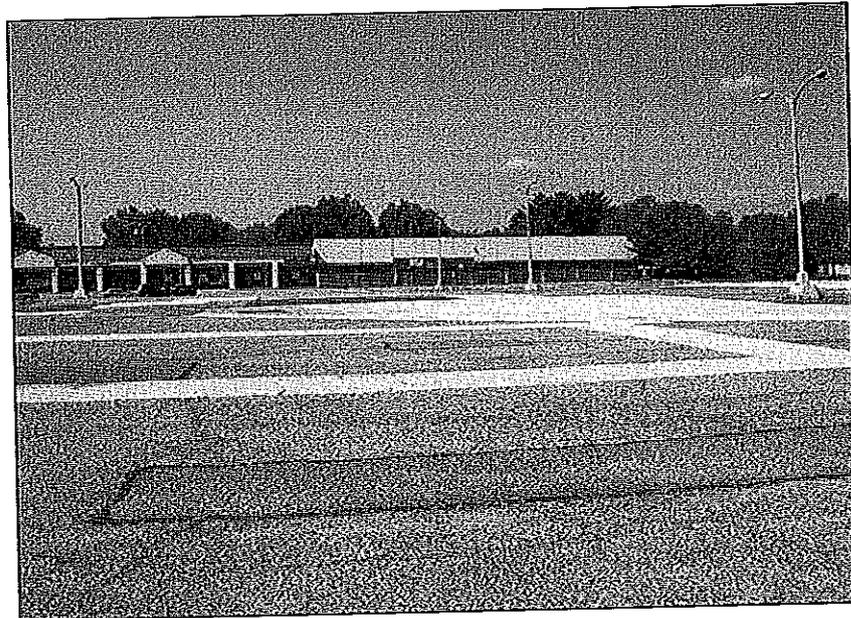


**Stratford Borough  
Camden County, New Jersey**

**LAUREL MILLS  
REDEVELOPMENT/REHABILITATION PLAN**



**March 28, 2011**

**Adopted by the Stratford Borough Council  
in accordance with Ordinance 2011:05 on August 9, 2011**

**Amended by Ordinance 2014:02 on February 11, 2014**

**BA** **BACH Associates, PC**  
ENGINEERS • ARCHITECTS • PLANNERS  
304 White Horse Pike, Haddon Heights, NJ 08035  
(856)546-8611 \* Fax (856)546-861

## **Stratford Borough 2011 Land Use Board**

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Anthony Costa, Esq., Solicitor  
Steven M. Bach, RA, PE, CME, PP, Engineer  
Leah Furey Bruder, PP, AICP, Planner

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**MAP 1 Aerial Photo showing Laurel Mills Rehabilitation Area**



## I. Introduction

The properties known as the Laurel Mills Plaza, Block 116 Lots 14 and 14.04, and the Bradlees Shopping Center, Block 62 Lot 2, were designated by Stratford Borough Council as an Area in Need of Rehabilitation in accordance with Resolution 2011-32 on March 3, 2011, after review and referral by the Land Use Board on February 24, 2011. The Resolution, together with the Stratford Borough Revitalization Planning Report (February 2011), provides an overview of the rehabilitation planning process, a description of the study area, provides details about the conditions within the study areas, reviews the relationship of the study areas to the Borough's Master Plan and the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan, and explains the conditions that warranted the rehabilitation area designation.

In order to allow for a more focused and efficient planning process for each of the two sites, since they are in distinct locations and under separate ownership, the Borough has decided to prepare a separate Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan for each of the sites. Both of the properties that have been designated as Rehabilitation Areas are of particular importance to the community, as they represent significant pieces of real estate relative to the Borough overall and their decline has had detrimental impacts on the community overall.

Stratford Borough aspires to facilitate opportunities for revitalization and redevelopment that will encourage the location of locally appropriate land uses, as well as meaningful and sustainable economic development; including the retention of existing retail and service uses in the community, attracting new businesses, and promoting energy efficiency and good design. In particular Stratford aims to stimulate revitalization and redevelopment of underutilized commercial properties, and to encourage re-use and redevelopment that will benefit the community by bringing goods, services, and amenities to serve existing and future residents, and to capture additional market share, thereby improving quality of life, increasing property values, and stabilizing the tax base. Attaining this balance is a challenge in the best of times and is made more difficult by the recent economic recession. Despite the many difficulties brought by the current economic conditions, the upside for municipalities is that the slow-down in development activity presents an opportunity to assess the current conditions and plan proactively for the future.

Stratford recognizes that the continued vitality of developed "first generation suburbs" requires adaptation to changing conditions and the creation of new opportunities for development on previously developed land.<sup>1</sup> With its revitalization planning efforts, the Borough aims to lay the foundations that will allow for a new balance to emerge that meets market demand, raises the standard for design, and re-shapes the built environment to meet the needs and desires of people and business. The Borough is taking a proactive position to encourage redevelopment and to do what is within the Borough's power to ensure that it is as easy for desired types of development to occur in smart growth areas in Stratford, a first generation suburb, as it is to develop on green fields at the suburban fringe.

The detrimental effects of persistent vacancy and underutilized buildings and parking areas have been well documented. The oversupply of auto-oriented retail and the lack of investment in the Borough's "greyfields" and the lack of responsiveness by the property owners to changes in the retail market demonstrate that the status quo has not been

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<sup>1</sup>. "First generation suburbs" or "inner ring suburbs" were the earliest group of municipalities to develop outside the urban core (in this case Camden and Philadelphia) in the post World War decades, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s. The first generation suburban context is explained more thoroughly in the Stratford Borough Revitalization Planning Report, February 2011.

effective in combating the persistent problems and vacancies. The continuing pattern of vacancy and decline has a draining effect on the overall synergy of the Borough's business district and depresses investment interest. Deliberate actions must be taken to affect positive change and provide new opportunities.

The Rehabilitation Area exhibits signs of neglect that detract from the aesthetics, dynamics, and quality of life of the community overall. At the same time, the Rehabilitation Areas present opportunities to reinvent and revitalize the properties with new site designs and new uses.

## II. Rehabilitation Planning

While the Borough had previously designated the subject sites (Block 116 lot 14 and Block 62 Lot 2) as Areas in Need of Redevelopment, the Rehabilitation Area designation is intended to supersede the previous designations and provide a fresh start for planning for the future and broadening the opportunities for re-creating the identities of the two sites.

The "Rehabilitation Area" designation is an alternative to "Redevelopment Area" designation that avails the Borough of many of the same planning tools available within a redevelopment area, but is less threatening to the owners of the designated property because the rehabilitation area designation does not permit the Borough to use the eminent domain power. Designating an Area in Need of Rehabilitation is also a simpler process than designating an Area in Need of Redevelopment.

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-3, "Rehabilitation" is defined as: "an undertaking by means of extensive repair, reconstruction or renovation of existing structures, with or without the introduction of new construction or the enlargement of existing structure, in any area that has been determined to be in need of rehabilitation or redevelopment, to eliminate substandard structural or housing conditions and arrest the deterioration of that area". An "Area in Need of Rehabilitation" is designated by resolution. The "Area in Need of Rehabilitation" designation is intended to prevent further deterioration and promote the overall development of the community in an area that meets the following criteria (N.J.S.A 40A:12A-14):

- A significant portion of the structures therein are in a deteriorated or substandard condition and there is a continuing pattern of vacancy, abandonment or underutilization of properties in the area, with a persistent arrearage of property tax payments thereon; or
- More than half of the housing stock in the delineated area is at least 50 years old, or a majority of the water and sewer infrastructure in the delineated area is at least 50 years old and is in need of repair or substantial maintenance.
- AND a program of rehabilitation may be expected to prevent further deterioration and promote the overall development of the community.

A rehabilitation area designation affords the municipality the opportunity to undertake a planning effort similar to that which is undertaken for a redevelopment area, except that the municipality may not use the eminent domain power to acquire property and may not utilize

long term tax exemption. However, short term tax exemption may still be used to assist in making a redevelopment/rehabilitation project feasible.

The Laurel Mills site and the Bradlees site have now each been designated as a "Rehabilitation Area" in accordance with Resolution 2011-32, and the basis for the designation is set forth in the resolution and in the Stratford Borough Revitalization Planning Report (February 2011). The Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-15) provides that the municipality may proceed with the replanning, conservation, development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of an Area in Need of Rehabilitation in accordance with the provisions of a redevelopment plan adopted pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-7, and may perform any of the actions set forth in N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-8 except that the municipality shall not have the power to take or acquire private property by condemnation in furtherance of a redevelopment plan for a rehabilitation area. **This document constitutes the Redevelopment Plan for the Laurel Mills Rehabilitation Area.**

The process for Rehabilitation Area designation and Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan preparation is as follows:

1. Governing Body makes a determination by resolution that the rehabilitation conditions set forth in Local Redevelopment and Housing Law are met (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-14).  
*Discussed at joint meeting of Land Use Board and Council on February 23, 2011 and Resolution 2011:32 adopted by Borough Council on March 3, 2011.*
2. Prior to the adoption of the resolution, the Governing Body submits the resolution to the Planning Board (Joint Land Use Board) for review. Within 45 days, the planning board shall submit its recommendations regarding the resolution and any proposed modifications. *Joint Land Use Board reviewed and recommended the resolution to Council on February 24, 2011.*
3. The Governing Body may then adopt the resolution determining rehabilitation need. *Resolution adopted on March 3, 2011.*
4. The resolution must be sent to the Commissioner of the DCA for review and approval. Since Stratford is a smart growth area it will be effective upon transmittal. *Resolution 2011-32 was sent to DCA Commissioner by the Borough Clerk on March 9, 2011. Response letter from the Commissioner's office was received on March 18, 2011.*
5. The Borough may then proceed with the preparation and adoption of a redevelopment plan for the rehabilitation area (same as for a redevelopment area), with the exception that municipality does not have the power to take or acquire private property by condemnation. *Joint meeting of Land Use Board and Borough Council was held on March 8, 2011 to discuss ideas and future land uses. Joint meeting of Land Use Board and Borough Council was held on March 22, 2011 to review and discuss draft Rehabilitation Plan.*

### **Clarification of Terminology**

The terms "redevelopment" and "revitalization" as used in this Plan refer to reinvestment in and reconfiguration of previously developed properties, and could include adaptive reuse of existing buildings, renovation and reconfiguration of existing buildings and site improvements, rehabilitation, or new construction. "Redevelopment" does not refer to an official "designation" or "determination" of "Redevelopment Need" in accordance with N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq. unless specified. "Redevelopment Designation" or "Redevelopment Determination" and "Redevelopment Area" are the terms that are used in reference to a redevelopment determination in accordance with Local Housing and Redevelopment Law (LRHL or N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et seq.).

## **III. Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan**

The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan for the Laurel Mills site (Block 116 Lots 14 and 14.04) supports the transformation of this property from an outmoded and underutilized shopping center and parking lot for new uses that will reinvigorate the property. The revitalization of this site with suitable uses and with careful design will advance the Borough's economic, land use, and design goals and to encourage productive use of this previously developed, but now functionally obsolete site. The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan envisions that the revitalization of the property will stabilize the area by affirming the value of the surrounding neighborhood and preserving neighborhood character, while also encouraging and permitting new uses that may breathe new life into the site and the community. The Plan supports coordinated development through a design intensive approach whereby the land use regulations are focused not only on use but also on form and design. This approach will serve to preserve and enhance the character of the Borough while facilitating development with a variety of options for use to ensure economic viability.

The Stratford Borough Council will serve as the redevelopment entity responsible for preparation of and the execution of the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan. The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan includes an outline for the planning, development, redevelopment and rehabilitation of the project area in accordance with the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et. seq.). The Borough Council, acting as the redevelopment entity, acknowledges that refinements to the Redevelopment Plan may periodically be necessary in order to ensure that the Plan is responsive to current conditions and reflects the Borough's goals and objectives. Amendments to the Plan will be adopted by ordinance in accordance with the requirements of Local Redevelopment and Housing Law.

### **A. Area Description**

The Laurel Mills portion of the Rehabilitation Area consists of two (2) tax lots totaling approximately 7.4 acres. An aerial photo of the site is appended to this plan. The Laurel Mills Rehabilitation Area contains an existing 61,000 square foot shopping center along with a paved parking area sufficient to accommodate 450 cars (7.37 spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail space). The site is entirely covered by impervious surfaces. The shopping center is presently 18.36 percent occupied.

The shopping center was constructed in the early 1960s and over the years has been anchored by supermarkets such as A&P, IGA, and Incollingo's at one end, and the W.T. Grants variety store at the other end. The southerly anchor, the former food store, was last occupied in 2008. The northerly anchor, the former W.T. Grants, later become Camden County education offices, and portions of the space have been used for a day care and a contractor over the years. W.T. Grants left in the 1970s and the County offices left in the 1980s. The space has been largely unoccupied for at least twenty years and has fallen into disrepair.

While the property has been functional in the past, the current conditions warrant intervention – sections of the structure have become shabby, dilapidated and unfit for tenancy. The parking area is in poor condition and is lacking in clear circulation patterns and landscaping. The loading area at the rear of the site is in need of substantial repair and is barely buffered from the adjacent residential properties.

The Stratford Post Office is located to the north of the site and the "outparcel" at the corner of Longwood Drive and Warwick Road contains a Rite Aid pharmacy. The property to the east across Warwick Road contains the Samuel S. Yellin School (4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grades). The surrounding area is otherwise residential.

Laurel Mills Redevelopment / Rehabilitation Area Zoning				
Block	Lots	Size	Zone	Designation
116	14 and 14.04	7.4 acres	C- Commercial	Rehabilitation

## B. Local Goals

The Laurel Mills shopping center was built as the population of Stratford and surrounding communities was exploding as America became a largely suburban nation. Stratford Borough's population increased from 1,356 people in 1950 to its peak of 9,801 people in 1970<sup>2</sup>, a 723% increase over twenty years. In its heyday the Laurel Mills shopping center served the shopping needs of the surrounding area as ever more families moved to the suburbs and more families had access to one or more cars. Changes in land development patterns and changes in retailing over the last twenty years have left shopping centers such as Laurel Mills largely vacant and decaying.

The redevelopment and revitalization of the Borough's "greyfields" is vital to achieving and maintaining the character of the community, building a vibrant local economy, maintaining safe and efficient traffic circulation, and providing services convenient to Borough residents and passersby. The Borough intends to set the stage for successful redevelopment and revitalization projects that will return the rehabilitation area properties to productive use consistent with the Borough's vision, and ensure that the properties are an integral part of the community fabric. The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan aims to catalyze change within the designated area and ensure that the properties are brought back to productive use consistent with smart growth principles; and that the properties are attractive, viable, functional, and well designed.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau

The goals set forth below provide the framework for the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan. The goals will guide the implementation of the plan and the realization of the rebirth of the Rehabilitation Area properties.

### **Local Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan Goals**

1. Promote new community and economic development opportunities through redevelopment and revitalization of underutilized and obsolete properties in smart growth areas deemed appropriate for growth and targeted development.
2. Provide opportunities for development types for which there is anticipated interest and market demand. Acknowledge the changing real estate economy, and the realistic prospects for older shopping centers.
3. Use the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan as a tool for revitalizing these properties and stimulating private investment, and ensuring that property owners and potential redevelopers are aware of the opportunities and options for redevelopment within Stratford.
4. Enhance the vitality of the Borough, while providing opportunities for residents to do business within the town, and potentially reduce vehicle miles travelled.
5. Encourage redevelopment projects that are designed and engineered using sustainable practices, green building materials, and renewable energy sources, and that are energy efficient.
6. Enhance neighborhood character and encourage walk-to amenities that support a healthy lifestyle.
7. Encourage planned developments carried out by a single entity or coordinated development carried out by separate entities, synchronized through the establishment of redevelopment agreements with the Borough.
8. Improve compatibility of adjacent land uses and redesign obsolete site arrangements to improve streetscapes and traffic safety and improve both vehicular and pedestrian circulation.
9. Orient activities toward the street (existing or new) and toward public spaces.
10. Eliminate conditions illustrative of physical and economic decline.
11. Implement smart growth design that considers pedestrians and bicyclists as well as automobiles, and encourages the integration of commercial, residential, and civic uses in close proximity to one another to create a sense of place and community.
12. Make productive use of developed property and existing infrastructure, and improve or modernize infrastructure to serve the properties as needed.
13. Enhance and stabilize the tax base.
14. Utilize public and private partnerships and creative funding mechanisms as incentives to encourage and spur redevelopment.

## **C. Proposed Land Uses in Redevelopment Area**

The map appended to this document shows the location of the Laurel Mills Rehabilitation Area. The adoption of the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan will amend the Borough's zoning map to identify the Rehabilitation Area. The land development requirements for the Rehabilitation Area are outlined below.

### **Overlay Zoning**

The use and design requirements for the Laurel Mills Rehabilitation Area are intended to provide a framework that encourages complete demolition and redevelopment of the site. At the same time, the Plan permits the continued use of the existing structures consistent with the uses permitted and the requirements of the underlying (existing) Commercial zoning district (section 17.24.020). Any new construction or development triggers the requirements of the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan, which are intended to promote the re-design and redevelopment of the property. The site should be designed with a coordinated and complementary design theme that considers building materials, form, mass, and scale. The land use requirements set forth in this Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan will apply as an overlay. Potential redevelopers are encouraged to utilize the overlay zoning set forth in the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan for redevelopment, renovation, new uses, and new site design and building construction at the site.

### **Redevelopers and Applicants**

Potential redevelopers should approach Borough Council, in its capacity as the Redevelopment Entity, to initiate a dialogue about the potential to become a designated Redeveloper. Designated redevelopers will enter into a redevelopment agreement with the Borough. The role of Borough Council acting as the Redevelopment Entity is described further in section D below. Designated redevelopers will work with the Borough to develop property consistent with the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan. The establishment of a Redevelopment Agreement may streamline the redevelopment and approval process, delineate time lines, expectations, roles and responsibilities, and may open opportunities to support project feasibility.

A property owner that has not been designated as redeveloper may also make application to the Land Use Board for a site plan proposal and may apply for variances from the Redevelopment Plan standards, consistent with Municipal Land Use Law and the Borough's Land Development Code. All applicants are encouraged to work with the Borough in developing a concept plan to meet the intent of the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan and the needs of the developer.

### **Uses and Site Design**

The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan permits a flexible mix of complementary uses to provide ample opportunities for returning the site to a fully productive condition. A variety of development scenarios have been reflected upon, and those expected to be the most viable and consistent with the Borough's goals are included in the Plan. The permitted uses include professional offices, personal service uses, restaurants, community and neighborhood retail uses, and civic space. The implementation of a planned commercial development will best promote the goals of the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan and will provide sufficient flexibility for a redeveloper to craft a high quality integrated development plan that will bring well-designed, high value commercial development opportunities. The Plan also encourages the Redeveloper to incorporate a civic gathering space into the fabric of the development

This redevelopment plan initially permitted moderate density market rate housing in addition to commercial development, as part of a mixed use plan, as a transition to the existing residential neighborhood to the west. It was later determined by Borough Council that housing is not a desired use on this particular site..

The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan recommends that the site include mixed use buildings such as two story commercial buildings with retail or service uses on the first floor and professional offices on the second floor, oriented toward a pedestrian friendly street. Planned commercial redevelopment of the site must incorporate a civic space into the overall site design, and buffers to adjacent residential uses must be provided. The design standards for the Rehabilitation Area are intended to ensure that developments are of a high quality and that careful attention is given to site layout, building massing and form, landscaping and connecting and integrating the development to the greater community. The design standards will ensure that economic development results in the preservation and enhancement of the Borough's character.

### **1. Permitted Principal Uses**

- A. Neighborhood Retail, including retail shops, grocery stores, pharmacies, private instructional facilities (such as martial arts, tutoring, dance, yoga, etc) and banks. The maximum square footage for each user is 20,000 square feet.
- B. Restaurants and cafes. Outdoor café areas are encouraged. Drive-through fast food restaurants are not permitted.
- C. Professional and Business Offices.
- D. Community Centers
- E. Civic Spaces and Parks

### **2. Overall Requirements**

- A. Multiple buildings are permitted on one tract when they are designed in a coordinated manner, have shared access and parking, and are under common ownership or shared maintenance with cross access.
- B. All development proposals in the Laurel Mills Rehabilitation Area must include a minimum of 12,000 total square feet of neighborhood commercial, professional office, restaurant (drive -through not permitted) and/or business/personal service uses.
- C. The site should be designed so that the uses and structures relate to one another, with consideration for context, scale, design and character. The "mixed uses" should be functionally and visually integrated. This integration should include complementary design features, pedestrian connections and vehicular connections when possible and practical.
- D. In order to make efficient use of land, office uses are recommended on the second floor of buildings, above retail or other commercial uses. It is recommended that new office buildings be a minimum of two stories.

- E. The site should have a central organizing feature such as a "village green", which may serve as a gathering place, with at least one design element such as a fountain, or a central "round about" with decorative pavement in order to create a focal point and design theme.
- F. Landscaped Buffer areas on commercial property or on common areas owned by a must be irrigated.
- G. All development must connect to the public water and sewer system.
- H. Sidewalks a minimum of 4 feet in width must be provided throughout the development and connecting the residential and non-residential portions of the development.
- I. A 20 foot wide landscaped buffer area is required along Longwood Drive.
- J. All Buffer areas must be landscaped with a combination of evergreen and deciduous trees sufficient to create a year round buffer. Evergreens must be a minimum of 6 feet high at the time of planting.
- K. Street Trees must be installed at intervals no greater than 50 feet along existing and new streets. At least 2 varieties must be incorporated and the trees must be a minimum of 3" caliper at the time of planting.

### 3. Commercial Requirements

#### A. In addition to the principal permitted uses the following Accessory and Structures are permitted:

1. Off street parking in accordance with the requirements in Section 17.68.020, except as follows:
  - a. Business and Professional offices: 1 space per 200 sq ft of gross floor area
  - b. Medical and dental offices: 6 spaces per 1,000 sq ft of gross floor area
  - c. Retail Stores: 4.5 spaces per 1,000 sq ft of gross floor area
2. Off Street loading in accordance with the requirements of section 17.68
3. Signs as regulated in accordance with section 17.60 and the requirements below.
4. Stormwater management structures and facilities
5. Accessory Structures for storage and for trash/recycling enclosures designed to match the finishes of the principal building and may not exceed 900 square feet
6. Electric Car charging stations accessory to permitted principal uses.

#### B. Bulk and Area Regulations

1. The standards apply to the overall tract or assemblage of lots, not to individual lots within a planned commercial development, when the lots share access and parking and are developed as part of a coordinated plan.
2. Minimum tract area size is 1 acre, however lots that are part of a planned commercial development may be as small as 20,000 square feet for financing and conveyance purposes.
3. Dimensional requirements vary based on the tract size. The intent is to provide a different set of standards for commercial development that is part of a mixed use plan and a 100% commercial development for the entire site.

Standard	Required for planned commercial on 5 acres or more	Required for planned commercial sites less than 2 acres
Minimum Tract Area	5 acres	1 acre
Lot Frontage Minimum	300 feet	200 feet
Lot depth Minimum	400 feet	200 feet
Side Yards, each side		
From non-res use	30 feet	20 feet
From residential use	50 feet	30 feet
Front Yard Minimum	50 feet	50 feet
Rear Yard Minimum	50 feet	50 feet

Maximum Building Cover	25%	30%
Maximum Impervious Cover	80%	80%
Maximum Height	35 feet	35 feet
Minimum distance between 2 freestanding buildings on the tract	40 feet	30 feet
Buffer to single family residential use	20 feet	15 feet
Minimum Parking setback from Warwick Road ROW	10 feet	10 feet
Minimum Parking Setback to Longwood Drive ROW	20 feet	20 feet

### C. Design Requirements

1. The architectural style of buildings shall be designed to avoid the massive scale and uniform impersonal appearances of a strip center or "big box" center through the use of façade ornamentation, building off sets, window treatments, variation in rooflines, entry treatments and upgraded building materials.

a. Each building façade shall have clearly defined, prominent customer entrances and must include at least three of the following :

- i. Canopy, portico, overhangs or awnings
- ii. Recesses or projections
- iii. Arcades
- iv. Raised cornices or parapets over the door,
- v. Peaked roof form or arch
- vi. Detailed roofing materials
- vii. Outdoor patios
- viii. Large display windows
- ix. Tile work or moldings
- x. Integral planters or wing walls

b. Building façade materials may include:

- i. Stone
- ii. Wood,
- iii. Brick,
- iv. Glass
- v. CMU, but it must have a textured finish.
- vi. Tiles and Muted metals may be used as a secondary material

c. building façade materials may not include

- i. Aluminum siding
- ii. Vinyl siding
- iii. Smooth faced CMU
- iv. Concrete panels
- v. Neon tube lighting

- d. Decorative elements and building trim should be emphasized
  - e. Awnings over doors and windows are encouraged. Colors may vary, but the design and angles should be consistent throughout the development.
  - f. All sides of a building visible to the public must be designed with the same treatment as the front façade.
  - g. Variations in rooflines (parapets) shall be used to screen HVAC equipment, to provide interest and reduce the scale of large buildings.
  - h. Outdoor seating for restaurants should be delineated with decorative fencing, bollards or landscaping.
  - i. 2 story retail buildings and retail and office combinations are encouraged.
2. Site Design and Parking
- a. Parking shall be in accordance with the requirements in Section 17.68.020, except as follows:
    - i. Business and Professional offices: 1 space per 200 sq ft of gross floor area
    - ii. Medical and dental offices: 6 spaces per 1,000 sq ft of gross floor area
    - iii. Retail Stores: 4.5 spaces per 1,000 sq ft of gross floor area
  - b. Where there is potential for additional development or redevelopment on adjacent lots, the site plan should include provisions for connectivity for vehicular and pedestrian access.
  - c. The perimeter of parking areas must be landscaped, and when the adjacent property is residential the landscaping must create a visual buffer.
  - d. Buildings should have direct frontage on at least one street or internal driveway in order to frame the street scape.
  - e. Sidewalks along building frontages must be a minimum of 8 feet wide
  - f. Pedestrian cross walks should be constructed with colored stamped concrete, brick or pavers. "Bump outs" are encouraged at crossing areas.
  - g. Outdoor common seating areas or a community green should be provided as a focal point and gathering place
3. Landscaping. A comprehensive landscape plan shall be designed to provide for shade, buffering to adjacent uses, planting beds within parking areas, foundation plantings adjacent to buildings, preservation of existing healthy vegetation where possible, and other landscaping elements designed to compliment and enhance the overall site and building design.

- a. At main entryways massed landscaping, architectural features and appropriate signage shall be utilized to create visual focal points and to add to the creation of a sense of place.
- b. Shade trees shall be installed along road frontages and internal access drives at intervals of no less than 50 feet.
- c. There shall be a landscape island at least 9 feet in width at the terminus of each parking row.
- d. Each parking lot island must contain at least one shade tree along with shrubs and ground cover. Where lighting is installed within the islands, shrubs may replace the shade tree.
- e. Planted berms shall be utilized to enhance buffers between incompatible uses and to shield loading and service activities.
- g. Seasonal flowers should be incorporated at entryways and at the base of signs
- h. Streetlights and pedestrian lighting shall be pedestrian scaled, traditionally styled fixtures and shall be consistent with fixtures designated by the Borough.

#### D. Sign Requirements

1. Freestanding Signs. One Freestanding monument style sign is permitted per street frontage
  - a. Maximum area per side is not to exceed 60 square feet.
  - b. Maximum height for monument style sign is 8 feet
2. Façade or Wall Signs. One façade or wall sign is permitted on each principal use or structure on each wall that faces a street frontage or public access drive.
  - a. Maximum sign area is 10% of the principal façade area or 80 square feet, whichever is less.
  - b. Façade or wall signs may not protrude above the roofline.
  - c. Façade signs may not consist of illuminated box signs. Channel letters or opaque backgrounds are encouraged.
3. Planned commercial developments with more than 4 tenants may have one directory sign, not to exceed 16 square feet and 8 feet in height.
4. All signs must be set back a minimum of 5 feet from the property lines and must be outside all sight triangles.
5. Sign Design Regulations
  - a. A total increase in size and height of up to 10% may be allowed for monument or ground signs that are designed with carved or sandblasted copy or with a brick base.
  - b. Freestanding and ground signs shall have a landscaped area around the base. The landscaped area shall be a minimum of 1.5 times the area of the sign. For example, a 24 square foot sign must have a minimum 36 square

foot landscaped area at the base consisting of evergreen shrubs, ground cover and seasonal flowers.

- c. There should be a consistent sign design theme throughout a particular project. The design theme should include style of lettering, illumination, color, height, construction material, size, and type of pole or structure. Color of letters and background should be carefully considered in relation to the color and material of the buildings and where the signs are proposed to be located. Signs should be a subordinate feature of the plan relative to the principal structure. The design of a sign must be integrated into the design of the building to which it relates.
- d. Signs must be located on a lot so that they are not within the public-right-of-way and do not interfere with sight distances at street intersections or ingress and egress points to a lot. Signs intended to be seen from a vehicle should be perpendicular to the line of travel, while signs designed to be read by pedestrians can be parallel with walkways.

#### **E. Prohibited uses**

1. Automobile Service stations
2. Gasoline Filling Stations
3. Car sales
4. Outdoor storage
5. Junkyards
6. Portable buildings and Trailers may not

## **D. Redevelopment Entity and Approving Authority**

1. The Stratford Borough Council is hereby designated the Redevelopment Entity to implement this Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-4).
2. The governing body, acting as the Redevelopment Entity may take the actions authorized by N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-8 in order to effectuate the plan.
3. When necessary for the implementation of this plan, the Redevelopment Entity shall enter into a contract with a redeveloper for any improvement, construction or other work forming a part of this redevelopment plan. (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-4(c)) The redeveloper may be chosen through a Request for Proposals, a Request for Qualifications or through direct negotiations.
4. The Stratford Borough Joint Land Use Board shall review and approve all plans and proposals for development that require a subdivision or site plan approval with respect to conformance with this Redevelopment Plan and zoning and land use ordinances, and conformance with the standards and requirements that may be set forth in a redevelopment agreement established between the borough and the redeveloper.
5. The redeveloper shall be required to furnish escrows and performance guarantees as required by the Stratford Borough Land Use Board (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-53), and in accordance with any Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Redeveloper and the Borough Council.
6. The designated redeveloper shall agree to comply with all design standards and development regulations established in this plan for the Redevelopment Area. "C" variances may be reviewed and considered by the Joint Land Use Board, but a designated Redeveloper may not request a "D" variance, instead the Redeveloper may request a change to the redevelopment plan, which must be amended by ordinance. A property owner may apply for a "D" (use) variance consistent with Municipal Land Use Law.
7. The Redevelopment Entity may make plans for carrying out a program of voluntary rehabilitation of buildings and improvements and may make plans for the enforcement of laws, codes and regulations relating to the use and occupancy of buildings, and may require the repair, rehabilitation, demolition or removal of buildings or improvements consistent with the Redevelopment Plan.
8. The Redevelopment Entity shall be empowered under N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et. seq. and N.J.S.A. 40A:21-1 et. seq. to allow for the implementation of alternative tax structures to assist in realizing the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan land uses and objectives and to make redevelopment projects economically feasible. The establishment of redevelopment agreements including provisions for short term or long term tax abatement or exemption may benefit the Borough by getting properties back on the tax rolls and increasing the value of properties over time. Alternative tax structures may be mutually beneficial for the Borough and the redeveloper. Each project and payment structure shall be subject to an individualized program through negotiation and will be based on the specific circumstances and development budget.

- a. **Short term exemption and abatement (N.J.S.A. 40A-21).** The short term exemption and abatement is an inducement for property owners to invest in their properties, as it ensures that the improvements will not result in an immediate increase in their property taxes. The Borough must adopt an ordinance to permit tax abatement/exemption. This tool may be used in the rehabilitation area for adaptive reuse and improvements to existing buildings, construction of new buildings, and the improvement or expansion of commercial or industrial structures. Tax exemption may be granted from property taxes on all or a portion of the added assessed value from an improvement or new construction. A Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) may then be established and a schedule is established for phasing into full taxation at the end of the five year period.

Tax abatement is a reduction in taxes granted for a portion of the existing assessed value of the property. Abatement is potentially available for improvements to residential dwellings and multi-family structures, for the conversion of non-residential dwellings to residential use, for the construction of residential dwellings and new commercial and industrial buildings, but not for improvements to commercial or industrial buildings.

- b. **Long term exemption (N.J.S.A. 40A-20).** Long term exemption may not be utilized for a rehabilitation area, but this information is provided for information and for reference. In order to utilize long term exemption the redevelopment project must have a public purpose linked to the redevelopment plan, it must be limited to a specific time period (up to 30 years), and the profits of the corporation receiving the exemption must be limited. The exemption applies to the value of the new improvements, not to the value of the land. Long term exemptions may only be granted to an Urban Renewal Entity – a private corporation formed for the purpose of undertaking redevelopment. The urban renewal entity must apply to the municipality for tax exemption, providing information about the project, architectural plans, site plans, estimated project cost, sources of private capital funds, and a fiscal plan for the project. The dividends or profits of the corporation are limited. Instead of paying property taxes, the redeveloper pays an annual service charge to the municipality, commonly referred to as a PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes). The amount is established as part of the redevelopment agreement. The PILOT may be a percentage of the total project cost or the annual gross revenue. The PILOT is phased into full taxation by the end of the exemption period.

The Borough Council acting as the Redevelopment Entity may also investigate and pursue any State or Federal grant programs for environmental assessments and investigations of the Rehabilitation Area properties and subsequent remediation if any is found to be necessary. The Redevelopment Entity may utilize all provisions enumerated in N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 et. seq. in furtherance of the goals and objectives herein.

## E. Statutory Requirements

As described below, the Redevelopment/rehabilitation Plan is in full compliance with the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1, et seq).

### 1. Relationship to Definite Local Objectives

The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan is a comprehensive plan for the property that includes a description of the relationship of the Plan to local objectives as to appropriate land uses, density of population, and improved traffic and circulation, public utilities, recreational and community facilities and other public improvements. The Laurel Mills Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan has been prepared to carry out the goals and objectives of the Borough's Master Plan, and is supported by the findings of the Stratford Borough Revitalization Planning Report.

### 2. Proposed Land Uses and Building Requirements

The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan includes maps and narrative descriptions to identify and describe the proposed land uses and building requirements within the project area.

### 3. Relocation Provisions

This plan does not anticipate that relocation of any residents will be necessary, as there are no residential dwellings within the designated Rehabilitation Area. It is expected that the redevelopment of the site may require the relocation of up to three (3) existing businesses (tenants) within the existing shopping center, but this relocation will take place through private negotiation, with the potential for the existing tenants to move into new commercial space closer to Warwick Road. To the extent possible Borough will assist the property owner and existing tenants to identify alternative business locations within Stratford.

### 4. Identification of Property to be Acquired.

The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan has not identified any specific parcels for acquisition by the Redevelopment Entity/Agency. The Rehabilitation Area designation provides the Borough the tools to facilitate redevelopment and/or adaptive reuse of the property, but does not afford the Borough the ability to forcibly purchase property using the eminent domain power. The Borough anticipates that the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan will incentivize redevelopment of the property and that any sale/purchase of the property will take place through private negotiation on the free market.

### 5. Relationship to Other Plans.

The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan has no significant effect on the Master Plans of contiguous municipalities, the Master Plan of the County of Camden or the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. This plan is in fact consistent with the goals of the State Plan in that the State Plan includes the entirety of Stratford Borough within the Metropolitan Planning Area (PA-1). PA-1 is a smart growth area. Within Planning Area 1, the State Plan's intention is to:

- Provide for much of the State's future redevelopment
- Promote growth in compact forms
- Stabilize older suburbs
- Protect the character of existing stable communities
- Redesign areas of sprawl
- Revitalize cities and towns

The Metropolitan Planning Area (PA-1) is viewed as a key area for accommodating market forces through redevelopment and demand for development in an efficient way.

The Camden County Improvement Authority has supported and authored several planning studies, analyses, and plans in order to provide information and lay the groundwork for local and regional economic development efforts. The Laurel Mills Redevelopment/Redevelopment Plan aims to focus attention on the redevelopment potential of this site and to find balance between market demand, quality and character of place, and return on investment for redevelopers.

#### 6. Affordable Housing Inventory and Replacement.

The implementation of the Laurel Mills Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan will not have any impact on existing housing units affordable to low and moderate income households, or any existing residential properties. The provision of replacement housing will not be needed, as no housing units are proposed to be removed.

#### 7. Relationship to Municipal Land Use Law

The Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan describes its relationship to the Municipal Land Use Law and creates no conflict with existing local development regulations. This Redevelopment Plan will supersede the underlying zoning standards except as specifically indicated in the Proposed Land Use section of the Plan.

#### 8. Stratford Borough's Master Plan

The Redevelopment Plan is substantially consistent with the goals and objectives set forth in the Borough's 2006 Master Plan. The Master Plan's intentions with regard to land use, housing, and economic development are to:

- Maintain a balance of land uses within the Borough that encourages living, working and recreation within the community
- Revise the Land Use Ordinance as needed to insure compatibility with new growth demands for housing, commercial and industrial uses within the community and reduce the stress on environmentally sensitive lands
- Rezone areas of the community where appropriate to reflect current uses or uses deemed to be in the long-term best interest of the community.
- Provide a variety of housing types that meet the housing needs and desires of the community.
- Provide Stratford's regional fair share of affordable housing for low and moderate income families in concert with the Borough's Fair Share Plan

- Expand and diversify the economic profile of the Borough establishing Stratford as an important economic player along the New Jersey State Highway Route 30 Corridor (Route 30).
- Retain and promote existing business
- Promote nonresidential development that is consistent with the natural capacity of the land and availability of infrastructure to support the economic success of the business community.
- Encourage redevelopment and full occupancy in existing commercial locations.
- Encourage dialogue with developers regarding opportunities within the community.
- Promote redevelopment and offer business incentives

The Stratford Borough Master Plan also encourages the preservation and protection of open space areas such as areas providing ecological benefits, wildlife habitat, and visual amenities. Further the Master Plan encourages the reduction on non-point source pollution and the promotion of ground water recharge. Redevelopment and adaptive reuse of previously developed properties will indirectly advance these goals. Further, the Master Plan encourages the adoption of a redevelopment plan to encourage redevelopment and discourage blight, vacancies, and further deterioration of land along the Route 30 corridor and on Warwick Road.

## **F. Time Limits**

1. Reasonable Time for Development. The redeveloper of a specific project within the rehabilitation area shall begin the development of land and construction of improvements within a reasonable period of time to be determined in a redevelopment agreement contract between the Borough and the duly designated redeveloper. (N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-8(f)).
2. Expiration of Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan. The provisions and regulations specified in this plan shall continue in effect for an unspecified period of time, until the Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan is repealed or superseded by the adoption of a new plan for the same properties.
3. Upon completion of the improvements outlined in a Redevelopment Agreement between the Borough and a Redeveloper, the conditions warranting the initial Rehabilitation Area determination shall be determined by the Borough Council to no longer exist.

## **III. Conclusion**

This Redevelopment/Rehabilitation Plan is part of the Borough's on-going, long-range planning efforts intended to provide the best possible quality of life for Stratford's residents, to provide opportunities for a vibrant economy, to strengthen the fabric of the community, and to guide design toward a sustainable and attractive town where the past and the present; the built and natural environments coexist in harmony. It is anticipated that the Redevelopment Plan will be a tool to initiate and facilitate the realization of redevelopment projects that will make the most of public and private resources to bring

underutilized and tired properties back to productive use and will bring out the full potential of the properties in the context of their surroundings.