

**GENERAL REEXAMINATION OF THE MASTER PLAN
AND MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT**

PREPARED FOR

**THE TOWNSHIP OF MOUNT LAUREL
IN THE COUNTY OF BURLINGTON
STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**Adopted by
The Planning Board of the Township of Mount Laurel
_____, 2017**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mount Laurel Township is a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, located in the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington (PA-NJ-DE-MD) Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) with over 6 million people. According to the U.S. Census, the Township had a population of close to 42,000 in 2010, which represents steady growth. Mount Laurel has easy access to I-295, the New Jersey Turnpike, and other major state roadways. Over the past decades, due to its location to Philadelphia and southern New Jersey, Mount Laurel has been successful in attracting major commercial, industrial, and residential developments. With fewer vacant lands available presently, Mount Laurel is well-established and largely built-out. The Township is an attractive community to live, work, and play and its land use future is guided by a comprehensive planning document.

Pursuant to Section 40:55D-89 of the Municipal Land Use Law, municipalities having a master plan are to at least once every ten years reexamine the master plan and, as a part of, existing development regulations for the purpose of determining the continued viability of each and need for amendment due to the emergence of land use issues and external influences such as statutory mandates which 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 Township's preeminent 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 Section 40:55D-89, the reexamination must 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

- f. 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 Mount Laurel Township Master Plan, herein examined, was prepared by Louis Glass Associates, Inc. of Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania 19004, and was adopted by the Planning Board on April 20, 2006. The document consists of the following elements: 1) Goals and Objectives, 2) Land Use, 3) Housing and Fair Share (amended March 2010 and later revised and dated April 2017), 4) Recreation and Open Space (amended May 2009), 5) Circulation, 6) Community Facilities, 7) Conservation and Open Space, 8) Energy Conservation and Recycling Plan, and 9) Stormwater Management.

Since the time of adoption, the Master Plan has been amended on two occasions. The amended Open Space and Recreation Plan Element was conducted in 2009. The major issue facing the Township in regard to open space and recreational planning is the Township's affordable housing obligation. More specifically, the first two COAH rounds reduced the Township's ability to acquire open space and recreational lands. Two principle goals of this amendment were: 1) to use the results of a vacant land inventory to inform new recommendations related to open space and recreational lands and 2) to recommend several amendments to the master plan including the designation of various sites for open space and active recreation. The Master Plan was further amended as a result of adoption of an updated Housing Element/Fair Share Plan which was dated April 2017. This element was adopted to reflect revised third round compliance for affordable housing obligations.

This is the first reexamination of the 2006 Master Plan.

With respect to format, this reexamination report addresses in the same sequence the elements outlined within subsections "a" through "e" of the above mentioned 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 of the Master Plan. As this is the first reexamination of the Master Plan, the charge then becomes one of establishing, from the original 2006 document, 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. The latter is addressed as the 2006 Master Plan does not specifically outline the major problems, but incorporates these items into the chapters for each of the various Elements. To simplify, these items are outlined below.

1. **Major problems existing at the time of the 2006 Master Plan.**
 - (a) Stagnate Population - Due to various elements such as land usage, development patterns, and land availability, the population has peaked and will stabilize.
 - (b) Agricultural Lands - Land devoted to agriculture has steadily diminished to the point where it is no longer a significant land use activity in the Township.
 - (c) Open Space Preservation - The ability to fully address preservation of open space and the provision of recreational facilities is negatively impacted due to the Township's mandate for providing affordable housing opportunities in relation to the first two COAH rounds. Additionally, large-size tracts of land are no longer available to pursue for open space acquisition, therefore, smaller lots must be pursued.
 - (d) Active Recreation - From an acquisition perspective, park system planning is limited by the opportunity to acquire the land before it is used for other purposes.
 - (e) Housing - Housing developments are diminishing considerably because there are no longer any large vacant tracts of zoned residential for development. Also, a significant portion of housing inventory does not reflect a variety of housing options.
 - (f) Traffic Congestion - Traffic congestion has increased due to development throughout the region.

2. **Major objectives as identified in the 2006 Master Plan.** The 2006 Master Plan defined specific Goals, Objectives and Policies for each of the Elements that specifically describe the various aspects and policies for articulating the community's vision¹. These goals and objectives were previously developed through data analyses and public input on community issues.
 - (a) **Goals and objectives of the 2006 Land Use Plan Element include:**
 - (i) To preserve and enhance the character and living quality for all residents in all parts of the Township.
 - (ii) To recognize the natural constraints preventing development in certain areas, such as flood plains, wetlands, streams, natural amenity areas, high water tables, and erosion-prone land, and the necessity of preserving these critical areas for the benefit of all citizens.

¹ 2006 Mount Laurel Master Plan - Page O-3

- (iii) To guide future land development and community facilities to meet the needs of residents while ensuring that new development is compatible with existing developments.
- (iv) To provide for a variety of residential, commercial, industrial, public open space, recreational and conservation uses.
- (v) To ensure that developments are compatible with the adjacent land uses in surrounding communities, where feasible.
- (vi) To provide for a balanced economic base and a source of employment through utilization of non-residential lands.
- (vii) To provide for the efficient movement of goods and people through the Township.
- (viii) To encourage continued efforts to coordinate regional services and conservation efforts.
- (ix) To provide for the implementation of low and moderate-income housing.
- (x) To satisfactorily address the issue of increased traffic congestion.
- (xi) To acquire more open space and recreation land as set forth in the recently updated recreation and open space program.

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

1. Major problems existing at the time of the 2006 Master Plan.

- (a) Stagnate Population - In 2006, it was put forth that the overall population for Mount Laurel reached its peak. At this time, national economic conditions dictated that growth would slow. This was true for Mount Laurel, as well as for the State and nation. Also, land constraints persisted at the time that would limit Mount Laurel from absorbing new residents. For many years, conditions such as job loss and foreclosures climbed substantially. The factors associated with the economic downturn have been reduced, which positively impacts population projections not only for Mount Laurel, but for many municipalities throughout Burlington County and the State. Presently, population projections for 2015 through 2045 indicates a reversal of stagnation.
- (b) Agricultural Lands - Land devoted to agriculture has steadily diminished to the point where it is no longer a significant land use

activity in the Township. This problem has not been stemmed or reduced. Recent land use/ land cover data for Mount Laurel presently suggest that agricultural lands make up a much smaller portion compared to other land use classifications such as single family or wooded land use classifications. Further, evaluating land use classifications by acres in 2000 reveals that roughly 1,539 acres or 10.4% out of all land uses was classified as agriculture. In 2010, agricultural land use decreased to 1,172 acres or 8.3% out of all land uses. In comparison, multifamily use was enumerated in 2000 as 521 acres or 3.7% of all uses. In 2010, there were 1,144 acres classified as multifamily use or 8.1%.

- (c) Open Space Preservation - Affordable housings third round obligations will continue to have an impact on availability of lands for other purposes than affordable housing, including open space. However, Mount Laurel has successfully funded the acquisition of open space through public funds, thereby, reducing the problems associated with open space since the master plan adoption. The Mount Laurel Open Space, Recreation and Farmland and Historic Preservation Trust Fund was created to acquire lands for recreation and conservation purposes and to develop lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes. Since the 2006 master plan over 200 acres of open space and recreational land has been acquired. A referendum is being proposed that would amend the Trust Fund established in the voter-approved referendums of 1998, 2001, 2002 and 2007. The present vote would permit the Township to use the funds to maintenance the lands acquired for recreation and conservation purposes.
- (d) Active Recreation - While difficult to acquire the land before it is used for other purposes, the Township has managed to acquire additional acres of open space. Since the master plan, the Township also participates in the Blue Acres Program, which acquires land in flood-prone area to dedicate for recreation and conservation purposes. Furthermore, since the master plan adoption, the Township amended its Open Space and Recreation Element in 2009. This amendment called for the acquisition of several parcels that collectively made up five key areas for active recreation. To date, the Township has acquired four parcels (Block 800, Lot 9; Block 101.15, Lot 12; and Block 508.03, Lots 5 and 6) that are now dedicated open space.
- (e) Housing - Housing developments are being impacted by diminishing vacant parcels zoned for residential. This trend continues to persist. Generally, there has been a drop in total land classified as vacant land. In 2000, roughly 1,121 acres or 7.9% out of all land uses was classified as vacant. In 2010, vacant land decreased to 908 acres or 6.5% out of all land uses.
- (f) Traffic Congestion - Investments in infrastructure over the years have begun to address and mitigate some of the congestion. The master

plan called for the implementation of a highway plan that addresses deficient roadways identified for improvements to meet future traffic conditions. The plan identified several roadway improvements that could include a series of improvements such as a roadway widening and/or realignment, grading, drainage improvements, resurfacing, or restriping. The following study and roadways were identified: 1) State-owned: I-295 Resurfacing and the NJ Route 73 Widening; 2) County-owned: Marine Highway Improvements; Fellowship Rd. (CR 673) Improvements; Church St. (CR 607) Improvements; Church Road (CR 616) Improvements; Hainesport-Mt. Laurel Road (CR 674) Improvements, and 3) Township-owned: Walton Ave. Improvements; Union Mill Road Improvements; Marter Avenue Loop Roadway; Gaither Drive Improvements; Ark Road Improvements; Briggs Road Widening and Extension. At the request of Burlington County, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) conducted a study in 2014 to assess three improvement alternatives for the Church Road (CR 616) corridor.

To address traffic, the master plan also called for separate residential and commercial traffic in relation to the industrial park development within the Transportation Improvement District. This work was completed and additional work was required to build the preferred alignment of the Marter Avenue loop roadway. This loop road was to be constructed on what is now the Bancroft School site. The loop road could possibly be constructed further north, but this location may not prove feasible.

The master plan also called for the introduction of traffic calming techniques to achieve a traffic behavior pattern that is compatible with other street activities. One location for traffic calming included Tam O'Shanter Road and Brentwood Drive. Further, the Township aimed to achieve consistency with NJDOT's policies, which requires level of service (LOS) "C" on all new intersection approaches.

2. Major objectives as identified in the 2006 Master Plan

The aforementioned Goals and Objectives of various Elements in the 2006 Master Plan, to date, remain viable in Mount Laurel Township and should continue to be implemented through a variety of mechanisms including development controls.

- 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.***

1. Redevelopment will play a prominent role in the coming years as the Fellowship Area Redevelopment Plan (amended 2015) is implemented. This plan permits a mix of uses that will create an attractive gateway into the Township along Route 73, will improve traffic circulation, and will provide for commercial development and affordable housing. Presently, several major initiatives associated with the Redevelopment Plan are completed.
2. Since the master plan, several large scale developments have occurred or received land use board approval to assist Mount Laurel in being recognized as an economic hub in Burlington County. Increases in economic development activity is, in part, due to its strategic location nearby major transportation corridors. Further, according to the Department of Economic Development and Regional Planning in Burlington County, rents in the Township for office, commercial, and industrial sites are considered reasonable from a countywide standpoint. Conversely, Mount Laurel Township has been the loss of some larger office, business, and retail use.
3. Mount Laurel has a high percentage of residents with higher levels of educational attainment. Recent 2000-2015 American Community Survey (ACS) data shows that for persons 25 years and older in Mount Laurel, 49.2% had a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 35.7% in Burlington County. Businesses will continue to find Mount Laurel attractive as a result of its highly-skilled workforce.
4. Since the economic recession ended, Mount Laurel has rebounded and has a strong commercial tax base. Parallel, the hotel industry has been able to thrive because of growth in businesses. Subsequently, Mount Laurel is facing challenges with the proliferation of hotels.
5. Rowan College at Burlington County Mount Laurel remains a major employer in the Township. The Mount Laurel Campus is undergoing major expansions, therefore, it can be assumed that additional capacity in anticipated school enrollment will have major impacts on the Township. Student housing may create pressures on the local housing stock. Greater code enforcement may be required to address off-campus residential overcrowding or inappropriate living conditions.
6. Due to major developments since the master plan, such as the opening of the Virtua Moorestown Health and Wellness Center in late 2012, the Bancroft school, and other projects within the community, it can be assumed that significant investments in capital transportation projects will also be needed to accommodate this expansion.
7. At the time of adoption of the master plan, it was noted that Mount Laurel's decades-long land development growth pattern was ending due to the consumption of large tracts of land. With smaller tracks of land scattered throughout the Township, a presumption is that future development in the

Township will be in the form of infill development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation.

8. In 2010, the State of New Jersey began to examine the continued viability of the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) as an agency and its methods for determining fair share obligations and the realistic opportunity for the production of affordable housing. At present, COAH is moribund. Mount Laurel is only one of few municipalities that received the Court's approval of a first, second, and third round plan prior to the demise of COAH. More recently, a new housing plan and Fair Share Plan for the Township was adopted April 2017. Its third round perspective need is 1,074 units, which will be addressed through a variety of mechanisms. This is an increase in units and will impact future development projects. Further, when a new legislation is enacted, the master plan may need to be updated to guarantee there is a basis for any newly adopted ordinance revisions necessary to support the Township's affordable housing efforts.
9. Changes in Local, County, and State Conditions - An analysis of current conditions highlights ways in which the Township will be impacted in years and decades to come.

Density and Distribution of Population

- a) Demographic trends indicate positive growth for the Township. Over a ten-year period, the municipality grew by roughly 4%. The Township's population in 2000 was 40,221 and increased to 41,864 in 2010. Overall, the Township's density and distribution of population has remained stable. In comparison, Burlington County grew from 424,547 in 2000 to 449,238 in 2010, approximately a 5.8% increase.
- b) As shown below on Figure 1, the Township is projected to grow in population by 6.2% by 2045. This is moderate considering Burlington County's projected growth at 9.4%. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Township will continue to face moderate development pressures to accommodate anticipated growth.

Housing and Economic Conditions

- a) In 2000, the average household size in Mount Laurel was 2.41 persons. In 2013, it dropped slightly to 2.37 persons².
- b) Mount Laurel's percentage of owner-occupied housing units is roughly 75%, which exceeds Burlington County at 71%. It can be assumed that homeownership rates will remain strong in the Township, therefore maintaining neighborhood stability.

² 2009-2013 American Community Survey – Selected Housing Characteristics, Average Household Size

- c) Housing units are growing older in the Township. The majority of homes in Mount Laurel were built before 2000. Less than 1% of its housing stock built after 2010³.
- d) In 2013, Mount Laurel's housing inventory increased by 6.8%, rising to 18,323 units since 2000⁴.
- e) By 2045, employment is projected to grow in Burlington County by more than 22,000 and by more than 3,000 for Mount Laurel Township. This growth is a part of a larger gain in overall employment anticipated in the Delaware Valley region of nearly 11%⁵.

3 2009-2013 American Community Survey – Selected Housing Characteristics, Year Structure Built
4 2009-2013 American Community Survey – Selected Housing Characteristics
5 DVRPC Employment Projections 2015-2045

Figure 1: Population Forecasts 2015 to 2045

	2015 Estimate	2020 Estimate	2025 Estimate	2030 Estimate	2035 Estimate	2040 Estimate	2045 Estimate	Abs. Change 2015 - 2045	% Change 2015 - 2045
Bass River Township	1,449	1,483	1,516	1,550	1,580	1,604	1,624	175	12.1
Beverly City	2,559	2,710	2,859	3,011	3,143	3,251	3,343	784	30.6
Bordentown City	3,882	4,012	4,141	4,273	4,387	4,480	4,559	677	17.4
Bordentown Township	11,935	11,965	11,996	12,027	12,053	12,075	12,094	159	1.3
Burlington City	9,808	10,010	10,210	10,414	10,590	10,735	10,858	1,050	10.7
Burlington County	450,226	459,344	468,428	475,978	482,560	488,026	492,709	42,483	9.4
Burlington Township	22,826	22,936	23,045	23,156	23,252	23,331	23,398	572	2.5
Chesterfield Township	7,572	7,715	7,857	8,002	8,127	8,230	8,317	745	9.8
Cinnaminson Township	16,651	16,880	17,108	17,339	17,540	17,704	17,844	1,193	7.2
Delanco Township	4,541	4,644	4,746	4,849	4,939	5,013	5,075	534	11.8
Delran Township	16,767	16,959	17,150	17,343	17,511	17,649	17,766	999	6.0
Eastampton Township	6,011	6,450	6,887	7,331	7,715	8,031	8,298	2,287	38.1
Edgewater Park Township	8,788	8,995	9,200	9,409	9,590	9,738	9,864	1,076	12.2
Evesham Township	45,577	47,546	49,519	49,847	50,175	50,504	50,831	5,254	11.5
Fieldsboro Borough	532	539	547	554	560	565	570	38	7.1
Florence Township	12,688	12,864	13,038	13,216	13,369	13,495	13,602	914	7.2
Hainesport Township	6,053	6,582	7,108	7,643	8,105	8,486	8,808	2,755	45.5
Lumberton Township	12,428	12,712	12,995	13,281	13,530	13,734	13,907	1,479	11.9
Mansfield Township	8,574	8,735	8,896	9,058	9,200	9,315	9,414	840	9.8
Maple Shade Township	18,963	19,071	19,178	19,287	19,381	19,459	19,524	561	3.0
Medford Lakes Borough	4,085	4,097	4,109	4,122	4,132	4,141	4,149	64	1.6
Medford Township	23,414	23,916	24,415	24,922	25,361	25,721	26,027	2,613	11.2
Moorestown Township	20,564	20,745	20,925	21,107	21,265	21,395	21,505	941	4.6
Mount Holly Township	9,493	9,620	9,747	9,875	9,987	10,078	10,156	663	7.0
Mount Laurel Township	41,842	42,342	42,839	43,346	43,784	44,146	44,449	2,607	6.2
New Hanover Township	8,078	7,927	7,777	7,625	7,493	7,384	7,292	-786	-9.7
North Hanover Township	7,609	8,049	8,486	8,930	9,315	9,630	9,898	2,289	30.1
Palmyra Borough	7,314	7,420	7,525	7,632	7,725	7,801	7,865	551	7.5
Pemberton Borough	1,383	1,390	1,397	1,404	1,410	1,415	1,419	36	2.6
Pemberton Township	27,771	28,279	28,784	29,297	29,741	30,106	30,416	2,645	9.5
Riverside Township	7,997	8,254	8,511	8,771	8,996	9,181	9,338	1,341	16.8
Riverton Borough	2,748	2,753	2,758	2,763	2,768	2,771	2,774	26	1.0
Shamong Township	6,419	6,494	6,568	6,644	6,709	6,763	6,809	390	6.1
Southampton Township	10,337	10,735	11,131	11,533	11,881	12,167	12,409	2,072	20.0
Springfield Township	3,355	3,386	3,417	3,448	3,475	3,498	3,517	162	4.8
Tabernacle Township	6,954	7,051	7,147	7,244	7,329	7,398	7,457	503	7.2
Washington Township	674	681	689	697	703	708	713	39	5.8
Westampton Township	8,726	8,932	9,137	9,345	9,525	9,673	9,799	1,073	12.3
Willingboro Township	31,270	31,831	32,391	32,959	33,451	33,855	34,198	2,928	9.4
Woodland Township	1,793	1,833	1,873	1,913	1,948	1,977	2,001	208	11.6
Wrightstown Borough	796	801	806	811	815	819	822	26	3.3

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Figure 2: Housing Characteristics 2011 to 2015

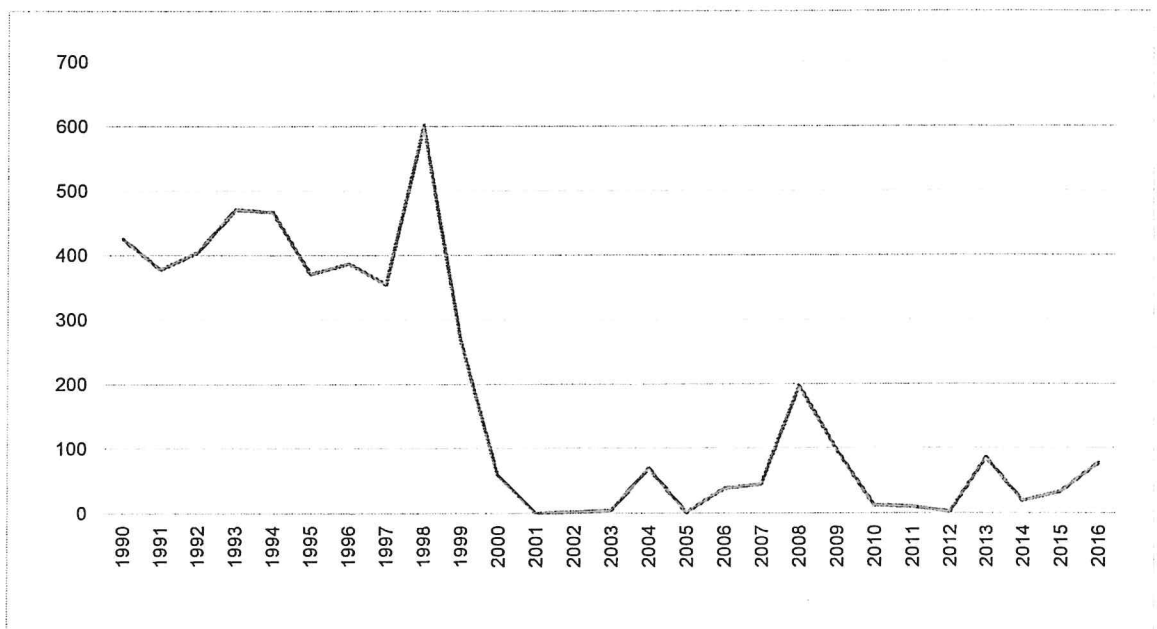
	Total housing units	Owner-occupied	% Owner-occupied	Renter-occupied	% Renter-occupied	Vacant housing units	% Vacant housing units	Median home value	Avg. home value	Median rent
Bass River Township	606	485	80.0%	73	12.0%	48	7.9%	\$228,900	\$222,315	n/a
Beverly City	1,072	659	61.5%	301	28.1%	112	10.4%	\$152,000	\$105,659	\$1,033
Bordentown City	2,062	879	42.6%	918	44.5%	265	12.9%	\$209,400	\$105,445	\$1,157
Bordentown Township	4,504	3,331	74.0%	900	20.0%	273	6.1%	\$266,600	\$212,959	\$1,022
Burlington City	4,590	2,559	55.8%	1,340	29.2%	691	15.1%	\$157,700	\$107,503	\$930
Burlington County	177,058	125,905	71.1%	38,754	21.9%	12,399	7.0%	\$245,000	\$209,669	\$1,207
Burlington Township	7,960	5,775	72.6%	1,801	22.6%	384	4.8%	\$264,800	\$210,985	\$1,071
Chesterfield Township	1,997	1,756	87.9%	163	8.2%	78	3.9%	\$411,200	\$381,137	\$1,473
Cinnaminson Township	6,146	5,106	83.1%	735	12.0%	305	5.0%	\$270,100	\$239,864	\$1,547
Delanco Township	1,990	1,445	72.6%	361	18.1%	184	9.2%	\$224,800	\$194,504	\$987
Delran Township	6,239	4,381	70.2%	1,441	23.1%	417	6.7%	\$250,800	\$189,810	\$1,167
Eastampton Township	2,400	1,584	66.0%	746	31.1%	70	2.9%	\$260,300	\$164,060	\$1,103
Edgewater Park Township	3,923	2,091	53.3%	1,428	36.4%	404	10.3%	\$173,000	\$100,774	\$1,093
Evesham Township	18,407	13,042	70.9%	4,168	22.6%	1,197	6.5%	\$275,500	\$211,811	\$1,346
Fieldsboro Borough	236	185	78.4%	30	12.7%	21	8.9%	\$199,500	\$189,660	\$1,229
Florence Township	5,433	4,210	77.5%	809	14.9%	414	7.6%	\$222,400	\$211,193	\$961
Hainesport Township	2,399	2,219	92.5%	87	3.6%	93	3.9%	\$279,900	\$285,876	\$1,129
Lumberton Township	4,673	3,165	67.7%	1,246	26.7%	262	5.6%	\$296,500	\$226,868	\$1,115
Mansfield Township	3,563	3,335	93.6%	67	1.9%	161	4.5%	\$295,400	\$311,195	\$1,352
Maple Shade	9,065	3,951	43.6%	4,302	47.5%	812	9.0%	\$186,000	\$86,319	\$1,100
Medford Lakes Borough	1,620	1,430	88.3%	139	8.6%	51	3.1%	\$291,500	\$271,883	\$1,953
Medford Township	8,697	7,017	80.7%	1,347	15.5%	333	3.8%	\$361,500	\$318,548	\$1,337
Moorestown Township	7,747	6,022	77.7%	1,191	15.4%	534	6.9%	\$486,000	\$470,858	\$1,127
Mount Holly Township	3,835	2,116	55.2%	1,281	33.4%	438	11.4%	\$188,700	\$119,019	\$1,085
Mount Laurel Township	18,364	13,900	75.7%	3,316	18.1%	1,148	6.3%	\$253,900	\$228,750	\$1,445
New Hanover Township	718	250	34.8%	370	51.5%	98	13.6%	\$257,100	\$111,297	\$2,147
North Hanover Township	2,863	1,058	37.0%	1,462	51.1%	343	12.0%	\$246,900	\$99,284	\$1,800
Palmyra Borough	3,561	2,371	66.6%	815	22.9%	375	10.5%	\$171,200	\$144,184	\$1,181
Pemberton Borough	676	408	60.4%	197	29.1%	71	10.5%	\$248,800	\$159,064	\$977
Pemberton Township	10,803	6,786	62.8%	3,255	30.1%	762	7.1%	\$174,800	\$135,310	\$1,126
Riverside Township	3,195	1,843	57.7%	979	30.6%	373	11.7%	\$167,300	\$111,926	\$1,136
Riverton Borough	1,069	825	77.2%	211	19.7%	33	3.1%	\$283,800	\$227,483	\$1,071
Shamong Township	2,299	2,128	92.6%	116	5.0%	55	2.4%	\$296,500	\$275,143	\$959
Southampton	4,977	4,242	85.2%	404	8.1%	331	6.7%	\$204,700	\$214,446	\$1,174
Springfield Township	1,190	1,060	89.1%	84	7.1%	46	3.9%	\$366,800	\$338,006	\$1,200
Tabernacle Township	2,515	2,197	87.4%	172	6.8%	146	5.8%	\$297,100	\$282,299	\$1,555
Washington Township	334	242	72.5%	67	20.1%	25	7.5%	\$231,600	\$208,735	\$962
Westampton Township	3,267	2,731	83.6%	358	11.0%	178	5.4%	\$246,600	\$232,784	\$1,828
Willingboro Township	11,197	8,613	76.9%	1,773	15.8%	811	7.2%	\$162,300	\$143,110	\$1,551
Woodland Township	530	422	79.6%	74	14.0%	34	6.4%	\$264,700	\$234,848	\$1,283
Wrightstown Borough	336	86	25.6%	227	67.6%	23	6.8%	\$222,200	\$55,240	\$985

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

Building Permits

- a) As shown below on Figure 3, Mount Laurel experienced a dramatic drop in building permits in 1998 and activity continued to lag through 2003. Moderate spikes in activity took place, with one increase most notable in 2008. This was followed by a sharp decline due to the economic recession. Since 2014 the Township continues to witness increases in building permits. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Township will continue to witness building permit activity and it can be further assumed that the Township will continue to redevelop on existing sites, as there are few vacant sites available for development.

Figure 3: Mount Laurel Building Permits 1990 to 2016



Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission.

- 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, adopted by the Planning Board on April 20, 2006 (amended in 2009, 2010 and 2017), consists of the following elements: 1) Goals and Objectives, 2) Land Use, 3) Housing and Fair Share (amended March 2010 and later revision dated April 2017), 4) Recreation and Open Space (amended May 2009), 5) Circulation,

6) Community Facilities, 7) Conservation and Open Space, 8) Energy Conservation and Recycling Plan, and 9) Stormwater Management.

Since the time of adoption of the master plan, the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28) has been further amended providing thereby for two new optional plan elements: the Educational Facilities Plan Element and the Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Plan Element. It does not appear to be a pressing need for the preparation of these two optional plan elements for Mount Laurel at this time. It should be noted that when considering Mount Laurel's broader smart growth and sustainability goals, the latter optional plan element has been contemplated to a degree and is incorporated with elements of the existing master plan. A green buildings and environmental sustainability plan element, "shall provide for, encourage, and promote the efficient use of natural resources and the installation and usage of renewable energy systems; consider the impact of buildings on the local, regional and global environment; allow ecosystems to function naturally; conserve and reuse water; treat storm water on-site; and optimize climatic conditions through site orientation and design." Under the 2006 master plan, there is overlap with the Conservation and Open Space element as well as the Energy Conservation and Recycling Plan element.

Due to the more recent adoption of the master plan as well as the recent adoption of a new Fair Share Plan, it is not recommended to prepare a new master plan at this time.

Notwithstanding, further recommended changes to the master plan are as follows:

- (a) Create an Economic Development and Marketing Office - The Township relies heavily on resources and technical business assistance from the State and the Burlington County Department of Economic Development. To assist with the increase in current and future business activity, Mount Laurel would be best suited to have its own local economic development office that can provide necessary information and resources to new businesses and existing business that may want to expand or avoid closing.
- (b) Implement a complete streets policy, including the expansion of bicycle lanes, to link parks, open space, and residential communities. Complete Streets is a planning and design approach to the transportation system that ensures accessibility for people of all ages and abilities. Further, the master plan called for the creation a bicycle plan that provides a safe place for bicyclist. This remains a valid planning goal and a comprehensive bicycle plan will consider off-road and on-road bicycle facilities with appropriate design measures to ensure the safety of bicyclist.
- (c) While the master plan promoted smart growth, which efficiently integrates land use and transportation, it could benefit from more

emphasis on the incorporation of public transit. The master plan should contemplate improved links between public transit links and residential, employment, retail, civic and recreational uses.

2. **Development Regulations Recommendations.** Current development regulations in general continue to meet the needs of the Township; however, various changes as below should be considered:

- (a) Inconsistent Regulation - The Land Use regulations should be examined for any inconsistency with the New Jersey Residential Site Improvement Standards N.J.A.C. 5:21-1 et seq. and for instances where existing regulations are inconsistent one with another. It is also further recommended that inconsistent or inaccurate references to outside agencies or regulations be updated accordingly.
- (b) Definitions - Consideration should be given to adding and modifying some definitions within the Township's ordinances for clarity to ensure a clear understanding for the public and code enforcement personnel.
- (c) Electric and Wind Energy - Update ordinance related to electric car charging and explore provisions with gas stations. Provisions for wind turbines and appropriate locations that are compatible with existing uses is needed.
- (d) Renewable Solar Energy - There is an opportunity to update the ordinance in relation to solar energy systems, which include site detail and design for ground and roof mounted units.
- (e) Sign Regulation - The Township has a strong sign regulation that should be examined for continued viability and updated as necessary. Reasonable revisions to modernize it may permit LED/digital signs with appropriate constraints.
- (f) Parking Standards - There is a need to reevaluate parking standards in order to encourage smart growth, ensure adequate parking availability, and balance parking needs with other community goals.
- (g) Rehabilitation Facilities - There is a need to review and evaluate current permitted land use and zoning standards to determine appropriate locations/zoning districts to permit or conditionally permit rehabilitation facilities for mental health, drug, and alcohol treatment.
- (h) Multi-family Attached Residential - Over 50% of the residential units with Mount Laurel are comprised of multi-family dwellings. In order to advance the goals of the Master plan and to provide for a more balance housing options within the Township zoning ordinance should be revised to improve single-family housing options. Permitted uses, densities, area and bulk regulations should be reviewed and evaluated to advance single-family residential options.

- (i) Hotel/Motels - Mount Laurel Township has the second highest number of hotel units within the State of New Jersey. In order to meet the goals and objectives of the master plan, and to provide for balanced non-residential land uses, the Township zoning ordinance should be reviewed and evaluated for improved opportunities for other non-residential land uses, and the reduction of future hotels/motels. Further, restrictions on the length of stay and other regulations should be evaluated to promote the goals and objectives of the master plan.
- (j) Accessory Structures - The Township's accessory buildings standards should be evaluated to improve standards within residential zones. Consideration should be given to reduce the side and rear yard setbacks for lots 10,000 square feet or less due to the impact of the current standards on the use and functionality of these lots, as well as limiting the size of accessory structures on smaller lots.
- (k) Mobile Food Facilities or "Food Trucks" - The Township should consider inclusion of standards and locations to allow food truck vendors and other transient businesses. These activities should be limited to non-residential zones, and in locations where appropriate safety measures can be provided for pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- (l) Property Maintenance and Foreclosure Ordinances – Consideration should be given to improve the Township's maintenance ordinance to ensure occupied and vacant properties within Mount Laurel are appropriately maintained. Resources and efficient code enforcement procedures will help prevent neighborhood decline, hold the responsible party accountable, and promote the well-being of the community. A foreclosure ordinance should be considered to address vacant and abandoned properties that are often the result of foreclosure. These ordinances would reduce the impact of poorly maintained and abandoned parcels on the community.
- (m) Poultry and Livestock - Evaluate existing ordinance requirements and amend as necessary to provide appropriate standards for livestock, poultry, etc. Considerations should include animal density, site suitability, and requirements for livestock buildings and structures. These standards should ensure that sufficient land area is provided and appropriate measures are provided to reduce impact on adjacent properties.
- (n) Industrial Zone - To keep pace with modern standards, permissible uses for the Industrial Zone should include "distribution center" and "fulfillment center" to address new types of specialized warehousing models. Further, these districts are more accessible for the transportation infrastructure that these uses require.

- (o) Industrial Zone - Section 154-56.C (12) lists that motor vehicles sales, storage or display as a permitted use. In order to clarify this permitted use, it is recommended that the ordinance be revised to state the motor vehicles sales, repair, storage or display in conjunction with a new car dealership as the permitted use. Further, it is recommended that outside storage of materials be prohibited within the Industrial zone and that all materials be storage within an enclosed structure.
- (p) Major Commercial Planned Development District - In order to clarify specific permitted uses with this zone, it is recommended to include medical offices within the professional and general office use.
- (q) Business District - Section 154-43 B (11) is an outdated standard and should be revised to permit retail food facilities or fast food services in conjunction with a motor vehicle service station. This amendment will reflect changes in the industry, as it is common to have food service facilities in connection with motor vehicle service stations.
- (r) Cellular Communication Towers - The Township must understand the impact of cellular communication facilities on the community in order to advance the goals and objectives of the Township's Master Plan and the overall quality of life. Thus, the Township should evaluate and establish improved standards for the location, colocation, and enhancement of cellular communication towers and facilities.
- (s) **Rezoning.** This report recommends the following adjustments to the zone plan:
 - 1) The regulations governing Planned Unit Developments (PUD) in the Township were repealed years ago. This makes it difficult for the Zoning Officer and approving agencies to examine applications for building and zoning permits within areas designated as PUD on the zoning map. Therefore, it is recommended that areas currently zoned PUD on the Mount Laurel Township Zoning Map are reclassified taking into consideration existing conditions of the area, such as commercial use, dwelling type, lot size, density, and community character. Since there are various development characteristics within the PUD zone, including non-residential and residential, as well as varying lot sizes, each neighborhood will need to be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Appropriate designations and standards should be based on current conditions and prior development approvals granted for the various sections.
 - 2) Evaluate the existing zoning of the property bounded by South Church Street, Elbo Lane and Texas Avenue to determine whether it would be appropriate to expand the B-Business or I-Industry zoning districts. Due to the character of the area including heavy traffic and existing adjacent uses, the

R-3 Residential designation may no longer be appropriate in this location.

- 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 Township 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 an area to be in need of redevelopment. These area is summarized below:

The Fellowship Redevelopment Area - This area is approximately bounded by Route 73, Fellowship Road, Church Road and Beaver Avenue as well as along Route 73 from Beaver Avenue to Route 295. The properties consist of Block 1310, Lots 1 to 10, 10.01, 11-12, 12.01 and 13; Block 1305.03, Lots 11-14 and 14.01; Block 1305.02, Lots 4-15; Block 1305.01, Lots 1-10; Block 1304.03, Lots 1-12; Block 1304.02, Lots 1-24; Block 1304.01, Lots 1-18. The plan for revitalization, which is dated August 15, 2011 and revised to April 27, 2015, identifies three areas for revitalization, each having its own emphasis, as suggested by each area’s permitted uses and bulk standards. The plan specifies RA-1 which fronts Route 73, Fellowship Road and Beaver Avenue; RA-2 which fronts on Fellowship Road, Church Road and Beaver Avenue; and RA-3 which fronts Route 73, Beaver Avenue and Oregon Avenue. The township has executed a redeveloper agreement for portions of this redevelopment area and land development improvements have been constructed. Lifetime Fitness has been developed along Church Road between Fellowship Road and Beaver Avenue while a proposed Walmart store is under construction along Route 73.

Pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et. seq., where redevelopment plans have been adopted which supersede existing development recommendations, the zoning map is to delineate all such areas. The Township zoning map has not been amended to depict the Fellowship Redevelopment Area. The zoning map must be revised in order to give notice of the redevelopment area which has requirements that supersede the existing development regulation and availability of the adopted redevelopment plans, the need to amend the land use plan element to incorporate the redevelopment plan will be necessary.

In addition, a recommendation of this reexamination report is the exercise of redevelopment planning pursuant to the redevelopment statute over any lands on which conditions justifying the declaration of an area in need of redevelopment. In order to remedy existing conditions as well as trends suggestive of economic and physical deterioration, to promote beneficial economic growth, and maximize the development potential of lands potentially useful and valuable for contributing to and

serving the public health, safety and welfare within the Township, the following areas within the Township of Mount Laurel should be considered for the redevelopment/rehabilitation declaration eligibility:

- Expand the Fellowship Redevelopment Area to incorporate property bounded by Beaver Avenue, Church Road and the Route 295.
- Lands commonly known as Rancocas Woods located along the north side of Creek Road, between Fleetwood Avenue and Woolmans Lane
- Lands commonly known as the ARI property, located along Route 38, between Fostertown Road and Ark Road.
- In addition, a recommendation of this reexamination report is the exercise of redevelopment planning pursuant to the redevelopment statute over any lands on which conditions justifying the employment of same emerge.

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 2006 Mount Laurel Master Plan, with amendment as proposed herein, remains a valid and pertinent document for the advancement of planning policy guidance necessary for the future of land in the Township. This report further concludes that the goals and objectives of the Master Plan, which includes efficient land consumption, protection and preservation of natural resources and existing community character, and smart growth, should be retained and modified 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.