

HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP

2023 Master Plan Re-Examination Report

“The primary goals in Hopewell Township are the preservation of the Township’s agricultural character and the development of a desirable and livable community.”

August 16, 2023

Adopted by Land Use Board Resolution #2023-06

Prepared by:

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Table of Contents

	Page No.
I. Introduction and New Ordinances	1
II. 2022 Re-Examination Process	2
A. Section I:	3
2012 Master Plan Re-Examination Report identified Major Problems and Objectives relating to land development	
B. Section II:	4
The extent to which identified problems and objective have been reduced or have increased since the adoption of the 2012 Report	
C. Section III:	6
2012 Significant changes in the assumptions, policies and objectives forming the basis for the Master Plan or Development Regulations and changes in State, County and Municipal policies and objectives	
D. Section IV:	15
Recommended changes for the Master Plan and Development Regulations, including Objectives, Policies and Standards, or whether a New Plan or Regulations should be prepared	
E. Section V:	17
2021 Planning Board recommendations 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.)	
F. Section VI:	18
Recommendations of the planning board concerning locations appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure, including but not limited to, commercial districts, areas proximate to public transportation and transit facilities and transportation corridors, and public rest stops; and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary or appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure.	

INTRODUCTION and NEW ORDINANCES

Each municipality in New Jersey is required by Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL Section 40:55D-89) to re-examine its Master Plan and development regulations at least once every ten years and revise if necessary. Hopewell Township's intention is for this Re-examination to evaluate the progress of its Master Plan goals and objectives since the first Master Plan was developed in 1960.

During this re-examination process, a review of the Township's original Master Plan of 1960, along with that of 1977-78, and its periodical revisions of 1983,'88,'94, 2004 and 2012 were completed, and when summarized, the objectives and goals of the Township's future planning has remained consistent; *To provide for its residents a community which respects and desires to maintain its rural characteristics.* The primary mission is to achieve a balance between anticipated growth (business and residential) and the preservation of our agricultural and natural lands.

In an effort to assist Hopewell Township with its objectives and goals, Hopewell has also established several Boards, including the Agricultural Advisory Committee, Recreational Committee, Environmental Commission and Economic Advisory Board. These community Boards consist of volunteers, who serve to develop, review and incorporate many of the Township's planning elements during their functional duties.

The Township has devoted significant time and capital to develop several new Plan Elements and Ordinances. The Master Plan Elements and Ordinances (and/or drafts) developed since 2006 are:

- I. FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN ELEMENT (May 2018):** Hopewell is defined by its prime farmland and dynamic agricultural base and it is essential to the preservation of its economic well-being and rural character to implement policies that support the retention of agriculture.
- II. HOUSING ELEMENT (December 2006):** Designed to achieve the goal of access to affordable housing to meet present and prospective housing needs, with particular attention to low and moderate-income housing.
- III. FAIR SHARE PLAN (December 2006):** Is a companion plan to the Housing Element and puts forth the approach Hopewell intends to

take to meet the State's relevant COAH (Council on Affordable Housing) requirements.

- IV. MUNICIPAL STORMWATER MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE (February 2021):** Establishes minimum storm water management requirements and controls for "major development" within the Township.
- V. DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE (2021 review):** This outlines the Township's perimeters and future expectations of residential and commercial development.
- VI. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN ELEMENT (October 2011):** Outlines the Township's Open Space and Recreational areas and an action plan to provide recreational opportunities for its residents.
- VII. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES INVENTORY (May 2007):** A community resource and management tool describing the environment of the Township's land, life forms, and atmosphere.

- - RE-EXAMINATION PROCESS - -

This report is composed of six sections in compliance with Section 40:55D-89 of the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), requiring a re-examination of the following:

1. Section One: *Reviews the major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality since the adoption of the last re-examination report.*

2. Section Two: *The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to the last re-examination.*

3. Section Three: *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:*

- *Density, distribution of population, and land uses*
- *Housing conditions*
- *Circulation*
- *Conservation of natural resources*
- *Energy conservation*

- *Collection, disposition and recycling of designated recyclable materials*
- *Changes in State, county, municipal policies and objectives*

4. Section Four: *Outlines specific changes recommended for the Master Plan, or Develop Regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.*

5. Section Five: *Outlines recommendations of the planning board concerning 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.*

6. Section Six: Recommendations of the planning board concerning locations appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure, including but not limited to, commercial districts, areas proximate to public transportation and transit facilities and transportation corridors, and public rest stops; and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary or appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure.

- - SECTION I - -

The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last re-examination report.

A. Preserving and maintaining our agricultural and natural lands remains a priority. While there was no large-scale loss of agriculture lands, scattered residential subdivisions in the agricultural district on existing roads have continued, resulting in some acreage being lost. Encouraging residential development in the R districts, closer to the town center and available utilities, is preferred. The Township encourages participation in the State's Farmland Preservation Program as a method to protect its prime farmlands and maintain the well-established agriculture industry within its borders.

B. Planning for a proper balance of developed and non-developed lands has been considered. The Township purchased 50 acres on Rt 49, now known

as the "Hopewell Business Park", intending to increase its commercial ratable base and provide additional employment opportunities for area residents. The Business Park will enable new commercial opportunities to be conveniently located in a centralized area near this high traffic corridor. In addition, detailed planning of commercial development along the Route 49 corridor was completed, defining business districts with specified permitted uses. Provisions have been made to allow higher density, residential uses (as conditional uses) in some areas of this corridor, where infrastructure exists and conflicts with commercial uses would be minimized.

C. Continued attention to protecting / preserving our natural resources. Significant portions of the Township's lands are in the CAFRA (Coastal Area Facility Review Act) designation, offering some protection guidelines along with various State environmental policies and regulations. Township ordinances in the agriculture districts allows for small residential development on existing roads. While offering landowners this land use opportunity, the intention is to still reduce sprawl deep into the agricultural areas and provide an element of protection to the natural resource areas.

D. The Township recognizes the need for residential housing of all types, including for low and moderate-income level residents. The Phase III revision of the State's COAH regulations increased the availability requirements of affordable housing within Municipalities.

E. The Township recognizes the need to outreach to neighboring municipalities to increase shared services for community facilities, services and requisite utilities. The intent of municipal sharing is to provide and / or continue services in a cost-effective manner for its residents. Current examples being utilized are the Joint Convenience Center, Construction Department, Municipal Judicial Court, EMS Services and the Senior Center located in Hopewell. The Township, along with Upper Deerfield, recently participated in the re-organization of the Bostwick Lake Commission, with renewed interest in enhancing the passive recreational use of this scenic area for the community.

F. Evaluate the opportunities available for residents and visitors to enjoy our natural surroundings.

- - SECTION II - -

The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.

A. The creation of several Township Community Boards, Plans and Ordinances has better positioned the Township for future residential and commercial development while maintaining its rural character.

B. State affordable housing requirements remain in a state of flux. The Township will again need to re-evaluate its requirements once the State re-establishes its directive.

C. One area of renewed interest is "Green Renewable Energy", prompted by State and Federal incentive grants. New Jersey is one of the most aggressive states promoting the use of both wind and solar for residential and commercial purposes. While few would dispute the benefits of utilizing renewable energy, given current solar technology, renewables could have a significant impact on land use in the township due to the abundance of open space. As renewable energy uses evolve, the Township's Land Use Boards and Governing Body should continue to monitor their allowance for both private and commercial use in line with state mandates and regulations in light of the overall overall goals of the Township's Master Plan.

D. Development of the Hopewell Business Park continues to be challenged as the local economy follows the slowed national economic trend experienced in recent years. Some encouragement is provided by the continued success of a local bank branch placed in the Park, along with the construction of the 25,000 sq. ft. Amish Market in 2011. Township officials should continue to review the ordinances and policies related to the HC, PR and HB zones, in order to encourage future growth in this planned area, in a matter consistent with the overall goals of the Township. In 2022, Hopewell Township amended the redevelopment area to create additional opportunities for commercial growth.

E. Land owners continue to participate in the State's Farmland Preservation Program, deed restricting over 5,636 acres to date, making Hopewell a leader among Cumberland municipalities comprising 25% of the County total.

F. Hopewell Township preserved approximately 100 acres east of the Hopewell Crest School along Sewell Road and created a park for residents. The park consists of walking trails and an area for residents to park and enjoy this park.

- - SECTION III - -

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.

Migration of residential growth into Southern New Jersey counties during the mid-1990's to present brought with it many challenges for the affected communities, along with the displacement of some of their rural surroundings. The Cumberland County cities of Vineland and Millville experienced an increase in residential development, as well as some commercial growth. Hopewell's neighboring municipality, Upper Deerfield, experienced some of this pressure as well, seeing rural land uses converted to residential and commercial uses.

Bridgeton, Cumberland's third urban city and county seat, to which Hopewell shares a border, has experienced some distressed times in recent decades. This fact, along with Hopewell's general location in the County, its limited utility infrastructure, CAFRA designation and Township zoning, may have insulated Hopewell from this migration pressure to some degree, but not entirely.

Although growth has been rather stable within Hopewell since the last re-evaluation of 2012, this stability has not been taken for granted as has been noted with the creation of various planning documents outlining the Township's objectives and the continuous monitoring of the Township's development procedures.

Density, Distribution of Population and Land Uses

At the creation of the Master Plan in 1960, Hopewell's population was measured at 3,586. In 2010, U.S. Census records indicate Hopewell's population as 4,571, an overall growth of almost a third since 1960. An evaluation of the Census data per decade since 1960 shows the largest percentage of growth occurred prior to 1980. Measuring the thirty-year span between 1980 and 2010, this indicates a modest growth of 5% in the Township's population (4,365 to 4,571), while the latest census in 2020 saw a drop of 4% in township population (4,571 to 4,391)

According to housing data between 2011-2021, 12 new single-family houses were constructed on stand-alone lots throughout the Township, which was half the amount experienced during each of the last two re-examination periods. There has not been a Major Subdivision application to the Land Use Board in the last 10 years.

Given the modest amount of new homes constructed, and their locations throughout the Township, the distribution of the population has not been greatly altered, with most residents occupying 10% of the Township acreage, located primarily in established neighborhoods in the center portions of the Township.

Of the almost 19,000 acres in the Township, 75% are qualified farmland. Approximately 5,636 farmland acres are permanently preserved through the State's Farmland Preservation Program, an increase of 65% since 2012. Overall, the land uses in the Township since the last re-examination have remained stable. In addition to the farmland and residential percentages previously stated, other uses include: approximately 1% currently in Commercial uses, the Cohansy River (Tidal Wetlands) and the Elk Lake area make up just under 7%, with Parkland just over 1%. Various public / exempt lands are approximately 3.0%.

Given the current zoning districts and accompanying ordinances, lack of sewer and water service, percentage of State Planning Area 4 (Rural) and preserved acreage, along with State Planning regulations governing the Township, population distribution and land uses should not change significantly in the foreseeable future, and any measurable density increase most likely would occur in the proximity of the existing Rt. 49 corridor land uses located in the center of the Township. The State Planning Map, as well as the Township's zoning map, mirrors the denser residential / commercial uses along the Rt. 49 corridor, surrounded by farmland / rural lands having a principal use of agriculture.

Housing Conditions and Affordability

Data compiled for the development of Hopewell's Housing Element of the Master Plan (December 2006) indicated a housing stock of 1,693 units in 2000, 89% of which were single or two family units. Sixty-five units (4%) were vacant. Of those occupied, 83% were owned, 17% rented. In 2010 the census showed 1,741 units. The just released 2020 U.S. Census data indicates total housing stock in the Township is now 1,778, with the above stated category percentages remaining stable.

Analysis of the previously stated 12 new housing starts indicated a median construction cost of \$167,700. Consideration of the new housing building costs shows 73% of these homes would have been eligible to participate in the U.S.D.A financing program for low and moderate homes (absent of other qualifying categories).

A study of housing data over the last decade completed and published by the Atlantic City Press of New Jersey in April 2010 indicated Hopewell's median home price was \$139,000 for 2009. The 2020 Census reporter median price in Hopewell is now \$186,500. This is a 34% increase over the last 10 years. After years of flat real estate prices, the last several years has seen double digit increases in real estate across the country.

Comparing the 2020 Census reporter to adjacent Cumberland County Municipalities show the following: Hopewell \$167,700, Upper Deerfield \$194,900, Shiloh \$165,300, Greenwich \$219,600, Fairfield \$164,400, Bridgeton \$109,800.

Current median *household income* data from the 2020 U.S. Census shows this income to be \$80,259. This figure represents Hopewell as the highest median household income in Cumberland County. It should be noted township and county comparisons may be impacted somewhat due to Cumberland's housing and population distribution amongst three cities, ten rural townships and one borough.

An overview of these available data sets may indicate the Township has a housing stock that is affordably priced in terms of new construction costs, median home sale and rental expenses. Additionally, Hopewell average rent was \$1,011 (2015-2019), the 5th lowest in the county, the highest being Lawrence at \$1,283, while the lowest was Shiloh at \$880.

As previously indicated, Hopewell did submit to the State its Fair Share COAH Plan based on the latest published rules, known as Third Round, indicating the Township's calculated past obligation and future requirement specifications. As stated, COAH's administrative duties have recently been transferred to the State's Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the program's directive is still a discussion point amongst the Legislature, court proceedings, and interested organizations. Hopewell agrees with sentiments expressed by other municipalities throughout the State that these discussions take into consideration regional and municipal statistics in regards to defining affordable housing, its availability and requirements.

Circulation

No new roads have been constructed in the Township since the last re-examination. Discussions during site plan applications brought before the Municipal Land Use Board have given careful consideration as to the impact on the existing road patterns with regards to usage and safety when jurisdiction would allow.

Conservation of Natural Resources

The rural surroundings of Hopewell are comprised of productive farmland and natural resources. The Cohansey River borders the Township on two sides of its triangular form.

The Township has been very active in the support of the State's Farmland Preservation Program. Currently, Hopewell has over 5,636 acres deed restricted as farmland. The Township and the Agricultural Advisory Board, continues to support the municipal Farmland Preservation Plan, and continues to participate in a Municipal Planning Incentive Grant program through the State Agriculture Development Committee to help cost share eligible farmland preservation applications. If accepted, final participation will be dependent on State funding availability and the municipal budget allowances at that time.

Hopewell also has increased its recognition of the importance of its natural resources. The creation of an Environmental Commission, with citizens who not only have a great appreciation for the natural resources, but a knowledge base that can communicate its importance to the Township. The Governing Body, and Township at large, was well served with the Commission's input during the creation of an Environmental Resources Inventory by Clarke, Caton & Hintz, documenting the Township's land, water, life forms and atmosphere, including historically significant sites. Hopewell's development ordinance specifies that an Environmental Impact Report accompany all major subdivisions and site plans brought before its Land Use Board, unless granted a waiver of such.

The Environmental Commission developed an Open Space and Recreation Plan Element for the Township's Master Plan to assist in the planning of a harmonious relationship between its residents, visitors, and the natural resources, while enhancing the accessibility and appreciation of such. The creation of this Plan was a pre-requisite for participation in project funding sources through the State's Green Acres preservation program, the result of which was the Township preserving approximately 100 acres east of the Hopewell Crest School and creating Hopewell Park as its first initiative.

Energy Conservation

Recently, there has been an increased national awareness as to the environmental and social impacts caused by our country's energy creation and usage practices.

Historically, comprehensive land use planning has given consideration to energy conservation with regards to activities performed as part of daily routines within a municipality. This has resulted in efforts to connect residents to neighborhoods, local businesses and the natural surroundings through community sidewalks and on and off-road walking / biking trails. While a rural municipality, such as Hopewell, introduces some challenges of connectivity, planning concepts such as a Town Center within the Route 49 corridor, residential development standards that foster community connection and concepts such as Rails to Trails could assist in accomplishing this planning objective.

Since the last re-examination, the nation has seen renewed interest in renewable energy creation along with usage that emphasizes conservation. The creation of New Jersey's Clean Energy Program (NJCEP) promotes increased energy efficiency in construction / rehabilitation of homes and buildings, as well as the use of clean, renewable sources of energy (solar, wind, geothermal and sustainable biomass). NJCEP offers financial incentives, programs, and services for residential, commercial and municipal customers.

The Township's development ordinance makes provisions for the use of solar energy for homes and businesses in any zone as an accessory use. Wind energy apparatuses are permitted as accessory uses in every zone district except residential.

Collection, Disposition and Recycling of designated recyclable materials

The Township participates in a shared services agreement with Greenwich in the operation of a trash / recycling collection center located on Township property. This center works in conjunction with the countywide landfill located in Deerfield Township, which is operated under the Cumberland County Improvement Authority. The Authority provides assistance to the Township with recycling and trash disposal requirements. The diligent use of separate containers for commingled wastes (glass, metal, plastics) and mixed papers by municipal residents has helped to make Cumberland the #3 ranked county Statewide with regards to recycling rates.

Changes in State, County, Municipal Policies and Objectives

The State of New Jersey continues to revise and/or produce new policies and procedures that affect Hopewell in various degrees.

Municipal Stormwater and Wastewater Regulations: Since the last re-examination, the creation and/or updating of Municipal Stormwater and

Wastewater Management Plans were required by the State as part of Municipal planning documents. With the goal of reducing non-point source pollution, protection of sensitive environmental conditions, flood control and encouraging groundwater recharge, the Department of Environmental Protection has been enacting and enforcing a variety of regulations affecting water quality and supply.

In February 2006, Fralinger Engineering prepared the Township's Stormwater Management Ordinance, specifying the requirement and controls for "major developments", which are defined as developments that disturb one or more acres of land.

In 2021, the NJDEP updated the stormwater rules NJAC 7:8. Much stricter guidelines were established to ensure the amount of runoff, the amount of stormwater is recharged back into the ground and the quality of the stormwater remains a top priority. A new Best Management Practice in meeting these goals was adopted using Green Infrastructure. All Major Developments must now incorporate these techniques which promote a more environmentally desirable result to control stormwater.

In 2022, Hopewell Township was designated a Tier A municipality for stormwater discharge permit. The previous designation was Tier B, which is less stringent. All Tier A municipalities will be required to modify various stormwater components to meet the more stringent Tier A. Additionally, street sweeping, inlet cleaning, more inspections and public outreach program will be placed on Hopewell Township.

For wastewater, Hopewell is served by both a sanitary sewer system and individual septic systems. The sewer system was developed in conjunction with the Cumberland County Utility Authority and their sewer treatment plant located in Bridgeton. This system serves the more developed areas located near the center of the Township. Residential and commercial uses in the more rural areas of the Township utilize septic.

The 2020 Pandemic:

The COVID-19 Pandemic that impacted the world during the preparation of this report had an immediate impact on people's lives. The State of New Jersey along with many other States across the country implemented public safety policies that restricted people's movements and all sectors of the economy were impacted in one way or another.

Certain businesses were not permitted to open and there were various travel restrictions in place. During this period, many businesses that could,

implemented remote work for their staff, and businesses that could remain open added curbside pickup services that were not available previously. Also, during this period, many people shifted to buying items online for home delivery that previously would have been purchased in store. Ever since online shopping became readily available for many items, brick and mortar locations have faced consistent pressure from online markets.

The overall final impact from COVID-19 to shoppers buying behavior regarding home delivery of items, that in the past were purchased in-store, is yet to be known. It is assumed that some consumers will continue to buy online for home delivery that did not do so prior to the pandemic; and, it is also assumed that businesses that adopted curbside pickup and delivery services may need or want to continue to do so.

It is assumed that shopping centers and retail locations that do not have drive-through pickup readily available may reconfigure site circulation to accommodate this new way of doing business. Due to the higher volume of online purchasing that occurred during the pandemic, the result was an increase in demand for modern warehouses designed to accommodate processing of orders that contained multiple items for packing and delivery. Demand is on the rise for both micro-distribution centers and modern warehouse space.

Electric Vehicles:

At the time this report was being drafted, one of the largest producers of internal combustion motor vehicles in the United States announced a goal to shift to producing only Electric Vehicles (EV) by 2035. Other vehicle manufacturers are also increasing efforts to produce more EV in the future. There are generally three (3) types of electric motor vehicles: Hybrid Electric; Plug-in Hybrid Electric; and All Electric. The Hybrid electric type vehicles still utilize an internal combustion engine, whereas the All Electric does not.

The following assumptions are made regarding the foreseeable future. The number of EV are expected to significantly increase on roadways within the next 10-20 years. Depending on EV cost to buy and own compared to traditional internal combustion engines and the type and number of EV models available, it is assumed that there will be a modest increase in the number of EV on the roads beginning to occur 5-6 years from now. If there is a significant drop in the number of internal combustion engine vehicles on the road, there will still be a need for locations to fuel those vehicles. It is assumed diesel motors will continue to be the primary motor driving the heavy vehicle and trucking industry until a better alternative has been proven.

Driverless and autonomous vehicle technology will continue to evolve and within the next 10-20 years, it may be common to see driverless or drone vehicles on the roads 20 years from now.

In 2023, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy directed the NJDEP to begin the process of adopting the requirement that all car and light trucks sold in the state be zero emission by the year 2035.

Smart Buildings:

Although vehicles are expected to become major users of available electricity in the future, it is assumed as technology continues to be integrated into devices and structures for convenience and efficiency, homes, businesses, and industry will continue to become more energy efficient. It is also assumed in the future more people will work remotely and travel less for work and as such, individual use of vehicles for work commuting will be reduced.

Marijuana: Medical and Recreational:

The "New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory, Enforcement Assistance, and Marketplace Modernization Act," primarily concerns the development, regulation, and enforcement of activities associated with the personal use, by persons 21 years of age or older, of legal cannabis or cannabis resin (the terms provided to distinguish the legalized products from unlawful marijuana or hashish). This would be accomplished through the expansion of the scope and duties of the Cannabis Regulatory Commission, created by P.L.2019, c.153 (C.24:6I-5.1 et al.) to oversee the State's medical cannabis program, which is primarily set forth in the "Jake Honig Compassionate Use Medical Cannabis Act," P.L.2009, c.307 (C.24:6I-1 et al.).

The new law establishes six "marketplace" classes of licensed businesses as follows: (1) Class 1 Cannabis Cultivator license; (2) Class 2 Cannabis Manufacturer license; (3) Class 3 Cannabis Wholesaler license; (4) Class 4 Cannabis Distributor license; (5) Class 5 Cannabis Retailer license; (6) Class 6 Cannabis Delivery license.

In July of 2021, Hopewell Township passed a resolution to not allow any of the six classes of licensed cannabis businesses. The Township may revisit some of the licenses in the future, and an agricultural aspect of the license may be a component of any future considerations.

The County of Cumberland has always recognized the importance of balancing and protecting the characteristics that define the rural municipalities surrounding its three more urban cities.

Farmland Preservation: Since its inception in 1992, the County has operated a very active and thus successful Farmland Preservation Program in partnership with the State Agriculture Development Committee. Hopewell is a leading municipality in acres preserved, currently at over 5,636 acres, which is almost 25% of the County total. Another 3,500 acres are outlined in the Shiloh / Hopewell target area in the 2010 County Farmland Preservation Plan as eligible for immediate participation. The County also supports municipalities participating in the SADC's Municipal Planning Incentive Grants program for farmland preservation, in which Hopewell Township participates.

Open Space: The County has adopted an Open Space Plan as an Element to its Master Plan, which will assess and prioritize non-farm open space projects within the County. Although the Plan gives focus to enhancing the current open space offerings in the County, it does stress future acquisition projects would result from partnerships between various entities, among them, State, County, Municipal, and Private. Throughout the development of this Plan, the County invited municipal input, to which Hopewell responded. The County encouraged townships to develop their own open space plans and directives to aid in future open space planning and implementation at the County level.

Economic Development: The County, recognizing the importance of economic development throughout all its municipalities, offers many outreach and contact support programs to both private and public entities. They also are invaluable in providing a contact source with various State governmental departments. The County has continued to recognize agriculture's role as an economic engine in this area with support and administration of various programs, such as Farmland Preservation and 4-H.

The Municipality's objectives have not been greatly altered as stated in the first Master Plan of 1960 and they continue on as the basis for which policies have been developed and adopted since.

Though its policies, the Township has continued to be mindful of the needs of its residents as well as the importance of maintaining its rural heritage. The progress the Township has made with the creation of the Business Park, Senior Center, and its many municipal shared service agreements, along with the support of the Farmland Preservation / Green Acres Programs, are evident of its policies supporting its objectives.

Hopewell has been a *dry* municipality for its entire history, but the 2010 vote approval by residents to allow the issuance of the Township's first liquor license created a need for the Governing Body and Township's Land Use

Boards to develop ordinances, under the parameters assigned by the State, which would regulate the retail consumption of alcoholic beverages on the licensed premises in a manner consistent with the characteristics and goals of a rural municipality such as Hopewell Township.

- - SECTION IV - -

Specific changes recommended for the Master Plan or Development Regulations.

The re-examination of 2012 suggested some changes in the development ordinances with regards to residential and commercial zoning. Implementation of the suggestions led to the elimination of higher density residential zones, but included some opportunity of this use into the newly defined commercial districts along Rt. 49, where the needed infrastructure to support these types of uses is present. This re-examination concludes these 2012 changes are still considered relevant and consistent with the goals and objectives of the Township.

A. A review of all existing elements and development ordinances shall be completed prior to the expiration of this 2022 re-examination. This review may result into an ordinance addition / change prior to the next re-examination, or as a discussion item for the re-examination.

B. Prior to the next re-examination, if any addition or change to a Development Ordinance which is deemed to require an amendment to the Township Master Plan, the amendment will be done so under the provisions specified under New Jersey MLUL.

C. This re-examination offers the following specific areas for review with possible incorporation, deletion, or changes to existing Township policy and documents.

Review Development Ordinances: The goal of preserving and maintaining our agricultural and natural lands remains a priority in our community. The uses in the Highway Commercial Business zone and the Agricultural Business zone should be looked upon as the areas for growth within the township. One tool to develop these areas is the designation of Areas of Redevelopment, see additional information in section 5. A subcommittee from the Land Use could be formed to review the current commercial and business zones and offer recommendations for those areas for possible Redevelopment. Past Master Plan recommendations have

discussed clustering, and exploring clustering in both the Residential and Agricultural districts should be discussed. Additionally, zones HC and HCB should be reviewed to allow or allow conditional use for certain residential uses, such as mixed use, multi-family dwellings and townhouses.

Environmental preservation, protection, and enhancement: As stated, the Township adopted an Open Space and Recreation Plan as an element of the Master Plan, outlining protection, preservation and enhancement of the non-farm rural land areas and natural resources of the Township, enhancing the appreciation and accessibility of such. Additionally, the economic and financial plan component should be updated and evaluated. SADC's PIG (Municipal Planning Incentive Grant) require the plans to be updated every 10 years with regard to farmland preservation.

Stormwater Management Plan Element: Since the adoption of the last re-examination report, the Township has adopted ordinance amendments that include minor increases to lot coverage within certain zones. At the time this report was being drafted, the Township was preparing NJDEP required amendments to the existing stormwater control ordinance. Consistent with new State requirements regarding stormwater control updates, the Township adopted an updated stormwater control ordinance in 2021. In 2023, Hopewell Township was included in the state Tier A requirements. Additional restrictions, inspections, upgrades and other requirements per the Tier A permit will be required in the next five years to maintain the stormwater discharge permit.

Hopewell Business Park: Given the successful operation of a multi-municipal Senior Center and banking office located in the Business Park, along with the success of a retail Amish Market, the Township Committee and Land Use Boards should analyze the development ordinances in the Park's district in light of the governing body's current / future vision for the park.

Specific Recommendation to the Land Development Ordinance:

1. Review the definition of Major and Minor Subdivisions. The planning board is often confronted with Major subdivisions for lots that have been divided more than two times. Discussion of expanding the definition of a Minor over the length of time after the first two lots were divided should be discussed.

2. Livestock -- a comprehensive review of livestock ordinance and zone permitted and non-permitted uses should be reviewed, especially in Residential Zones.

3. Front yard setback in the A zone. Discussion of reducing the 100' front yard setback should be discussed.

4. Clarify the definition of existing substandard lots and permitted use when related to the adoption of the Land Development Ordinance should be reviewed for clarity.

5. Exploring the use of clustering in both the Residential and Agricultural districts should be examined.

- - SECTION V - -

Outline recommendations of the Land Use Board concerning 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 recommend changes if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

No recommendations concerning redevelopment are anticipated at the time of this re-examination, but in light of the various planning initiatives the Township has developed in recent years, some areas of the Township may be discussed in the future as to their present and future role within the overall planning objectives of the Township.

Township Town Center

Past Master Plan Re-examination Reports support the planning of a Town Center surrounding the intersection of West Park and Route 49. It was stated that the sprawling, low-density commercial uses that have developed along the highway over the years are considered inefficient for infrastructure planning and circulation. Concentrating goods and services into a town center provides for a one-stop shopping experience, reducing vehicle trips and increasing opportunities for social engagement. With the current developed uses and private ownership in this intersection area, along with the State jurisdiction of Route 49, successful redevelopment will be dependent on a collaboration of government, private landowners and the Townships residents. In the interim, any proposed changes of existing uses or structures in this

area, whether through private ownership rehabilitation or new construction, the spirit of this town center concept should be incorporated to the extent allowed by State/County agencies and MLUL, in light of the objectives of the Township.

- - SECTION VI - -

2021 Recommendation of the Land Use Board concerning locations appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure, including but not limited to: commercial districts, areas proximate to public transportation corridors, and public rest stops; and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary or appropriate for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructures.

The Land Use Board has recommended that all zones be permitted to install electric vehicle (EV) charging stations as a permitted accessory use-structure. Additionally, in all zones where motor vehicle service stations are permitted, EV charging stations should be permitted as part of their fueling operations. The zoning ordinance should be updated as needed to accommodate or clarify EV charging as a permitted or accessory use. The ordinance could be updated to confirm that conversion of a traditional gas pump fueling station to an EV fueling station should not trigger a site plan review unless a change is made to site circulation or additional stations area added. The parking ordinance may also need updating to clarify that parking spaces equipped to charge EV should be counted toward the overall parking onsite when the space does not restrict other vehicles from parking within the space.

On July 9, 2021 the New Jersey Governor signed bills S3223 and A1653 into law. Future ordinance revisions should be consistent with the newly enacted laws:

- S3223 – Establishes numerical requirements and zoning standards for installation of electric vehicle supply equipment and Make-Ready parking spaces.
- A1653 – Encourages development of zero-emission vehicle fueling and charging infrastructure in redevelopment projects.