

***Master Plan Reexamination Report  
a Master Plan Amendment  
and Amendment to the  
Land Use Element of the Master Plan***

***BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP  
SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY***

*Prepared by the  
Bridgewater Township Planning Board*

ADOPTED  
October 17, 2022

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**MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT-  
A MASTER PLAN REVISION**

**BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP  
SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The Master Plan Reexamination Report addresses the required areas outlined in the provisions of the Municipal Land Use Law: N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89 and is intended to also be considered as an Amendment to the Master Plan Land Use Element.

- A. Identify the major problems and objectives relating to land development at the time of adoption of the last Reexamination Report.
- B. Discuss the extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
- C. Discuss the extent to which there have been significant changes in 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 and energy, collection, disposition and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, County and Municipal policies and objectives.
- D. Outline 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. Provide recommendations of the Planning Board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law" into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan and recommended changes, if any, to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

**II. AREAS OF DISCUSSION**

**\*\* 1 \*\***

- A. Identify the major problems and objectives relating to land development at the time of adoption of the last Reexamination Report.**

MAJOR PROBLEM: There has been recent concern regarding higher vehicular activity on Route 202/206 North and a concern over the need to keep large multifamily complexes to a minimum.

**MAJOR OBJECTIVE: TO PRESERVE THE DEVELOPMENT CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP. THIS OBJECTIVE APPLIES TO RESIDENTIAL AND NON-RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES.**

- In the December 15, 2016 Master Plan and Reexamination report, there was increased municipal concern for the objective of identifying permitted uses along the major corridors of Route 22, 202 and 206 to improve the visual and economic benefit.
- There was increased municipal concern for study and recommendation of compatible land uses for the existing uses on land known as the SJP corporate complex.
- There was increased municipal concern to reconcile residential land uses along Route 202/206. As a first phase, the study should consider existing multifamily uses with the objective to reconcile the existing, stable multifamily neighborhoods with the single-family zone in which they lie.
- There was increased municipal concern to reinforce the residential zoning of an existing non-permitted use (Redwood Inn) so that the land use will strengthen the existing and stable character of the single-family zone that surrounds it.
- There was increased concern to proactively respond to the changing purchasing pattern and office employment patterns that have modified since the COVID 19 pandemic. It is perceived that retail purchasing is being conducted more on-line and working from home is more frequent. Relative to the yet-undeveloped Center of Excellence project on Route 202/206 which has high intensity retail and office component, there was agreement that certain additional uses for this R-SEED zone is timely and a responsible approach toward development in these times of changing lifestyles.

**B. Extent that the objective has increased or decreased as a municipal concern:**

The objective to reexamine the planning approaches remains as a strong municipal concern in order to improve and fortify the overall appeal of living in the Township. Preserving the character of the individual neighborhoods remains a clear objective. Bridgewater Township should continue to strengthen the identity of its residential neighborhoods and its commercial sectors without creating undue intrusion from traffic, noise, light and degraded air quality.

This ongoing concern includes the desire to preserve the residential and corporate character of the Township. Further, adapting to changing circumstances caused by shifting social, demographic and economic trends increases the municipal challenge to update ordinances to respond to modern needs. Keeping in touch with changing circumstances is necessary in order to strengthen the identity of Bridgewater through its residential neighborhoods and promotion of a robust commercial sector.

Bridgewater is keenly interested in maintaining its identity along the major corridors and yet being in a position to respond to changing residential and corporate preferences.

### C. Extent to which there have been significant changes in assumptions/policies:

As is often the case, changes in land use are needed to adjust to lifestyle needs that may occur swiftly or gradually over time. Changes in Master Plan and Reexamination Report assumptions and policies must acknowledge and respond to changing circumstances. A summary of the Planning Board studies is summarized below and also demonstrates the policy to focus on improvement of the commercial sector which contributes to fiscal stability.

- Master Plan, dated 1990 provides a vision for the Township, citing valued policies and objectives for the Township. The Master Plan recommends that:
  - a) *'The Township continue to investigate and adopt development controls for conservation such as clustering...'*
  - b) *'Municipal ordinances should be adopted to permit clustering.'*
- Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report, dated February 28, 2005 addresses newly-developed policies and development strategies intended to serve as a basis for focused study in an effort to preserve the goals outlined in the 1990 Master Plan and to further enhance the quality of life in the Township through additional sound planning policies.
- Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report, dated November 11, 2008 deals with impervious coverage and floor area ratio standards to maintain the established scale within several residential and non-residential districts.
- Master Plan Amendment of the Recreation Element of the Master Plan adopted on May 24, 2010 sets forth a plan for facilities and uses on public lands.
- Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report-Economic Element, was adopted on April 13, 2010. This study was developed in response to the Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report, dated February 28, 2005, where the study was recommended to, "Encourage appropriate development of land use focus areas in the Township that will, within the limits of zoning, return underutilized land to productive use, generate economic development activity, diversify the municipal economic base, create new employment opportunities, and strengthen the tax base." This particular study, and the resulting reports, focus on non-residential improvements along much of the Route 22 corridor in an effort to bring land use along the highway to its higher potential.
- Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report-Circulation Element, dated September 2010 studied traffic circulation and modes of transportation throughout the Township which resulted in recommendations to be addressed moving forward. The focus of this study and resulting reports was to establish modernized criteria for commercial-based development, parking and sound strategies for site plan evaluation of such development.

- Reexamination Report dated February 8, 2011 addressed recommendations for places of assembly (e.g., Houses of Worship), focusing these on roadways that can better accommodate higher volumes of traffic.
- In 2014, Bridgewater tackled the redevelopment criteria which included the study of ‘areas in need of redevelopment’. The Plan accelerated the goal to identify “areas in need of redevelopment” and design Redevelopment Plans offered a framework to bring underdeveloped or underutilized lands into productive use.
- The Reexamination Report of April 27, 2015 addressed several issues that were documented in prior Master Plans and Reexamination Reports, most particularly dealing with areas in need of redevelopment and also addressed the need to revisit zoning districts along the highway corridors.

Below is a condensed excerpt of the matters that address study and recommendations in the April 27, 2015 Reexamination Report which highlights significant changes:

*Master Plan studies should be conducted to offer development regulations for the Route 22, Route 202/206 and the Route 202 corridors should be considered as a continuation of the corridor studies conducted in 2010.*

The Reexamination Report also suggests review of residential development along the highway.

*Studies should also be conducted for zoning districts along the highway corridors. Studies should consider the residential character....*

The Reexamination Report also specifically addresses the need to study residential zones along Route 202-206 and also identifies the increase in interest to reconcile existing uses with their zoning:

*...there is an enhanced interest and objective toward evaluation of the highway corridors and regulations which will continue to have a mix of uses which are compatible with and complimentary to their surroundings.*

- The Reexamination Report of December 13, 2016 responds to a municipal settlement agreement with a religious organization, another matter presents itself as a significant change in a policy and assumption – to study non-permitted premises that was not located on the highway corridor. Evaluation of this non-permitted land use was viewed as an opportunity to bring the original land use (non-conforming commercial use) into conformity with the surrounding single-family residential neighborhood.

- The Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report of December 13, 2016 addressed needs for zoning changes that deal with environmental needs, such as cluster zoning measures, to better address objective of preservation of neighborhoods and the environment, as well as to address zoning inconsistencies. This aspect of the Reexamination Report was in furtherance of the 1990 Master Plan which recommends that: *The Township continue to investigate and adopt development controls for conservation such as clustering...*  
Complimentary permitted Principal uses were also encouraged through zoning ordinance recommendations.
- A Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report was adopted in February, 2022. Amendments include elimination of the Active Adult Residential zone (AAR) and bringing this area into the R-40 Single Family zone, rezoning areas along Union Avenue in order to respond to the need to provide meaningful development options, recommendations for craft brewery permitted uses, relaxation of setback requirements for certain porches and decks and clarifications in the Definitions section of the ordinance.
- A Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report was adopted on September 13, 2022. This document addressed prior land use and zoning issues. The documents also discussed the more current issue of addressing the critical desire to provide 40 affordable housing units that were effectively eliminated from the Center of Excellence project. This document also stated that a new Master Plan should be considered.
- A Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report was adopted on September 27, 2022 which addressed the rezoning of a crescent portion of land known as Block 400 Lot 42 which is currently located in the R-40 zone. This crescent segment is located on Route 202/206 North. The property is owned by Bridgewater Township, The property was recommended to be rezoned to C-2, a Regional Retail zone.
- Most recently, the New Jersey State Planning Commission released a publication entitled, Warehouse Siting Guidance in Draft form which addresses the observation that, "... industrial-scale warehousing for goods storage and distribution to business and retail customers has undergone rapid change ..." Further, the document stated, "At a minimum, communities should conduct a Master Plan reexamination and update their zoning ordinances, relevant redevelopment plans and land development policies that comply with UCC building codes."

**D. Specific changes recommended for the Master Plan or development regulations for land development, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared:**

- A new Master Plan is recommended. The study of zoning changes should include additional permitted uses, where appropriate. Consideration should be made to offer revision, clarification



and amplification of uses that are viewed as archaic. Amending bulk standards may be considered to achieve consistency with lot sizes and neighborhood development patterns.

- A consideration of a healthy balance and broad mix of uses would require that there not be an over-preponderance of any one feature, and warehouses would alter the visual streetscape of the established corridors within the Township/ Consideration should include policies and land use ordinance revisions as a response to the comments made in the *WAREHOUSE SITING GUIDANCE*

**E. Provide recommendations of the Planning Board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law” into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan and recommended changes, if any, to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.**

As noted in prior reexamination reports, redevelopment areas have been adopted by the Township Council for the Eden Woods neighborhood (Finderne) and Center of Excellence (Route 202/206) sites. These redevelopment plans have included an obligation for construction of affordable housing units for low, moderate, and very low-income persons and families. There are no plans for studies of additional ‘areas in need of redevelopment’ or for redevelopment plans at this time; however, the Council has recently amended the Redevelopment Plan for the Center of Excellence, where an ordinance was adopted to permit alternative uses for the R-SEED zone.

**\*\* 2 \*\***

**A. Identify the major problems and objectives relating to land development at the time of adoption of the last Reexamination Report.**

MAJOR PROBLEM: There were no Major Problems cited at that time.

MAJOR OBJECTIVE: TO PROMOTE A WELL-BALANCED VARIETY OF RESIDENTIAL, RECREATIONAL PUBLIC, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND CONSERVATION LAND USES.

**B. Extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.**

The extent of the concern for such balance in land use has been somewhat reduced due to being addressed by conserving lands through the cluster development option. With the purchase of Camp Cromwell, a site having approximately 100 acres, the Township has demonstrated its commitment to offering high-value land conservation and recreational facilities to its residents.

As it relates to the balance for a variety of residential uses, housing options for its seniors, was particularly evident in the zoning and approval of two major sites previously envisioned for

senior housing, one on Route 28 (an apartment complex) and one on Route 202/206 North (A large lot in the AAR zone), were either converted to unrestricted housing by the state legislature, or developed instead for house of worship purposes. The Four Seasons complex on Route 202/206 North is an existing owner-occupied townhouse community for seniors. The new Master Plan should present attention to other potential locations for owner-occupied senior citizen housing communities within the Township. Approval was recently granted for an age-restricted community, with individual housing units on individual lots, in the Martinsville village. This provides a reduction of concern for senior citizen living accommodations.

In order to achieve an acceptable balance between uses, there is need to consider planning and zoning decisions that will reconcile traffic impacts of a land use with the objective not to cause traffic congestion along the roadways.

The desire to provide affordable housing units consistent with the Court-approved Housing Plan prompted the search for suitable sites for 40 affordable housing units.

As related to balance and the intended image of Bridgewater Township as viewed from its corridors, Bridgewater has received several applications for large warehouse and similar large structures with many loading docks on its major corridors. The Township has also received inquiries for additional locations that may be considered for development of more warehouse buildings and being prepared for these rapidly-changing circumstances is necessary, Existing applications for warehouse-and similar manufacturing/shipment structures contemplate demolition of existing office buildings in a campus setting that lie along Bridgewater's major corridors. The proposed building mass, coupled with building setback, may overwhelm the preferred Township image as currently found along the corridor.

**C. Extent to which there have been significant changes in assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan or development regulations as last revised.**

As noted in the September 13, 2022 Master Plan and Reexamination Report, "there is significant change in policy regarding the evaluation of the highway corridors and regulations which will continue to encourage a mix of compatible uses without over-burdening its residents with frustrating and inconvenient traffic congestion."

Including the issue of traffic and congestion, environmental issues are a concern for warehouses. The *Warehouse Siting Guidance* notes potential environmental impacts including diesel truck emissions which could produce fumes and traffic impacts that could affect traffic movement along the corridors. These are only a few of the potential impacts which could affect the general welfare of the Township.

The issue of large-size warehouse construction along the streetscapes, coupled with the removal of office structures, changes the character of the corridors and upsets the balance that has been created.

**D. 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.**

In conformance with objectives and policies noted in the September 13, 2022 Master Plan Amendment and Reexamination Report, the Township should continue to consider appropriate uses that have limited traffic impacts on the highways, county and local roads. Developing zone change strategies to produce an economically-viable uses along Route 202/206 have been studied.” It is this strategy that is recommended for expansion.

In order to address the individual circumstances surrounding each of the warehouse applications, the Township should rezone the following zones to REMOVE the Warehouse use as a *Principal Permitted Use* from the following zones:

- M-1
- M-1A
- M-1B
- M-1C
- M-2

FURTHER, in order to assure the continued robust nature of its existing industrial sectors, the Warehouse use should be inserted as a *Permitted Accessory Use* in the aforementioned zones.

It is also recommended that the following Definitions be added to Section 126-2, Definitions:

**MANUFACTURE.** Establishment engaged in the mechanical or chemical transformation of materials or substances into new products, including assembly of component parts, creation of products and blending of materials such as oils, plastics, resins. Manufacturing does not include the activity of unpacking and re-packaging pre-assembled stock. Accessory warehousing activities associated with a manufacturing facility does not include receipt, storage or shipment of products that are not used in the creation of the products manufactured on the site (See Warehouse).

**WAREHOUSE, break-bulk facility.** Distribution center that receives products in large quantities and does not require individual packaging. Distribution is typically transferred by pallet. Shipment is to retail, business and to fulfillment centers.

**WAREHOUSE, fulfillment center.** Distribution center that picks and packs items for individual destination delivery. This facility typically sends products to the last-mile facility which is closer to the customer.

WAREHOUSE, last mile fulfillment. Smaller distribution fulfillment facility servicing individual households for online shopping orders and retail stores. Examples are UPS, FedEx, Amazon

- E. Provide recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law” into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan and recommended changes, if any, to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.**

There are no new redevelopment plans recommended at this time.

**\*\* 3 \*\***

- A. Identify the major problems and objectives relating to land development at the time of adoption of the last Reexamination Report**

**MAJOR PROBLEM:** None were noted at that time.

**MAJOR OBJECTIVE:** TO GUIDE LAND DEVELOPMENT AND LOCATION OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP RESIDENTS AND TO PROMOTE THE PRESERVATION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

- B. Extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.**

The matter of open space remains a strong municipal interest. A Recreation Plan Element to the Master Plan was adopted in 2010. Bridgewater Township Open Space Advisory Board and Park Board continue to actively analyze municipal lands for possible Green Acres, Recreation and Open Space (ROSI) designation. With the acquisition of Camp Cromwell, there is a strong commitment to expand the inventory of recreational opportunities, along with assuring conservation of valuable woodland assets.

- C. Extent to which there have been significant changes in assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan or development regulations as last revised.**

There are no significant changes in assumptions, policies or objectives that formed the basis for the Master Plan or development regulations. That is to say, these are still strongly held.

- D. 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.**

Underlying objectives and policies and standards are incorporated into this document. The proposed change is to remove the Warehouse use as a *Principal Permitted Use* throughout all

zones and support the existing industrial sector by placing the Warehouse use as a *Permitted Accessory Use*.

It is recommended that a new Master Plan be developed for Bridgewater Township.

- E. Provide recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law” into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan and recommended changes, if any, to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.**

There are no new redevelopment plans recommended at this time.

**\*\* 4 \*\***

- A. Identify the major problems and objectives relating to land development at the time of adoption of the last Reexamination Report.**

MAJOR PROBLEM: There were no Major Problems cited.

MAJOR OBJECTIVE: COORDINATE FUTURE GROWTH WITH NEEDED EXPANSION OF PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES.

- B. Extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.**

While there are no current problems relating to expansion of public facilities and services, the Township is mindful that it must be capable to fiscally address needs as they arise. Tropical Storm Ida is an example where unforeseen circumstances can put a financial strain on municipal infrastructure. Potential expansion of opportunities may be helpful in meeting these challenges.

- C. Extent to which there have been significant changes in assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan or development regulations as last revised.**

There have been no significant changes in assumptions, policies or objectives.

- D. 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.**

The September 13, 2022 Master Plan and Reexamination Report states that, “Bridgewater Township intends to continue to monitor and implement, where possible, quality of life amenities, including the initiative to consider programs that will encourage some expansion of activities in the arts as well as physical sporting activities.” The ability to consider programs relies on the fiscal ability to underwrite the associated costs of these.

As noted in the Reexamination Report dated September 13, 2022, Tropical Storm Ida leveled a widespread and devastating impact on the Township’s facilities and public services. It is

recommended that the ordinance be revisited to strengthen the design standards and maintenance procedures for stormwater management. This renewed effort is intended to improve overall drainage during and after storm events.

- E. Provide recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law” into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan and recommended changes, if any, to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.**

There are no new recommended new redevelopment plans recommended at this time.

**\*\* 5 \*\***

- A. Identify the major problems and objectives relating to land development at the time of adoption of the last Reexamination Report.**

MAJOR PROBLEM: There were no Major Problems cited.

**MAJOR OBJECTIVE: TO PROMOTE THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL SYSTEMS, ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES, RURAL APPEARANCE, AND THE NATURAL AMENITIES WHICH PRESENTLY CHARACTERIZE BRIDGEWATER TOWNSHIP.**

- B. Extent that the objective has increased or decreased as a municipal concern:**

The objective remains an ongoing and important objective, and has not changed as a municipal concern.

- C. Extent to which there have been significant changes in assumptions/policies:**

There have been no significant changes in assumptions or policies, but this objective remains strongly-held.

- D. 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.**

There are no changes to this category that are recommended at this time.

- E. Provide recommendations of the Planning Board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law” into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan and recommended changes, if any, to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.**

There are no new redevelopment plans recommended at this time.

**A. Identify the major problems and objectives relating to land development at the time of adoption of the last Reexamination Report.**

MAJOR PROBLEM: There were no Major Problems cited.

**MAJOR OBJECTIVE: RECONCILE USES ALONG THE HIGHWAY CORRIDORS TO CORRELATE TO ZONING.**

**B. Extent that the objective has increased or decreased as a municipal concern:**

The following objective has decreased in municipal concern:

The objective to reconcile uses to zoning is also met with the need to reconcile zoning to uses has increased to reconciling zoning with the streetscape image envisioned by Bridgewater.

**C. Extent to which there have been significant changes in assumptions/policies:**

Receipt of the Warehouse Siting Guidance from the NJ State Planning Commission provided an impetus for reevaluation of warehouses in Bridgewater. The zones that currently permit warehouses are often in proximity to non-industrial and residential areas. Currently, proposed new warehouses are not small structures, they are in the hundreds of thousands square feet in size, exceeding the mass that is currently found along the highways.

Also, the demolition of existing buildings and replacement with warehouses will alter the employment demographic of the Township, changing from many office-based work forces, often living in the Bridgewater/Somerset Regional Center area, to fewer warehouse workers.

The existing development character of an over-abundance of warehouses will intensify the 'big box' image along the corridor which is not consistent with the current appearance.

**D. 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.**

Township should rezone the following zones to REMOVE the Warehouse use as a *Principal Permitted Use* from the following zones:

M-1

M-1A

M-1B

M-1C

M-2

FURTHER, in order to assure the continued robust nature of its existing industrial sectors, the Warehouse use should be inserted as a *Permitted Accessory Use* in the aforesaid zones.

THE FOLLOWING DEFINITIONS SHOULD BE ADDED to Section 126-2, Definitions:

**MANUFACTURE.** Establishment engaged in the mechanical or chemical transformation of materials or substances into new products, including assembly of component parts, creation of products and blending of materials such as oils, plastics, resins. Manufacturing does not include the activity of unpacking and re-packaging pre-assembled stock. Accessory warehousing activities associated with a manufacturing facility does not include receipt, storage or shipment of products that are not used in the creation of the products manufactured on the site. (See Warehouse).

**WAREHOUSE, break-bulk facility.** Distribution center that receives products in large quantities and does not require individual packaging. Distribution is typically transferred by pallet. Shipment is to retail, business and to fulfillment centers.

**WAREHOUSE, fulfillment center.** Distribution center that picks and packs items for individual destination delivery. This facility typically sends products to the last-mile facility which is closer to the customer.

**WAREHOUSE, last mile fulfillment.** Smaller Distribution fulfillment facility servicing individual households for online shopping orders and retail stores. Examples are UPS, FedEx, Amazon

- E. Provide recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law" into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan and recommended changes, if any, to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.**

There are no new redevelopment plans recommended at this time.

**\*\* 7 \*\***

- A. Identify the major problems and objectives relating to land development at the time of the adoption of the last Reexamination Report.**

**MAJOR PROBLEM:** There were no Major Problems cited at the time.

**MAJOR OBJECTIVE:** IDENTIFY THE MUNICIPAL NEED TO DEVELOP PLANNING STRATEGIES WHICH WOULD ENHANCE BRIDGEWATER'S QUALITY OF LIFE.

- B. Extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.**



Maintaining a high quality of life for its residents and commercial partners continues to remain as a strong objective in the Township.

**C. Extent to which there have been significant changes in assumptions, policies and objectives**

Bridgewater is at the forefront of continually reexamining its Master Plan to better achieve its policies and objectives. The objective of maintaining the exceptional character of Bridgewater Township is strong and the need to address changing circumstances requires action on the part of the Township.

Receipt of the NJ State Planning Commission, *Warehouse Siting Guidance*, triggered the conversation of large warehouse applications and traffic and environmental issues that should be considered.

While a continual series of Reexamination reports were considered to be adequate to immediately deal with changes in assumptions, policies and objectives, a new Master Plan is recommended.

**D. 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.**

The ordinance should be amended so as to remove the Warehouse use as a Principal Permitted Use and insert the Warehouse use as an *Accessory Use*.

The zones that currently permit warehouses are often in proximity to non-industrial and residential areas. Currently, proposed new warehouses are not small structures, they are in the hundreds of thousands square feet in size.

Also, the demolition of existing buildings and replacement with warehouses will alter the employment demographic of the Township, changing from many office-based work forces to fewer warehouse workers.

**E. Provide recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law" into the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan and recommended changes, if any, to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.**

There are no additional recommendations offered at this time.

# ***Amendment to the Land Use Element of the Master Plan***

The New Jersey State Planning Commission Recommends A Proactive Approach Toward Warehouse Siting:

The New Jersey State Planning Commission released a publication entitled, *Warehouse Siting Guidance* in Draft form which addresses the observation that, "... industrial-scale warehousing for goods storage and distribution to business and retail customers has undergone rapid change ..." The *Warehouse Siting Guidance* identifies the different forms of warehousing that is emerging in this fast-growing industry and offers a sober view of the need for communities to proactively address their Master Plans and zoning regulations. A few remarks in the *Warehouse Siting Guidance* are noted below and set the framework for zoning evaluation and recommended revisions. It suggests that zoning should evolve to keep up with the changing variety of warehouse uses.

"The continuing evolution of logistics industries will have profound implications on the nexus between land use and the intermodal transportation network for years to come."

"At a minimum, communities should conduct a Master Plan reexamination and update their zoning ordinances, relevant redevelopment plans and land development policies that comply with UCC building codes."

"...it has never been more important that municipalities update and refine their planning and zoning regulations to differentiate among warehouse use types so it can handle the resultant impacts..."

The *Warehouse Siting Guidance* recommends that, "existing zoning should consider an appropriate mix of spaces...that may create better-paying jobs than warehousing spaces."

In response to this publication, Bridgewater has considered the following:

Bridgewater Township has recently received several applications for large warehouses and similar large structures with many loading docks.

Bridgewater Township has received inquiries for additional locations that may be considered for development of more warehouse buildings. The recommendations in this Master Plan Amendment address the desire to proactively respond to the *Warehouse Siting Guidance*, maintain the

streetscape ambiance of the Township and have the time and authority to thoroughly address the various forms of impacts that warehouses may produce.

Existing applications for warehouse, and similar large manufacturing/shipment structures, contemplate demolition of existing offices and industrial buildings in campus-style designs that lie along Bridgewater's major corridors. Of concern is the current concept for warehouses which is for buildings that are hundreds of thousands of square feet in area. Zones that currently permit warehouses are often in proximity to non-industrial and residential areas, thereby having the potential for complaints of intrusion (noise, lighting, fumes and general nuisance) since warehouses are often active throughout the entire day and entire night.

As noted in the *Warehouse Siting Guidance*, potential environmental impacts, including diesel truck emissions, could produce fumes which can cause an unhealthy environment for properties that are in proximity to the areas devoted for trucks and tractor-trailer vehicles. Traffic impacts that could affect traffic movement along the corridors and residential side streets. These are potential impacts which could affect the general welfare of the Township and the Township desires to have the ability to carefully consider the individual applications.

The demolition of existing buildings and replacement with warehouses will alter the employment demographic of the Township from many office-based work forces in the commercial campus to fewer warehouse workers. In some cases, at some locations, this change may be found to be in good planning design, worthy of approval, but these applications are based on the individual circumstances of the application. The factual circumstances of the application will result in information that will demonstrate the advantages of each warehouse application.

A consideration of a healthy balance and broad mix of uses would require that there not be an over-preponderance of any one feature, and warehouses would alter the visual streetscape of the established corridors within the Township.

Bridgewater intends to continue to assure the health, safety and welfare of its residential and commercial community and will apply scrutiny to all warehouse siting within the Township, in a manner consistent with the with the terms of the Land Development Ordinance and intent of the Master Plan.

In order to address the individual, factual circumstances surrounding each warehouse application, rather than broadly permitting warehouse use throughout a particular zone district, the Township should rezone the following zones to REMOVE the Warehouse use as a *Principal Permitted Use* from the following zones:

- M-1
- M-1A
- M-1B
- M-1C
- M-2

Further, in order to assure the continued robust nature of its existing industrial sectors, the Warehouse use should be inserted as a *Permitted Accessory Use* in each of the aforecited zones.

THE FOLLOWING DEFINITIONS SHOULD BE ADDED to Section 126-2, Definitions:

**MANUFACTURE.** Establishment engaged in the mechanical or chemical transformation of materials or substances into new products, including assembly of component parts, creation of products and blending of materials such as oils, plastics, resins. Manufacturing does not include the activity of unpacking and re-packaging pre-assembled stock. Accessory warehousing activities associated with a manufacturing facility does not include receipt, storage or shipment of products that are not used in the creation of the products manufactured on the site. (See Warehouse).

**WAREHOUSE, Break-Bulk Facility.** Distribution center that receives products in large quantities and does not require individual packaging. Distribution is typically transferred by pallet. Shipment is to retail, business and to fulfillment centers.

**WAREHOUSE, Fulfillment Center.** Distribution center that picks and packs items for individual destination delivery. This facility typically sends products to the last-mile facility which is closer to the customer.

**WAREHOUSE, Last Mile Fulfillment.** Smaller distribution fulfillment facility servicing individual households for online shopping orders and retail stores. Examples are UPS, FedEx, Amazon