

**INDEPENDENCE TOWNSHIP
WARREN COUNTY, NJ**

**MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION
AND LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT - 2000**

Adopted by:

**Independence Township
Planning Board**

Date: March 20, 2000

Prepared by:

**P. David Zimmerman, AICP/PP
Township Planner**

**MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION AND
LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT - 2000**

Township Committee:

Walter Brandt
Robert Giordano
Bonnie Kelsey
Peter Miller
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Adopted On: March 20, 2000

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March 8, 2000

Ronald Zuckerman, Chairman
Independence Township Planning Board
Municipal Building
Regina Lane
Great Meadows, NJ 07838

Re: Master Plan Reexamination And
Land Use Plan Amendment - 2000

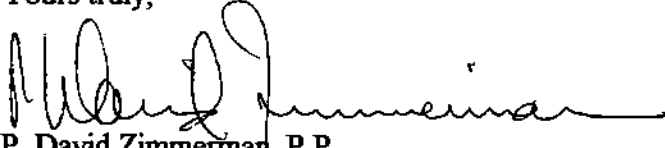
Dear Mr. Zuckerman,

Please find contained herein the Master Plan Reexamination And Land Use Plan Amendment - 2000 for review by the Planning Board. This document is the subject of a public hearing by the Planning Board scheduled for March 20, 2000.

The enclosed amendment recommends redesignation of two properties in Independence Township: one fronting Old Allamuchy Road and the second fronting Route 46. The recommendation is for their development to address senior citizen and age restricted housing needs. In addition, the plan proposes a modest 5% of these new housing units to be set aside for low and moderate income senior households.

I look forward to discussing these issues with the Planning Board at their upcoming meeting.

Yours truly,


P. David Zimmerman, P.P.
Planning Consultant

PDZ:hc
Enc.

MASTER PLAN AND MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION HISTORY

The last comprehensive Master Plan, adopted by the Planning Board, was in 1982. Subsequently, in 1988 and 1995 Master Plan Reexamination Reports and Land Use Plan Elements were prepared and adopted by the Independence Township Planning Board. Both 1988 and 1995 documents contained additional chapters and elements over and above that required by N.J.S.A. 40-55D-89. The Municipal Land Use Law allows a municipality to amend a master plan and periodic reexamination report as needed after a public hearing thereto. Such an amendment is presented herein.

MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION AND LAND USE PLAN AMENDMENT

Examination of recent population trends shows people are living longer. This older age group is finding it difficult to continue to maintain, both financially and physically, the traditional single family home. As a consequence, there is a need for alternative housing choices for this age group. To meet this growing need, a variety of senior housing projects such as of age-restricted communities, assisted living facilities, congregate care facilities and nursing homes are being built in the region.

In 1990, the population census for Independence showed there were 640 persons 55 years old or older, representing 16.0 percent of the Township population. In Warren County there were in 1990, 19,864 persons 55 years old and older or 21.7 percent of the population. Similarly, in Morris County there were 84,292 persons 55 years old or older or 20.0 percent of the total population. Since 1990, the population and this age group has continued to grow. For example, the Warren County Planning Board estimates the 55 year old population to be 21,397 (1997), a 1,533 growth or additional 7.7 percent of that age cohort. Today, in the year 2000 the 55 year old population in both Warren and Morris Counties is even larger.

As we as a society live longer and have the ability and resources to make housing choices, the demand for all types of housing for this age cohort continues to grow. Similarly, there is an increasing demand for nursing and congregate facilities. To address both the local and regional need, Independence designates two tracts for age restricted and senior housing, nursing and congregate care facilities.

1. Block 4, Lots 28 and 29. This property contains 113 acres and fronts Old Allamuchy Road. The tract is served by both public water and sewer from the Hackettstown Municipal Utilities Authority (HMUA). For a considerable period of time, this tract as well as neighboring properties were zoned for single family residential use.

The 1988 Reexamination Report And Revised Land Use Plan studied this property and

neighborhood. In recognition of the tract's close proximity to Route 517, a major artery between Hackettstown and I-80, public water and sewer service and relative isolation from single family neighborhoods the Township designated the entirety of the 113 acres, as well as contiguous tracts to the north OR Office Research. In making this recommendation, the Plan (1988) made the following observation:

The Plan places Block 4, Lots 1, 3, 28 and 29 on Old Allamuchy and Mt. Rascal Roads in the OR zone. This area is potentially attractive to corporate, professional and business office users due to its excellent regional accessibility, proximity to Hackettstown services, potential for HMUA water and sewers service and good future access due to proposed bypass road through Independence from Route 517 to Route 46 around Hackettstown. (p. 80)

Subsequent rezoning placed the lower portion; that area below elevation 750 ft., in the OR Office Research zone. The balance or upper portion, remained in the R-2 Low Density Residential zone. Since that rezoning, approximately 10 years hence, the property has remained vacant.

However, the 1995 Master Plan Reexamination recommended the following in the Land Use Plan chapter:

3. OR and R-2 to PD. This large property which fronts Old Allamuchy Road is presently zoned Office Research (lower area) and Residential (remainder). The very top is isolated from the main property due to the steep slope and should remain zoned R-2.

The bulk of the property is recommended to be changed to a new planned development zone district.

This PD zone designation would allow office, retail business, industrial and multi-family housing.

The property is in the HMUA sewer service area and can be served by public water. It is recognized that, while office designation was appropriate in the 1988 Master Plan Reexamination, the downturn in regional and state economics makes it unlikely that office use will be developed in the foreseeable future.

There are business and multi-family housing uses already in the neighborhood and thus planned development would be compatible with existing uses, both in Independence Township and Hackettstown. It is also recognized that business uses and multi-family uses in Independence have been net tax

rateables. Many of the multi-family projects are built out or will be built out in the next several years. Thus, it is prudent to plan to introduce new business and multi-family housing development opportunities to come on line in the next couple of years.

The more desirable mix of uses of the property would allow for significant portions to be developed for non-residential. Any development of this property will of necessity require careful circulation planning such that new traffic can directly access Route 517. (p. 47-48)

Subsequent discussion by the planning board with input from the property owner resulted in designation of the property for senior housing, nursing home and congregate care uses. While planned development was an appropriate designation, as outlined above in the Master Plan Reexamination (1995), further detailed analysis showed little likelihood that the lower portion of the property could be used for office, industrial, warehouse or retail uses in the near term future (next 10 years). Thus, the Township ultimately, after much discussion and analysis rezoned the lower portion of this 113 acre tract for senior citizen housing or Planned Residential Development - Senior Citizens (PRD-SC).

This zone permits a maximum of 275 senior units on that portion of the property below elevation 750 ft. It is this area that is served by public water and sewer, is flatter, and has direct frontage on Old Allamuchy Road and access to Route 517. This use is compatible with the PRD-4 zone to the west and existing multi-family housing fronting Old Allamuchy Road. There is also local stores and shops in the immediate neighborhood that can service future population from PRD-4 development. Lastly, it is recognized that PRD-SC use will be a tax rateable. It will also generate few traffic trips.

This Master Plan Reexamination And Land Use Plan Amendment substantiates the actions of the planning board and governing body in the senior citizen housing land use designation and subsequent rezoning to PRD-SC. The recommendation is that the Master Plan Reexamination And Land Use Plan is amended accordingly.

2. Block 21, Lot 38. This property contains 133 acres and fronts Route 46. Currently, the property is split zoned. The front to a depth of 700 ft. is in the B Business zone district (25± acres) and the remainder is in the Com/Prof. Commercial-Professional zone district (108±) acres).

The property has frontage along Route 46 for a distance of 1,100 ft. The property extends back from Route 46 approximately 3,500 ft. It is the shape of a long rectangle.

The east side of the property borders the Pequest River. A portion of that border area is characterized by floodplain varying in depth between 100-200 ft. Portions of this area are also

characterized by wetlands and wetlands transition. The western boundary is identified by the Pequest River and an adjacent 34 acre parcel zoned R-2.

For a considerable period of time, the subject 133 acres was the B Business zone (front 700 ft. - 25 acres) and R-2 Low Density Residential zone for the remainder.

The 1988 Master Plan Reexamination shows the entirety of the 133 in a new TC "Town Center" designation. The TC "Town Center" envisioned this area being developed for retail shopping including a supermarket and possibly a junior department store plus professional and business offices. In addition, multifamily housing including senior citizen or age-restricted housing would be permitted. Single family detached housing on lots of 10,000 to 15,000 square feet would also be permitted. This concept was shown in the 1988 Land use Plan map as applying to the subject property.

Subsequently, however, the TC "Town Center" designation was not implemented. Rather, in 1991 the Township maintained the front portion B but rezoned the bulk of the property to Com/Prof from R-2. This new Com/Prof zone permits retail sales and services and offices for professional, executive and/or administrative purposes.

The 1995 Master Plan Reexamination Land Use Plan continues the designation of the front area in the B zone and the rear area in the present Com/Prof zone.

It appears obvious both from the 1988 Plan, the 1991 rezoning and the 1995 Land Use Plan that the Township saw this property as warranting a land use designation and zoning unique from its neighbors. In particular, it was property that warranted a designation appropriate to its highway frontage, village location, size and development potential.

Recently, the planning board was presented with a concept plan for this property envisioning age-restricted housing, commercial use fronting Route 46 and open space uses. Upon review and analysis by the planning board, they made the following findings:

a. The subject property is geographically in the heart of the Great Meadows and Vienna villages. This area is characterized by commercial, civic, school and small lot single family uses. This property has the potential, if developed properly, to contribute and re-enforce the village characteristics of this area.

Thus this property, developed for business and age-restricted housing, can become an integral part of the villages and evolving town center land use for this area.

b. The introduction of local shops and stores will be a convenience to area residences and the traveling public.

c. This is a need for age-restricted housing in the Township and region. Use of

this property for such housing will address a portion of this need in a rural-village setting.

d. Upon analysis, it was the finding that the proposed uses will contribute to the rateable and economic base of the Township.

e. The traffic impact of age-restricted housing is slight. It is significantly lower than full development as presently zoned.

f. The property is highly unique considering:

- (1) Split zoning: Business and Commercial-Professional.
- (2) Key geographic location between the two villages and in the middle of the town center area.
- (3) Extensive frontage along Route 46.
- (4) Proximate to existing commercial, civic and residential uses that are compatible in density and land use.

For the above reasons, the planning board, in this document, is recommending that the Master Plan Reexamination And Land Use Plan be amended to designate this 133 acre property for business and age-restricted housing. Implementation of this designation will require rezoning to a planned age restricted development zone.

3. **Housing And Fair Share Plan Amendment.** Currently, Independence Township has a low and moderate income housing need of 45 units. The Township has received a 40 unit credit for inclusionary zoning (Stone Mill). However, while that zoning remains in place, it is questionable whether the project will be built in the near future due to problems inherent to the developer/owner and lack of demand for a large number of townhouses at that location at this time.

The NJ Council On Affordable Housing ("COAH") encourages senior citizen type housing which are available to low and moderate income senior households. These units can be credited towards a municipality's fair share need. Thus, in recognition of COAH's policies and the need for this type housing in the Township and region, the two aforementioned senior and age-restricted projects shall have five percent (5%) of all housing set-aside for low and moderate income senior households.

4. **Amendment To Land Use Plan Element.** The Land Use Plan described in the 1995 Master Plan Reexamination Reports duplicated the existing zone districting of the Township in some areas,

while recommending several changes from one zone to another in other areas. The Planning Board has given considerable discussion and consideration to the creation of a new zone districts designed to permit the creation of various types of age restricted housing and support facilities to meet the growing housing needs of the senior citizen segment of the Township and region's population in a location appropriate for this type of development, while at the same time providing for development which takes into account the various environmental constraints of the area and traffic concerns, particularly along the Route 46 and Route 517 corridors.

When reviewing the goals and objectives for the development of Independence Township as set forth in the 1988 Master Plan, in conjunction with the 1995 Reexamination Report, as well as the Fair Housing Act and the State Plan for Development and Redevelopment, a Planned Age Restricted Residential Development (PAR) zone and Planned Residential Development - Senior Citizen (PRD-SC) zone will appropriately serve the Township in pursuit of the goals and objectives as set forth and stated in the Master Plan, and will assist the Township in pursuit of the general overall goals and objectives relating to the Fair Housing Act and the State Plan of Development and Redevelopment. The planned age restricted and senior citizen residential development zones will provide, encourage and guide the appropriate use and development of the lands within Independence Township so as to promote the public health, safety, morals and general welfare, by providing an opportunity for senior citizen housing in areas appropriate for same. Such development can be designed so as to secure safety from flood by providing for open space "green" area buffers near areas of wetlands or floodplain, and will permit a cluster type development that will provide adequate light, air and open space within the township.

Tract size minimums of 100 acres will insure not only a successful development technique but the ability to appropriately cluster structures onto smaller lots so as to provide maximum protection to the environmentally sensitive areas of the tract. Such development will promote the establishment of an appropriate population density and concentration for senior citizens within the Township that will contribute to the well being of all persons, neighborhoods, communities and to the region in general and will further serve to preserve the environmentally sensitive areas. Such development opportunities will encourage the appropriate and efficient expenditure of public funds for senior citizen housing through the coordination of such development with appropriate land use policies. It will broaden the spectrum of the variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses with open space, both public and private, according to the respective environmental requirements, in order to meet the needs of all New Jersey citizens. It will encourage appropriate volumes of traffic flow onto State Highway Route 46 and Route 517 which will promote the free flow of traffic while discouraging the location of such facilities and routes which result in congestion or blight.

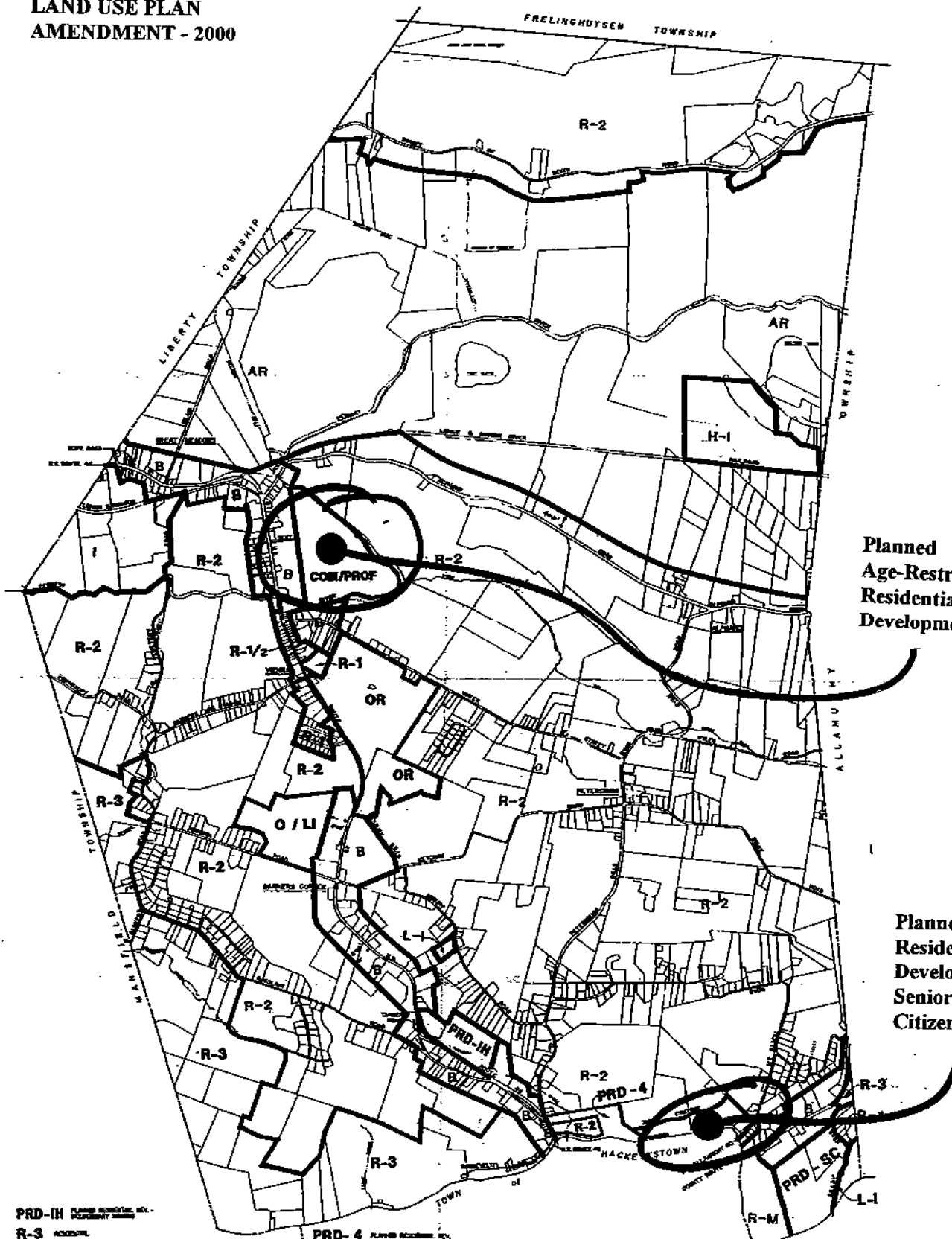
It will provide an opportunity to promote a desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangements. It will provide for the conservation of open space on the large tract parcel and will seek to protect the valuable natural resources in the Township and of the State. It will permit the design of a planned development type concept which will incorporate the best features of creative design and will relate the type, design and layout of the residential, commercial and recreational development to the particular site and which will certainly encourage senior citizen community housing construction. This form of development will continue to be appropriate for large tracts of land although the specific requirements for lot size, open space, maximum density and other individual lot criteria may be amended from time to time as development constraints and criteria are analyzed and the specific requirements established in the Zoning Ordinance.

The Planning Board recommends that ordinances consistent with the guidelines stated herein be adopted by the Township Committee.

P. David Zimmerman, AICP/PP
Township Planner

March 20, 2000

**LAND USE PLAN
AMENDMENT - 2000**



**Planned
Age-Restricted
Residential
Development**

**Planned
Residential
Development -
Senior
Citizens**

- PRD-IH PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEV. - HIGH DENSITY
- R-3 MEDIUM DENSITY
- O / LI OFFICE - LIGHT BUSINESS
- R-2 LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- R-1 MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- R-M HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
- R-1/2 RESIDENTIAL VILLAGE
- AR SPECIAL AGRICULTURAL
- PRD PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

- PRD-4 PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEV. - SENIOR CITIZENS
- OR OFFICE - BUSINESS
- COM / PROF COMMERCIAL - PROFESSIONAL
- PRD-SC PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEV. - SENIOR CITIZENS
- H-1 HEAVY INDUSTRY
- I INDUSTRY
- L-1 LIGHT INDUSTRY
- B BUSINESS



**TOWNSHIP OF
INDEPENDENCE
WARREN COUNTY, N.J.**

- DECEMBER 4, 1997
- REVISION 4, OR
- JANUARY 23, 1998
- OCTOBER 8, 1990
- OCTOBER 24, 1987
- JULY 18, 1987
- JUNE 2, 1987
- DEC. 30, 1986
- MARCH 22, 1984
- JAN. 9, 1984
- DEC. 27, 1983
- NOV. 28, 1982
- NOV. 22, 1981



REVISIONS

BASE MAP PREPARED BY WARREN COUNTY PLANNING OFFICE
WARREN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING BOARD BELVIDERE, N. J.
DAVID ZIMMERMAN, TOWNSHIP PLANNER