BOROUGH OF MERCHANTVILLE

MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT

PREPARED FOR THE MERCHANTVILLE JOINT LAND USE BOARD

ADOPTED ON JANUARY 21, 2020

Photo credit: Scott Anderson, Merchantville Resident

Mara Wexler-Wuebker, PP/AICP,
Community Development Director
License # 33LI00587600

The original of this document was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.A.C. 13:41 -1.3(b)

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following persons who contributed to this Re-examination Report.

Joint Land Use Board Members and Board Professionals

Patrick Brennan, Chairman
Eric Benjamin
Scott DiSimone
Sean Fitzgerald, Councilman
Louis Fiume, III
William Lammey, Vice Chairman
Daniel Licata
Jessica Stewart
James Uricchio
Raymond Woods

Matthew Madden, Esq., Board Solicitor
G. Jeffrey Hanson, PE, Board Engineer

Table of Contents

I. Introduction 5

II. Statutory Requirements 5

III. Major Problems and Objectives relating to Land Development at the Time of the Adoption of the Master Plan 6

A. Land Use Issue 1: Downtown Revitalization 6

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased 6

2. Significant Changes in Assumptions forming Basis of Master Plan or Development Regulations for Downtown Revitalization 7

3. Recommended Changes to the Master Plan and Regulations for Downtown Revitalization 8

4. Recommendations for Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans into the Master Plan and Changes to Regulations to Effectuate them for Downtown Revitalization 11

B. Land Use Issue 2: Harmonizing New Construction with Merchantville's Small-Town Charm and Historic Character 11

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased 11

2. Extent of Significant Changes in Assumptions and Policies forming the Basis of the Master Plan or Development Regulations for New Construction 12

3. Specific Recommended Changes to Master Plan or Development Regulations for New Construction 12

4. Recommendations Concerning Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans into Master Plan 12

C. Land use Issue 3: Provision of Adequate Parking in the Downtown 12

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased 12

2. Extent of Significant Changes in Assumptions and Policies forming the Basis of the Master Plan or Development Regulations for Parking 13

3. Recommended Changes to Master Plan or Regulations regarding Parking 13

D. Land Use issue 4: Neighborhood Stability and Revitalization of the West End 15

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased 15

2. Extent of Significant Changes in Assumptions and Policies forming the Basis of the Master Plan or Development Regulations for the West End 16

3. Recommended Changes to Land Use Element of the Master Plan and Development Regulations for the West End 16

4. Recommendations concerning the Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans into the Master Plan for the West End and Recommended Changes to Regulations to Effectuate them 16

E. Land Use Issue 5: Stabilization and Enhancement of Chapel Avenue & Centre Street Circle Gateway 17

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased 17

2. Extent of Significant Changes in Assumptions and Policies forming the Master Plan or Development Regulations for Chapel Avenue/Centre Street Circle Gateway 17
3. Specific Recommended Changes to the Master Plan and Development Regulations for Chapel Avenue/Centre Street Circle Gateway 17
IV. Supplemental Topics 18
1. Land Use Management Housekeeping Matters 18
a. Zoning Ordinance Consistency with the Municipal Land Use Law 18
b. Site Plan Ordinance 18
c. Special Events and Activities at Commercial Sites 19
d. Parking and Storage of Recreational Vehicles 19
2. Environmental Sustainability 20
a. Solar Panels 20
b. Green Team 20
c. Urban Forestry 20
3. Housing Element and Fair Share Plan 21
4. Utilities Plan Element 21
a. Stormwater Management 21
b. Sanitary Sewer 23
5. Circulation Plan Element 23
a. Complete Streets Policy 23
b. Jitney Bus Feasibility Study 24
c. Multi-Use Path Realignment 24
d. Public Electrical Vehicle Charging Infrastructure 24
e. Circulation Study for Chestnut Avenue 24
f. Road Widening for East Park Avenue 25
g. Mid-Block Crosswalks 25
V. Conclusion 25
VI. List of Exhibits 26

I. Introduction

A Master Plan is a policy document that articulates the community's vision, goals and objectives, analyzes existing resources and conditions, and develops strategies for achieving the goals in the future. It is intended to guide elected officials and board members when making decisions that will affect the physical, economic, and social development of a community.

The Master Plan is not intended to be a static document; the municipal land use law requires a periodic examination of the master plan and development regulations at least every 10 years. Merchantville adopted the most recent Master Plan on October 23, 2007. Additional planning studies have been conducted and are incorporated into this Re-examination Report as specified herein.

The Master Plan is broken into various subject matters by elements (i.e., chapters), including: Land Use Plan Element, Historic Preservation Plan Element, Community Facilities Plan Element, Recreation Plan Element, Circulation Plan Element, Housing and Population Element, Economic Plan Element, Utility Service Plan Element, Recycling Plan Element. This Re-examination Report primarily focuses on the Land Use Plan Element, however, other elements are referred to, where appropriate, to identify new or changed issues and recommendations.

II. Statutory Requirements

The Municipal Land Use Law requires the review of the following matters in a Reexamination Report:

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:12A-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.

See N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89.

III. Major Problems and Objectives relating to Land Development at the Time of the Adoption of the Master Plan

In 2007, the Planning Board identified the following major issues in the Land Use Plan Element: (A) Downtown Revitalization, (B) Harmonizing New Construction with Merchantville's Small-Town Charm and Historic Character, (C) Provision of Adequate Parking in the Downtown, (D) Neighborhood Stability and Revitalization of the West End, and (E) Stabilization and Enhancement of Chapel Avenue/Centre Street Circle Gateway Area.[1]

A. Land Use Issue 1: Downtown Revitalization

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased

The 2007 Master Plan identified Downtown Revitalization as a major issue, recognizing that suburban sprawl has diminished the downtown's role as a social and economic hub for Merchantville and the surrounding communities. Residents and visitors no longer come into Merchantville for all of their needs. As such, it was believed that public and private re-investment, and a new role and/or market niche, would be important to downtown revitalization. The Land Use Plan Element proposes a multi-faceted approach to help revitalize the downtown. Specifically, it recommends capitalizing on the Borough's historic character, enriching the Borough's sense of place, enhancing its pedestrian-friendly nature, encouraging a greater mix of land uses and activities, and adding density. While there has been progress in the downtown since the adoption of the Master Plan,[2] downtown revitalization continues to be a goal for the Borough.

Over the years, there has been an on-going effort to redevelop an underutilized triangular area in the downtown bounded by East Chestnut Avenue, Centre Street, and East Park Avenue. At the time of the Master Plan, the Planning Board had already approved a proposed redevelopment project for the site, known as Town Centre East, consisting of 86 residential units, 16,000 square feet of commercial space, and a parking structure. However, that project did not proceed. In 2009, there was another attempt to redevelop the site for 53 residential units and 4,400 square feet of new commercial space. However, that second redevelopment initiative also did not move forward. In the meantime, the Borough acquired the former PNC Bank properties (Block 29, lots 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14), as well as 9 East Park Avenue (Block 29, lot 4) as a means of helping to facilitate redevelopment.

In 2015-2016, the Borough engaged in a redevelopment visioning and planning process to rekindle redevelopment efforts.[3] The Borough adopted a Redevelopment Plan amendment that included several proposed concepts focused on creating a destination in the downtown, as well as amended zoning

---

[1] See Borough of Merchantville Master Plan, Land Use Plan Element, pp.7-8.

[2] Since 2007, there has been both private and public investment in the downtown. There are new destination businesses, such as: The Blue Monkey Tavern, Park Place Café, Eclipse Brewery, and the Station & Eilandarts Center. There have also been municipal-led improvements to the downtown, such as blight removal at the Maple-Chapel Avenues intersection, landscape upgrades to Morrissey Park, extension of the multi-use path, gazebo reconstruction, as well as a host of business and volunteer-led street fairs and festivals to draw persons into the downtown.

[3] The planning initiative was sponsored in part by a Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) grant from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC).

regulations and design guidelines to implement those concepts.[4] More recently, in 2018, the Borough entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Viking Group, appointing the company as the 'conditional redeveloper' for the site. Currently, the Viking Group's concept proposes 88 residential apartments, 13,000± SF of commercial space (which includes the gut rehabilitation of the vacant former PNC Bank), and a pedestrian feature connecting East Park Avenue to the multi-use path. Viking Group's plan provides a sizeable infusion of downtown residents to add human vitality to the downtown and to help provide a more viable built-in market of downtown consumers, while augmenting the local tax base. The Borough is now on the cusp of significant downtown investment. Therefore, downtown revitalization continues to be a primary land use goal of the Borough.

2. Significant Changes in Assumptions forming Basis of Master Plan or Development Regulations for Downtown Revitalization

a. Technology's Impact on Land Use Assumptions

While in 2007 the Land Use Plan Element focused on the dilutive impact of the Cherry Hill mall and big-box retailers, since then technology has altered basic assumptions about the nature and viability of traditional retail stores. E-commerce has rung in a new retail era; people are making purchases on-line with goods being delivered directly to front doors. As such, technology has further reduced the demand for retail storefronts (both in downtowns and at the mall), making it even more challenging for traditional retail to be successful in brick and mortar stores.

Technology has also reduced the demand for office use; many employees work remotely with the use of laptops and live video-conferencing capabilities so there is a reduced need to rent office space. Workers can hold small meetings at local coffee shops or take advantage of new co-working office space. Additionally, the oversupply of office buildings in the region, coupled with the conglomeration of medical practices into regional hospital systems, has also significantly reduced the market demand for traditional office space in many downtowns.

It is anticipated that technology will also impact transportation and circulation needs in the future. Smart phone apps, like Uber and Lyft, link users to driving services, making it easier for persons who don't own a car (or for those who own a car, but don't want to drive) to get to their destinations. Many cities already have car-share services, like Zipcar, which is a replacement to car ownership. Recently, electronic scooters have also become popular in cities as an easy, fun, and environmentally-friendly way to commute short distances and to explore a destination. In the future, driverless vehicles may appear on our streets. If they do, a driverless car or bus will simply drop off passengers, and continue on its way to find another passenger. Therefore, as technology has had a significant impact on the market demand for retail and office uses in the Borough, it is assumed technology will continue to change circulation and transportation needs in the future, as well.

[4] Ordinance 16-03.

3. Recommended Changes to the Master Plan and Regulations for Downtown Revitalization

a. Master Plan Changes

This Reexamination Report modifies one of the strategies that seeks to enhance the mix of land uses and activities in the downtown. Specifically, Section 5.1.3.1 of the Land Use Plan Element recommends the Borough reserve street level storefronts only for retail and service oriented businesses in the downtown, rather than permitting office or residential uses on first floors of buildings.[5] This is because retailers traditionally needed to be on first floors to be successful, whereas office and residential uses could be successful on any floor. The Borough was trying to cultivate more pedestrian activity in the downtown, and to safeguard the ability for retail and service facilities to be situated near one another to draw customers to the downtown as a destination. Though this policy is well-reasoned and well-intentioned, the Board believes more flexibility is warranted given changed retail market conditions.

The Board does not want to unduly restrict first floor uses in the downtown, particularly as the traditional retail market continues to dissipate and Merchantville's relatively small resident base is challenging to sustain local retailers of goods and services in the downtown. Today, retailers don't even need to have a physical storefront, as transactions often take place over the internet. It is also recognized that office use has been beneficial to the downtown during this weakened retail market, as office employees frequent the local restaurant and convenience businesses during the week, while residents are at work.

There are also instances when it is appropriate to have office use on first floors in the downtown. Some types of office use generate foot traffic as much as other types of retail or service establishments because they have a steady stream of customers or clients as part of normal operations, such as dentist and doctor offices. Also, it may be appropriate when prime retail and restaurant locations are not being displaced, but rather additional layers of activity are being generated in secondary commercial areas in the downtown. Additionally, there are some buildings in the downtown that are unique and do not easily lend themselves to typical retail or service-oriented business.[6]

Therefore, while there is a preference for retail and service oriented uses to be established on the first floors of buildings in the downtown, especially along the primary commercial corridor of Centre Street, the Board does not find it prudent to prohibit all office uses on first floors of buildings in the downtown (as recommended in the 2007 Land Use Plan Element). More flexibility for office use is recommended.

b. Zoning Ordinance Changes

This Reexamination report also recommends various changes to the Borough's land use and development regulations related to 'Downtown Revitalization.' The Borough's Zoning Ordinance should strive to implement the following identified Downtown Revitalization goals and objectives set forth in the 2007 Master Plan.

- To encourage an economically and socially vibrant downtown, by promoting a healthy mix of housing, shopping, offices, restaurants, and civic uses and enhancing its pedestrian-friendly nature;[7]

---

[5] Merchantville Master Plan, Land Use Plan Element, p.13 (2007).

[6] For instance, the former PNC Bank building located at 9 South Centre Street is a unique building and will likely require a unique user. Also, the medical office building at 1 South Centre Street does not have any first floor windows, diminishing the ability to attract walk-in customers with displays of merchandise.

[7] Merchantville Master Plan, Land Use Plan Element, p.2 (2007).

- To increase tax ratables so the Borough can maintain and improve the quality of services it provides to its residences and businesses;[8]
- To have a vibrant downtown with a healthy mix of businesses and attractive storefronts;[9]
- To provide a business-friendly environment for existing businesses, which have invested in the Borough and to provide a supportive environment for those wishing to upgrade or renovate;[10]
- To attract new businesses to the Borough.[11]

In order to help achieve those land use management and economic development goals, this Reexamination report recommends the following changes to the Zoning Ordinance:

1. Eliminate Site Plan Approval Requirement for every 'Change of Use'

Currently, every zoning application for a change of use requires site plan approval from the Joint Land Use Board. A "Change of Use" is either: (1) a use that is not essentially similar in function to the last prior use or (2) a use that requires a different minimum amount of parking than the preceding use.[12] Site plan review is a type of development plan review that examines the existing and proposed physical conditions of the lot (i.e., grading, building footprint, parking areas, stormwater management, means of ingress/egress, landscaping, buffers, etc.). Given the context of Merchantville's built environment, and the fluid nature of uses in downtowns, it is recommended that this requirement be eliminated for most 'permitted uses.'

The site plan review process can be costly, cumbersome, and time-consuming. In Merchantville's business districts, which are mostly urban-like settings, most applicants seek a site plan waiver because no changes are proposed to the land, and there is no capacity to add more on-site parking. For an entrepreneur who is determining where to invest their time and money, the lack of predictability and unnecessary costs of the site plan approval process are a deterrent to locate a business in Merchantville. Moreover, it gives the impression that the Borough is providing needless red tape that is counter-intuitive to what the Borough is trying to achieve, which is attracting more businesses and activities to the Downtown. Therefore, it is recommended that the Borough provide a more hospitable business climate, by eliminating the site plan approval requirement for most changes of 'permitted use.'[13]

2. Update and Clarify Land Use Categories

Concurrently, it is recommended that the Borough update and clarify the land use categories in the Zoning Ordinance. Some of the categories are overly-broad, like 'retail of goods and services,' and

---

[8] Merchantville Master Plan, Economic Plan Element, p. 1. (2007).
[9] Id.
[10] Id.
[11] Id.
[12] Article II, §94-5 of the Zoning Ordinance.
[13] A few caveats may still be warranted. For instance, Article IX, §94-52D of the Zoning Ordinance acknowledges Merchantville's urban-like setting, by not requiring a parking variance for existing buildings unless they are increased in size or intensity of use. However, if an applicant for a 'change of permitted use' will be increasing the size or intensity of the site, and there is an existing parking lot on-site, site plan review should be required to ensure adequate circulation and parking lot improvements for public safety. There are instances of parking lots that have been haphazardly developed over the years without Board engineer review and approval.

"manufacturing, fabricating, altering, finishing or assembling." This can result in unintended uses being permitted in the downtown. It is recommended that the land use categories be broken down into more detailed sub-categories so that desired, non-controversial uses should be permitted by right, whereas those that may have potential off-site detrimental impacts, such as noise, odors, vibrations, traffic generation, etc., or pose other concerns, should be identified as 'conditionally permitted uses' or 'prohibited' uses, and analyzed on a case by case basis by the Board.

3. Amend Sign Ordinance Regulations

Recently, Borough Council loosened the sign regulations in an effort to be more business-friendly. It is recommended that Council clarify ambiguous terms and resolve any inconsistencies in the ordinance. Additional changes to the Sign Ordinance are recommended, based on the types of requests the Historic Preservation Commission repeatedly encounters, provided they would not have a detrimental impact on the aesthetic or historic character of the historic districts.

For example, the current sign regulations only allow one sign per window. The regulations do not permit sign bands (i.e., sign stripes that run along the bottom or top of a window) or other decorative sign features in the window if there is another sign in the same window. Since the sign regulations are in the Zoning Ordinance, the Historic Preservation Commission does not have the authority to grant variances, even when they feel that the proposed signage would be appropriate. Therefore, the ordinance should be fine-tuned, with the input of the Historic Preservation Commission, to reflect desired allowable signage. It is also recommended that Illustrative examples of desired signage be prepared to provide guidance to applicants on the types of signs that are acceptable in the historic districts.

4. Recommendations for Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans into the Master Plan and Changes to Regulations to Effectuate them for Downtown Revitalization

As noted above, there has been an on-going effort to redevelop an underutilized triangular area in the Downtown bounded by East Chestnut Avenue, Centre Street, and East Park Avenue. The 2008 Downtown Redevelopment Area Plan Amendment, which reduced the maximum height of buildings from "up to 60 feet" and "four stories" to "up to 48 feet" and "three stories," is considered incorporated into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan.[14] However, the 2016 Redevelopment Plan Amendment is not considered incorporated into the Land Use Plan Element yet, as it is anticipated that it will be amended soon.[15] For example, the 2016 Amendment only allows commercial uses on the first floor of buildings in the Redevelopment Area. However, the Conditional Redeveloper currently proposes residential units on the first floor of some of the buildings, with first floor infill commercial uses on Centre Street, and a commercial anchor at the entrance to the pedestrian street on East Park Avenue. The minimum parking requirements will also likely need to be changed to reflect more flexibility for the Redevelopment Area. Therefore, the 2016 Redevelopment Plan Amendment is not incorporated yet and will be reconsidered once amendments are completed.

It is also recommended that the Borough embark on several actions in order to effectuate redevelopment. Specifically, it is recommended that the Borough acquire Block 29, Lot 5, 17 E Park Avenue, which is an integral piece to the Downtown Redevelopment Area. The Borough will need to have control over this parcel when implementing the DOT grant for the Pedestrian Street in the redevelopment area. Also, a traffic and circulation study for Chestnut Avenue should be undertaken to determine whether Chestnut Avenue could be turned into one-way streets in order to accommodate additional on-street with angled parking in the downtown, if needed. *Also see recommendations in Circulation Plan Element and parking discussion below in Section C.*

B. Land Use Issue 2: Harmonizing New Construction with Merchantville's Small-Town Charm and Historic Character

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased

This Land Use Issue was identified in the 2007 Master Plan as a result of concerns expressed during the first approved Redevelopment Project, known as Town Centre East. Design guidelines were incorporated into the Master Plan for building placement, building height, building scale, architectural character, building form, etc. As noted above, in 2008, Borough Council adopted a Redevelopment Plan Amendment reducing the maximum height of buildings from "up to 60 feet" and "four stories" to "up to 48 feet" and "three stories." With redevelopment on the horizon, harmonizing new construction with the existing fabric of the downtown is still an objective for the Borough. However, the perceived problem appears to be reduced now that the maximum allowable building height has been decreased by ordinance, the downtown has gone through several redevelopment iterations, and other communities have experienced redevelopment projects, lessening fears of change.

---

[14] Ordinance 08-08 adopted on September 22, 2008.
[15] Ordinance 16-03 adopted on May 23, 2016.

2. Extent of Significant Changes in Assumptions and Policies forming the Basis of the Master Plan or Development Regulations for New Construction

There have not been significant changes in assumptions, policies, and objectives on this topic.

3. Specific Recommended Changes to Master Plan or Development Regulations for New Construction

a. Building Height

When Borough Council revisits the Downtown Redevelopment Plan Amendment soon, it should consider fine tuning the building height parameters. Three-story buildings do not typically correspond with 48 feet in height. The Board recommends providing additional details to accompany the height parameters in order to convey context, so there will not be an attempt to subvert the three-story maximum limitation.

4. Recommendations Concerning Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans into Master Plan

Recommendations concerning the incorporation of Downtown Area Redevelopment Plans into the Land Use Plan Element are described above in Section A. Land Use Issue 1: Downtown Revitalization.

C. Land use Issue 3: Provision of Adequate Parking in the Downtown

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased

Over the years, it has been said that one of the deterrents to downtown revitalization is a lack of adequate parking. During the public hearings, businesses claimed they were losing customers because there were not convenient parking spaces and visitors did not know where to park in the downtown, as signage was lacking. As such, it was identified as a land use issue in the 2007 Master Plan, with the Board recommending an updated parking study.

Ragan Design Group (hereafter "RDG") conducted a Parking Management Study that was adopted as an Addendum to the Land Use Plan Element on December 9, 2008. RDG analyzed the parking supply, parking patterns, and made recommendations for maximizing the Borough's parking assets. The quantitative part of the study found that based on the land uses at that time, there was a slight overall surplus of parking spaces in the core area, and a larger surplus if overflow parking was considered. This analysis assumed all spaces would be available to all users, and included parking spaces in the former PNC lot. During the qualitative analysis part of the study, RDG concluded that there was a parking management problem. There were often available spaces in the downtown core. However, user restrictions, time limitations, convenience expectations, and a lack of proper signage played a significant role in the effectiveness of the existing parking supply.

The 2008 study made recommendations for maximizing and improving existing parking resources. The Parking Study recommended: (1) increasing the number of on-street and off-street parking spaces in various ways, (2) facilitating mutual cooperation among landowners in order to reorganize parking lots and to allow shared use of parking spaces, (3) implementing a parking zone plan (with time restrictions

and parking fees to better correspond with convenience), (4) installing signage to help visitors locate parking resources and to clarify parking policies of parking spaces, and (5) updating parking standards in the Zoning Ordinance and Vehicle and Traffic Ordinance. Some of the parking management strategies have since been implemented, though additional opportunities remain.[16]

2. Extent of Significant Changes in Assumptions and Policies forming the Basis of the Master Plan or Development Regulations for Parking

While it is still a challenge to accommodate modern parking convenience expectations in a historic community like Merchantville, there has been a philosophical shift in community planning away from suburban zoning regulations that require site specific parking for single-use developments, as it is recognized that single-user minimum parking requirements have contributed to suburban sprawl. In fact, some New Jersey urban communities have eliminated minimum parking requirements altogether.[17] For instance, nearby Collingswood recently eliminated minimum parking requirements for properties with buildings fronting on Haddon Avenue, the major commercial artery through its downtown. Lambertville and Haddon Township, too, are considering the elimination of minimum parking requirements for their business districts, as it is believed that minimum parking standards for 'changes of use' in denser older communities (with limited or no on-site parking expansion capability) hampers productive use of buildings and economic development in the community. In fact, some cities are establishing maximum parking standards, which place an upper limit on the amount of new parking spaces allowed in downtown areas, in an attempt to achieve balanced land use management. It is expected that this trend will continue as technology diminishes the need for parking facilities over time.

3. Recommended Changes to Master Plan or Regulations regarding Parking

a. Master Plan Changes

Recently, Governor Murphy signed into law legislation requiring the Land Use Plan and Circulation Plan Elements to show existing and proposed locations of public electrical vehicle charging infrastructure. As such, it is recommended that three strategic areas are considered for future installation of charging stations: (1) the public portion of the Verizon parking lot (Block 33, Lots 5-7) in the downtown, (2) an on-street parking space on Maple Avenue near Borough Hall and (3) an off-street parking space in the West Maple Neighborhood when off street parking facilities are created in the West Maple Redevelopment area in the future.[18]

---

[16] For instance, the Borough has rearranged the bus stop location and some of the parking near the municipal building, has increased the time limits on Centre Street from 1 to 2 hours, removed parking meters on Chestnut Avenue near the Blue Monkey Tavern, and has entered into a lease arrangement with Verizon for the use of its parking lot.

[17] *Effective Parking Management*, prepared by Sustainable Jersey, p. 8 (September 2019).

[18] It is anticipated that a parking facility will be created at 604 West Maple Avenue (Block 9, Lot 4).

b. *Zoning Ordinance Changes*

1. Update Residential Parking Standards

The existing off-street parking regulations overstate the residential parking demand and are not consistent with the standard Statewide Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) for residential development. For example, the multiple dwelling off-street parking requirement of 'no less than two parking spaces per residential unit' does not consider the reduced parking needs associated with one bedroom and efficiency type of residential units, as well as lower car ownership rates associated with senior and affordable housing. It is recommended the Borough amend the Zoning Ordinance to correspond with the RSIS, while allowing greater flexibility for shared parking lots of mixed-use developments and redevelopment areas. Therefore, it is recommended that Borough Council review the parking schedule and update the off-street parking regulations in the Zoning Ordinance.

2. Allow Shared Parking

The Zoning Ordinance does not currently permit shared parking. Single-user parking is an inefficient use of land, particularly in a small downtown like Merchantville's. A single-user parking lot sits empty part of the time (for example, a church parking lot that sits mostly empty 6 days of the week, or an office parking lot that sits empty during the evenings and on weekends). Shared parking creates a more efficient use of the land, while allowing more space to be dedicated to uses like living, office, or retail space, creating a more walkable environment. Therefore, it is recommended that the Borough amend the off-street parking regulations in Article IX, §94-53, of the Zoning Ordinance to encourage shared parking between different uses.

c. *Vehicle and Traffic Ordinance Changes*

1. Implement Parking Management Strategies

It is recommended that the Borough make the most use out of its parking assets, by evaluating the productivity of curb space and off-street parking areas. This will be particularly important when redevelopment occurs in the downtown, as additional parking will be in demand for long-term resident and employee parking. For instance, the Borough should evaluate areas along Maple Avenue, in the vicinity of the municipal building, that currently have typically low occupancy rates during the day, as this indicates a parking management problem. Also, the Borough should evaluate prohibited parking areas to see whether restricted curb space (bus stop, church reserved, sight clearance) can be reduced to enable the creation of more on-street parking spaces. Additionally, the Borough should work with owners of user-restricted off-street parking facilities to create potential shared use of facilities. Additional parking management strategies are provided in the 2008 parking study. Any on-street changes will require amendments to the Parking Schedules in Chapter 86, the Vehicle and Traffic Ordinance.

2. Circulation Study

As noted above, it is recommended that the Borough hire a traffic engineer to conduct a study to determine whether the different segments of Chestnut Avenue should be turned into one-way streets in order to accommodate additional on-street parking in the downtown, if needed.

D. Land Use issue 4: Neighborhood Stability and Revitalization of the West End

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased

The West Maple Neighborhood near Route 130 still experiences significant challenges, including uninviting streetscape conditions, declining housing stock, vacant and underutilized storefronts. Since the Master Plan, there have been two phases of multi-municipal planning studies for the West Maple Neighborhood facilitated by Ragan Design Group on behalf of Merchantville, Pennsauken, and Camden. The studies focused on community planning efforts to stabilize the neighborhood, by improving the scenic quality of the Route 130 gateway, eliminating blighting conditions, and improving pedestrian safety and comfort.

On a parallel track, in 2010, the Borough declared 604 West Maple Avenue (Block 9, Lot 4) and 606 West Maple Avenue (Block 9, Lots 2 -3) to be in Need of Redevelopment and it declared 614-622 West Maple Avenue to be in Need of Rehabilitation. In 2011, a Redevelopment Plan and Plan for Rehabilitation was prepared by Remington & Vernick, and a Redeveloper was appointed who significantly rehabilitated 606 West Maple Avenue, known as Wellwood Manor. More recently, in 2018, Borough Council declared 607 West Maple Avenue (Block 4, Lot 12), 701 West Maple Avenue (Block 3, Lot 5), and 703 West Maple Avenue (Block 3, Lots 6, 7) to be in Need of Redevelopment and it declared 675 West Maple Avenue (Block 4, Lot 6) to be in Need of Rehabilitation.

While there has been some progress in the West Maple Neighborhood since the last Master Plan (including the rehabilitation of Wellwood Manor, and landscape, pedestrian, and transit improvements

along West Maple Avenue), continued public and private investment is needed in order to improve overall neighborhood conditions.

2. Extent of Significant Changes in Assumptions and Policies forming the Basis of the Master Plan or Development Regulations for the West End

There have not been significant changes in assumptions, policies, and objectives on this topic. The Borough should continue to pursue strategic revitalization efforts, both individually, and in partnership with Pennsauken Township and the City of Camden. Given the patchwork of municipal boundaries in the West Maple Neighborhood, inter-jurisdictional coordination and cooperation is needed to achieve the greatest impact on neighborhood conditions.

3. Recommended Changes to Land Use Element of the Master Plan and Development Regulations for the West End

The following planning studies are considered incorporated into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan, as Addendums.

- The Joint Municipality West Maple Neighborhood Revitalization Plans, Phase One, prepared by Ragan Design Group for the Multi-Municipal Task Force (2010)
- The Joint Municipality West Maple Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, Phase Two, prepared by Ragan Design Group for the Multi-Municipal Task Force (2013)

As it is anticipated there will be an Ordinance amending the Zoning Map to include overlay districts over the 2018 Redevelopment and Rehabilitation designated parcels (607, 675, 701, 703 West Maple Avenue), the Zoning Map should be graphically updated to reflect all changes to the Merchantville Zoning Map to date. Additionally, it is recommended that the Borough 'keep the flame burning' by reinstituting the multi-municipal task force so the three communities continue to coordinate revitalization efforts and pool resources to target public investments that will achieve the greatest impact on neighborhood conditions.

4. Recommendations concerning the Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans into the Master Plan for the West End and Recommended Changes to Regulations to Effectuate them

The "Plan for Redevelopment and Rehabilitation: West Maple Avenue," prepared by Remington & Vernick, dated April 14, 2011, adopted on June 13, 2011 by Ordinance No. 11-05 is considered incorporated into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan. Additionally, it is recommended that the Borough prepare a Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Plan for the 'Areas declared to be in Need of Redevelopment and Rehabilitation' in the West Maple Neighborhood in 2018 with consideration for incorporation into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan thereafter.[19]

[19] Specifically, the properties located at 607, 675, 701, and 703 West Maple Avenue, as discussed above.

E. Land Use Issue 5: Stabilization and Enhancement of Chapel Avenue & Centre Street Circle Gateway

1. The Extent Problems and Objectives have been Reduced or have Increased

At the time of the Master Plan, the Chapel Avenue Centre Street Circle gateway was experiencing significant challenges, including neglected housing stock, several blighted vacant buildings, and an unattractive commercial strip center. The gateway has improved over the years. Specifically, the strip center took advantage of a Neighborhood Preservation Plan façade improvement grant to help unify the design of the commercial center. Additionally, two vacant and dilapidated buildings on the corner of Magnolia Street and Chapel Avenue were recently demolished, significantly improving the blighted conditions of the gateway, as well as the visibility at the intersection. A local developer acquired and rehabilitated a few of the older houses on Centre Street. Also, the Merchantville Garden Club installs beautiful landscaping in the center of the circle, providing a warm welcome to the community. Recently, there have also been improvements to the Merchantville Community Center, including resolving stormwater problems in the basement and the installation of new deck, storage, and restroom facilities.

2. Extent of Significant Changes in Assumptions and Policies forming the Master Plan or Development Regulations for Chapel Avenue/Centre Street Circle Gateway

There have not been significant changes in assumptions, policies and objectives. They are still the same, such as continuing to pursue housing rehabilitation grant assistance programs for the neighborhood, such as through Community Development Block Grant or the Neighborhood Preservation Program, implementing traffic calming and traffic management measures at the circle, strengthening code enforcement in the area, working with the owner of 177 South Centre Street to continue to improve the aesthetics of the commercial center, continuing to work on rehabilitation and preservation efforts for the Merchantville Community center, and engaging in multi-municipal planning efforts with Pennsauken and Cherry Hill.

Recently, the Borough's Code Enforcement office, working with the Borough Solicitor, has utilized the State's Abandoned Properties Rehabilitation Act (APRA) to acquire several abandoned properties and work with St. Joe's Carpenter Society to rehabilitate them - - one of the structures in this neighborhood. APRA enables communities to take control of neglected properties with a plan for their rehabilitation. The Borough should continue to use this tool under the APRA to stabilize the Borough's residential neighborhoods, including the Chapel Avenue/ Centre Street Circle Neighborhood.

3. Specific Recommended Changes to the Master Plan and Development Regulations for Chapel Avenue/Centre Street Circle Gateway

There are no other specific recommended changes to the Master Plan or development regulations for the Chapel Avenue/Centre Street Circle Gateway at this time. However, it is recommended that the Borough monitor any new applications filed in Pennsauken Township for construction on the corner of Chapel Avenue and Magnolia Street (where several structures were recently demolished) to ensure that site visibility at the intersection.

IV. Supplemental Topics

1. Land Use Management Housekeeping Matters

The following are housekeeping recommendations. The Zoning Ordinance has been amended piecemeal overtime. A comprehensive update is needed to reflect the standards and procedures set forth in the municipal land use law and to eliminate any internal inconsistencies in the Ordinance. The regulations should be easier to administer while achieving the Borough's land use goals. Additionally, the following specific changes are recommended:

a. Zoning Ordinance Consistency with the Municipal Land Use Law

The Zoning Ordinance should reflect that certain uses are controlled by Statute. For instance, 'child care centers' are permitted uses in all non-residential zoning districts and 'family day care' homes are permitted uses in all residential districts, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-66.5b and 40:55D-66.6.

The ordinance should also be clear when zoning permits are required and it should distinguish the zoning permit process from certificates of occupancy or certificates of continuing occupancy, which fall under the authority of the Construction Official.

b. Site Plan Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance is unclear about the scope of activities that trigger site plan review. Article XVI, §94-98 of the Zoning Ordinance currently states: "Prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy or construction permit, site plan approval shall be required for *all applications* not meeting the definition of a "site plan, exempt."[20] The Ordinance does not actually explain what a site plan review is, or the types of activities that generally fall under the umbrella of 'site plan review.' Instead, the reader must make assumptions, by referring to the definition section for 'exempt site plans' and 'minor site plans.' Furthermore, there are some activities that should trigger site plan review, even though an "application" is not being made. Therefore, it is recommended that the Borough amend the ordinance to include the municipal land use law definition of "Site plan" and to articulate the scope of activities that trigger site plan review.

The site plan ordinance should also be updated to include specific site design standards for lighting, trash enclosures, sight triangle visibility, drive aisle widths for various parking lot layouts, etc. Borough Council may also consider moving the site plan regulations out of the Zoning Ordinance and merging them with the Subdivision Ordinance; there are standards and procedures that are applicable to both the Site Plan Review and Subdivision Review process (such as checklist of minimum requirements, review procedures, required performance and maintenance guarantees, inspection procedures and escrows, etc.). Additionally, by removing the Site Plan ordinance out of the Zoning Ordinance, the appropriate review standard (waiver) will be applied if an applicant desires a deviation from a standard. Currently, any site plan deviations require a 'variance' because it is located in the Zoning Ordinance, which requires a weighty analysis of the positive and negative criteria for a variance set forth in the municipal land use law and case law.

[20] Emphasis added.

c. Special Events and Activities at Commercial Sites

From time to time, businesses host special events and activities at their sites. Sometimes, the activities coincide with downtown events like the weekly Market Off Centre or the Merchantville Birthday Celebration (i.e., outdoor displays of merchandise, food vendors outside, music performances, etc.), while other times the activities are unrelated to downtown events (such as Paint Nights, pop-up dinners, or private events). While the Borough wants to encourage activities that bring visitors and customers to Merchantville, reasonable rules for special events and activities are needed to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of attendees and the community.

First, the downtown is a mixed-use district, with persons living on upper floors of buildings and there are residential neighborhoods closely surrounding the downtown. When the activities occur on a frequent basis, it has the potential to negatively impact the reasonable expectations of residents to have use and enjoyment of their property. Secondly, some events and activities are taking place that are not otherwise permitted as a land use (such as outdoor music concerts at a business when the site is not approved as a music venue); as such, some businesses are using these opportunities to circumvent the land use approval process. Third, the frequency makes some special events cross the line from being 'occasional' events to being 'regular' activities, warranting land use review and approval.

Therefore, it is recommended that the Borough adopt regulations regarding these types of privately-held special events and activities. Specifically, it is recommended that Council consider identifying the maximum number of occurrences that can take place per year, per site, without triggering review as a regulated land use - - similar to how the Borough treats yard sales.[21] If it exceeds that number, then it should be treated as a land use requiring land use review and approval. The Board also recommends that Council consider identifying parameters for the special events or activities taking place on private property (such as whether amplified music taking place outdoors should be permitted, documentation of licenses of participating vendors, and compliance with fire and building code requirements, etc.). This way, there will be clear rules for all persons to understand and follow.

d. Parking and Storage of Recreational Vehicles

Article IX, §94-52.1 of the Zoning Ordinance states the following with regard to parking and storage of recreational vehicles:

> Recreational vehicles and equipment owned and used by the owner or occupant of the dwelling, such as boats, trailers, campers, etc., may be parked, stored or garaged off street within the residential zones as long as they are parked, stored or garaged to the rear of the front building line and, if outside a garage, that they be parked on a hard surface.

In order to maintain the integrity and residential character of Merchantville's residential neighborhoods, it is recommended that the Zoning Ordinance provide more stringent requirements regarding the parking or storage of recreational vehicles in residential districts, including the maximum number of vehicles on a site, the maximum size of vehicles, the nature and size of the hard surface underneath the vehicle, the minimum setbacks of the vehicle parking or storage from adjacent properties, etc.

[21] Yard sales are permitted three times per calendar year.

2. Environmental Sustainability

a. Solar Panels

Since 2007, there has been a growing trend toward retrofitting buildings to be more energy efficient. The Historic Preservation Commission recently approved its first application for a roof solar energy system. It is recommended that the Borough amend the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate guidelines regarding solar panel installations in the Borough's locally designated historic districts. There are sample guidelines prepared by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions that can be used as a resource. Additionally, it is recommended that the Borough explore opportunities for installation of solar panels on municipal facilities, as a means of enhancing the Borough's own energy efficiency.

b. Green Team

Since the adoption of the Master Plan in 2007, a sustainability group has formed in Merchantville - - the Merchantville Green Team, which develops plans, implement programs, and assists with educational opportunities to support the creation of a sustainable community. The Green Team is registered with Sustainable Jersey, which is a private organization that provides tools, training and financial incentives to support communities pursuing sustainability programs. A recent offshoot of the Green Team is 'Incredible Edible Merchantville,' which seeks to develop edible landscapes to promote a healthy culture and community sustainability.

c. Urban Forestry

Merchantville recently celebrated its 42nd year as Tree City USA, which is an accreditation from the National Arbor Day Foundation. Merchantville's Shade Tree Commission, consisting of a group of volunteer residents, was established to plant, care for, and control the Borough's trees. There are approximately 2,100 publicly-managed trees, with 500 trees on municipal property (parks, Borough Hall, Community Center and multi-use path), as well as approximately 1550 street trees in the rights of way along Merchantville's street network.[22] To manage these, the Shade Tree Commission adopted its fourth Community Forestry Management Plan, dated December 2018, which provides a program for maintaining, improving, and growing the community forest and shade tree resources in the Borough.

Trees provide many benefits to the community, including improving the air quality, mitigating stormwater runoff, providing shade, enhancing aesthetic beauty, providing wildlife habitat, and increasing property values. Merchantville's mature shade trees sometimes outgrow their planting strip, expanding into, and uplifting, the sidewalk. As property owners are responsible for sidewalk maintenance, they can be cited by the Code Enforcement Office for tripping hazards. As a means of fixing the problem without causing an imminent reoccurrence, property owners often want to cut tree roots or remove the tree. However, the Shade Tree Commission is in charge of the trees and evaluates whether the proposed solution could harm the tree and/or cause a stability hazard. Upon request, the Shade Tree Commission will approve removal of a dangerous or dead tree by the Borough or resident.

[22]Email correspondence from Joan Anderson, Shade Tree Commission Secretary, dated January 2, 2020.

One of the identified goals in the Community Forestry Management Plan is to minimize tree failures that have the potential to cause property damage and human injury. The Borough and Shade Tree Commission recently received a matching Resiliency Planning Grant from the New Jersey Forest Service to establish an inventory of all publicly-managed trees. A tree inventory will identify and help prioritize tree maintenance needs, by providing a professional assessment of tree conditions, so tree work can be prioritized to eliminate the greatest risk, based on likelihood of failure and likelihood of impacting a target (humans or property), with the goal of making the Borough more resilient during storm events. As part of the project, the tree expert will recommend solutions to tree/sidewalk conflicts.

While the budget for the Shade Tree Commission is considerable for a community of this size (in 2018, it was $17,000, which equates to $4.50 per resident or $10.58 per dwelling unit), it is not enough to finance all of the Shade Tree Commission's tree management needs for the 2,100 trees. It is recommended that the Shade Tree Commission continue to use its adopted Community Forestry Management Plan as the framework for activities and initiatives, as well as pursue additional grant opportunities in order to help offset the costs of needed urban forestry management.

3. Housing Element and Fair Share Plan

The Borough's current Housing Element and Fair Share Plan is comprised of two parts: (1) the Borough of Merchantville's Amended Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, prepared by Ragan Design Group for the Merchantville Joint Land Use Board, which was adopted on December 8, 2015 and (2) the 2016 Court Settlement with Fair Share Housing Center, dated August 5, 2016, and last signed on August 9, 2016, which is attached herewith as an exhibit. In the event of any conflicting or contradictory language between the two documents, the court settlement agreement supersedes any and all conflicting or contradictory language in the Borough's 2015 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. The 2007, 2008, and 2014 Housing Elements and/or Fair Share Plans for the third round are considered superseded.

4. Utilities Plan Element

a. Stormwater Management

The Municipal Land Use Law requires the Municipal Stormwater Management Plan to be reexamined at each subsequent scheduled reexamination of the master plan pursuant thereto. (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-93). As noted in the 2007 Master Plan, the Planning Board adopted Merchantville's Municipal Storm Water Management Plan, dated March 22, 2005, prepared by CME of Consulting Engineer Services, on June 14, 2005. At that time, CME recommended nonstructural stormwater management strategies for the prevention of stormwater pollution.[23] The Borough also adopted a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan,

[23] The implementing ordinance was adopted on November 28, 2005 by Ordinance 05-15. There have been various additional amendments to the Stormwater Management Ordinance since then: On July 9, 2007, Article IX, Stormwater Management Requirements and Controls for Major Development, was added to Chapter 71a by Ordinance 07-11. On May 11, 2009, Article XI, Private Storm Drain Inlet Retrofitting, was added to Chapter 71a by Ordinance 09-10, which was amended 11-19-2009 by Ordinance 09-17, and amended again on 9-12-2011 by Ord. No. 11-09. On May 11, 2009, Article XII, Refuse Containers/Dumpsters, was added to Chapter 7a, by Ordinance 09-10; amended 11-9-2009 by Ordinance 09-17 and again on 9-12-2011 by Ordinance 11-10. On September 12, 2016, Chapter 33A, Flood Damage Prevention, was added by Ordinance 16-08. On May 14, 2018, Article I, Containerized Yard Waste, was amended by Ordinance 18-06.

dated November 2006, prepared by Remington & Vernick Engineers that was recently revised by the Borough in April 2018.

The Borough's stormwater focus has expanded to community resilience, which is the sustained ability of a community to withstand and recover from man-made or natural disasters. It has become more important in recent years, as climate change and extreme weather events are increasing the Borough's exposure to hazards and risk. Flood prevention is on the minds of Merchantville residents and businesses as intense downpours have overwhelmed Merchantville's stormwater management systems. Borough representatives recently met with residents of the Glenwood and Ivins Avenue neighborhood, as they have experienced extreme flooding events during storms. The Borough Engineer is currently investigating potential storm water management solutions for this neighborhood. Other areas of the Borough have also been subject to heavy flooding during storm events, flooding basements and properties. Recently, it was discovered that certain segments of storm water infrastructure along Centre Street in the vicinity of Park Avenue and Locust Avenue have failed; Camden County will be replacing the failed infrastructure when it resurfaces Centre Street in Spring/Summer of 2020.

The State of New Jersey amended its stormwater management regulations (N.J.A.C. 7:8) on June 2016 and updated its New Jersey Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) Manual in November 2018.[24] The following are recommendations regarding stormwater management, given the changes to the regulations:

1. Preparation of an Updated Stormwater Management Plan Element

It is recommended that an updated Stormwater Management Plan be prepared in coordination of the Camden County Soil Conservation District, so that it meets the current minimum requirements of N.J.A.C. 7:8, including the following:

1. Expand the identified goals so they reflect the current goals set forth for Stormwater Management Planning in N.J.A.C. 7:8-2.2;
2. Map groundwater recharge areas within the Borough (there are no water bodies and no wellhead protection areas);
3. Update the description of how the municipal stormwater management plan incorporates design and performance standards in N.J.A.C. 7:8-5;
4. Describe how adequate long-term operation as well as preventative and corrective maintenance (including replacement) of the selected stormwater management measures will be ensured;
6. Describe how the plan will ensure compliance with Safety Standards for Stormwater Management Basins at N.J.A.C. 7:8-6 (at this time, there are none, but if any are installed in the future);
7. Describe how the municipal stormwater management plan is coordinated with the appropriate Soil Conservation District and other relevant stormwater management plans (such as those areas where Merchantville's stormwater drains to).
8. Evaluate the extent to which the municipality's entire master plan (including the land use plan element), official map, and development regulations (including the zoning ordinance) implement the principles expressed in N.J.A.C. 7:8-5.3(b).
9. In order to grant a variance or exemption from the design and performance standards in N.J.A.C. 7:8-5, include a mitigation plan that identifies what measures are necessary to offset the deficit created by granting the variance or exemption.

[24] https://www.nj.gov/dep/rules/rules/njac7_8.pdf

10. Include a copy of the recommended implementing stormwater control ordinance(s) requiring stormwater management measures, if any;

2. *Improve Resiliency in the Face of Extreme Weather Events.*

The Borough Engineer should continue to investigate potential storm water management solutions to help mitigate areas of the Borough that are subject to worsened flooding conditions to improve resiliency in the face of extreme weather events.

3. *Evaluate and Replace Any Failed Systems*

The Borough should request the County Department of Public Works to investigate the condition of all County-owned storm water systems in the Borough. Replacement of any failed systems will help to mitigate adverse conditions of storm water quantity and quality.

b. Sanitary Sewer

At the time of the 2007 Master Plan, the age and condition of the sewer infrastructure was a principal concern. The Plan recommended conducting a comprehensive investigative study to identify local sewer system conditions. After additional investigations, the majority of Merchantville's sanitary sewer lines and manholes were rehabilitated in 2010 with the financial assistance of the New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust.[25]

5. Circulation Plan Element

a. Complete Streets Policy

The 2007 Master Plan Circulation Plan Element includes various goals and initiatives that would be termed 'a complete streets policy' today.[26] 'Complete Streets' are streets that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, all modes of transportation, and all ability levels. They balance the needs of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, emergency responders, and goods movement based on local context. With an older historic community, like Merchantville, it is often challenging to retrofit existing street network facilities for all users, all modes of transportation, and all ability levels. Nevertheless, the Borough should still strive to enhance our existing infrastructure to make it more complete, where it can. While the Borough is fortunate to have a multi-use path along Chestnut Avenue, between Euclid Avenue and Cove Road, it would be desirable to have additional multi-modal opportunities in the community. It is recommended that the Borough pursue grant opportunities to analyze means of enhancing Merchantville's multi-modal travel capacity via a Bicycle and Pedestrian Enhancement Plan. The most current State resource for municipal circulation planning is the New Jersey Department of Transportation's fourth Complete Streets Design Guide (2017).

---

[25] According to the NJEIT Sewer Line and Manhole Rehabilitation Project Plans, prepared by Joe Brickley, P.E. of CES Engineers, dated 12/30/08, there were small segments that were not rehabilitated, including the entirety of Volan Street, and small segments of Hamilton Avenue, Lexington Avenue, Cove Road, and Ivins Avenue, as those had previously been replaced.

[26] See Circulation Plan Element, Goals for Circulation, pp 1-2 (2007).

b. Jitney Bus Feasibility Study

Transit is an important amenity that can help attract new residents, employers, and visitors. It is recommended that the Borough also apply for a grant to conduct a feasibility study to explore a local circulator bus system (i.e., a jitney) that could provide frequent convenient service between popular destinations around town and to the PATCO speed line, so that persons can conveniently and comfortably travel to and from Philadelphia without an automobile. One of the fundamental goals of Complete Streets is to facilitate and encourage a variety of transportation choices beyond the personal automobile. A jitney would not only help those who desire to travel by a different mode than vehicle, but also for those that cannot drive and must use an alternate mode of transportation.

c. Multi-Use Path Realignment

It is recommended that the Borough realign the multi-use path along Chestnut Avenue, in the vicinity of Centre Street, onto the existing Merchantville Mile multi-use path right of way, if feasible. Currently, users of the multi-use path are directed to ride their bicycle into the cartway of Chestnut Avenue in the vicinity of Centre Street (150'± west of Centre and 120' ±east of Centre Street). This is problematic for a number of reasons, including user–confusion and public safety, and it is also an inefficient use curb space in the heart of the Downtown. Specifically, some motorists traveling northbound on Centre Street, who desire to make a right turn onto East Chestnut Avenue, have mistaken the bike lane as a vehicular travel lane (with several older motorists actually driving off road onto the path). There are also conflicts with NJ Transit buses that are traveling southbound on Centre Street who unintentionally swing into the bike lane when turning left onto East Chestnut Avenue, striking the bike lane separation bollards. The on-road bike lane also displaces valuable on-street parking spaces in the center of the Downtown. When Camden County makes improvements to Centre Street in the spring of 2020, it is recommended that this scope of work be included in intersection improvements.

d. Public Electrical Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

As noted above, Governor Murphy signed into law legislation requiring the Land Use Plan and Circulation Plan Elements to show existing and proposed locations of public electrical vehicle charging infrastructure. It is recommended that three strategic areas are considered for future installation of charging stations: (1) the public portion of the parking area in the Verizon parking lot (Block 33, Lots 5-7) in the downtown, (2) an on-street parking space near Borough Hall on Maple Avenue, and (3) an off-street parking space in the West Maple Neighborhood when off street parking facilities are created in the West Maple Redevelopment area. It is anticipated that a parking facility will be created at 604 West Maple Avenue (Block 9, Lot 4).

e. Circulation Study for Chestnut Avenue

As noted above, it is recommended that the Borough hire a traffic engineer to conduct a circulation and parking study to determine whether Chestnut Avenue could be turned into one-way streets in order to accommodate additional on-street angled parking in the downtown, if needed.

f. Road Widening for East Park Avenue

It is recommended that East Park Avenue be widened. There are metered on-street parking spaces on East Park Avenue that have relatively low occupancy rates, primarily due to the insufficient width of the street cartway, causing undesirable parking conditions. It is a circulation objective to widen East Park Avenue during the redevelopment process to properly accommodate, and increase, the number of useable on-street parking and loading spaces on East Park Avenue. Utility pole removal and replacement underground should coincide with road widening and redevelopment along East Park Avenue.

g. Mid-Block Crosswalks

It is recommended that the Borough study several areas for the installation of mid-block crosswalks. For instance, it is recommended that a mid-block crosswalk be considered for Centre Street, near the former PNC Bank (9 E Centre Street) and Rite Aid (14 S Centre Street), as it is a natural crossing area for pedestrians who cross back and forth on Centre Street. Additionally, there is an area along West Maple Avenue in the West Maple Neighborhood that would benefit from a mid-block crosswalk. Vehicles are moving quickly from Route 130 into the neighborhood, while persons frequently cross the street to go to the storefronts on West Maple Avenue. Lastly, a mid-block crosswalk is desired on West Maple Avenue in the vicinity of CVS (18 West Maple Avenue) and the bus stop in front of Morrissey Park, as persons often cross at this location to go to CVS and the Post Office. It is recommended that the Borough Engineer analyze conditions in these locations to determine if mid-block crosswalks would be feasible. As Maple Avenue and Centre Street are County roads, they would require County cooperation and approval.

V. Conclusion

This Reexamination Report concludes that the 2007 Merchantville Master Plan, as amended, remains a viable planning policy to guide development and redevelopment of land in the Borough. It is recommended that a new 'Stormwater Management Plan Element' be prepared in order to be consistent with recent changes to NJDEP regulations. Other elements have been updated as noted herein.

Additionally, the following documents are considered to be incorporated into the Master Plan, by reference, to the same extent as if fully set forth herein:

<u>Land Use Plan Element</u>

- Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan Amendment, adopted on September 22, 2008 by Ordinance No. 08-08
- Plan for Redevelopment and Rehabilitation: West Maple Avenue, prepared by Remington & Vernick, dated April 14, 2011, adopted on June 13, 2011 by Ordinance No. 11-05
- The Joint Municipality West Maple Neighborhood Revitalization Plans, Phase One, prepared by Ragan Design Group for the Multi-Municipal Task Force (2010)
- The Joint Municipality West Maple Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, Phase Two, prepared by Ragan Design Group for the Multi-Municipal Task Force (2013)

Housing Element and Fair Share Plan

- The 2015 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, prepared by Ragan Design Group, adopted on December 8, 2015.
- The Court Settlement Agreement between the Borough of Merchantville and the Fair Share Housing Center, dated August 5, 2016, signed on August 9, 2016.[27]

VI. List of Exhibits

1. Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan Amendment, adopted on September 22, 2008 by Ordinance No. 08-08
2. Plan for Redevelopment and Rehabilitation: West Maple Avenue, prepared by Remington & Vernick, dated April 14, 2011, adopted on June 13, 2011 by Ordinance No. 11-05
3. The Joint Municipality West Maple Neighborhood Revitalization Plans, Phase One, prepared by Ragan Design Group for the Multi-Municipal Task Force (2010)
4. The Joint Municipality West Maple Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, Phase Two, prepared by Ragan Design Group for the Multi-Municipal Task Force (2013)
5. The Court Settlement Agreement between the Borough of Merchantville and the Fair Share Housing Center, dated August 5, 2016, signed on August 9, 2016.

[27] In the event of any conflicting or contradictory language between the two documents, the court settlement agreement supersedes any and all conflicting or contradictory language in the Borough's 2015 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan.