

**REVISED
DRAFT**

PRINCETON JUNCTION

**REDEVELOPMENT STUDY AREA
DETERMINATION OF NEED**

**Township of West Windsor
County of Mercer**



**Township of West Windsor
271 Clarksville Road
West Windsor, New Jersey 08550
(609) 799-2400**

The original of this report was signed and sealed in accordance with N.J.S.A. 45:14A-12

John Madden, P.P., AICP PP#1452

MC Project No. WWP-047

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to determine whether all or parts of West Windsor's Princeton Junction area, as shown on Map 1. Redevelopment Study Area, qualify as an Area in Need of Redevelopment as defined by the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (NJSA 40:12A-1 et seq., herein referred to as LRHL). This analysis has been conducted pursuant to the LRHL, which specifies the conditions that must be met within the delineated areas and the process to be undertaken by the Planning Board during the investigation.

This report is written pursuant to Section 6 of the LRHL (NJSA 40:12A-5) that requires the following:

- a) No area of a municipality shall be determined a redevelopment area unless the governing body of the municipality shall, by resolution, authorize the Planning Board to undertake a preliminary investigation to determine whether the proposed area is a redevelopment area according to the criteria set forth in Section 5 of the P.L. 1992(C.40A:12A-5)...The governing body of a municipality shall assign the conduct of the investigation and hearing to the Planning Board of a municipality.
- b) (5) After completing its hearing on this matter, the Planning Board shall recommend that the delineated area, or any part thereof, be determined, or not be determined, by the municipal governing body to be a redevelopment area. After receiving the recommendation of the Planning Board, the municipal governing body may adopt a resolution determining that the delineated area, or any part thereof, is a redevelopment area.

The Township Council, in a resolution dated April 12, 2004, requested that the Planning Board undertake a preliminary investigation as to whether the properties identified in the resolution are in need of redevelopment pursuant to the LRHL. (See Resolution in Appendix A.)

Section 6b(4) of the LRHL also requires the Planning Board to hold a hearing on this matter prior to recommending that the delineated area, or any part thereof, be determined or not determined a redevelopment area by the governing body. After obtaining the Planning Board's recommendation, the governing body may adopt a resolution determining that the delineated area, or any part thereof, is a redevelopment area (Section 6b(5) of the LRHL). This report serves as the statement setting forth the basis for the investigation of an area in need of redevelopment, as required under the LRHL.

Before presenting the study area investigation and parcel level analysis, it is important to note that the determination of need presented in this analysis is only the first step of the redevelopment process and does not provide guidance with respect to the planning, development or redevelopment of the project area. Section 40A:12A-7 of the LRHL describes the tool (the redevelopment plan), which specifies how the redevelopment should be planned, in addition to the process through which such a plan is prepared.



A redevelopment plan, which may supersede the zoning of an area or serve as an overlay thereto, specifies the following:

Relationship of the project area to local objectives as to appropriate land uses, density of population, improved traffic and public transportation, public utilities, recreational and community facilities and other public improvements.

Proposed land uses and building requirements in the project area.

Adequate provision for the temporary and permanent relocation, as necessary, of residents in the project area, including an estimate of the extent to which decent, safe and sanitary dwelling units affordable to displaced residents will be available to them in the existing housing market.

An identification of any property within the redevelopment area which is proposed to be acquired in accordance with the redevelopment plan. (Note: not every property in a redevelopment area must be acquired and, in fact, none may be acquired; the redevelopment plan can specify buildings or uses to remain in the redevelopment area and to be incorporated into the future design and development of the area).

Any significant relationship of the redevelopment plan to the master plan of contiguous municipalities, the master plan of the county, and the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

This report and investigation are aimed only at determining whether the Study Area meets the statutory criteria to be identified as an Area in Need of Redevelopment and therefore does not contain any of the specific planning guidance contained in a redevelopment plan.

Criteria for Redevelopment Area Determination

Section 5 of the LRHL outlines the following criteria that were considered in evaluating the Princeton Junction study area. An area may be determined to be In Need of Redevelopment if, after investigation, notice and hearing, the governing body of the municipality concludes by resolution that any one of the following relevant conditions is found:

- a) The generality of buildings are substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated, or obsolescent, or possess any of such characteristics, or are so lacking in light, air, or space, as to be conducive to unwholesome living or working conditions.
- b) The discontinuance of the use of buildings previously used for commercial, manufacturing, or industrial purposes; the abandonment of such buildings; or the same being allowed to fall into so great a state of disrepair as to be untenable.



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- c) Land that is owned by the municipality, the county, a local housing authority, redevelopment agency or entity, or unimproved vacant land that has remained so for a period of ten years prior to the adoption of the resolution, and that by reason of its location, remoteness, lack of means of access to developed sections or portions of the municipality, or topography, or nature of the soil, is not likely to be developed through the instrumentality of private capital.
 - d) Areas with buildings or improvements which, by reason of dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty arrangement or design, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities, excessive land coverage, deleterious land use or obsolete layout, or any combination of these or other factors, are detrimental to the safety, health, morals or welfare of the community.
 - e) A growing lack or total lack of proper utilization of areas caused by the condition of the title, diverse ownership of the real property therein or other conditions, resulting in a stagnant or not fully productive condition of the lands potentially serving useful and valuable for contributing to and serving the public health, safety and welfare.
 - f) Areas, in excess of five contiguous acres, whereon buildings or improvements have been destroyed, consumed by fire, demolished or altered by the action of storm, fire, cyclone, tornado, earthquake or other casualty in such a way that the aggregate assessed value of the area has been materially depreciated.
 - g) The designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.

In addition to the above criteria, Section 3 of the LRHL allows the inclusion of parcels necessary for the effective redevelopment of the area, by stating “a redevelopment area may include land, buildings, or improvements, which of themselves are not detrimental to the health, safety or welfare, but the inclusion of which is found necessary, with or without change in their condition, for the effective redevelopment of the area in which they are a part.”

DESCRIPTION OF PRINCETON JUNCTION STUDY AREA

Overview

The Princeton Junction Study Area is the 350 acre area in West Windsor centered around the Princeton Junction passenger railroad station. The Study Area, shown on Map 1, Princeton Junction Redevelopment Study Area, is bound by Little Bear Brook to the north, the Township Boundary to the east (also consists of the Millstone River), the rail line along part of the southern boundary, all lots in the P, ROM-4, and B-2 zones south of the rail line and, Alexander Road as the western boundary line.



There are sixty-five (65) individual properties within the study area consisting of the following:

Block 5, Lots 8.05, 14, 19, 20, 78

Block 6, Lots 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16.01, 16.02, 17, 18, 27, 32, 33, 41, 44, 48, 54, 55.01, 57, 60, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 76, 78.01, 79.01, 84.01, 84.02, 84.03, 88

Block 6.20, Lots 20, 21, 22, 49, 73, 74, 83

Block 12.04, Lots 2, 10, 17, 18, 25, 26, 27

Block 13, Lots 1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

Block 57, Lot 1

Block 59, Lot 1, 2, 3

Block 64, Lot 170.01

The Study Area has historically been used for a mixture of commuter parking lots, offices, retail stores and railroad tracks and appurtenances associated with the main Northeast Corridor Line and the “Dinky” rail service connection to downtown Princeton. The Northeast Corridor Line and the “Dinky” rail line are the two forms of mass transit currently located in the Study Area.

New Jersey Transit operates the Northeast Corridor Line as a commuter rail line traveling between Trenton and New York City. Princeton Junction has historically been a major passenger rail stop in Central Jersey, which was the original impetus of persons and businesses locating in Princeton Junction and later in West Windsor as a whole. With an average of 6,242 passengers daily, this station is currently the third busiest commuter rail stop on the Northeast Corridor¹.

Also serving regional mass transit needs is the “Dinky” rail service connection. This is a smaller rail service transporting passengers from downtown Princeton to West Windsor’s Princeton Junction Train Station.

Development and Improvements Occurring in the Study Area

West Windsor’s growth has been outward from the train station as it evolved from being a rural agrarian community to one of New Jersey’s premiere suburban communities. Its first commercial center was focused at Princeton Junction. The suburban community that grew around it still regards this area as its town center. Yet, West Windsor has not seen this area evolve into the kind of mature downtown with the strong sense of place commonly found in Northern New Jersey railroad suburbs. This is partially due to the fact that West Windsor’s overall suburban development is a fairly recent phenomenon and partially due to impediments to logical development at this vital point in Central Jersey.

The Study Area has been the focus of interest and decisions in recent years at the municipal, State and regional levels aimed at fostering the next stage of Princeton Junction’s development. The area generally surrounding the Princeton Junction Train Station is considered one of the fastest growing areas of the Township, in fact, the Princeton Junction area is entering into a new era as a center of growth as exemplified by the Estates at Princeton Junction residential development and proposals centering on emphasizing Princeton Junction as a village area.

¹ Phonenumber with Ken Hitchner of New Jersey Transit, November 2004.



The Estates at Princeton Junction, an 1,165 unit planned residential development, is currently under construction and partially occupied on 292 acres west of the Train Station, between Bear Brook Road and the rail line. This development will place an excess of 2,000 persons in close proximity to the train station. In addition to this residential development, there are nonresidential developments approved but unbuilt in the Study Area.

There are numerous changes to the circulation in the Princeton Junction Study Area in various stages of planning and implementation. Each proposal strives to decrease the dependence on the automobile by providing increased and safer opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle mobility.

Alexander Road Bridge Replacement. This proposal, currently in the implementation stage, will replace the existing aging two-lane bridge which has no pedestrian or bicycle access. This bridge is currently a significant traffic choking point as it is one of the few places to cross the railroad tracks. The bridge will be enlarged to include two vehicular travel lanes, sidewalks and a bike lane, and additional road improvements will take place south of the bridge.

Millstone Bypass. This proposal, as West Windsor conceives of it, would provide additional east-west circulation, bypassing the Penns Neck area of the Township with a new two lane roadway starting at the railroad bridge at the base of Washington Road, traveling to the north side of the Sarnoff site, crossing Route 1 just south of Harrison Street. An alternative alignment was proposed by the project's Environmental Assessment. Nevertheless, the Township required in the approval of the future Sarnoff Campus development that a future bypass road be built based on the Township's Circulation Plan.

Vaughn Drive Extension. Vaughn Drive is currently a local road serving as access to the Princeton Junction Train Station. The road begins as two lanes at its intersection with Alexander Road but becomes parking area access drives before connecting to Station Drive. The proposal would realign and extend Vaughn Drive as a Township owned through road and would provide another connection between Alexander Road and the future Washington Road.

Route 571 Road, Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements. Route 571 through Princeton Junction is a two lane road in need of improvements for circulation and aesthetic reasons. It serves as the gateway to Princeton Junction and is one of the principal roadways used to access the Train Station. In addition, due primarily to its proximity to the Train Station, the road is often used by pedestrians and bicyclists, despite that it has unsatisfactory conditions for these transportation modes. The Township is working closely with Mercer County to improve vehicular pedestrian and bicycle conditions on Route 571 through Princeton Junction and to influencing the final land use character on the east side of the Train Station.

Bus Rapid Transit. Through the Delaware Valley Regional Transportation Commission (DVRPC) Central New Jersey Transportation Forum (CNJTF), Bus Rapid Transit has been proposed to alleviate vehicular traffic in the Township and surrounding area. This proposal, which is supported by the Township is a form of mass transportation involving dedicated right-of-ways for bus use, with ability for conversion to light rail, if feasible. The Bus Rapid Transit line is proposed to serve the Route 1 employment centers in West Windsor, Princeton Junction Train Station, downtown Princeton, and the greater surrounding area consisting of Mercer County and portions of Middlesex County and Bucks County, Pennsylvania.



Existing Land Use in the Study Area

Despite being located at an important point in Central Jersey, only 61.5% of the properties (excluding streets) within the Study Area can be considered improved. Map 2, Aerial Photograph of the Princeton Junction Study Area and its surroundings, shows the built-up nature of this section of West Windsor except for the Study Area around the Train Station. Of the area's 65 parcels, only 40 parcels are improved properties while the remaining 25 parcels consist of vacant lots, parking areas or properties related to the operation of the railroad. As the aerial photograph of the Study Area shows only 114 acres or 33% of the study area are occupied by buildings. The total impervious area of surface parking amounts to 27.5 acres consisting of eleven lots on both sides of the railroad station occupied by 3635 parking spaces owned by New Jersey Transit, the West Windsor Parking Authority and private entities.

Map 3 showing lot ownership indicates that 109.15 acres are in municipal, public ownership or railroad ownership and 240.85 acres are in private ownership. The fact that approximately 31% of the Study Area is in public land or railroad (largely AMTRAK parking area) ownership points to the prospect redevelopment of a critical portion of this Study Area could proceed in its initial phases without costly or disruptive relocation.

The Study Area has demonstrated market potential for new development. The Study Area saw construction late in the 1990's of several new Class A corporate office buildings at the intersection of Alexander Road and Vaughn Drive. Mack/Cali has received approval to build Princeton Junction Metro Office Park II, a 97,024 square foot Class A office building on Block 57, Lot 79.01, located next to its companion building on Vaughn Drive. The Sarnoff Corporation, part of whose lands lie within the Study Area, received General Development Plan approval to build 1,860,000 square feet of corporate office and research facilities along with a 340,000 square foot hotel and 60,000 square feet of retail and child care facilities.

There has been no retail development built in Princeton Junction's commercial zones east of the railroad within recent years. However, Block 6.20, Lot 21, at the southwest corner of Wallace Road and Princeton Hightstown Road, was recently approved for a 3,650 square foot PNC bank and will include a gateway feature announcing one's arrival in the commercial area of Princeton Junction. In addition, across Princeton Hightstown Road, Block 12.04, Lots 10 and 14 has been subject to multiple applications for development. Each application proposed the removal of the existing auto repair structure and derelict vehicles and replacement with a pharmacy, refurbishing of the existing adjacent strip center and the addition of landscaping features and sidewalks. Another new bank and office building application is under study by the Planning Board for Block 12.04, Lot 2 at the corner of Sherbrook Drive and Princeton Hightstown Road.



Table 1 Princeton Junction Study Area Ownership

Ownership	Area (acres)	Block and Lot
Township Parking Authority	10.7	Block 6, Lots 16.02, 69 & 70
Township Other	12.78	Block 6, Lots 17, 18, 84.01, 32; Block 59, Lots 1 & 2; Block 5, Lot 22
Railroad	57.3	Block 5, Lot 14; Block 6, Lots 6, 14, 27, 66, 67, 68 and Block 59, Lot 3
New Jersey Transit	28.37	Block 6, Lots 18, 33, 44, 65, 88; Block 57, Lot 1
Private	240.85	

As shown on Map 4, Existing Land Uses, the dominant land uses in the Redevelopment Study Area are undeveloped land, public and railroad lands comprising 67.8 percent of the Study Area. Office is the predominant developed use with light industrial uses, second in terms of land area.

Table 2. Existing Land Use Character

Land Use Type	Total Acres	Number of Parcels	Percent of Total Acreage (Rounded)
Residential	4.14	6	1.18%
Retail	25.72	15	7.3%
Office	49.51	11	14%
Industrial	33.27	4	9.5%
Public / Railroad	109.15	22	31.2%
Vacant / Open Space	128.21	7	36.6%

Zoning Characteristics in the Study Area

Map 5, Existing Zoning, shows that the sixty five (65) lots in the Study Area are located in six nonresidential zones: B-2 Business District (neighborhood center), P Business District, R & D



Research and Development District, ROM-1 Research Office Limited Manufacturing District, ROM-2 Research Office Limited Manufacturing District, and ROM-4 Research Office Limited Manufacturing District.

B-2 Block 5, Lots 14, 19, 20
 Block 6.20, Lots 21, 22, 49, 73, 74, 83,
 Block 12.04, Lots 10, 17, 25

P Block 6, Lots 27, 67, 68, 69, 70
 Block 12.04, Lots 2, 18, 26, 27
 Block 59, Lots 1, 3

R & D Block 5, Lot 8.05

ROM-1 Block 5, Lot 78
 Block 6, Lots 8, 48, 54, 55.01, 76
 Block 13, Lots 1, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

ROM-2 Block 6, Lots 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16.01, 16.02, 17, 18, 32, 33, 41, 44, 57, 64, 65,
 66, 79.01, 84.01, 84.02, 84.03, 88
 Block 57, Lot 1

ROM-4 Block 6.20, Lot 20
 Block 64, Lot 170.01

B-2 Business District (neighborhood center)

Permitted uses:

- Stores and shops for the conduct of any retail business, excluding drive-in establishments.
- Personal service establishments (e.g., a tailor, barbershop or beauty salon.)
- Offices for professional services (e.g., physicians, lawyers or architects); commercial offices (e.g., realtors or travel agencies); and offices incidental to uses permitted in this subsection.
- Restaurants and neighborhood taverns, excluding drive-in and curbside service establishments.
- Repair and servicing, indoor only, of any article for sale which is permitted in this district.
- Attended laundry and retail dry-cleaning services, not including bulk processing on or from other premises.
- Copy centers and newspaper offices.
- Planned commercial development

Conditional uses:

- Living and/or sleeping accommodations for one household in conjunction with a permitted use
- Public utilities, substations, electric and gas facilities
- Fast-food operations



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- Motion-picture theaters and/or theaters for the performing arts
 - Motor vehicle service stations and motor vehicle commercial garages
 - Hotel/motel
 - A planned commercial development providing for a community-scale retail convenience center

Floor Area Ratio:

- Planned Commercial Development:
 - One story buildings: .20
 - Multistory buildings: .25
- All other permitted uses:
 - One story buildings: .18
 - Multistory buildings: .20

P Business District

Permitted uses:

- Offices for professional, financial and administrative activities, including sale of products customarily incidental to the uses permitted in this subsection, such as post office and utility offices.
- All farm and agricultural uses permitted in residence districts

Conditional uses:

- None

Floor Area Ratio:

- One story buildings: .18
- Multistory buildings: .23

R & D Research and Development District

Permitted uses:

- Mixed used planned developments as set forth in the ROM-1 District, provided that no less than 30% of the floor area be low traffic-generating uses
- Outdoor athletic facilities open to the general public at no charge.

Conditional uses:

- Transmission lines, transmitting and receiving antennae or aerials
- Public utilities (e.g., electric, gas, telephone, water, sewer, etc.) substation, electric and gas facilities
- Billboards

Floor Area Ratio:

- .21



ROM-1 Research Office Limited Manufacturing District

Permitted uses:

- Research, testing, analytical and product development laboratories and pilot plant facilities not involving the manufacturing, sale, processing, warehousing, distribution or fabrication of material, products or goods, except as incidental to the principal permitted uses.
- General, corporate, administrative and professional offices.
- Data processing and computer centers.
- Limited manufacturing associated with such specialty industry groupings as agriculture, aerospace, computers, telecommunications, instrumentation, biomedical, medical, pharmaceutical and electronics.
- All farm and agricultural uses permitted in residential districts
- Accessory uses and accessory buildings on the same lot and within the same zoning district with and customarily incidental to any of the permitted principal uses, which may include but shall not be limited to:
 - A restaurant or cafeteria primarily for supplying meals only to employees and guests of the principal use; and newsstand, post office, automated banking facilities and similar conveniences serving primarily employees and guests of the principal use, provided that there shall be no external evidence of such use, with the exception of directional signage.
 - In-service training schools for employees.
 - Custodial living quarters.
 - Indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, provided that all such accessory buildings and uses shall be planned as an integral part of the principal use development.
 - Overnight lodgings for visitors to any permitted principal uses, provided that such facilities are not open to the general public.
 - Assembly halls for meetings incidental to the business of the principal use.
 - Maintenance, utility and storage facilities incidental to the principal use.
 - Sale of products incidental or accessory to the principal use.
 - Warehouse facilities and wholesale storage
 - Branch banks, provided that they are located within the principal building housing the offices of a banking organization or financial institution.
 - Helistop
- Building structures and uses owned and operated by the Township of West Windsor.
- Mixed use planned development
 - All those permitted and accessory uses within the ROM-1 District
 - Research and business development incubator facilities, providing flexible designed spaces that can accommodate shared administrative, laboratory, computer and related research support services, including limited manufacturing facilities.
 - Conference center.
 - Hotel.
 - Business support uses primarily intended to service the mixed use park tenant needs, to include but not be limited to health clubs, child-care facilities, convenience retail, professional offices and service uses, branch banks (excluding drive-through facilities),



restaurants, package shipment collection points, business libraries, travel agencies, recreational facilities and similarly related activities.

- Affordable housing as an integral part of a mixed use planned development
- Veterinary clinics

Conditional uses:

- Transmission lines, transmitting and receiving antennae or aerials
- Public utilities (e.g., electric, gas, telephone, water, sewer, etc.) substation, electric and gas facilities
- Billboards

Floor Area Ratio:

- One story buildings: .22
- Multistory buildings: .30

ROM-2 Research Office Limited Manufacturing District

Permitted uses:

- Research, testing, analytical and product development laboratories not involving the manufacturing, sale, processing, warehousing, distribution or fabrication of material, products or goods, except as incidental to the principal permitted uses.
- General, corporate, administrative and professional offices.
- Computer centers.
- Limited manufacturing.
- Publishing houses and commercial printing plants.
- Research offices and limited manufacturing park developments
- All farm and agricultural uses permitted in residential districts
- Accessory uses and accessory buildings on the same lot and within the same zoning district with and customarily incidental to any of the permitted principal uses, which may include but shall not be limited to:
 - A restaurant or cafeteria primarily for supplying meals only to employees and guests of the principal use.
 - In-service training schools for employees.
 - Custodial living quarters.
 - Indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, provided that all such accessory buildings and uses shall be planned as an integral part of the principal use development.
 - Assembly halls for meetings incidental to the business of the principal use.
- Building structures and uses owned or operated by the Township of West Windsor for municipal purposes.
- Conversion of existing residential structures to office uses
- Veterinary clinics in existence as of January 1, 2000

Conditional uses:

- Transmission lines, transmitting and receiving antennae or aerials



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- Public utilities (e.g., electric, gas, telephone, water, sewer, etc.) substation, electric and gas facilities
 - Hotel/motel
 - Warehouse and wholesale storage facilities
 - Nursing homes

Floor Area Ratio:

- Conversion of existing residences to office uses: .08
- Primarily Research/Office Uses:
 - One-story buildings: .22
 - Multistory buildings: .30
- Primarily Manufacturing/Warehousing Uses and Nursing Homes:
 - One-story buildings: .30
 - Multistory buildings: 40

ROM-4 Research Office Limited Manufacturing District

Permitted uses:

- Research, testing, analytical and product development laboratories not involving the manufacturing, sale, processing, warehousing, distribution or fabrication of material, products or goods, except as incidental to the principal permitted uses.
- General, corporate, administrative and professional offices.
- Computer centers.
- All farm and agricultural uses permitted in residential districts
- Accessory uses and accessory buildings on the same lot and within the same zoning district with and customarily incidental to any of the permitted principal uses, which may include but may not be limited to:
 - A restaurant or cafeteria primarily for supplying meals only to employees and guests of the principal use.
 - In-service training schools for employees.
 - Custodial living quarters.
 - Indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, provided that all such accessory buildings and uses shall be planned as an integral part of the principal use development.
 - Assembly halls for meetings incidental to the business of the principal use.
 - Maintenance, utility and storage facilities incidental to the principal use, provided that they are in fully enclosed buildings.
- Building structures and uses owned or operated by the Township of West Windsor.
- Limited manufacturing.

Conditional uses:

- Transmission lines, transmitting and receiving antennae or aerials
- Public utilities (e.g., electric, gas, telephone, water, sewer, etc.) substation, electric and gas facilities



Floor Area Ratio:

- One story buildings: .22
- Multistory buildings: .30'

Development Potential in the Study Area

Another measure of the wide discrepancy between the economic potential of the Study Area and the actual use of land area can be understood by an assessment of its development potential under current zoning. If the maximum floor area ratios permitted in each zone were applied to the current land area occupied by the parking areas in the Study Area, it would have the potential to generate 93,375 square feet of office floor area and 722,057 square feet of research or light industrial floor area.

Environmental Characteristics

There is a limited amount of environmental constraints located in the Study Area as illustrated by Map 6 titled Environmental Constraints. Wetlands and flood plains are located along the northern and western boundary and shown in the Master Plan as proposed Greenbelt. Isolated wetland areas have interfered with the expansion of parking areas adjacent to the railroad.

The area surrounding the Train Station contains a disproportionate amount of environmental contamination compared to the rest of the Township. The Study Area contains three contaminated sites as identified by the Township Health Division and various other suspected or potential contaminated sites. IN 1996, New Jersey Transit acquired the two acre parcel consisting of Block 6, Lots 18 and 33, which is adjacent to the 7.4 acre parcel owned by the Township and currently leased as a compost station (Block 6, Lots 17 and 32). When substantial contamination was found on the site, litigation was instituted by New Jersey Transit against the former owners (Princeton Research Lands) who then joined West Windsor Township as a defendant, claiming that contamination was due to the use of the property as a municipal landfill. Ultimately, a Consent Order was entered in July 2001 whereby West Windsor acquired title to Block 6, Lots 18 and 33 but was obligated to undertake environmental remediation of the site. As a result, a large area west of the train station between Alexander Road and the southbound station platform has been determined to be contaminated and in need of remediation. See Appendix B for a brief description of the environmental contamination issues in the Study Area.

RELEVANT PLANNING STUDIES

2001 Master Plan

The 2001 Master Plan recognizes Princeton Junction as a unique area in the Township and discusses issues and makes recommendations particular to the area. However, the area indicated as Princeton Junction in the Master Plan has a different boundary than that the Study Area. The area shown in the Master Plan includes much of the residential neighborhoods south of the Study Area and excludes much of the land in the northeast corner of the Study Area (north of the



railroad and east of Route 571); in addition, the Master Plan shows considerably more land west of Alexander Road, such as the Estates at Princeton Junction.

The Master Plan includes the following planning goals and objectives for the Princeton Junction Area:

- Develop a center in Princeton Junction to enhance the community identity and pride and to serve as a commercial, civic and cultural focal point that can integrate the diverse needs of various residential neighborhoods, local commuters and employees.
- Protect and enhance the quality of life of the existing residential neighborhoods in the Princeton Junction study area.
- Develop multimodal transportation solutions to deal with peak hour traffic congestion.
- Improve the circulation connections of all modes of travel within the center and from the center area to key community points like Community Park.

The Master Plan proposes zoning changes in the Study Area as part of the overall Township Land Use Plan. The area bound by Princeton Hightstown Road and Washington Road is proposed to be rezoned to B-2 Neighborhood Center Business and POR-1 Professional Office/Residential. Also proposed as POR-1 is a portion of the area bound by Bear Brook Road, Old Bear Brook Road and Alexander Road; in addition, this proposed POR-1 designation extends south of Old Bear Brook Road to include three additional properties. Lastly, the area south of Old Bear Brook Road and east of the Estates at Princeton Junction is proposed to be rezoned RO-2 Research Office.

The Circulation Element of the Master Plan indicates many proposed transportation improvements to the area:

- Program B (2002-2007)
 - Intersection improvement at Vaughn Drive and Alexander Road
 - Extension of Vaughn Drive to Princeton Hightstown Road
 - Intersection improvement at Wallace Road/Post Road and Alexander Road
- Program C (2008-2012)
 - Improvement of Alexander Road south of Vaughn Drive, including the Alexander Road Bridge
 - Intersection Improvement at Alexander Road and Wallace Road (northeast of Alexander Road Bridge)
 - Construction of the Millstone Bypass
 - Intersection Improvement at Cranbury Road and Princeton Hightstown Road
 - Intersection Improvement at Alexander Road and Princeton Hightstown Road
 - Improvement of northern section of Princeton Hightstown Road to Windsor Drive



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- Program D (2013-2017)
 - None
 - Program E (2018 and Beyond)
 - Improvement of Cranbury Road

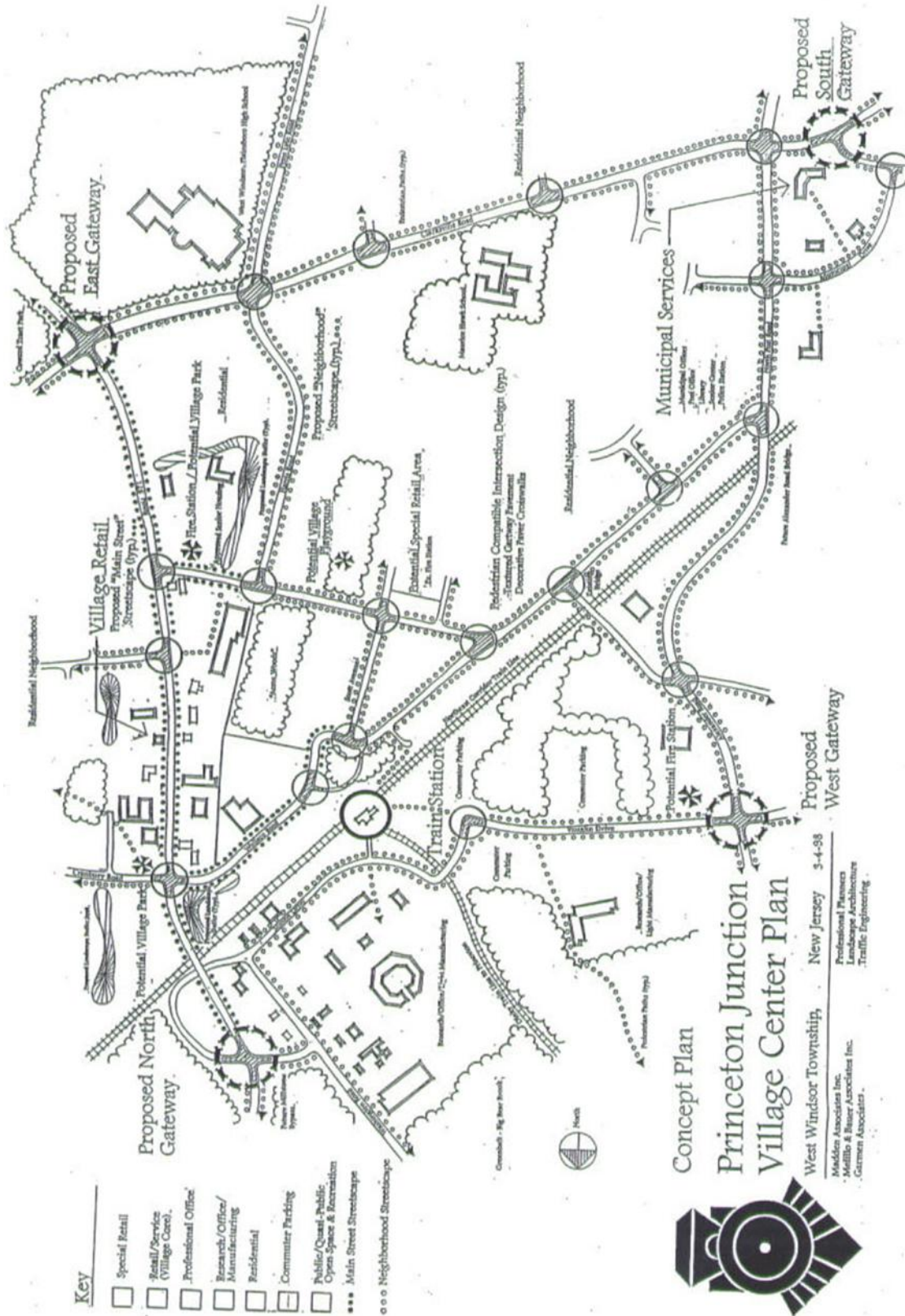
1998 Princeton Junction Village Center Plan

The 1998 Princeton Junction Village Center Plan was developed in concert with a Petition to the New Jersey Office of State Planning (now known as the New Jersey Office of Smart Growth) for Center Designation of the Princeton Junction area. The Village Center Plan includes a series of recommendations, in which the principal policy is to “preserve the moderate scale development character of the existing center while providing opportunities for public and private actions that enhance and improve the area.²” The Village Center Plan includes a concept plan and eight Master Plan Goals³:

- Integrate the existing retail business center, municipal services center, train station, and commuter parking lots, office uses, vehicular routes and residential neighborhoods into a community scaled Village Center emphasizing safe and convenient pedestrian oriented circulation, and complimentary street furnishing, landscape and architectural design guidelines.
- Encourage a mix of complimentary commercial, residential, open space and public service uses within reasonable walking distance of one another to conveniently serve the residents and employees of the area and encourage travel by bicycle and foot, as well as car.
- Create “gateways” to define the Village Center and create a sense of place in combination with the circulation, street furnishing, and landscape improvements.
- Promote the redevelopment over time of new, moderately scaled commercial and office structures with a consistent architectural and site design theme.
- Ensure the preservation of important natural resources, such as the Acme Woods, the pond at Wallace Circle, and the greenbelt.
- Preserve established residential neighborhoods within and surrounding the Village Center, allowing for compatible infill residential development, as appropriate.
- Provide for road and bridge improvements to support rather than discourage pedestrian movement.
- Create a village-scaled center plan consistent with center designation criteria of the Office of State Planning.

² 1998 Princeton Junction Village Center Plan, page 2.

³ 1998 Princeton Junction Village Center Plan, page 14.





Princeton Junction Station Area Vision Plan

New Jersey Transit has recently completed a Vision Plan of the Princeton Junction Train Station area. This Vision Plan illustrates the enormous latent development and place-making potential at this focal location in Central Jersey. It shows how the combination of circulation improvements for vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and mass transit together with a more logical development scheme using structured parking, rather than the acres of surface parking that dominates this area, can transform this underperforming area into a place of arrival to West Windsor and a vibrant mixed use core with residential neighborhoods for young professionals, active seniors, and empty nestors.

Specifically, the plan calls for construction of the Bus Rapid Transit line with a staging area adjacent to the Princeton Junction train station, extension of Vaughn Drive, development of a Town Square and a moderately scaled downtown with a “main street” theme of retail, hotel, residential units, parkland, pedestrian and bicycle connections through the station area, and structured parking that would increase the total amount of parking spaces.

Relationship to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The 2004 Preliminary State Development and Redevelopment Plan (Preliminary Plan) Policy Maps designate the Study Area as the Suburban Planning Area (PA 2), which is one of the “Smart Growth Planning Areas” designed to accommodate future growth. In addition, the 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan), which in this respect continues to be applicable despite the existence of the Preliminary Plan, identifies Princeton Junction as a Proposed Village. This designation is a result of the previous petition for Center designation that was concurrent with the 1998 Princeton Junction Village Center Plan. Princeton Junction never received center designation due to the fact that the Office of State Planning and the Township were unable to come to an agreement on implementation of the plan.

AREA EVALUATION FOR CONFORMITY WITH REQUIRED REDEVELOPMENT CRITERIA

Study Approach

An analysis of the Study Area’s existing land uses, site layout and physical characteristics was conducted using tax records, physical inspection of the area, review of aerial photographs, Master Plan studies and maps and other municipal records.

Study Conclusions and Recommendation

It is recommended the West Windsor Planning Board and Township Council determine that the entire Princeton Junction Study Area is an area in need of redevelopment based on the following findings:



-
- Criteria H. can be applied to the entire Redevelopment Area as a whole. It states, “The designation of the delineated area is consistent with smart growth planning principles adopted pursuant to law or regulation.” The New Jersey Office of Smart Growth website lists the following as smart growth principles:
- mixed land uses
 - compact, clustered community design
 - range of housing choice and opportunity
 - walkable neighborhoods
 - distinctive, attractive communities offering a sense of place
 - open space, farmland, and scenic resource preservation
 - future development strengthened and directed to existing communities using existing infrastructure
 - transportation option variety

The Study Area, as currently developed, provides for none of the applicable principles, with the exception of transportation option variety. All of the properties in the proposed redevelopment area potentially meet the smart growth principal embodied in Criteria H in that they are all within the influence area of the Princeton Junction train station and therefore are appropriately situated for redevelopment as a future Transit Village, which is one of the primary smart growth implementation techniques emphasized and supported by the State Planning Commission and other State agencies such as the New Jersey Department of Transportation and New Jersey Transit. Criteria H is, however, a new and untested addition to the criteria in the LRHL. More reliance is therefore placed in this study on the other criteria in finding support for an area in need of redevelopment designation since approximately half of the properties in the study area meet one or more of the statutory criteria other than Criteria H.

- As specified below, slightly over half (51%) or 178.97 acres in the Study Area meet one or more of the statutory criteria, other than Criteria H, needed to make an area in need of redevelopment determination.

Only 11 of the 65 properties in the Study Area exhibit none of the statutory criteria except for Criteria H. On the east side of the railroad, four parcels amounting to 20.38 acres possess none of the conditions necessary to support the other statutory criteria for redevelopment. They include:

- The main line of the railroad (B5, L14)
- The former Lucar Hardware Site (B6.20, L21) now in construction for a PNC Branch Bank
- Sovereign Bank (B6.20, L83)
- Weichert Realtors (B12.04, L26)



Block 6, Lot 68, the access area to the train station on Wallace Road, technically meets Criteria “C” and “E” but because of its environmentally sensitive condition redevelopment changes to this parcel are unlikely.

On the west side of the railroad, seven parcels amounting to 161.57 acres do not possess conditions meeting redevelopment statutory criteria other than Criteria H.

- Sarnoff (Block 5, Lot 8.05)
- The railroad main line (B6, L17)
- Greenbelt parcel (B6, L84.01)
- Four existing or approved office development parcels (B6, L78.01, 79.01, 84.03, 16.01)

There may be some consideration given to excluding from the designated area the 35.8 acre area consisting mainly of new Class A office buildings around the intersection of Vaughn Drive and Alexander Road. However, since Vaughn Drive will play such a critical part of the structure of the Study Area’s future redevelopment, it is recommended this area remain in the proposed redevelopment area so that West Windsor can retain all improvement options it may need in this critical corridor.

- 16.88 acres consisting of three properties exhibit the statutory condition under the “B” criteria due to a discontinued use on the property. These three properties also meet other statutory criteria.
- 61.24 acres or 17.5 percent of the Study Area exhibits conditions meeting Criteria “C”. The majority of land meeting Criteria “C” does so because of an unimproved condition being without a building for a period of ten years or more. All parking areas exhibit this condition. 14.65 acres meet Criteria “C” because of known or suspected contamination.
- 97.92 acres or 28 percent of the Study Area exhibit the statutory conditions under Criteria “D”. The vast majority (77%) of the properties were found to possess deteriorating building conditions, outdated or obsolete building design, poor site maintenance or poorly designed vehicular circulation or parking arrangements. Six properties totaling 6.94 acres meet Criteria “D” because the building is in excess of 50 years of age and therefore likely to possess conditions of obsolescence, obsolete layout, outdated facilities or faulty arrangement or design.

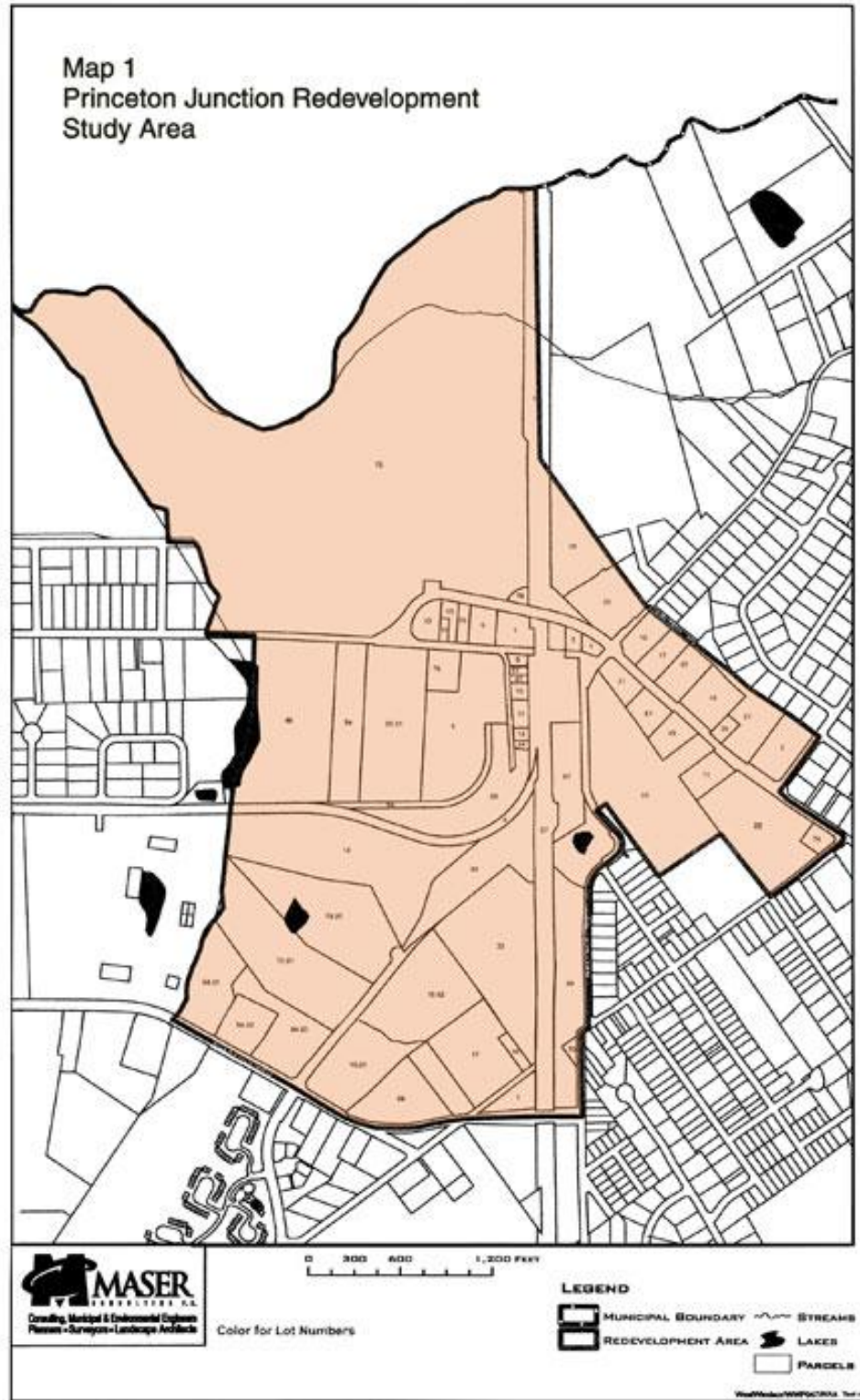
Five properties totaling 15.14 acres were considered meeting Criteria “D” conditions because they are nonconforming uses.

- 257.42 acres or (73.5%) of the Study Area exhibits conditions meeting the “E” criteria for an area in need of redevelopment designation. The majority of these properties comprising 241.7 acres exhibit a growing lack or total lack of utilization either because they are parking areas, public land or are not in a fully productive condition considering the economic potential of this prime Central Jersey location.



The Study Area seems especially underutilized considering the commonly-held Smart Growth planning policy that asserts mixed use and increased residential density are most appropriate within walking distance of public transit, especially of the quality of existing and proposed service in Princeton Junction. 41.36 acres meet the “E” Criteria because they will be affected by either the extension of Vaughn Drive or the improvement of Princeton Hightstown Road. All or a portion of these properties are essential to implementing these vital circulation plan improvements. The impact of right-of-way acquisitions will, in some cases, necessitate a total taking of these properties or will substantially affect existing on-site circulation and parking arrangements.

Appendix C provides an evaluation of the redevelopment statutory criteria for each property in the Study Area.



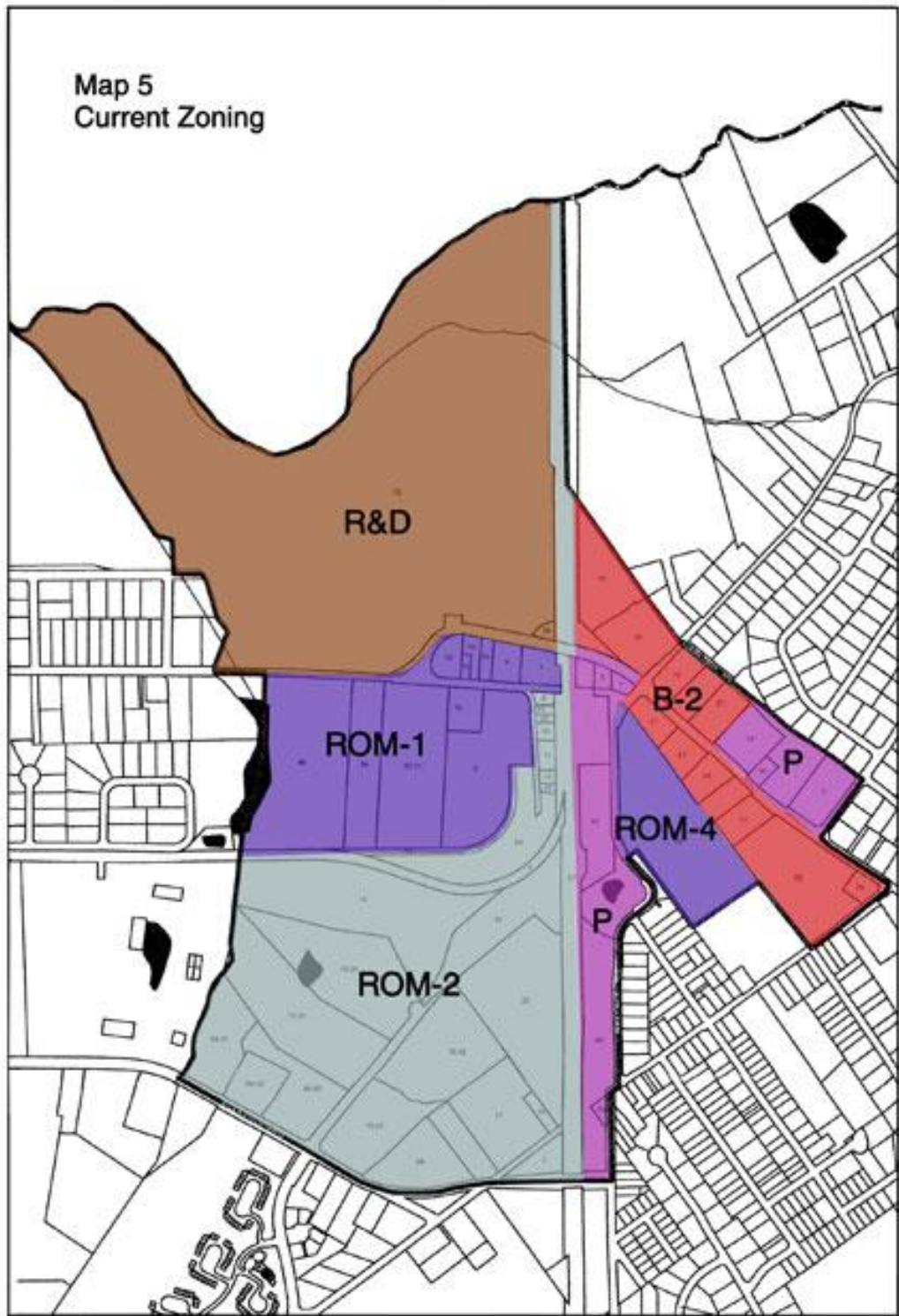


Map 2
Aerial Photograph of the Princeton Junction Study Area
and its surroundings





Map 5
Current Zoning



Color for Lot Numbers



LEGEND

- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
- REDEVELOPMENT AREA
- STREAMS
- LAKES
- PARCELS



Map 6 Environmental Constraints



Color for Lot Numbers

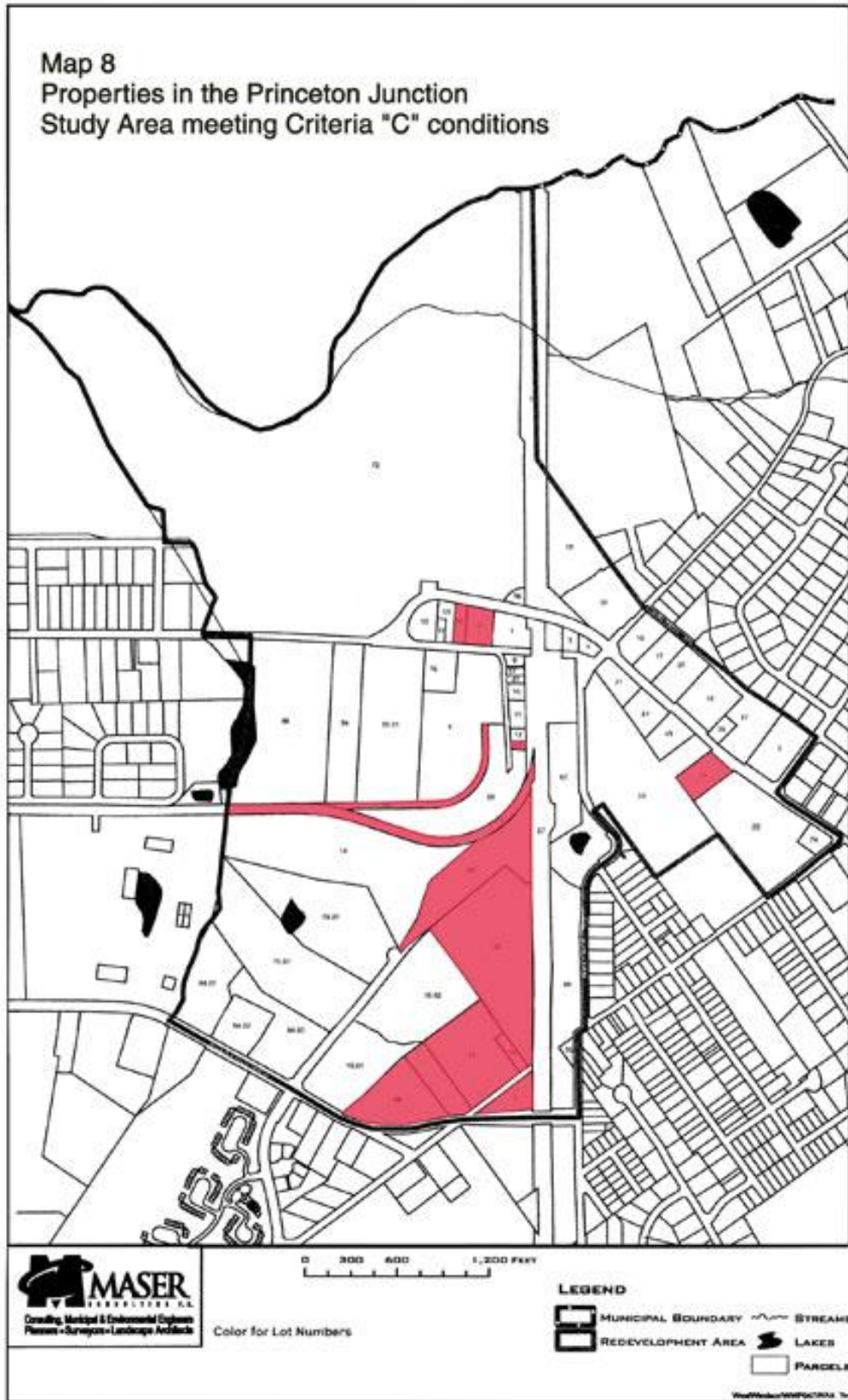
0 300 600 1,200 Feet

LEGEND

- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
- REDEVELOPMENT AREA
- STREAMS
- LAKES
- PARCELS

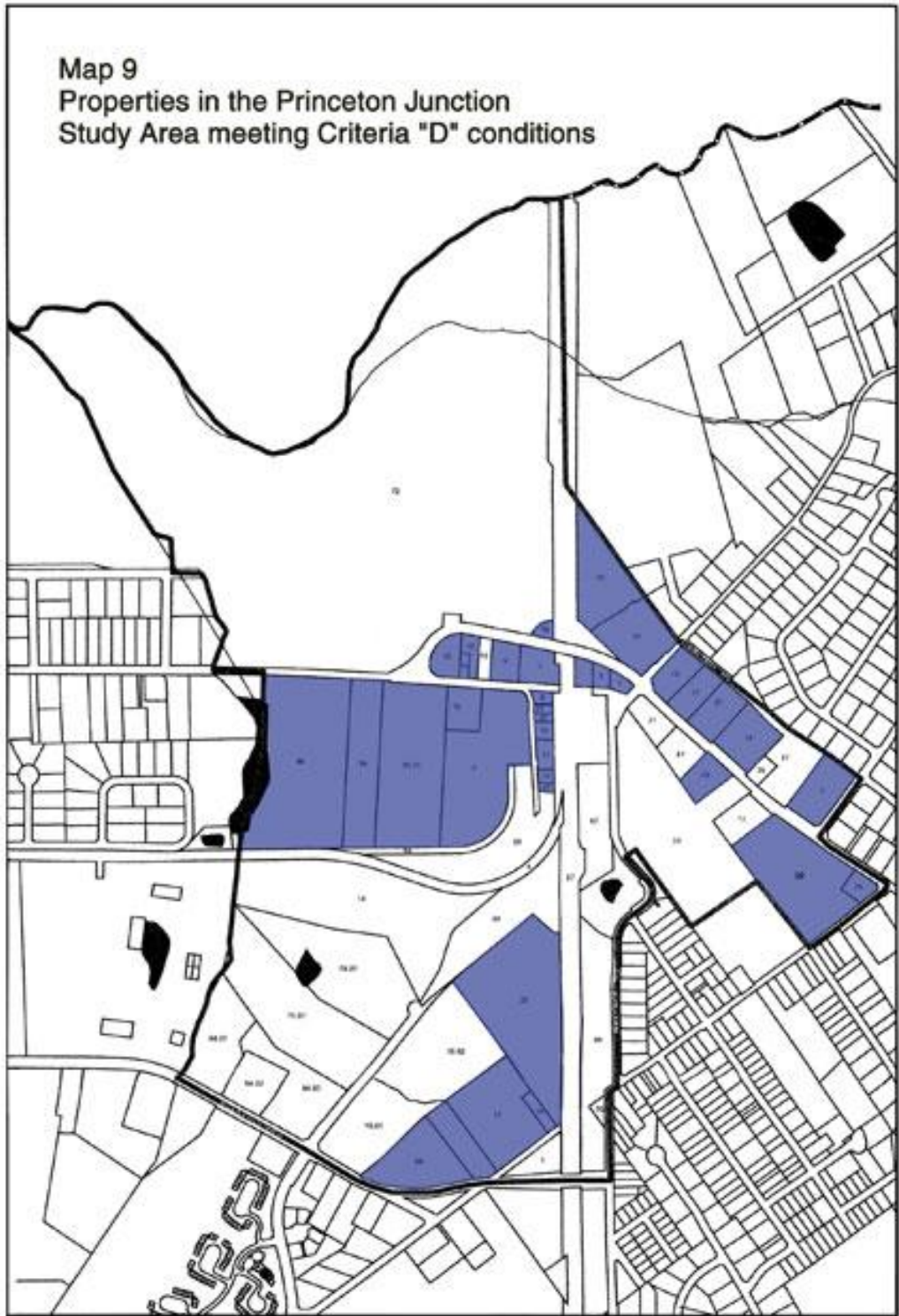


Map 8
Properties in the Princeton Junction
Study Area meeting Criteria "C" conditions





Map 9
Properties in the Princeton Junction
Study Area meeting Criteria "D" conditions



Color for Lot Numbers

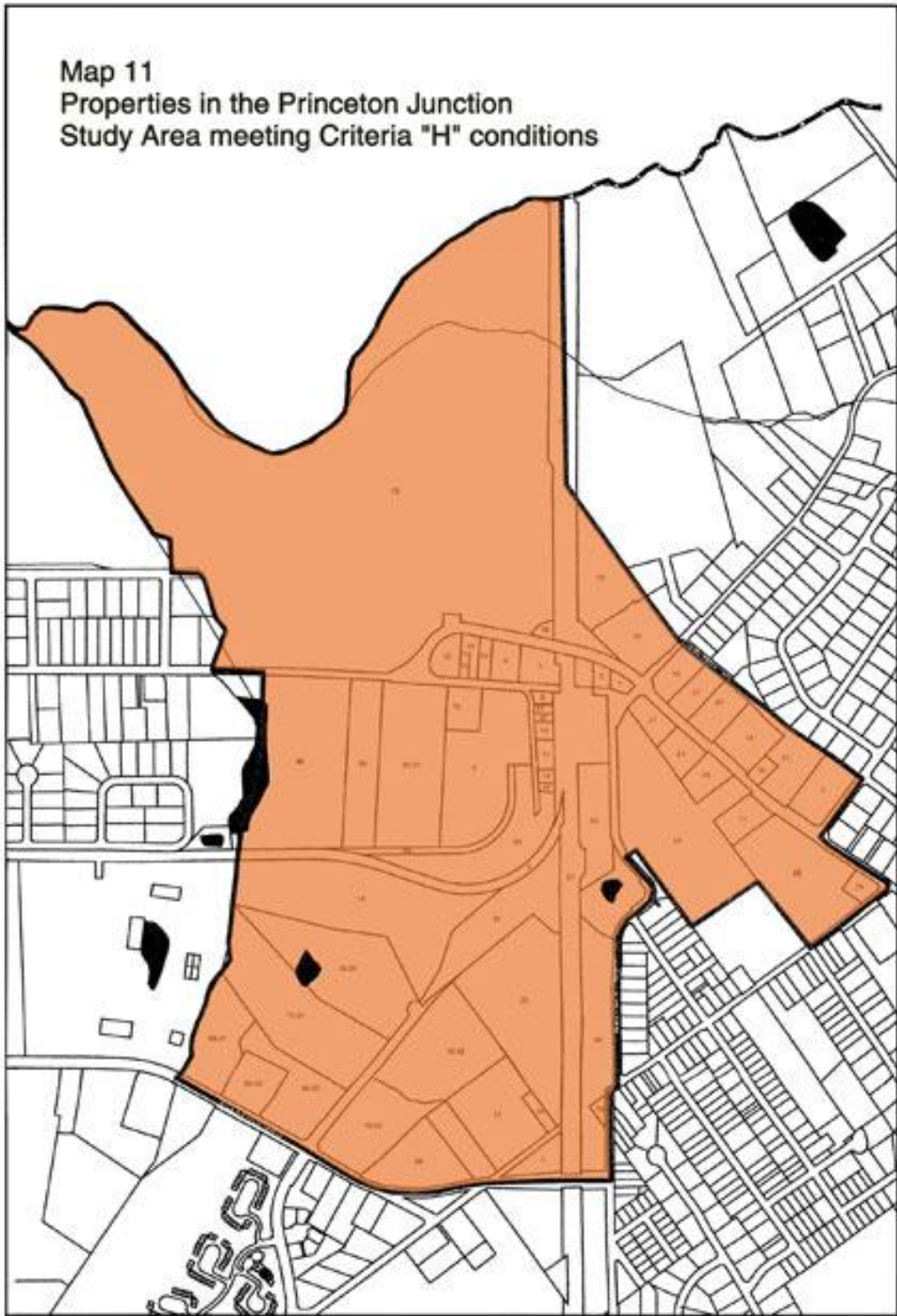


LEGEND

- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
- REDEVELOPMENT AREA
- STREAMS
- LAKES
- PARCELS



Map 11
Properties in the Princeton Junction
Study Area meeting Criteria "H" conditions



Color for Lot Numbers



LEGEND

- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
- REDEVELOPMENT AREA
- STREAMS
- LAKES
- PARCELS

