

# MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT- LAND USE PLAN ELEMENT

PREPARED FOR  
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP LAND USE BOARD

BY:

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The original of this document was signed and sealed

in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12

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Franklin Township, Warren County, NJ

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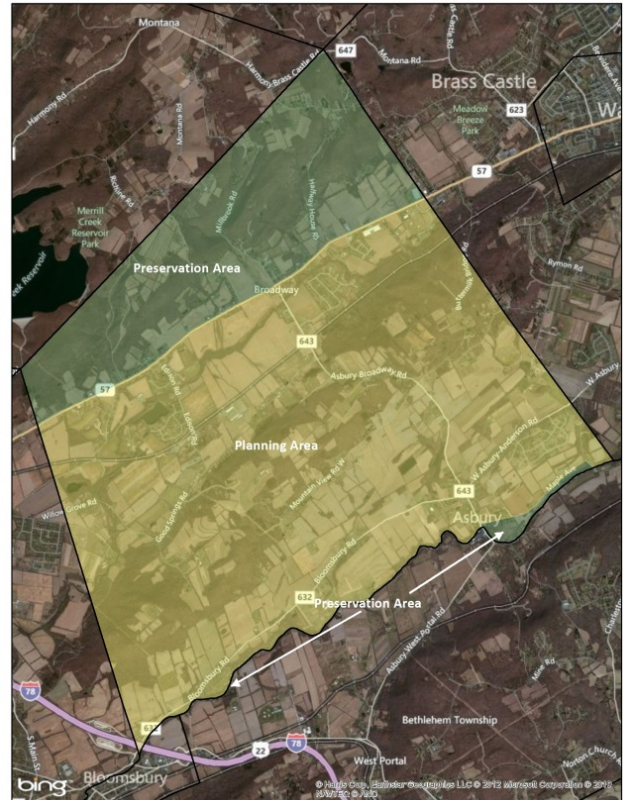
## INTRODUCTION

This amendment to the Land Use Plan Element of the Franklin Township Master Plan has been prepared to analyze and implement zoning changes along the Route 57 corridor, which runs east/west through the northern part of the Township. As a community comprised primarily of farmland and single family homes, the Township has little in the way of large-scale commercial development or diversity in the commercial and service uses offered to residents. What little commercial development is located in Franklin is concentrated in Asbury and along Route 57 in Broadway and New Village.

Franklin is located within the Highlands Region and the Township is engaged in the ongoing process of conforming to the Highlands Regional Master Plan for lands in the Preservation Area. Within the Township's boundaries, the Preservation Area encompasses all lands located to the north of Route 57 and a small area along the Musconetcong River to the south (see map at right). With many existing commercial enterprises situated on the north side of Route 57 in the Preservation Area, hopes of expansion of nonresidential development there have all but dried up. As such, the Township must focus on meaningful economic development opportunities in the Planning Area on the south side of Route 57 and in Asbury.

There are two areas of focus addressed in this amendment. The first is related to the physical extent of the C-1 Village Commercial District within the Township. In reviewing the character of existing development along the south side of Route 57 from Stewartsville Road to the former site of Rossini's Supermarket, there appears to be opportunity to include parcels that are currently zoned R-75 Village Residential in an extension of the Village Commercial District. Not only does this address current businesses uses including Hunter's Tavern and the antique store, but it provides an appropriate location for additional commercial development in the future. The second area of focus is on uses permitted in the Village Commercial District. By expanding those uses permitted as of right, the hope is to draw a broader range of commercial businesses to the Township, businesses that address recreational endeavors currently undertaken by Township residents and those that visit the area.

It should be acknowledged that this amendment to the Land Use Plan has been prepared by the Land Use Board at the request of the Township Committee, who received a request that property located at Block 34, Lot 20 be considered for inclusion in the C-1 Village Commercial District. The property owner also requested that the permitted uses be broadened to include additional commercial opportunities. Initial review of that request led to the idea that other properties along Route 57 would be appropriate for inclusion in the C-1 Village Commercial District in order to provide more opportunity for commercial enterprise along this busy corridor.



## STUDY AREA

The area in question includes eleven (11) parcels located on the south side of Route 57 just east of Stewartsville Road, currently situated in the R-75 Village Residential Zone. Figure 1, below, shows the parcels in the study area outlined in red, while Table 1 lists each parcel.

**Figure 1 – Study Area Parcels**



**Table 1- Study Area Parcels**

<b>Block</b>	<b>Lot</b>	<b>Area (acres)</b>	<b>Property Tax Class</b>	<b>Zoning Classification</b>
34	12	1.0	2 (residential)	R-75 Village Residential
34	13	2.13	2 (residential)	R-75 Village Residential
34	13.01	0.42	2 (residential)	R-75 Village Residential
34	14	0.279	2 (residential)	R-75 Village Residential
34	15	0.279	2 (residential)	R-75 Village Residential
34	16	0.72	2 (residential)	R-75 Village Residential
34	17	0.96	2 (residential)	R-75 Village Residential
34	18	0.2507	2 (residential)	R-75 Village Residential
34	19	0.68	2 (residential)	R-75 Village Residential
34	20	2.13	4A (commercial)	R-75 Village Residential
37	20	1.1	1 (vacant)	R-75 Village Residential
<b>Total</b>		<b>9.949</b>		

At present, Lots 12 through 19 in Block 34 are occupied by single family detached and attached dwellings, although Lot 13 also contains an antiques business. Block 34, Lot 20 is occupied by Hunter's Tavern and Block 37, Lot 20 is vacant. Surrounding land uses include farmland to the south, commercial and residential development along Thatcher Avenue to the east, and residential development across Route 57 to the north and to the west along Stewartville Road. Block 37, Lot 20 while vacant, is adjacent to the building formerly occupied by Rossini's Supermarket.

## **CURRENT ZONING**

At present, all of the subject properties lie within the R-75 Village Residential District. Figure 2, below, depicts the current zoning for the area, with the subject properties outlined in black.

**Figure 2 – Current Zoning**



As outlined in the Schedule of Use Regulations in the Land Use and Development Ordinance, permitted uses in the R-75 Village Residential District include single-family detached dwellings, agricultural uses, public utility structures and civic buildings. Accessory uses permitted include signs, home occupations, home professional offices, private tennis courts, bed-and-breakfast inns, accessory apartments, small wind energy systems, renewable energy facilities and any use or structure customarily incidental to principal permitted uses. Conditional uses permitted include churches and educational uses, wireless telecommunications antennas placed on existing structures and wireless telecommunications towers.

Permitted uses in the C-1 Village Commercial District include local retail activities such as grocery stores, meat markets, seafood markets, delicatessens, bakeries, drug stores, book stores, packaged liquor stores and similar neighborhood retail uses, local service activities, such as barber and beauty shops, laundromats, tailors and dry cleaners, appliance repair shops and similar service uses, wireless telecommunications antennas placed on existing structures and renewable energy facilities. Accessory uses permitted include off-street parking, signs, bed-and-breakfast inns, accessory apartments, small wind energy systems and renewable energy systems. Permitted conditional uses include gasoline service stations and wireless telecommunications towers.

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

Route 57 is the principal artery traversing Franklin Township, connecting Hackettstown to Phillipsburg and Easton and carrying an average of more than 10,000 vehicles per day. Not only is it an important transportation route, it is home to the bulk of the Township's commercial and service businesses. While Franklin has seen some measure of redevelopment and reuse of commercial facilities along Route 57 in the past few years, the level of commercial and service businesses in the Township in general is seen as inadequate, particularly with the recent closing of businesses like Rossini's Supermarket.

The Highlands Regional Master Plan's policies have had a profound impact on development opportunities and business expansion in the Preservation Area, which encompasses all lands north of Route 57 in Franklin. Restrictions on additional impervious coverage and development present serious limiting factors to business owners in the Preservation Area wishing to undertake meaningful expansion. There are provisions related to Highlands Redevelopment Areas that may prove somewhat beneficial to properties in the Preservation Area in the long term, but ultimately even those will not permit large-scale expansion of commercial development.

With restrictions on expansion of commercial development north of Route 57, other areas south along the highway are seen as the only viable option for additional opportunities for business within Franklin. The area east of Stewartville Road down to Rossini's Market while currently zoned R-75, includes some nonresidential uses like Hunter's Tavern and the antique store. The depth of lots along this stretch of Route 57 makes them appropriate for development of commercial uses, although lots will likely have to be combined for meaningful development.

Merrill Creek Reservoir, located just north of Route 57 in neighboring Harmony Township, is a 650 acre lake that offers recreation opportunities including hiking, boating, fishing and hunting. Not only is it a resource for local residents, but it attracts people from throughout the region. There appears to be opportunity for recreation-related commercial uses in Franklin to support those that utilize Merrill Creek regularly. Many Township residents routinely hunt and fish, and the Musconetcong River presents additional opportunity in the southern portion of Franklin for excellent trout fishing. Commercial uses with recreational focus, both in sales and service, are viable given the potential market.

## **MASTER PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Franklin Township's most recent Land Use Plan Element was adopted in 2001, and the Land Use Board reexamined the Master Plan and development regulations in 2011 and 2014. None of the underlying goals and objectives were changed at the time of reexamination. Generally the existing Land Use Plan is supportive of expanding commercial opportunities along Route 57, and the following goals and objectives are specifically promoted by the zoning changes contemplated in this amendment to the Land Use Plan:

### **Growth**

- Regulate growth in an orderly fashion and channel new development to appropriate locations.
- Encourage commercial, agricultural business, office and light industrial development in suitable locations along Route 57.

Community Type

- Retain the rural and agricultural character of the Township while diversifying the tax base with commercial and industrial expansion.

Land Use

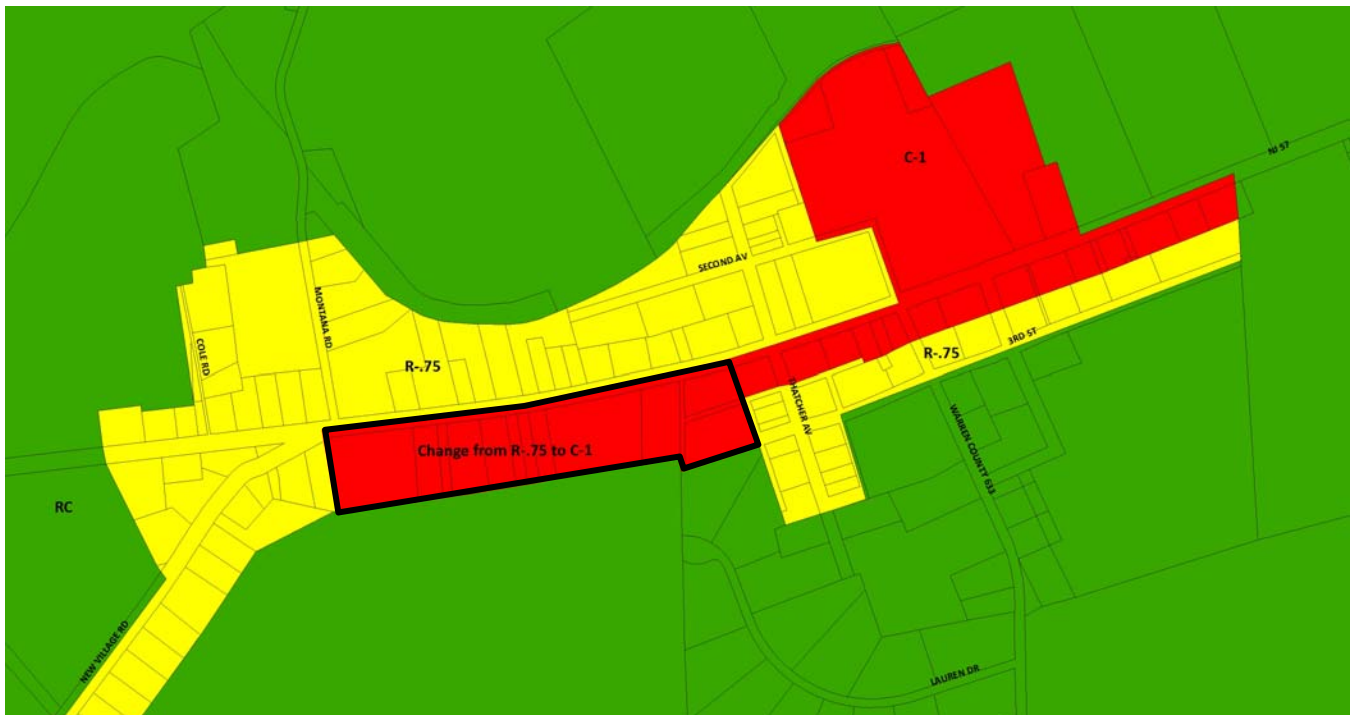
Commercial

- Promote commercial development along designated portions of Route 57, and maintain village neighborhood shopping opportunities in Asbury, Broadway, and New Village.

**PROPOSED REZONING**

After reviewing the nature of parcels west of the existing C-1 Village Commercial District on the south side of Route 57 and considering the Master Plan’s long-standing goals and objectives related to promoting opportunity for additional commercial development in the Township, it is recommended the Village Commercial District be extended to include areas currently zoned R-75 Village Residential. This will provide additional area along Route 57 for future commercial development. Figure 3, below, depicts the lots proposed to be included in an extension of the C-1 Village Commercial District.

**Figure 3 – Proposed Zoning Change**



To provide more diversity in commercial uses throughout the Township and to address the market related to recreational opportunities in the area, the permitted uses for the C-1 Village Commercial District should be expanded to allow hunting, fishing and archery sales and service, firearms and ammunition sales, indoor

facilities for firearms and archery firing and practice and rental of kayaks, boats and other recreational equipment.

Acknowledging that existing residential uses within the area proposed for rezoning will likely remain, a grandfather provision should be included in any amendment to the Land Use and Development Ordinance to permit those uses to remain and expand a limited amount should it be desired by homeowners.