TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE
MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT

TOWNSHIP OF BELLEVILLE
ESSEX COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Adopted by the Belleville Planning Board: January 10, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

The Township of Belleville is located along the Passaic River in northeastern Essex County. Bordered by Nutley Township to the north, the Passaic River and Bergen County (the Borough of North Arlington and Town of Kearny) to the East, the City of Newark to the south, and Bloomfield Township to the west. The Township is part of a larger urban area that maintains a substantial industrial base, clusters of well-established neighborhoods with neighborhood commercial development patterns, and established, mature residential neighborhoods. Belleville is a well-established aging urban suburb located on the fringe of New Jersey’s largest City. This unique location is an asset that should be recognized and properly addressed.

The past decade has revealed a resurgence of interest in our urban areas. As the country’s urban areas continue to experience significant population growth, the Township is experiencing increased development pressure and must apply skill and knowledge to ensure that new development makes the community more vibrant, inclusive and environmentally sound. The re-urbanization trend, coupled with the continued decline in the amount of land dedicated to industrial uses in the Township and region, presents a significant opportunity for the Township to redevelop in a manner that bolsters its tax base and enhances its “sense of place.” The Township’s proximity to New York City and the City of Newark, its network of parks and recreational facilities, its well-established urban fabric, Silver Lake Light Rail Station connecting directly to Newark Pennsylvania Station and the NY/NJ Metropolitan PATH system, and ease of access to regional vehicular transportation linkages including the Garden State Parkway and several State highways each present strengths upon which the Township can capitalize to achieve its vision for its future. The Township seeks to improve the health of its community and enhance the quality of life of its residents. This can be achieved through proper planning, investment in infrastructure and enhancing economic and social vitality within the Township of Belleville.

The Township of Belleville Master Plan was adopted by the Belleville Township Planning Board in 2009. The 2009 Master Plan was based, in part, on the Land Use Element of the Township Master Plan prepared in 1995. The 2009 Master Plan also incorporated the policy changes recommended in the Master Plan Reexamination Reports adopted by the Planning Board in 2004 and 2007. The February 2018 Master Plan update was very comprehensive and was intended to provide a policy framework for capitalizing on the re-urbanization of the nation’s population while ensuring that future development and redevelopment preserves established residential neighborhoods and enhances the quality of life of Township residents. That plan paved the way to examine the Township more closely and to identify further goal oriented recommendations and to establish specific milestones needed to achieve the Township’s multipronged objectives.

This Master Plan update consists of three sections: The first is a Master Plan Reexamination Report prepared pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89. The Master Plan Reexamination Report outlines changes that have occurred since the adoption of the 2009 Master Plan and provides an overview of recommended master plan and zoning changes based upon these changes. The second part is a series of amendments to the specific elements of the 2009 Master Plan based upon the aforementioned reexamination report. The third section contains recommended amendments to the Township Zoning Ordinance intended to effectuate the updated master plan.
The Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. §40:55D-1 et seq.) requires that the governing body shall, at least every 10 years, provide for a general reexamination of its master plan and development regulations by the planning board, which shall prepare and adopt by resolution a report on the findings of such reexamination. The master plan reexamination report must include discussion on:

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.

Major Problems and Objectives at the Time of the Last Reexamination Report

The Belleville Township Master Plan was most recently re-examined in February of 2018. The 2018 Reexamination Report and the 2009 Master Plan document the major problems and objectives outlined in the 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report. Many of the same problems and objectives originally identified in 2007 continue to plague the Township. The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report and 2018 Master Plan Reexamination Report identified the following major problems and objectives relating to land development in the Township and this up-date provides some supplemental information regarding these continuing problems and objectives:

1. Vacant stores and lack of off-street parking in the Washington Avenue business area, despite the creation of a new municipal parking lot at 131-135 Washington Avenue, remains a major problem. The regulation of Washington Avenue as a 1.8-mile long homogenous General Business District does not effectively deal with the variety of land use conditions and retail concentrations along this business street.
2. There is a shortage of Municipal Park and recreation facilities only partially offset by the existence of a large County Park and golf course.

3. There remains a need for senior citizen housing.

4. Traffic bottlenecks at key intersections.

5. There is a changing pattern of land use in the Valley due to a strong market for condominiums and little interest in industrial buildings.

6. There is the potential conflict with the light industrial area proposed in the 1989 Bloomfield Master Plan in an area across from multifamily housing in Belleville near Montgomery Street, and an area of multifamily east of Washington Avenue in Nutley adjoins an industrial area in Belleville.

7. There is uncertainty over pursuing a regional center designation in the State Plan due to the redevelopment criteria definition.

8. The Main Street corridor south of Joralemon Street to Rutgers Street is characterized by a mix of commercial, industrial, and residential uses. There is a recent trend toward more non-residential uses which should be addressed.

9. The Main Street corridor north of Little Street and including the formal Walter Kidde property (Finkelstein Tire Company) includes a number of vacant and underutilized former industrial properties which should be addressed.

10. The property along Joralemon Street adjacent to the Third River and cemetery property should be reviewed for conformity with the land use designation.

11. The former Essex County Geriatric Hospital site should be reviewed as to the future land use potential if redeveloped.

12. The Hoffman-La Roche/Clara Maass office properties along Franklin Avenue should be reviewed as to future land use potential if redeveloped.

13. The Mill Street Condominiums, which were approved via use variance, should be placed in an appropriate zone district.

14. The west side of Belmont Avenue south of the Pathmark shopping center should be reviewed for its future land use potential, if redeveloped. The area along Franklin Street west of Belmont Avenue should be reviewed for its future land use potential if the former General Motors/Macy’s warehouse properties, which extend into Bloomfield, are redeveloped.

15. Belleville’s aging infrastructure is in need of improvements.

16. The Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) previously assigned Belleville a zero (0) allocation responsibility for new affordable housing units and an obligation to provide for 162 units of present need for low and moderate units through rehabilitation.
17. A Historic Preservation Plan should be prepared.

18. The zoning ordinance should be amended to regulate certain uses, add conditional uses, add definitions, and new retail commercial use, office, research, and light industrial facilities.

19. The potential for redevelopment of transit village areas using state and federal funds.

The Extent to Which Problems and Objectives Have Been Reduced or Have Increased

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report and the 2009 Master Plan each address the problems and objectives identified in the 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report. The extent to which each problem has been reduced or has increased is noted below in italicized typeface:

1. Vacant stores and lack of off-street parking in the Washington Avenue business area despite the creation of a new municipal parking lot at 131-135 Washington Avenue remains a major problem. The regulation of Washington Avenue as a 1.8-mile long pedestrian-oriented, homogenous General Business District has not effectively supported the variety of land use conditions and retail concentrations desired along this business street.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report noted that “there are fewer vacant stores than in the recent past but too many of the new stores are marginal, low value retailers. The storefront façade improvements funded by the Community Development Block Grant and implemented for one side of Washington Avenue should be continued on the other side of the business street to stimulate private reinvestment.

The Township Council adopted the Zoning Ordinance amendments and amendments to the Township Zoning Map after the 2007 Reexamination Report was adopted by the Planning Board. However, these amendments have not succeeded in improving the quality of businesses or length of tenure of businesses along Washington Avenue. Similarly, the dearth of parking along Washington Corridor remains a problem. The 2009 Master Plan carries these problems forward and reemphasizes the proliferation of marginal, low-value retailers and the lack of adequate off-street parking along Washington Avenue. The 2009 Master Plan provides a policy basis for more intensive mixed use development in the B-G (Commercial/Residential Mixed Use) Zone District located proximate to the Township’s shared border with Nutley and Newark. The 2009 Master Plan also recognizes the opportunity to implement shared parking arrangements. Since the 2009 Master Plan, the Township has made significant improvements in providing street lighting along the Washington Avenue corridor. However, the problems that have continually plagued the Washington Avenue Corridor, including the lack of parking and condition of existing parking lots, continue to remain significant.
2. There is a shortage of municipal parks and recreation facilities only partially offset by the existence of a large County Park and golf course.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report noted the following with respect to Township Parks:

(a) The stands and fields at Belleville Stadium were improved.
(b) Fairway Park was improved with the addition of a new baseball field.
(c) The pocket park proposed on the south side of Franklin Street was rejected because of its impractical small size.
   **It should now be considered for a community garden.**
(d) The bike path proposed along the Second River is still under construction.
   **The bike path is no longer under construction, but remains an asphalt path under the jurisdiction of Essex County. The Township should work with the County to incorporate all County-run path systems into its Open Space and Recreation Plan Element.**

The dearth of municipally-owned parks and recreational facilities continues today. The 2009 Master Plan noted that according to Essex County’s 2003 Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, the Township is recommended to have over 300 acres of parkland (9.3 acres per 1,000 residents), whereas the Township maintains approximately 61 acres of municipal parks. The shortage of parkland and open space will likely remain a problem moving forward due to the Township’s fully developed nature. It is recommended that requiring the creation of public open space in conjunction with redevelopment projects will help to address this shortfall.

3. There remains a need for senior citizen housing.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report and the 2009 Master Plan each note the continued need for senior citizen housing within the Township. Each document makes particular reference to the need for senior housing that caters to low and moderate income individuals and households, and references the completion of a senior citizen housing project on a 1.4-acre site at Franklin and Mill Streets. This project, now known as Franklin Manor, has been completed, and most of the 137 age-restricted affordable dwelling units are now occupied. The need for additional age-restricted affordable housing remains. Specific projects to create more affordable senior housing can also be sought through redevelopment.

4. Traffic bottlenecks at key intersections.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report noted the completion of the following intersection improvements:

(a) Franklin Avenue and Belleville Avenue
(b) Franklin Avenue and Joralemon Street
(c) Washington Avenue and Rutgers Street
(d) Joralemon Street and Main Street
(e) Joralemon Street and Hoover Avenue
(f) Franklin Street beginning from the Belleville municipal border moving east toward the south end of Belmont Avenue

The 2007 Reexamination Report noted that the Joralemon Street and Union Avenue intersection remains a dangerous intersection and requires a dedicated left turn signal to avoid conflict between motorists seeking to make left turns and through traffic.

The 2009 Master Plan noted that the 1995 Master Plan Reexamination Report listed Franklin Street and Belmont Avenue as an area of concern.

Exploring changes in street direction should not be ruled out as a way to manage failing intersections.

5. There is a changing pattern of land use in the Valley due to a strong market for condominiums and little interest in industrial buildings.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report noted the limited demand for industrial space in the Valley and that the demand for retail and multifamily residential uses has supplanted the demand for industrial uses in this area. The 2009 Master Plan noted the continuance of this trend in the Valley. However, market trends since the adoption of the 2009 Master Plan indicate like industrial development, commercial development has been largely limited in the Valley. In fact, Bindi’s North American Headquarters has been the only major commercial/industrial development constructed in the Valley section of the Township since the 2009 Master Plan was adopted.

6. There is the potential conflict with the light industrial area proposed in the 1989 Bloomfield Master Plan in an area across from multifamily housing in Belleville near Montgomery Street and an area of multifamily east of Washington Avenue in Nutley adjoins an industrial area in Belleville.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination Report noted that the light industrial area in Bloomfield was approved and would present little conflict issues as it would replace older factories with light industrial issues. However, the Land Use Plan Map of the 2002 Bloomfield Master Plan designates the area of Montgomery Street for medium density, single-family residential uses, recognizing the changing character of this area. The 2009 Master Plan indicated that the Township of Bloomfield along Montgomery Street is zoned as R-1B with single-family detached homes, which are generally consistent with the R-B and R-C residential districts seen in Belleville.

In Bloomfield Township, areas north of Montgomery Street and south of Belleville Avenue are zoned for industrial uses. However, as noted above, the Land Use Plan Map of the Township Master Plan designates these areas for medium density single-family residential, community commercial, and neighborhood commercial land uses. Industrial uses that existing along the Belleville-Bloomfield border are consistent with the existing zoning in the area. However, the relatively limited area zoned for industrial uses is indicative of the changing character of the area.

The Land Use Plan of the Township of Nutley’s 2012 Master Plan designates areas east of Washington Avenue along the Belleville-Nutley border for industry/manufacturing uses, while the area east of Washington Avenue in Belleville is zoned for and
developed with multifamily uses. The Nutley Master Plan recognizes that this area is an area in transition where garden apartment buildings have supplanted manufacturing uses. These land use patterns are generally consistent with the prevailing land use patterns within Belleville.

7. There is uncertainty over pursuing a regional center designation in the State Plan due to the redevelopment criteria definition.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination recognizes the elimination of the center designation process by the State Planning Commission.

8. The Main Street corridor south of Joralemon Street to Rutgers Street is characterized by a mix of commercial, industrial, and residential uses. There is a recent trend toward more non-residential uses which should be addressed.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination noted that this land use condition still remained an issue that should be addressed through zoning ordinance revisions. The 2009 Master Plan notes that this area was still characterized by a mix of commercial, industrial, and residential uses and that there was market interest in establishing more retail commercial uses to capitalize on the area’s exceptional regional accessibility. The 2009 Master Plan recognized that providing for commercial uses will offset the declining demand for industrial properties and will help the Township to stabilize the municipal non-residential and residential base.

The 2009 Master Plan indicated that the recommended zoning changes from the 2007 Reexamination Report were adopted by the Township Council. These zoning changes reduced the area fronting Main Street zoned R-B and replaced it with Planned Retail/Light Industrial zone along the Main Street Corridor. The previously zoned B-A district fronting Joralemon Street was rezoned to the B-F Planned Retail/Light Industrial zone to address this issue.

9. The Main Street corridor north of Little Street and including the former Walter Kidde property (Finkelstein Tire Company) includes a number of vacant and underutilized former industrial properties which should be addressed.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination indicated that this land use condition still remained a problem area. The 2009 Master Plan also noted that this land use condition continues to remain a problem. The change from the I-B Industrial Business zone to the B-F Planned Retail zone stimulated some retail and development interest, however, little development has taken place in this area despite this change. Enhanced visioning and zoning adjustments must be implemented to strengthen this area of the Township.

The 2009 Master Plan contained several recommendations aimed at addressing the vacant and underutilized properties along the northern portion of the Main Street Corridor. However, environmental contamination and the extent of remediation required to permit redevelopment of this area with residential uses continues to hamper the revitalization of this area. A portion of the former Kidde property has been remediated and a preliminary investigation by the Planning Board found the area to be in need of redevelopment. However, the area was never formally designated. It is
recommended that a preliminary investigation be conducted to see if it qualifies as a non-condemnation redevelopment area and, if so, prepare a redevelopment plan for the entire site.

10. The property along Joralemon Street adjacent to the Third River and cemetery property should be reviewed for conformity with the land use designation.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination stated that this property was zoned as RA-1, Single Family Residential. According to the 2009 Master Plan, a small portion of this area was rezoned to the R-C zone, Multi-Family Residential.

11. The former Essex County Geriatric Hospital site should be reviewed as to the future land use potential if redeveloped.

This facility is currently being renovated into apartments.

Both the 2007 Master Plan Reexamination and the 2009 Master Plan reported that the former Essex County Geriatric Hospital was being rehabilitated as a medical facility by CMMI and that four of its eight stories were occupied while work to rehabilitate the remainder of the building continued.

Both the 2007 Reexamination Report and the 2009 Master Plan noted that a 14.174-acre (617,419.44 sq. ft.) portion of the former County hospital grounds were zoned for planned residential development and was approved for the 262-unit SOHO stacked townhouse development at 18.5 dwelling units per acre in 2005. These documents also note that both a 2.25-acre (98,010 sq. ft.) section and a 0.7-acre section were recommended for inclusion in the R-C zone district to facilitate the development of free market senior housing in the area.

Another 7.91 acre (344,559.6 sq. ft.) portion of the former County hospital grounds (known as the Great Lawn and designated as Parcel 3 in the site Redevelopment Plan) was to be permanently preserved as open space, although future roadway improvements and accessory parking for the renovated hospital was also permitted in this area.

The 2009 Master Plan noted that a potential developer was litigating for approval to build on the Great Lawn area of the property. The Master Plan noted that the Great Lawn was designated for open space and passive recreation uses by the 1993 redevelopment plan for the entire County Geriatric Hospital Site. Both the 2007 Reexamination Report and the 2009 Master Plan note that the Belleville Master Plan Land Use Element was amended to designate Block 540, Lots 1 and 2 (those lots that constituted the Great Lawn) for open space uses as its only principal allowable use as set forth in the adopted Redevelopment Plan in a manner consistent with a prior Court settlement agreement.

12. The Hoffman-La Roche/Clara Maass office properties along Franklin Avenue should be reviewed as to future land use potential if redeveloped.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination stated that the future use of these properties was an immediate planning issue for the Township of Belleville as a result of the purchase
of the Clara Maas Medical Center by the Saint Barnabas Hospital System and the announcement by the Roche Diagnostics System, Inc. of its intent to vacate the 18.7-acre (814,572 square-foot) industrial parcel at the southwest corner of Franklin Avenue and Mill Street. Roche had requested a zoning amendment to allow for multi-family use in addition to the continuation of the current use.

According to the 2009 Master Plan, the Hoffman-La Roche/Clara Maas properties along Franklin Avenue were reviewed and rezoned for mixed-use development. The Township saw this as a rare opportunity to create an attractive, tax-generating employment center and modern residential neighborhood appealing to non-family professional households by taking advantage of the emerging importance of Clara Maas Medical Center, size of the Roche Diagnostic site, strategic location, mass transit service, regional roads, and the open space amenities of Branch Brook Park and a County golf course.

The 2009 Master Plan noted that the Township Land Use Plan was amended to permit the redevelopment of the Roche Diagnostic tract as a mixed use development zone. According to the 2009 Master Plan, a minimum of three (3) acres is required to develop non-residential uses emphasizing medical services. The mixed use residential zone district recommended that the Roche Diagnostic tract incorporate a variety of housing products including town homes, free standing apartments, and apartments above retail shops, and offices at a density of 12 dwelling units per acre. Another three and a half (3 ½) acres are required to be set aside for public uses either on-site or in a suitable location and should be devoted mainly to service future residents of the MXD zone. In return for the public land that was set aside, the developer is entitled to receive a density incentive of 4 dwelling units per acre.

An amendment to the Roche Diagnostic Redevelopment Plan, approved in December of 2016, revised the list of permitted principal uses to stimulate redevelopment activity, and established development requirements for new uses where appropriate. Residential uses are no longer permitted for this area as a result of previous contamination at the site.

As of October 2017, a developer has been designated for the entire site and site plans have been submitted for Planning Board review. Currently, half of the site has been approved and is under construction for a self-storage use and a commercial fuel and convenience use. Approximately 12 acres still remain undeveloped. The recommended usage of the remaining property is for a hotel with a full-service restaurant. Given the central location of this redevelopment area, inclusion of a public plaza and focal point is suggested and recommended for this site.

13. The Mill Street Condominiums, which were approved via use variance, should be placed in an appropriate zone district.

According to the 2007 Master Plan Reexamination this still remains an issue. The 2009 Master Plan does not reference if these condominiums were built or placed in an appropriate zone district. However, the Township Zoning Map indicates that this development is located within the R-C (Multifamily Residential) Zone, thereby addressing this issue.
14. The west side of Belmont Avenue south of the Pathmark shopping center should be reviewed for its future land use potential, if redeveloped. The area along Franklin Street west of Belmont Avenue should be reviewed for its future land use potential if the former General Motors/Macy’s warehouse properties, which extend into Bloomfield, are redeveloped.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination stated that this issue still remains. As of the 2009 Master Plan, the two large parcels that were occupied by the now closed Pathmark grocery store and the car storage facility were zoned as B-E, Commercial Shopping Center. At the time of the 2009 Master Plan, the Township considered conducting a study on the feasibility of establishing a Transit Village in the Silver Lake area. A mixed-use transit village development would take full advantage of this transit stop.

The Township Zoning Map depicts a portion of the aforementioned properties on Belmont Avenue within the Rehabilitation Area Overlay (RHB). In 2017, the Township authorized a redevelopment study for the site pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (“LRHL”, N.J.S.A. 40:12A-1 et seq.), now occupied by a Super Fresh Food World grocery store. A Phase I environmental investigation has been conducted on the site and a contaminated soil has been removed from the site of a former dry cleaner. The site has wells which are being monitored. Additional environmental investigation and remediation will be necessary to redevelop this property.

The Township recognizes the importance of facilitating the redevelopment of the neighborhood surrounding the Silver Lake Light Rail station, the Township envisions pursuing a Transit Village designation for this area and believe that recognition of this station so close to the Newark Pennsylvania Transit HUB is long overdue.

15. Belleville’s aging infrastructure is in need of improvements.

Many areas within the Township should be reviewed for redevelopment potential. If the areas qualify infrastructure within these redevelopment areas should be fully assessed, replace and upgraded as necessary.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination indicated that the County and State funding assistance was made available for road improvements, but that funds were needed to upgrade the existing sanitary and storm drainage systems. The 2009 Master Plan stated that these issues still remain and that the State Department of Environmental Protection has adopted new regulations aimed at reducing non-point source pollution resulting from stormwater flows. Maintenance work continued within the Township on aging water and sewer systems as funding became available. The Township also instated connection fees which generated a source of infrastructure funding. However, like much of the State’s older, more established municipalities, the Township’s infrastructure is aging and will likely need more wholesale upgrades in the coming years.

16. The Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) previously assigned Belleville a zero (0) allocation responsibility for new affordable housing units and an obligation to provide for 162 indigenous (local) low and moderate units through rehabilitation.
The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination stated that Belleville addressed its indigenous affordable housing need through the Valley Balanced Housing Program, the Silver Lake Neighborhood Preservation Program, and the Essex County Home Improvement Program, all of which offered grants to eligible low and moderate income homeowners to repair their substandard residences.

The 2009 Master Plan stated that the Township had previously addressed its COAH responsibilities from the 2007 Reexamination. The 2009 Master Plan noted that, under the proposed Third Round rules covering the period of 2004 through 2018, Belleville had a projected growth share obligation for 123.5 new affordable housing units and 249 rehabilitation units. The 2009 Master Plan recommended that a new Housing Element and Fair Share Plan be prepared once COAH’s Third Round regulations were legally established. It was also suggested that Belleville pursue policies before a new Housing Plan was adopted.

Subsequent to the adoption of the 2009 Master Plan, the “Growth Share” rules were invalidated by the Supreme Court, COAH was abolished, and the State Legislature neglected to draft new legislation to calculate statewide affordable housing obligations. In 2015, the Supreme Court returned control of the affordable housing process to the Courts. Litigation to determine the timeframe of the Third Round, the methodology to calculate regional rehabilitation and new construction obligation, and the method of allocating the regional obligation at the municipal level has been ongoing. According to expert estimates, the Township has no new construction obligation, but may be required to rehabilitate a significant number of dwelling units between 2016 and 2025. The Township recently adopted a development fee ordinance to facilitate the collection of development fees in an Affordable Housing Trust Fund in order to fund the rehabilitation of eligible dwellings to satisfy its as yet finalized rehabilitation obligation. The Township will develop and adopt an Affordable Housing Trust Fund Spending Plan in the future as required by the Court.

The Township recently adopted an affordable housing ordinance to implement its Third Round Rehabilitation Share. The Township will work towards meeting its obligation through the implementation of a Rehabilitation Program for very low, low, and moderate-income households.

17. A Historic Preservation Plan should be prepared.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination noted that a Historic Preservation Plan had not yet been prepared. The 2009 Master Plan noted that there is concern that as the pace of redevelopment quickens, older buildings and places of State and local historic or cultural value could be replaced by new construction. The 2009 Master Plan noted five sites in the Township that may be worthy of State Historic Register consideration according to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). A Historic Preservation Plan remains unprepared; however a Historic Preservation Commission has been appointed.

18. The zoning ordinance should be amended to regulate certain uses, add conditional uses, add definitions, and new retail commercial use, office, research, and light industrial facilities.
The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination noted that the majority of the zoning ordinance changes recommended in the 1998 Master Plan Reexamination Report had not been adopted. However, as noted in the 2009 Master Plan, the zoning ordinance text and map changes that were recommended in the 2007 Reexamination were adopted by the Township Council after the Master Plan Reexamination report was completed. The zoning ordinance amendments regulated certain uses, added conditional uses, added definitions, and added new retail commercial, office, research, and light industrial zone districts.

19. The potential for redevelopment of transit village areas using state and federal funds.

The 2007 Master Plan Reexamination noted that Belleville had been successful in attracting State and Federal grant assistance for housing and infrastructure in years past. The 2009 Master Plan notes that the Township has not pursued State or Federal grant assistance to facilitate the redevelopment of potential transit village areas.

The Township remains committed to encouraging and facilitating development and redevelopment along transit corridors; the Township does intend to pursue a formal Transit Village Designation by the Transit Village Task Force to foster recognition and investment within the Township and implement Smart Growth policies within the neighborhood surrounding the Train Station and other neighborhoods throughout the Township.

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 Reviewed

The 2009 Master Plan established a set of 19 goals and objectives intended to guide future development and redevelopment in Belleville Township. The extent to which these goals and objectives remain relevant and the extent to which there have been significant changes in the goals and objectives established by the 2009 Master Plan is discussed below.

1. To continue to encourage a wide variety of housing types at a range of sale and rental levels so that all types of families at all income groups can be housed in Belleville; to provide for residential growth at current densities and permit higher density development in limited areas.

There continues to remain a need for a variety of housing types that are available to residents of varying income levels within the Township. The Township maintains a well-diversified housing stock. However, both the age of the Township’s housing stock and the variety of housing within the Township remains an issue.

The Township should encourage the rehabilitation of its existing housing stock, especially for low and moderate income households through code enforcement and rehabilitation. The Township should also continue to encourage higher density development as part of a comprehensive mix of uses along Washington Avenue and the establishment of a special Silver Lake District within walking distance of the Silver
Lake Light Rail Station to capitalize on this public transit opportunity within the Township.

The Township should encourage new housing that meets modern market standards in terms of size, design and amenities. Part of this new initiative should include conducting a Township-wide review of infrastructure and housing stock to determine if it qualifies as an area in need of rehabilitation pursuant to the Local Housing and Redevelopment Law (LHRL) at N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq. in order to aid and encourage rehabilitation.

2. To continue to encourage a balance of land uses to include diversified residential areas, commercial areas to serve the residents of Belleville and nearby communities, and office industrial areas to provide jobs and strengthen the tax base.

The Township continues to encourage a balance of land uses, but recognizes the need to facilitate the redevelopment of transitioning areas as the Township’s industrial base continues to decline. The Township also recognizes the importance of providing the opportunity for mixed use development along Washington Avenue, the Main Street Corridor, and in the vicinity of the Silver Lake Light Rail Station as noted above. These areas present significant opportunities for the Township to stabilize its tax base through redevelopment in a manner that is respectful to established residential neighborhoods.

Residential zoning to govern residential neighborhoods on the periphery of the Silver Lake District Light Rail Station area and surrounding neighborhoods should be re-evaluated to ensure that the mix of use, bulk, and density standards are consistent with the existing historic development fabric. The Township should encourage new infill development to be of similar setbacks and permissive of similar side yards, and should consider less parking to build the neighborhood back to its original character.

The Township must also continue to recognize and identify areas and parcels of low investment, underutilization and dilapidation that are easily susceptible to change. This kind of disinvestment can deter market investment in the property and surrounding area causing further stagnation of the community.

Belleville should also employ all statutory tools available to local communities such as redevelopment and tax incentives in order to provide investors choices and to encourage redevelopment, rehabilitation and the return of ailing properties to once again become vital contributors to the community.

The Township should ensure that zoning and the range of permitted uses within each zone are conducive to attracting new and modern commercial and light industrial businesses and jobs to the community. In connection with this review, the Township should re-tool the Industrial Zone and the Light Industrial Zone to implement these objectives.

3. To encourage the preservation of open space where possible and to develop zoning controls which will require developers to provide open space for new buildings.
There remains a significant need to preserve open space within the Township. While instituting zoning provisions that require developers to provide open space for new developments will provide the opportunity to develop additional open space within the Township, this open space will likely result in the development of private open space in the form of resident amenities. In certain cases, such as with large scale redevelopment projects, the Township may have the opportunity to facilitate the preservation of land for open space or park development and require new privately owned open space to become improved and open for public use from dawn to dusk, with the responsibility of maintenance on the developer, minimizing cost to the Township.

While the Township should seek to take advantage of large scale redevelopment to increase open space, the Township should also focus on enhancing its existing inventory of municipal parks and open space areas. Doing so will maximize the utility of existing parks and open space areas, provide for a variety of amenities and recreational opportunities, and may serve to bridge gaps in the types of amenities and facilities available to Township residents.

4. To encourage the construction of senior citizens housing for market rate senior citizen housing and for Belleville's low and moderate income senior citizens.

There continues to be a need for senior citizen housing within the Township, and the Township should continue to encourage the development of senior citizen housing to permit older residents to age in place. Consideration should be given to establishing senior housing in areas envisioned for mixed use, transit-oriented development to provide the opportunity for seniors to access the regional transit network and existing or future neighborhood retail and personal service businesses in these areas.

5. To provide for the preservation of older residential neighborhoods through a systematic code enforcement program; to provide for the rehabilitation or reconstruction of older non-residential areas to maintain existing jobs and to produce new jobs; and to encourage the re-use or reconstruction of existing commercial and industrial structures which have been vacated.

This goal is three (3) pronged and is divided in three parts, as follows:

5a. To provide for the preservation of older residential neighborhoods through a systematic code enforcement program.

This goal is still valid. The Township’s existing housing stock is aging. Nearly one third of the Township’s existing housing stock was constructed prior to 1939, and less than 300 units have been constructed since 2000. Ensuring that opportunities for rehabilitation and reconstruction are in place at the municipal level is paramount to maintaining an adequate housing supply in the Township. Code enforcement serves to maintain and enhance the character of the Township’s well-established residential neighborhoods, increases desirability, and contributes to the financial health of property values in the Township.

5b. To provide for the rehabilitation or reconstruction of older non-residential areas to maintain existing jobs and to produce new jobs.
This goal should be replaced with: To attract new businesses, new jobs and new industries to increase economic vitality and support the tax base of the Township. Achieving this goal will require a coordinated effort to attract new business interests to the Township of Belleville. It will require the demolition of the old structures and environmental remediation, paving the way for new modern construction that can accommodate the required technology and services that these new business and their employees demand.

5c. To encourage the adaptive re-use or reconstruction of existing commercial and industrial structures which have been vacated.

There is a continued need to plan for and provide the opportunity for the redevelopment of land within the Township previously dedicated to industrial uses in order to stabilize the tax base and maintain economic opportunity for Township residents. However, the opportunity for adaptive reuse or reconstruction of vacated commercial and industrial structures may be impractical given the nature of past industrial activity in the Township and the likely presence of environmental contamination within historically industrial areas. Adaptive reuse and reconstruction is certainly encouraged; it hearkens back to the Township’s past character and maintains a piece of the Township’s past architectural character.

This goal is still valid in cases where the building maintains the character and scale of the neighborhood and is in a location where mixed use or a change to residential is supported by the recommendations herein.

6. To encourage the revitalization of the business area through proper land use controls, provision of off-street parking and provision of other public improvements.

Revitalizing the Township’s retail and commercial areas is crucial to the economic, social, and cultural health of the Township. Thriving business districts and mixed use neighborhoods promote walkability, enhance the Township’s tax base, and create physical environments that attract residents and visitors alike. Of particular importance to the Township is revitalizing the Washington Avenue corridor, the Silver Lake section of the Township, and enhancing neighborhood corner commercial parcels to encourage a more traditional mixed use style of ground floor commercial with upper floor residences.

Despite policy and legislative efforts to revitalize the Washington Avenue corridor, the corridor continues to be plagued by high commercial vacancy rates and a number of marginal, low quality retailers. Off-street parking remains an issue; however, there appears to be the opportunity to increase efficiency with respect to the use of the available parking supply along Washington Avenue. An overall evaluation of parking regulation and enforcement policies can address this issue. It comprises an efficient approach to evaluating the demand. If supply remains limited and enhanced demand emerges, the Township should explore identifying municipal garage locations on the edges of the commercial and Silver Lake Districts to serve retail and light rail travelers.
A change in approach to revitalizing Washington Avenue is warranted. There is a particular need to emphasize mixed use development that incorporates residential and non-residential uses along the corridor. This new development should require ground floor retail and ensure that the square footage of that retail is large enough to strengthen the retail corridor that it is located within. Stressing mixed use development will provide the opportunity to implement shared parking scenarios that maximize the use of the local parking supply. Mixed use development will also provide an increase in the number of residents living in walking distance of local businesses, restaurants, bars, and other entertainment venues. Mixed use development should be incentivized to encourage development and redevelopment along Washington Avenue.

Curb cuts along Washington Avenue should be discouraged or prohibited, as they further degrade the continuity of the commercial district. A similar philosophy should be adopted for the Silver Lake section of the Township to capitalize on access to the Newark Light Rail by way of the existing Silver Lake Light Rail Station.

7. To provide adequate community facilities to serve Belleville’s residents in terms of schools, parks and playgrounds, libraries, senior citizen centers, firehouses and other municipal buildings.

There has been no significant change in this goal. The Township will need to be vigilant and continue to provide adequate community facilities to serve its residents. As per the according to Essex County’s 2003 Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, the Township is recommended to have over 300 acres of parkland (9.3 acres per 1,000 residents), whereas the Township maintains approximately 61 acres of municipal parks. Additional open space is needed to meet minimum standards.

8. To provide adequate community services for Belleville’s residents, businesses and industry in terms of police and fire protection, street cleaning, snow removal, garbage disposal, health services, recreational programs and senior citizens services.

There has been no significant change in this goal or the assumptions thereto. The Township should pursue the establishment of innovative approaches to reduce emergency maintenance costs and provide more efficient and cost effective service to all residents and users.

9. To continue to provide for adequate sanitary and storm sewers to serve Belleville’s residential and non-residential neighborhoods.

This goal continues to remain relevant and has become increasingly important as the Township’s infrastructure continues to age and the NJ DEP’s stormwater management regulations become more stringent and focused on stormwater quantity reductions and stormwater quality improvements.

As with other community services listed above, the Township should pursue the establishment of innovative approaches to reduce emergency maintenance costs and provide more efficient and cost effective service to all residents and users.

10. To provide for the maintenance and up-gradning of the local street system to serve abutting uses.
While the Township’s local network of streets is well-established, there will be a need to provide for circulation and facility improvements that protect public health and safety and ensure that streets are adequately designed to accommodate future development and redevelopment. Large-scale development and redevelopment projects should be evaluated to determine the extent to which roadway improvements are needed to serve new uses.

This goal is still valid; it should, however, be re-evaluated to ensure the remedy is not expanding vehicular spaces, but instead identifying the modern need for complete streets, focusing on pedestrians and comfort within the public realm, and employing street diets and traffic calming wherever possible. Another goal to stress here is that redevelopment design should strive to discourage super-blocks and make all new development very porous. This entails incorporating as many streets as possible, encouraging small walkable blocks and setting a policy where existing streets are not vacated, but instead looked at as a public asset. If there is no longer a need for a street, it can instead be transformed into a pedestrian or special event plaza or open space park.

11. To work with county and state agencies to encourage public transit to serve the needs of Belleville’s residents and workers.

The Township is served by NJ Transit bus and Light Rail Service. In addition, a private bus carrier (DeCamp Bus Lines) provides commuter bus service to Manhattan. The availability of public transit service provides increased transportation choice for residents and visitors and benefits local businesses located along transit corridors or near transit stops. As such, the Township should continue to work with county, state, and transportation agencies to enhance the availability of transit service within the Township.

Special consideration should be given to the establishment of a transit oriented development zone around the Silver Lake Light Rail station to leverage this connectivity amenity in the Township.

12. To enhance community appearance and the visual environment by encouraging good design for new and rehabilitated buildings, through the proper planning of streets and landscaping of public and private property and through the use of design review where neighborhoods or business areas are being revitalized.

This goal continues to remain relevant. As infill and redevelopment projects move through the development approval process, the Township Planning Board and Zoning Board should ensure that the design of such projects is compatible with established buildings and uses. Such projects should enhance the character of existing neighborhoods while remaining sensitive and respectful to surrounding uses.

In addition to the design of private property, the Township must recognize that the design and condition of the street and public realm along and within the rights-of-ways are equally important. In fact, recent studies have found that these areas are more important than adjacent development parcels in defining desirable community character and creating vibrant communities. Reclaiming the Township’s streets and
Incorporating Complete Streets, road diets, parklets and old-fashioned streetscape beautification is necessary to enhance visual appearance, livability and enjoyment and to improve community perception of a neighborhood.

13. To enable environmental quality to be addressed in all pending developments by applying strict performance standards to all pending developments according to the site plan ordinance.

As the Township’s industrial base continues to decline, issues resulting from non-compliance with performance standards are decreasing. However, this goal continues to remain relevant to the extent that existing industrial or heavy commercial uses generate nuisance effects that impact surrounding properties. The Township should continue to remain vigilant with respect to the enforcement of performance standards and conditions attached to development approvals for such uses. The Township Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment should also ensure that development applications proposing uses that may result in potential nuisance issues are able to provide for a site layout and design features that mitigate nuisance issues and do not result in degradation of local or regional environmental resources, air quality, water quality, or quality of life.

The Township should identify and map known contaminated sites and actively seek remediation and redevelopment of same.

14. To preserve the historic and cultural heritage of the Township by determining whether pending development would adversely affect historic or cultural values.

The Township should strengthen this goal by implementing design standards that recognize the value of cultural and historic elements of the community and its buildings. As part of these efforts, the Township should establish preservation requirements, nominate contributing buildings, and amend zoning to incentivize the retention of important buildings and associated elements.

15. To conduct the Township’s planning program within the framework of a regional setting and fully cognizant of the needs and rights of Belleville’s neighboring communities and Essex County.

This goal continues to remain relevant. Reciprocally, the Township should ensure that none of the surrounding communities’ practices are harming or hindering the needs and rights of the community of Belleville.

16. To encourage active participation in the planning process by Belleville’s citizens.

The Township should employ modern, innovative public engagement techniques such as 1) Using pop-up events, on-line specialty sites, and interactive surveys to engage residents and community leaders and inform a common vision; 2) Offering citizens the opportunity to be co-creators in the making of a better, more interesting and more attractive place; 3) Starting a philanthropic culture of public support for local activities; 4) Enabling and encouraging new and unusual ideas; 5) Targeting unused spaces for special events.
17. To encourage stormwater management controls for all new developments.

NJ DEP’s Stormwater Management Rules (N.J.A.C. 7:8) governs stormwater management system design requirements for major developments as defined by the rules, while the Township site plan ordinance regulates stormwater management for development projects not subject to NJ DEP Stormwater Management Rules. The Township continues to require on-site stormwater management controls for new development subject to the approval of the Township Engineer.

The Township should incorporate green storm water options in addition to the traditional grey water systems employed in the prior century.

18. To promote the conservation of energy through the use of planning practices designed to reduce energy consumption and to provide for maximum utilization of renewable energy sources and sustainable practices.

Renewable energy sources are becoming increasingly important to reducing the rate of global warming and building sustainable communities. Advances in renewable energy technologies have increased the proliferation of renewable energy installations. At the municipal level, solar energy installations remain the most prevalent form of renewable energy sources. The Township should continue to encourage the use and development of renewable energy sources to the extent that the installation of such equipment does not negatively impact adjacent uses.

Cutting edge alternative energy can be incorporated in every aspect of community planning practices to promote greater civic pride in addition to improving health, safety and welfare of its residents.

Zoning should be reviewed and adjusted to ensure it does not unintentionally discourage such innovation.

19. To promote the maximum practicable recovery and recycling of recyclable materials from municipal solid waste through the use of planning practices designed to incorporate the State Recycling Plan goals and to complement municipal recycling programs (Municipal Land Use Law, Chapter 291, Laws of New Jersey 1975).

The Township operates a comprehensive, single stream recycling program that is intended to reduce the volume of the Township’s municipal solid waste and facilitate the recovery of recyclable materials from the Township’s waste stream. The Township should continue to evaluate the feasibility of accepting a wider variety of recyclable materials to further reduce municipal waste volumes.

The Township should expand this recycling goal to include Township-wide sustainability initiatives, including but not limited to green infrastructure promotion and school and community gardens to serve both educational purposes and also to spur social events such as cooking classes and themed festivals.
SPECIFIC CHANGES RECOMMENDED FOR THE MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

The goals, objectives, and policies of the 2009 Township Master Plan remain largely relevant today. However, there is a need to amend the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance to better effectuate the Township’s vision for future development, to provide the opportunity for the preservation and enhancement of established neighborhoods, to capitalize on the Township’s strengths, and to minimize its weaknesses.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The Master Plan Subcommittee notes the following strengths and weaknesses in the Township:

STRENGTHS

- The Township is located within close proximity to a number of key regional employment, transportation and commercial hubs including New York City, Newark Liberty International Airport, and the Port Newark-Elizabeth Marine Terminal.
- The Township has approximately 2 miles of frontage along the Passaic River, offering some views along its length.
- The Township contain several mid-sized medical institutions that serve as local anchor institutions. There is a high potential to partner on common goals and collaborative initiatives. These include the Clara Mass Hospital, the Soho Hospital, the Eastern International School, ShopRite, and the Motorcycle Mall, to name a few.
- The Township has exceptional parks and open space within its borders including Belleville Park, Branch Brook Park, and Hendricks Field Golf Course, all of which are owned and operated by Essex County. There are also many acres of unimproved vacant land such as the Newark Reservoir Site that can be added to the park collective, and two potential open spaces in linear configurations, Greenwood Lane and the Valley Line as a potential Rail-to-trail path), providing the possibility of open space and recreation linkages to significantly multiply the recreational amenities available to residents and businesses of the Township.
- The Township has excellent regional accessibility, with the regional transportation network including the Garden State Parkway, and New Jersey State Routes 7, 21, and 3.
- The Light Rail Station offering direct connection to the Newark Pennsylvania Station and NY/NJ Port Authority PATH system serving Manhattan, Hoboken, Jersey City, Harrison, and Newark has provided the Township with a mass transit hub. This in turn affords the community opportunities for a more walkable, transit-oriented development pattern around and leading to the station, as well as an urban living connection to these communities and the amenities they offer.
Weaknesses

- The Township’s building stock and infrastructure are aging and many of the Township’s older buildings are poorly maintained.
- There are many vacant and underutilized parcels and distinctive signs of disinvestment within the community.
- The community is separated from the riverfront by the Highway 21 right-of-way.
- Advancing and improving the resiliency of development along the Passaic River will be needed to ensure protection, and continued investment and interest in properties along the River and within the Valley.
- The Washington Avenue Corridor exhibits elements of disconnect. The existing streetscape is fragmented by a number of curb cuts and a lack of continuous building façade walls, degrades the aesthetics and walkability of the corridor.
- Existing zoning is not consistent with the unique character of the community, making much of the existing urban fabric that defines community character non-conforming.
- There are limited public transportation opportunities that provide direct access to New York City. Currently, DeCamp Bus Service Route #44 is the only quasi-public transportation option that provides one-seat access to New York City.
- Lack of new housing opportunities that appeal to the current market demands and contain access to the range of amenities and services customary of urban living are limited.
- Lack of brand recognition of the Township of Belleville – publicizing the Principles of Place that support the advantages of living in and locating a business in Belleville Township.
- Need for the implementation of a community-wide vision for the community.

Specific Amendments to the Master Plan

The following amendments are recommended for the Township Master Plan:

- The various elements of the Master Plan should be amended to remove sections related to issues and properties highlighted in the 2009 Master Plan. The amended Master Plan should be reorganized to establish overarching goals and specific objectives aimed at achieving each goal. The Master Plan should also be reorganized to provide the requisite Master Plan elements pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28. It is specifically recommended that the Township prepare an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan Element and Historic Preservation Plan Element in order to assess the existing conditions of and capitalize on the Township’s natural and cultural resources, such as the Reformed Dutch Church of the Second River.

- The Master Plan should be amended to provide up-to-date population, demographic, employment, housing, and economic data provided by the US Census Bureau and the NJTPA.
• An existing land use map reflecting the most up-to-date land use characteristics of the Township should be prepared.

• The Master Plan should be amended to establish objectives that stimulate higher density residential mixed-use development (commercial ground floor with residential or commercial upper floors) along the entirety of the Washington Avenue Corridor. Current Master Plan objectives envision higher density residential development only within districts that serve as the “Gateways to Belleville.”

• The Master Plan should identify anchor institutions within the Township that are also major employers and sources of economic development. Ongoing collaborative mechanisms and specialized zoning that addresses the institutional needs and simultaneously supports the character and expectations of the adjacent residential neighborhoods should be determined and incorporated in Plan objectives.

• The Master Plan should be amended to establish objectives that promote and favor shared parking to maximize the utility of existing and future parking facilities along the Washington Avenue Corridor and around the Silver Lake Light Rail Station. The amended Master Plan should recognize that the State Residential Site Improvement Standards are not a “one size fits all” approach to requiring off-street parking to serve new development, especially as it applies to infill development and redevelopment in urbanized areas such as Belleville.

• The Master Plan should be amended to encourage the development of “complete streets” along Township roadways to provide for safe, comfortable facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Major streets of particular concern include: Washington Avenue, Union Avenue, Belmont Street, Franklin Street, and Newark Avenue.

• The Master Plan should be amended to identify and establish a plan to design and implement a linear open space network for the Township that serves as an amenity to both the residential and business communities.

• The vast majority of future development in the Township will occur through infill development and redevelopment. The Master Plan should be amended to recognize the effectiveness of the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40:12A-1 et seq., “the LRHL”) in providing the necessary tools to provide for high quality redevelopment projects that achieve the Township’s vision for future development, especially as it relates to the redevelopment of formerly industrial properties.

• Identify policy directions and objectives that serve to make the Township more resilient, including outlining the essential customized tasks for making the community disaster resilient, and emphasizing that investing in resiliency is an opportunity for community improvement.

• The City of Newark, Nutley Township, and Bloomfield Township each adopted new master plans or master plan reexamination reports subsequent to the adoption of the Township Master Plan. The Master Plan should be amended to address the relationship between the Township Master Plan and the new policy documents of these municipalities.
Specific Changes Recommended for the Township Development Regulations

New Zone Districts, changes to existing Districts and consolidation of others is recommended as outlined below:

- **Create a Silver Lake Special District**

  The Silver Lake Special District is intended to recognize that this section of the Township has a distinctive character from other residential neighborhoods of Belleville. Not only are the lots smaller, the buildings are older and were developed closer to the street and closer together in a more traditional urban style. Many are multi-story and designed with flat roofs.

  Another significant distinction is that this area has the benefit of a light rail station that can provide commuter access to Newark Penn Station offering its residents convenient walkable transit connections to other key metropolitan destinations such as Midtown Manhattan, the World Trade Center, Hoboken, and Jersey City. As such, the station offers the Township and its resident linkages to nearby employment centers and their highly desirable cultural amenities. It also offers the potential to make Belleville a destination hub as well.

  The vision for this District is to encourage development that is more consistent with the traditional roots of the neighborhood. This pattern is already higher in density than other parts of the Township. The specific goal is to further encourage development around the train station that will not be as reliant on automobile travel, and permit higher densities closer to and within walking distance of the station itself.

  Another goal of this District is to recognize that it will need to accommodate parking for the residents of the Township that are not within walking distance of the station and do so in a way that does not mar the neighborhood character of the Silver Lake District.

  The District shall also provide for a strong link between the large employers of the Medical/Research and Development Zone and the train station. Beyond the light rail station, the District shall provide for a strong link and strengthening of development along Belmont Avenue and improving its connection to Bloomfield Avenue and the region. This can be done by identifying a special pedestrian friendly corridor(s), wayfinding improvements, bike share options and other complete streets techniques.

  In addition to those specified above, key items this District should include are:

  - Special district wide design regulations for streetscape, lighting, sidewalk and street furniture; and including branding of the District via icons on Street Signs, unique Design Themes for Sidewalks, crosswalks and other desired street furniture.
  - Distinctive on- and off-street parking standards that recognize the unique benefits of the mass transit accommodations.
Smaller lot size requirements to ensure infill development.
- Required maximum setbacks to ensure the maintenance of a traditional street wall and setback, and the elimination of front yard parking.
- Design standards for building materials and facades within the District.
- Higher densities that can be accommodated because of the proximity of the rail station and mixed-use B-G Zone shopping corridor along Franklin Street and Belmont Avenue.
- Requirements for outdoor dining within minimum distance from the station and along designated corridors.

- **Create a R-SL Silver Lake Residential District**

Create a customized residential zone that permits development that is more consistent with the traditional patterns of development within the neighborhood. As noted above, this neighborhood is characterized by smaller, 25 foot x 100 foot lots containing buildings with small front and side yard building setbacks. It is also characterized by walkable streets containing buildings with interesting street walls and stoops situated close to the sidewalk. Smaller lot size requirements to ensure infill development should be permitted and encouraged. Minimum and maximum parking standards should be employed to take advantage of the light rail station.

- **Create a Medical/Research and Development Zone**

Provide a zone that addresses the unique needs of the Clara Maass Medical Center and uses that support the hospital. In addition to supporting and accommodating the needs of the hospital and its growth, the designation would provide clarity for the future growth of the surrounding neighborhood as well. This Zone would fall within the Silver Lake District and contains several segments of the recommended greenway system discussed further below.

- **Create a Valley Business District**

This District would encompass the area of the existing I-B Industrial Zone and the B-F Planned Retail/Light Industrial Zone in the easterly portion of the Township along the Passaic River. This area is not suited to modern large-scale manufacturing and loss of these traditional users is evident. The new goals and objectives for this Zone are to establish a district that permits light industrial uses but also focuses on attracting and research and development uses and office uses to this District, as opposed to the historically industrial and large-scale commercial uses of the past. This Zone would permit incubators and demonstration projects, new fabrication and artisanal uses, as well as other new uses compatible with the above such as distilleries, tasting rooms and other such warehousing uses.

It is the intent to locate office/research/people-oriented businesses closer to Washington Avenue, and more industrial users characterized by fewer employees and greater truck traffic closer to Main Street.
This division of uses may best be accomplished by dividing the Valley District described above into two zones in order to better achieve this goal.

- **Extend the B-G Commercial/Residential Mixed Use District**

  The original concept of the B-G Zone recommended in the 2009 Master Plan is sound, but needs to be applied evenly throughout the corridors on which it is presently zoned. The District’s objective is to provide for greater economic stimulus along key corridors by allowing mixed use buildings with retail and commercial uses on the ground floor and residential uses above. This will encourage private investment and redevelopment of these areas. It is recommended that the Township revisit density standards in the District for a potential increase. Another recommendation is to regulate residential unit numbers not based on density but on unit size and building bulk, and to re-evaluate and expand permitted retail and commercial uses in order to modernize the uses in the District and create vibrant mixed use areas. Other recommended standards to enhance the walkability of the District include prohibiting first floor parking and surface parking along the frontage of a street in the Zone. Heights of 5-6 stories should be considered with the option of an additional bonus story for an office floor above the ground floor retail and/or an additional story for a parking floor that will be shared with surrounding corridor commercial uses not having on-site parking of their own.

- **Extend the B-A Neighborhood Retail/Mixed Use District**

  This recommendation reevaluates and expands the Zone to span secondary corridors across the Township and include areas that were previously zoned B-B General Business. The objective is to recognize that both Districts were designed to accommodate neighborhood business, and both need to more effectively accommodate the type and form of development and services best suited for neighborhood nodes at a lower density than the B-G Zone, but to manage the density in a similar way, through unit size and building bulk. The expansion and modification of certain standards within the District is designed to celebrate and accept the historically characteristic corner stores and neighborhood service centers by continuing to permit these uses as they have existed, with ground floor commercial and upper floor residential usage, emphasizing mixed use design as an important component and characteristic of development within the district. The general character of this zone would require three to four-story mixed use buildings, although it is recognized that in certain isolated, non-corridor locations, it may be preferable to allow one- to two-story commercial uses.

- **Modify the R-C Multi-Family Residential District**

  This District would be essentially the same, except that garden apartments and suburban style multifamily buildings would be eliminated as a permitted use. The multifamily units permitted would be of an urban town home style with land and building laid out and divided in traditional block patterns to match and that of the surrounding block patterns.
Additionally, the Township should correct the existing I-B zoning on Lot 7 in Block 701 to the R-C Zone District and rezone Lots 1, 2, 4, and 9 in Block 5401 to be consistent with the surrounding zoning.

- **Eliminate the B-E Commercial Shopping Center District**

  This District is recommended to be eliminated, as it only remains in a small, limited area of the Township and represents a shrinking retail sector. On-line shopping has eclipsed the future of this type of use and those that do remain have been plagued by vacancies and disinvestment. Former B-E Districts are being considered for redevelopment and re-use.

- **Eliminate the B-F Planned Retail / Light Industrial District**

  This District is recommended to be eliminated, as the proposed Valley Business Zone(s) would span these areas and modernize the uses. As noted above relative to the elimination of the B-E Zone District, on-line shopping has eclipsed the future of this type of use and those that do remain have been plagued by vacancies and disinvestment.

- **Eliminate the B-B General Business District**

  This District is recommended to be eliminated, as the proposed modified B-A District would incorporate these areas and promote more walkable, vibrant commercial cores within the Township.

The following additional amendments to the Township Zoning Ordinance are recommended to further the goals and objectives of the Township Master Plan within the following categories as described herein:

**Open Space**

- Incorporate strong open space improvement requirements in the Zoning Code that will support the creation and implementation of a connective Open Space Plan for the Township.

- **Establish a Greenway Path / Connective Linear Greenway System / Bike Trails and Bike Lanes**

  The purpose of this Greenway is to identify a preliminary connective linear pedestrian system that can accomplish many goals:

  - Serve as a public amenity to provide both needed open space and recreational space for the community and its residents
  - Serve as a connecting system to maximize use and accessibility to the limited green and recreational amenities of the Township.
  - Provide for recreational loops needed for jogging, biking and leisurely walking that can serve as a valuable amenity and public health asset for the entire community.
o Provide wayfinding signage guiding people to downtown districts and other important destinations and spaces.

The Township should further develop this concept through a Parks, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan Element where specific details on design, implementation and funding sources can be identified and evaluated for all segments of the greenway and the open space it connects.

Zoning

- Rezone the Franklin Street and Belmont Avenue corridors around the Silver Lake Light Rail Station to be consistent with the amended B-G Zone, recognizing the need to adopt zoning that encourages transit-oriented development.

- Rezone portions of the corridor along Rutgers Street from Washington Avenue to the Rutgers Bridge and the Belleville Avenue corridor from Mount Prospect Avenue to Washington Avenue to the B-A Zone in order to strengthen the commercial services link to regional access.

- Consolidate the B-B and B-A Zones, as well as segments of Union Avenue, and Newark Avenue and portions of the existing Industrial Zone outside of the Valley area into a neighborhood mixed use district that allow for the traditional mix of commercial ground floor with residential above. As these uses are generally on corners and not found within a corridor such as Washington Avenue, the density component associated with the new zone should be slightly less than the B-G Zone and based on building bulk and unit size.

- Rezone the Franklin Avenue and Hilton Street intersection to the B-A Zone in order to provide a mixed use transition from the business uses in Nutley Township to the residential areas along Franklin Avenue in Belleville.

- Recognize the unique character of the commercial and residential neighborhoods surrounding the light rail station and establish a Silver Lake Special District, designed to ensure the unique development pattern is supported and encouraged so that new development is compatible with the established neighborhood fabric.

- Rezone the existing R-B and R-C Zones within the Silver Lake neighborhood to a Silver Lake Residential District to accommodate the small lot footprints and reduced front and side yard setbacks characteristic of this neighborhood.

- Adopt a Medical/Research and Development for the Clara Mass campus and identify specific ways the facility can connect to and conform to the surrounding neighborhood, strengthening both the medical service function and the surrounding residential community.

- Rezone the declining I-B and B-F Zones to permit and attract more modern and mixed light industrial-oriented uses such as: office and research facilities, light assembly and artisanal establishments, business incubators with space for pilot project sites, and other new quasi-commercial uses such as brewpubs and tasting rooms. These are the types of uses that would be most appropriate closest to Washington Street but they
could also be permitted through the entire Valley Business District area. Uses that are characterized by higher truck traffic should be limited to the Main Street side of the Valley District.

- Update the R-C Zone District to permit townhouses, and rezone properties on Mill Street and Joralemon Street to the R-C Zone to be consistent with the surrounding areas.

- Limit and/or prohibit static uses that require significant land and floor area without generating economic vitality for the community, such as self-storage facilities.

- Identify and prohibit services such as methadone clinics, pain clinics and other types of clinics and rehabilitation centers not accessory to the Clara Maass Medical Center or within the proposed area of the Medical/Research and Development Zone.

- Distinguish between tattoo parlors and permanent make-up services so that the latter, new use is not prohibited.

- Seek regulatory solutions that will encourage illegal third units within two family zones to be improved to be code compliant and legal.

- Identify and prohibit external roll down grates or gates on shop windows and prohibit LED and/or flashing and blinking lights within and around shop windows or on the facade.

- Add definitions for adult day care uses and garden apartments.

- Future Township zoning must address the evolving statutory regulation of medical and recreational Cannabis within the State of New Jersey. Until there is certainty regarding these issues, facilities relating to the growing and/or distribution of Cannabis should be prohibited from residential zones, such as R-A1, R-A2, R-B and the Silver Lake Residential Zone.

**Rehabilitation and Redevelopment**

- Conduct a Township-wide scattered site area in need of redevelopment study and/or pursue a Township-wide area in need of rehabilitation designation.

- Encourage redevelopment that provides a variety of housing types for different households, while recognizing that there is also a need for senior housing in the Township for current residents to age in place.

- Evaluate the characteristics of the present Industrial District, including age and condition of utilities, for characteristics warranting rehabilitation pursuant to the LHRL.

- Evaluate the conditions of commercial areas along the Joralemon Street corridor for redevelopment potential.

- Within the Silver Lake District, we further recommend the study of former shopping centers, self-storage facilities, and surrounding parking lots for redevelopment and re-invigoration of the main corridors within the District, and well as an exploration of
options such as a Silver Lake Special Improvement District, Business District and Rehabilitation District to encourage comprehensive investment and economic recovery.

- Evaluate the characteristics of the large, mostly vacant or underutilized and dilapidated properties located within 1,000 feet of the light rail station for characteristics warranting redevelopment pursuant to the LHRL.

- Evaluate the characteristics of the commercial and residential neighborhoods surrounding the light rail station for age and condition of utilities to determine if these and other characteristics warrant rehabilitation pursuant to the LHRL.

- Establish standards for the Rehabilitation Overlay designation on Block 201, Lot 10 to encourage mixed-use development with characteristics similar to those of the B-G Zone District.

- Study the conditions of waning industrial complexes, large commercial establishments, and older retail strips that may be at the end of their real estate life cycle for characteristics warranting redevelopment, such as the Kmart Center Site and other industrial and retail sites.

- Study the conditions of commercial and industrial properties for characteristics that would merit redevelopment that are situated where improvements could be made to the adjacent greenway and open space through statutory redevelopment tools.

- There are several aging multifamily developments within the Township that display the need for maintenance and renovation. The Township should consider programs to support renovation and/or study these areas for conditions warranting rehabilitation or redevelopment.

- Study the conditions of Woodland Gardens and along Branch Brook Drive, both from the perspective of building and dwelling improvements, but also recognizing that this area provides a link between two of the largest parks and open spaces within the Township. Any redevelopment of this area should include a conservation easement and recreational improvement of the Newark Reservoir property for public outdoor park and open space. The redevelopment itself could include mixed uses, family and senior housing, as well as a public promenade.

- Study the area south of Franklin Street and bounded by Belmont Avenue and the Bloomfield municipal boundary for redevelopment. This commercial corridor, proximate to the Silver Lake Train Station, can reap the benefits of this mass transit asset, and redevelopment would evaluate the possibility of adaptive re-use of large, low-use properties such as the self-storage facility that, by its very layout, can be redesigned with internal roadways and street level activity. Recommended redevelopment includes ground floor retail and upper-level flex office space and other creative uses, such as artist studios.

- Study the commercial area within the B-B General Business Zone, located at Franklin Avenue and Joralemon Street, for redevelopment. This area serves as the anchor and neighborhood commercial core for the Township residential neighborhoods.
Immediately surrounding it. Promoting the health of this district and ensuring the preservation of its services is vital to the livability of the surrounding neighborhoods. Redevelopment at this site could serve to provide mixed use residential senior housing or office space above ground floor retail. Street-level outdoor areas should incorporate a public plaza and public amenities.

- Review signage standards to encourage modern, cohesive, and aesthetic business signage.

Parking

- Study existing conditions and implement creative parking solutions to address the changing need of the Washington Avenue corridor and the Silver Lake District without stifling economic development and investment in the community.

- As off-street parking demand would be the main limitation to the level of residential development that can be realistically achieved, the Township should explore innovative policies to address parking limitations, particularly along the Washington Avenue corridor. One method is to provide for the creation of municipal parking garages or lots along the Washington Avenue and other B-G corridors on cross streets that link to McCarter Highway, and/or create a parking fund to provide jitney service and funding for public parking, both on-street and off-street improvements for the corridor that can be linked to development along it.

- Prohibit first floor parking along street frontage in the B-A and B-G Zones to ensure that any first-floor parking is behind ground floor retail that is designed to activate the street frontage.

- Prohibit surface parking lots located on designated commercial streets and/or street segments designed to promote pedestrian activity.

- Utilize on-line technology and parking apps to maximize parking convenience and customer service.

- Remove parking requirements for first floor retail tenants of mixed use buildings where there is no room on the lot to accommodate the parking, nor a way to access it without harming the pedestrian character of the street. Maintaining a rigid parking requirement when it is impossible to meet that requirement is not productive, and also discourages the tenancy of these commercial spaces, going against the goals and objectives of advancing economic development and revitalization within the Township.

- Reduce the parking requirement for residential units to be more reflective of parking practice of multifamily rental housing within the region.

Design Standards

- Respond to emerging FCC 5G Infrastructure regulations to provide specific design requirements that maintain minimum sidewalk width, both on its own and in conjunction with outdoor café space.
• Establish design standards concerning lighting poles, light fixtures, banner poles and other related street furniture as the design and placement of the equipment serving this technology will impact the physical design of public spaces and the health, safety and welfare of the traveling public who use and rely on these spaces.

• Establish façade standards that can serve to clarify and enhance the character of the community of the distinctive districts within the Township. These shall include, but not be limited to, the inclusion of street façade requirements, stoops, roof design and materials.

• Provide design standards to ensure that no residential windows are adjacent to the sidewalk at eye level. Establish zoning solutions, including but not limited to incorporating stoops, providing a 3 foot-wide fenced landscaping hedge between the building and the public sidewalk, or providing a small fenced in defensible front yard area.

• Re-evaluate general sign, fence, and pool standards to ensure that they are reflective of modern needs and design.
REEXAMINATION REPORT CONCLUSION

The above findings and recommendation are put forth to meet the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Law (N.J.S.A. §40:55D-1 et seq. which requires that the governing body provide for a general reexamination of its master plan and development regulations by the planning board.