to invite people to explore all of the Downtown.
7. Replace gaps in street frontage, created by barren spaces such as off-street parking areas, with viable retail and mixed-use buildings.
8. Develop a direct access to the Shabbecong Creek Greenway while utilizing the area adjacent to this creek for public open space.
9. Establish a restaurant and entertainment center and a complete center for convenience goods and services within the Redevelopment Area.
10. Use zoning and design standards to reinforce pedestrian-scaled storefront design.
11. Prohibit development in the Redevelopment Area that would disrupt the unique pedestrian character of the Downtown.
12. Encourage one-story buildings in the Redevelopment Area to redevelop/renovate to building types more appropriate for the Downtown.



## RELATIONSHIP OF PLAN TO THE BOROUGH'S LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

This plan encourages both rehabilitation of existing structures and redevelopment of larger projects. The core principles of the Plan utilized to develop the concept designs contained herein can be applied in many different and creative ways.

The Redevelopment Area shall be redeveloped in accordance with the standards detailed in this Plan. This Plan supersedes any provision of the Borough Land Use Regulations for the Redevelopment Area as well as the use and bulk provisions thereof. However, existing engineering standards, performance standards and definitions shall apply, as reiterated herein in Appendix B. The Borough's Land Development Regulations shall continue to apply to lots within the Downtown that are not included in the Redevelopment Plan.

In connection with site plan and/or subdivision applications, the Planning Board may grant deviations from the regulations contained within this Plan that may be required by reason of: (i) the shape of a specific piece of property (including exceptional narrowness or shallowness); (ii) exceptional topographic conditions; (iii) pre-existing structures; or (iv) physical features uniquely affecting a specific piece of property.

The Planning Board may also grant a deviation in the event that the strict application of any area, yard, bulk or design objective or regulation adopted pursuant to this Plan would result in exceptional or undue hardship to a property owner.

The Planning Board may also grant a deviation from the bulk standards contained within this Plan related to a specific piece of property where the purposes of this Plan would be advanced by such deviation and the benefits of granting the deviation would outweigh any detriments.

The Planning Board may grant reasonable deviations or waivers of design standards from the requirements for site plan or subdivision approval within the general purpose and intent of the provisions for site plan review and/or subdivision approval. Such deviations may be granted if the literal enforcement of one or more provisions of the Plan is impracticable or would exact undue hardship because of peculiar conditions pertaining to this site.

No deviations may be granted under the terms of this section unless such deviations can be granted without resulting in substantial detriment to the public good and will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of this Plan.

The Planning Board shall not grant deviations that (i) will permit a use that is not permitted by this Plan; (ii) expands a use already in existence that is not in conformity with this Plan; (iii) allows for a conditional use that does not comply with this plan; (iv) increases floor area ratio; (v) results in an increase in density; or (vi) allows the height of a principle structure to exceed 10 feet or 10% beyond the maximum height permitted for such structure. If the Planning Board desires to grant such deviation, the Planning Board and the Borough Council shall undertake to amend this Plan. All development must be approved by the Planning Board and shall be submitted through the normal site plan and subdivision procedures as identified by N.J.S.A. 40:55D et seq.

Final adoption of this Plan by the Borough shall be considered an amendment to the Borough's Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map. Unless otherwise defined in the Plan, terms used in this Plan shall have the same meaning as defined in the Borough's Zoning Ordinance.