



Land Use Element

Branchburg Township Master Plan

Somerset County, NJ



DECEMBER 13, 2011



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Somerset County, NJ

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ADOPTED | DECEMBER 13, 2011



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Somerset County, NJ

Prepared pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28* of
the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law

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SECTION 1

Introduction

Raritan Valley
Community College



This Land Use Plan Element of the Branchburg Township Master Plan is intended to update and replace, pursuant to NJSA 40:55 D- 28 b. (2), the current Land Use Element dated July 1993. The Land Use Plan Element is organized first with Goals and Objectives pursuant to NJSA 40:55D-28 b. (1) followed by a discussion of land use issues which were identified through the various public forums during the planning process. A description of existing zoning districts is included and is followed by a series of recommended changes to the existing zone plan and proposed new zoning districts. Status of and consistency with other Master Plan Elements and the Master Plans of adjacent communities and State and County plans is addressed pursuant to NJSA 40:55D- 28 d. followed by mapping of existing land use and zoning as well as proposed land use.

The Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan seeks to maintain a balance in land use while providing the framework for planning and policy goals. It is designed to maintain and improve the quality of life for residents, land owners and visitors to the Township and to guide future development of the municipality, consistent with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan. It divides the lands of the Township into categories, or zones, based upon both type and intensity of uses based upon factors such as environmental characteristics, infrastructure availability and capacity, roads, existing land use patterns, and compatibility with land uses in adjacent municipalities. It is a long range document intended to address current and future concerns and needs.

Branchburg lies within the commuting region for New York City and has stops for rail and bus service in the municipality. Two US Highways, Route 202 and Route 22, traverse the municipality carrying commuters and residents of the region to employment centers and Township retail and service businesses as well as those in the area. Branchburg is also a college town. Raritan Valley Community College serving 8,500 students from Hunterdon and Somerset Counties is located in the northern section of the municipality. Branchburg's geographic location, roadway infrastructure, industrial, college, and retail opportunities all contribute to a robust economy and strong potential for future economic development. These factors also have a down side. The traffic congestion in Branchburg is a serious concern to residents requiring strategies to mitigate traffic impacts be included as part of all land use decisions.

Branchburg Township has a total land area of 12,970 acres, 20.2 square miles, with a population just under 15,000 persons. Branchburg is a rural/suburban community with over 80% of the land area devoted to single family residential uses, agriculture, or open space. The citizens of



Branchburg have expressed a strong commitment to protecting the remaining rural areas and consider agriculture and open spaces as defining features of the community. Single family homes are the predominant housing type occupying approximately 38% of the land area. Agriculture contributes 24.7% and open space and public lands contribute approximately 19% of land uses. Industrial and commercial uses occupy approximately 9% of the land area.

Land Uses by Acreage and Percentage

Color	Land Use	Acres	%
	Single Family Residential (2)	4478.1	34.5%
	Two-Family Residential and Greater (4C)	97.0	0.7%
	Commercial (4A)	294.4	2.3%
	Industrial (4B)	803.7	6.2%
	Schools / School Fields (15A & 15B)	427.2	3.3%
	Public/Quasi-Public (15C & 15F)	2106.6	16.2%
	Church, Cemetery (15D & 15E)	32.7	0.3%
	Vacant	360.5	2.8%
	Utility (6)	173.5	1.3%
	Railroad (5A & 5B)	69.6	0.5%
	Farm (Qualified/Regular) (3A & 3B)	1772.3	13.7%
	Common Open Space	204.9	1.7%
	Preserved Farms	1179.2	9.1%
	Roads	809.0	6.2%
	Riparian Land	161.3	1.2%
	Total:	12970.0	100.00%

Existing Zoning Acreage and Percentage

Zoning	Zone Name	Existing Acres	%
AH-1	Affordable Housing	24.7	0.19%
CF	Community Facilities	844.9	6.51%
I-1	Industrial (3 Acre)	906.2	6.99%
I-2	Industrial (5 Acre)	472.1	3.64%
LD	Low Density/1 Acre Residential	3301.7	25.46%
LD/C	Low Density Cluster Option	10.9	0.08%
MDR	Medium-Density Residential	521.9	4.02%
MH	Mobile Home	19.3	0.15%
NBH	North Branch Hamlet	22.9	0.18%
O	Office	86.1	0.66%
OL	Office/Laboratory	238.4	1.84%
R/S-1	Retail Service 1	72.8	0.56%
R/S-2	Retail Service 2	76.9	0.59%
R-3	Rural Three Acre Residential	1723.4	13.29%
RRC	Raritan River Corridor District	4399.7	33.92%
U	Public Utility	176.7	1.36%
VB	Village Business (Neshanic Station)	8.5	0.07%
VR	Village Residential (Neshanic Station)	62.8	0.48%
		12970	100.00%

Section 2

Goals and Objectives

During the public visioning process, citizens were asked to evaluate the continued relevancy of the current goals and objectives of the current land use plan element of the master plan. In general, the overall consensus was to retain the current goals and update the corresponding objectives where current trends or circumstances warrant. The 2006 Master Plan re-examination report included expanded goals for developing a vision for a sustainable future, enhancing community character, and protecting important natural and cultural resources. The following list of goals and objectives combines and updates both the existing land use plan goals and the vision statement from the re-examination report.

Goal 1: Preserve the rural character of Branchburg's undeveloped areas.

Objective 1a: To encourage development which preserves the rural and agricultural character of Branchburg.

Objective 1b: To conserve community character by carefully managing the scale and intensity of new development and retaining farmland and open space.

Objective 1c: To protect the township's scenic vistas and conserve the character of the remaining rural countryside and the historic hamlets that give Branchburg its unique identity.

Objective 1d: To preserve farmland and open space in a way which is consistent with the Township's Farmland Preservation Plan.

Objective 1e: To develop an open space and conservation plan for the Township's remaining undeveloped and sensitive environmental areas.

Goal 2: To provide for a diversity of non-residential uses in appropriate locations to provide for a balance of land uses within the township.

Objective 2a: To promote a diversity of non-residential uses that provide high quality employment, goods and services, and contribute to Branchburg's fiscal health.

Objective 2b: To provide for the development of high quality, large lot, low FAR office/laboratory development of the Rt. 202 corridor.

Objective 2c: To prevent the intrusion of retail and commercial development into areas designated as office/laboratory uses.

Objective 2d: To prevent sprawling commercial and strip commercial development and to avoid the development of 'big box' shopping centers.

Objective 2e: To establish design, architectural, and landscaping standards for the R/S zones which will to the maximum extent practical, upgrade the appearance of the R/S zones.

Objective 2f: To provide for signage in the township's commercial areas which is adequate to safely serve its purpose without being excessive.

Objective 2g: To encourage the elimination of billboards in areas which are visually prominent.

Objective 2h: To provide for a variety of industrial uses on smaller sites in the township's industrial zones while promoting environmentally sensitive designs.

Objective 2i: To provide for the development and redevelopment of the Rt. 22 and Rt. 202 corridors which creates a sense of place and manages traffic impacts.

Goal 3: To provide for the orderly, compatible infill development of remaining vacant parcels within the township.

Objective 3a: To protect established neighborhoods from intrusive and incompatible development.

Objective 3b: To provide for substantial buffers where different uses or intensities of uses abut one another.

Goal 4: To address Branchburg's affordable housing obligation.

Objective 4a: To provide for a variety of housing types compatible with the size and scale of the surrounding area serving a broad range of needs of Branchburg residents of all ages and income levels.

Objective 4b: To address the affordable housing obligation with the minimum amount of new residential construction.

Goal 5: To identify and protect the Township's historic resources.

Objective 5a: To preserve and protect the visual character of the Township's existing historic neighborhoods: Neshanic Station, the Village of North Branch, South Branch, Burnt Mills, and Centerville.

Objective 5b: To preserve and protect the cultural landscape by recognizing historic structures and districts, and by managing change within the historic villages.

Objective 5c: To identify and document historic structures and districts within the Township.

Objective 5d: To continue to seek listing with State and National Registers of Historic Places for the historic districts of the Township.

- Objective 5e:** To provide for the regulation of historic sites consistent with state statutes.
-
- Objective 5f:** To support the rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings in a way that is compatible with the historic content.
-
- Objective 5g:** To recognize that North Branch is an historic settlement and is located on a secondary arterial road.
-
- Objective 5h:** To support measures to improve safety and convenience of the residents of North Branch.
-
- Objective 5i:** To provide a green belt or buffer around the villages of North Branch and Neshanic Station within the Industrial zone to prevent adverse impacts upon the hamlets' historic visual character.
-

Goal 6: To provide and promote access to open space, recreation, and community facilities for the residents of the Township.

- Objective 6a:** To prevent sprawling developments that consume all of the land by promoting smart growth and conservation based design approaches.
-
- Objective 6b:** To provide for the expansion and safe linkage to private and public open spaces within neighborhoods, along a network of pedestrian and bicycle pathways, stream corridors, and significant natural features.
-
- Objective 6c:** To update and adopt a recreation plan element of the master plan.
-
- Objective 6d:** To maintain the quality of municipal facilities that contribute to the quality of life for existing and future residents of the Township.
-

Goal 7:	To identify and protect the Township's important natural resources.
Objective 7a:	To promote design and other techniques that result in energy and water conservation and minimize the impact of development on the environment.
Objective 7b:	To plan for development and redevelopment at densities and intensities that will respect the capacity of the natural and built infrastructure, retain the remaining natural areas of the Township, protect sensitive environmental areas, and encourage high quality designs.
Objective 7c:	To recognize the potential for flooding by managing development in flood prone areas.
Objective 7d:	To protect and improve the quality of the air and water through increased land and water stewardship and careful environmental management of sensitive areas.

Section 3

Land Use Issues

During the various public visioning and workshop meetings conducted to guide the development of this Land Use Element the following issues surfaced as key to the future of the Township:

3.1 Preservation of Rural Character



The working agricultural landscape, protected open spaces and the Raritan River corridor continue to impart the rural charm so cherished by residents of the community. Nearly half (~47%) of the land in Branchburg is either farmland, open space or parkland. The character of Branchburg is unique in that the township enjoys a robust commercial and industrial economy, abundant modern housing stock and still manages to feel quite rural in many areas. Agriculture plays an important role in maintaining the country atmosphere. Branchburg's Farmland Preservation Plan Element and Right to Farm Ordinance acknowledge agriculture's role and set goals for acquiring farmland, protecting land owner equity, and maintaining the viability of the agricultural industry. Branchburg remains committed to balancing preservation of sensitive environmental areas and farmland with economic development. The need to attract tax ratables in the most appropriate places without destroying the character of the community was voiced frequently during the public input sessions of this Land Use Plan process.

3.2 Historic Preservation

There are five historic districts in the community: Neshanic Station, the Village of North Branch, South Branch, Burnt Mills, and Centerville.

3.2 A The Village of North Branch

The Village of North Branch was issued a Certificate of Eligibility, (COE) in 1999. A COE is issued by the New Jersey State Historic Preservation

Office for properties not already listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places. A COE satisfies a prerequisite to apply for funds from the New Jersey Historic Trust, as well as several county preservation funding programs. The district received a State Historic Preservation Office,

SHPO, opinion in 2004. This is an opinion of eligibility issued by the State Historic Preservation Office in response to a federally funded activity that will have an effect on historic properties not listed on the National Register. The North Branch Historic District's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places was approved by the State Review Board on September 28, 2011.



3.2 B South Branch Historic District

The South Branch Historic District was issued a SPHO opinion of eligibility February 22, 1994. This district is located at the intersection of Studiford Drive and South Branch Road and contains houses, farmsteads, and a school house dating from the 18th to early 20th centuries. The district contributes to understanding of the history and development of Colonial America.

3.2 C The Neshanic Station Historic District

The Neshanic Station Historic District was issued a SHPO opinion of eligibility in 1995. The village was developed as a result of the completion of the Lehigh Valley Railroad in 1864. It is a significant example of a late 19th to early 20th century town which was established as a result of a railroad.

3.3 Environmental Protection

Because of the long border with the North Branch of the Raritan River, Branchburg enjoys spectacular views through the forested river corridor. A concept for a "Riverwalk" network of open spaces to connect people with the river has been discussed. Protection of the sensitive environmental areas associated with the river, its floodplain, and associated wetlands have begun to be addressed through the RRC, Raritan River Corridor Zone District. Stormwater management and flooding concerns continue to be voiced by residents of Branchburg, especially in the Village of North Branch and Neshanic Station.

3.4 Public Transportation



Branchburg has two public transportation options: the NJ Transit Train Stop at North Branch and the NJ Transit Park and Ride with Trans-Bridge bus line service to New York City. Both of these public transportation options are overcrowded and inadequate. Parking at both of the facilities is extremely limited. Discussion regarding relocating and expanding the train station has met with mixed approval. The Park and Ride location is a Green Acres property with no room for expansion.

3.5 Highways and Traffic

3.5 A Route 202

Traffic, congestion, speeding, long queues, and safety concerns were unanimously voiced as priority planning issues along Branchburg's major roadways. Intersections along Rt. 202 were cited as extremely problematic for commuters. In 2009, the Rt. 202 corridor intersections were extensively studied and documented through the Corridor Assessment and Multi-Modal Plan for Route 202, prepared by The Louis Berger Group, Inc, for the Somerset and Hunterdon County Planning Boards. The highway lacks a cohesive sense of place and has no defining character which is unique to Branchburg.



Rt. 202 Commercial Use

3.5 B Route 22 & County Route 614

Traffic and safety along the Rt. 22 corridor and Rt. 614 (old Rt. 28) was also voiced as a priority issue. Residents in the vicinity of Rt. 22 must navigate their vehicles through uncontrolled intersections with complicated turning lanes to cross or merge into this busy four lane highway.

Section 4

Existing Zone Districts

R3	R-3 Rural Three Acre Residential
LD	Low Density/1 Acre Residential
LD/C	Low Density Cluster Option
VR	Village Residential (Neshanic Station)
NBH	North Branch Hamlet
MH	Mobile Home
MDR	Medium Density Residential
AH-1	Affordable Housing 1
CF	Community Facilities
U	Public Utility
VB	Village Business (Neshanic Station)
R/S-1	Retail Service 1
R/S-2	Retail Services 2
OL	Office/Laboratory
I-1	Industrial (3 Acres)
I-2	Industrial (5 Acres)
O	Office
LDRC	Low Density Residential Cluster Affordable Housing Contribution District
RRC	Raritan River Corridor

4.1 R3- Rural 3 Acre Residential District

The R3- Rural 3 Acre Residential zone includes land areas predominantly in the southern part of the Township which were historically rural and agricultural but have since been developed as 3-acre residential lots. In spite of the development, the area still retains some of its rural characteristics with an abundance of natural vegetation, small farms and open views of surrounding districts.

4.2 LD- Low Density One Acre Residential District

The LD zone is located in the central portion of the Township and north of Rt. 22 flanking both sides of the Raritan Valley Community College. The purpose of the LD zone is to provide for low density residential development in a manner consistent with the established pattern of development in the areas of the Township serviced by suburban infrastructure.

4.3 LD/C- Low Density Cluster Option Residential District

The LD/C zone is located in the central portion of the Township along the north side of Harlan School Road. The purpose of the LD/C zone is

to provide for compatible low density clustered development in an area where the established pattern of development is clustered. It is the intent of this zone to provide for residential development at densities not to exceed those permissible in the conventional LD zone while providing for extension of open space into the existing open space and community facility network.

4.4 VR – Village Residential District (Neshanic Station)

This residential category is limited to the residential portions of the village of Neshanic Station. It recognizes the smaller lotting pattern of the village and encourages its preservation and expansion on the limited lands remaining for development/redevelopment. As the village has grown and changed over time, parcels of various sizes have been created. Stately, older homes on “oversized” parcels are a key element of village character. They should not be left on undignified remnant parcels with large new modern homes and cul-de-sacs substantially altering of the fabric and scenic character of the village. The density, bulk and design review standards are intended to preserve, protect and enhance the village character to the greatest extent practicable.

The purpose of the VR zone is to ensure that any new development is consistent with the character and scale of Neshanic Station and preserves the context of an earlier era which is an important element of the village character. The scale, rhythm and setbacks of any future infill development should be compatible with the established pattern.

4.5 NBH – North Branch Hamlet District

This land use designation is limited to the North Branch area adjacent to County Route 614. The purpose of this land use classification is to preserve the established historic hamlet and protect it from intrusive and incompatible development. The designation is for single-family detached housing with home occupations as a permitted conditional use.

The purpose of the NBH zone is to protect the character of the historic North Branch Hamlet and its environs, to encourage a gradual growth on higher and dryer grounds and to discontinue land uses other than farming in the flood plains. Development in this zone should be in reasonable harmony with the established character of this old nineteenth century hamlet with respect to size, bulk and general appearance of new construction and exterior alterations of existing structures as well as the location and configuration of structures and driveways. Applicants for subdivision before a Board must submit detailed plans and architectural elevations for review and recommendation by the Township Historic Preservation Commission.

Due to repeated flooding, the hamlet has changed over time, with some building removed or elevated. Previous lot area standards permitted subdivision to at least common denominator lot size (eight thousand (8,000) square feet) that invited the deconstruction or substantial alteration of the fabric and scenic character of the hamlet. The NBH zone density, bulk and design review standards are intended to preserve the village character to the greatest extent practicable.

4.6 MH – Mobile Home Park District

The Mobile Home Park designation is limited to the existing Edgewood Terrace Mobile Home Park located east of Route 202 on Kenbury Road, and the Friendly Mobile Park for those residents 55 and over located on Rt. 614.

The purpose of the zone is to allow the Township's two existing mobile home courts to operate in accordance with appropriate bulk and site design standards as set forth in the land use code. All mobile home units must be served by public water and public sewers. The regulations recognize the fact that the mobile home courts were built prior to the enactment of modern standards and construction of larger units. It provides for the administrative procedure to allow the courts to modernize in accordance with an approved site plan. Site plan approval is not required for the replacement of any mobile home unit provided that all zoning standards are met.

4.7 MDR – Medium Density Residential District

The MDR zone is located in three areas of the Township. Two areas are located between Rt. 22 and Rt. 202. The first area is located west of Readington Road and is known as the Old Towne at Countryside development. The second area is located in the vicinity of Stony Brook Road and is known as Mountain View Farms and also along Pine Ridge Road known as the Cedar Hill development. Additionally, the development along Winthrop Drive is included in this MDR zone. The third area zoned as MDR is located south of Rt. 202 in the vicinity of Covered Bridge Road known as the Twin Pines development. The purpose of the MDR zone is to provide for one acre development in a manner consistent with existing development in and contiguous to the zone. This zone previously permitted Residential Combination Clusters as a conditional use. All of the land reasonably appropriate for Residential Combination Clusters has been developed. New cluster subdivisions are no longer permitted. Lots previously subdivided under an approved Residential Combination Cluster zone must meet the minimum lot area and bulk requirements of the approved plan.

4.8 AH-1 – Affordable Housing 1 District

The AH-1 zone had previously been identified as the RMU Residential Multiple Use zone and was established to provide for multiple residential uses with immediate access to U.S. Highway 202, including senior citizens housing, townhouses and flats, and to provide for the opportunity for low and moderate income housing.

One tract has been identified as AH – Affordable Housing. The principal purpose of these tracts is to address the Township's affordable housing obligation. The AH tract located at the intersection of Whiton Road and Route 202, also known as the Jamm realty site, will address a significant portion of the Township's "prior cycle" affordable housing need. The tract has been developed with high density, multifamily rental housing.

4.9 CF – Community Facilities Zone

The Community Facilities designation is assigned to a number of parcels scattered throughout the municipality. These include municipally owned parks, public schools, the municipal complex, and other Township held properties. Also included in this category are the Midland School and County College properties. The Community Facilities zone has been created to provide appropriate zoning for areas where municipal uses, public schools, parks, playgrounds, or other municipal facilities exist or are planned to be constructed.

4.10 U – Public Utility Zone

The Public Utility Zone designation is comprised of four tracts. One tract fronts on Rt. 202 and Case Road and contains the PSE&G substation. Another tract has frontage on Case Road and Rt. 567, South Branch Road. A triangular tract is located abutting Lexington Avenue and Fernande Lane parallel to Van Arsdale Drive. The last tract abuts the South Branch of the Raritan River and fronts on South Branch Road, Rt. 567. These sites contain the existing gas transmission and electric substation uses. The purpose of the utility zone is to provide zoning to address large tracts where major public utility installations presently exist. No minimum area or bulk standards are included in the zone standards because of the unique character of these uses. A minimum buffer of 25 feet must be provided around the perimeter of all such facilities. Site plan review by the Planning Board should determine any other reasonable requirements to minimize the visual or adverse impacts of these uses on the surrounding properties.

4.11 VB – Village Business (Neshanic Station)

The Village Business designation is limited to that area of Neshanic

Station where non-residential activity has historically taken place. The purpose of the village business zone is to provide for commercial uses which have historically existed within the Village of Neshanic Station and to provide for additional commercial opportunities for uses which are compatible with the established village character.

4.12 R/S – 1– Retail Service Zone 1

The R/S-1 zone is located in the Route 22/614 Corridor. The lots in the R/S -1 area are somewhat larger than those in the other retail service zone, the R/S-2 zone. This area includes several substantial “through lots”, with frontage on both Routes 22 and 614; consequently, the bulk and dimensional requirements for this area must be different from those of the R/S-1 areas adjacent to Route 202. Permitted uses include retail sales and personal services, restaurants including conventional and take-out, business and professional offices, motels and hotels and the like. Automobile service stations and private garages are not permitted uses.

4.13 R/S–2– Retail Service Zone 2

This zone district is for retail and service type businesses limited to the sale on the premise of commodities and/or services or furnishings to the ultimate consumer. Automobile service stations and private garages are permitted uses. The R/S-2 designation was previously identified as the Highway Business category in prior plans and ordinances. The zone is located in a 4,000 +/- foot strip along Rt. 202 near the western border of Bridgewater Township and a smaller pocket along Rt. 202 near Imclone Drive. This area is largely developed with a variety of retail sales and service uses. Ownership consists of small lots, the majority of which do not meet the Ordinance frontage and area requirements.

4.14 OL – Office/Laboratory Zone

The purpose of the OL zone is to provide large scale, low intensity office and laboratory development in the Route 202 Corridor.

This designation includes most of the remaining large undeveloped parcels in the Route 202 Corridor. Much of the area had been identified as Research and Industrial in prior plans and ordinances. The purpose of this district is to provide for large scale, low intensity, large lot office, research, and laboratory uses. Uses on the same site which are accessory to the laboratory, business and professional office, include garages for the storage of company motor vehicles; parking facilities; maintenance

and utility shops for the upkeep and repair of buildings and structures on the site and equipment used on the site; central heating and power plants for furnishing heat and energy to structures on the site only, water drainage, sewerage, fire protection, and other utility facilities; educational facilities for training and study connected with the operation and activities of the owner or tenant; buildings for the storage of documents, records, testing, research, and experimental equipment; communication facilities, including antenna masts; clinics, cafeterias, sundry shops for the retail sale of articles to trainees and employees limited to 1,500 square feet of gross floor area; recreation facilities; child care facilities.

4.15 I-1 – Industrial Zone

The I-1 zone nearly spans the width of the Township south of Rt. 22 including all of the properties located south of Meister Avenue, and in the vicinity just south of Industrial Parkway excluding the Midland School properties and three properties east of County Route 679 which border the North Branch of the Raritan River. These areas are environmentally sensitive.

The purpose of the I-1 Industrial Zone is to provide for a wide variety of industrial uses including some types of manufacturing on three (3) acre or larger lots and to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community by managing the location of extraordinarily hazardous substance facilities. Permitted uses include uses such as fabrication, manufacture and packaging, office buildings, scientific and research laboratories with no materials or finished products manufactured, processed, or fabricated on site, warehousing or storage of materials except “mini-storage” is not permitted. Retail sale and outdoor storage are not permitted. Conditional uses in industrial zones that are extraordinarily hazardous substance facilities must meet the following enhanced requirements:

- 1.** Minimum distance to any residential zoning district (measured from closest edge of structure in industrial zone to the zone boundary): 450 feet.
- 2.** Minimum distance to public facility or gathering place, including but not limited to school, day care center, community center or municipal building (measured from closest edge of structure in industrial zone to property line of public facility): 450 feet
- 3.** Each extraordinarily hazardous substance facility must have its own freestanding building. Multiple tenant buildings are not permitted.

4.16 I-2 – Industrial Zone

The I-2 zone is located in two areas of the Township. The first zone is located between Rt. 22 and County Route 614 near the border with the historic village of North Branch. The second location is along the Rt. 202 corridor in the vicinity of Old York Road and County Rt. 646.

The purpose of the I-2 Industrial zone is to provide for a variety of industrial uses on lots of five (5) acres or more and to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community by managing the location of extraordinarily hazardous substance facilities. A range of industrial uses is permitted in the zone, with the exception of manufacturing uses. Permitted uses include uses such as office buildings scientific and research laboratories including incidental processing and fabricating, assembly and fabrication, warehousing or storage of materials and products. No retail sale and no outdoor storage is permitted. “Mini-storage” is not permitted.

Conditional uses in industrial zones that are extraordinarily hazardous substance facilities must have separate freestanding buildings and must meet maintain minimum safe distances from residential zoning districts and public facilities or gathering places.

Conditional uses in industrial zones that are extraordinarily hazardous substance facilities must meet the following enhanced requirements:

1. Minimum distance to any residential zoning district (measured from closest edge of structure in industrial zone to the zone boundary): 450 feet.
2. Minimum distance to public facility or gathering place, including but not limited to school, day care center, community center or municipal building (measured from closest edge of structure in industrial zone to property line of public facility): 450 feet
3. Each extraordinarily hazardous substance facility must have its own freestanding building. Multiple tenant buildings are not permitted.

4.17 O – Office Zone

The O Zone is located along the highway corridors of Rt. 22 and Rt. 202. The Rt. 22 location is limited to the frontage lots on the north side of Rt. 22 extending from County Line Road to the intersection with Rt. 614. Along Rt. 202, the O zone is limited to five (5) lots on the north side of Rt. 202 near the eastern border with Readington Township.

The purpose of the Office zone is to provide for moderate scale office development in the Route 22 and 202 corridors. The purpose of this zone is to upgrade the appearance and the quality of uses in the highway corri-

dors and to better ensure compatibility with adjacent residential areas.

4.18 LDRC– Low Density Residential Cluster Affordable Housing Contribution District

The establishment of the LDRC zone is an outcome of a mediated agreement resulting from a lawsuit (Branchburg Builders, Inc. v. Township of Branchburg, et als. Docket No. SOM-L-1691-98) that was subsequently transferred to the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing (COAH). The LDRC zone is intended to provide the opportunity for low density, clustered single-family residential development with an inclusionary component (in the form of a contribution to the Township's affordable housing trust fund in lieu of the construction of affordable housing on-site) on a portion of a larger tract (identified on the Branchburg Township Tax Map as Lot 1, Block 4 and Lot 8, Block 2). A dedication to agricultural and open space use is required because of the high proportion of highly productive farmland and environmentally sensitive land. Clustered development in the LDRC zone is to be served with public water and public sewerage solely from the right-of-way of Burnt Mill Road.

4.19 RRC– Raritan River Corridor District

This designation includes a significant portion of the Township's environmentally constrained land located in the vicinity of the North Branch of the Raritan River, South Branch of the Raritan River, and the C-1 Lammington River with expanded areas in the extreme northern and southern portions of the Township. This area of Branchburg is generally without public water and sewer infrastructure. These are Branchburg Township's remaining "rural areas". Some of the land included in this zoning designation is publicly owned, protected as open space or farmland, or is environmentally constrained. These areas are not intended to include the residential provisions of the RRC zone but are included in the zone district because the overarching goals of the zone are relevant to them. These areas should be identified as protected or publicly owned /preserved on the zoning map for clarity. During the public meeting which advised the development of this Land Use Element, one of the top priorities was the retention of Branchburg's cherished remaining rural character. The principal objective for this district is to assure that the impact of development is held to an absolute minimum. This includes visual, environmental, and traffic impacts. The goals of the RRC district are:

- To encourage land use patterns and development practices that enhance Township, County and State efforts to protect dwindling wildlife habitat, retain farmland and protect and preserve opportunities for agricultural activity within the Township;
- To protect the substantial public investments in farmland and open space preservation by limiting the extent of residential development in the Raritan River Corridor District;
- To promote the continuation of farming in the Raritan River Corridor District as a valuable component of the local economy;
- To protect prime soils, soils of state-wide importance and soils of local importance for their long-term value as an essential natural resource in any agricultural or horticultural pursuit;
- To permit limited non-farm residential development in a manner and at locations that will be consistent with the continuation of farming;
- To support the preservation of existing farm operations and limit conflicts between agricultural and nonagricultural uses by encouraging the separation of residential development from active farms;
- To retain flood plains and other open lands to perform their natural functions and to advance the State's Wildlife Action Plan by retaining a diversity of wildlife habitat to the greatest extent practicable.

In order to implement these goals, the RRC zone has a minimum lot area of 6 acres or 1.5 acres with a lot size-averaging option. Maximum Impervious coverage is 15%. and maximum dwelling unit density is 1/6 per acre. Conventional subdivisions of six (6) acre lots are discouraged.

The intention of the zone district is to promote the retention of larger parcels for agricultural uses and/or conservation of woodlands or other environmentally sensitive lands, and to encourage and promote flexibility, economy and environmental soundness in subdivision layout and design. The overall site design shall foster the following objectives: retention of large contiguous farmland and woodland areas; stream corridor and wetlands preservation; steep slope protection; reduction of impervious coverage; efficient traffic circulation; and sensitivity to the site's natural features, topography and relationship to open lands on neighboring parcels.

Section 5

Recommended Zone Changes

The following zone changes are proposed as the result of an extensive public process where residents and business owners were invited to participate in community visioning sessions and to provide input through targeted focus group workshops. Some of the proposed changes are modifications to existing zoning districts to expand permitted uses or to recommend updated design standards for overall improvement. Others are proposals for new zoning districts to eliminate non-conforming uses, create standards which are reasonable given the current economic climate, and to create buffers for sensitive environmental areas and linkages to recreational areas.

5.1 Modification to Existing Zone Districts

5.1.1 RS-2, Retail Service-2 Zone: Revised Design Standards

Design guidelines for the RS-2 zone along US Rt. 202 need improvement. Landscape design standards for parking lots need to be changed to require better screening with hedging and street trees. Architectural standards requiring upgrades to improve the character of buildings overtime should be developed. Sign standards require upgrading to improve the aesthetics and to create a cohesive sense of community. Lighting standards need to be changed to require full cutoff luminaires and a consistent light standard for the zone district. The standards would apply to all new development in the zone or major site plans for redevelopment. The aim is create a sense of place, identification of Branchburg along the corridor, and a more attractive environment for improved business development.

5.1.2 Industrial Zones: Alternative Energy Uses

The New Jersey Legislature has recently enacted a suite of new legislation with the goal of facilitating the development of alternative and renewable forms of energy. Specifically, P.L. 2009 c. 35 which was signed into law on March 31, 2009 establishes that renewable energy facilities, those which produce electricity from solar, photovoltaic, and wind energy, shall be a permitted use in every industrial district of a municipality. Conditions of this statutory provision include a requirement that the parcel must be a minimum of 20 contiguous acres and held by one owner.

5.1.3 Conditional Uses in the I-1 Zone

Lots existing at the time of implementing ordinances pursuant to adoption of the Land Use Plan measuring less than three (3) acres in area which front on the south side of Rt. 22 and are included in the proposed PO Zone overlay should be conditionally permitted to be developed for professional office and services uses such as banks, finance, insurance, and real estate, legal services, engineering, surveying, architectural, accounting and public relations, medical and dental offices. Restaurants, excluding drive through and fast food restaurants, which feature primarily sit down service with limited “take-out” capabilities should be permitted.

5.2 Proposed Zoning Districts

5.2.1 PO - Planned Overlay Zone

During the course of the land use plan process, the Planning Board organized a series of public visioning sessions and focus group meetings aimed at identifying areas of concern, needs for revised zoning and standards, and assessment of the current master plan goals and objectives. The Rt. 22 corridor surfaced as one of the areas of paramount concern to both residents



Critical Connection of Meister Avenue

and business owners in the Township. Calming traffic, curtailing through traffic, and improving difficult turning maneuvers into and out of the adjacent residential developments north of Rt. 22 were expressed as extremely important to residents of the area. The business community expressed long term frustration with the current industrial zoning noting that the current economic downturn further limited the development of the corridor. Numerous applications for use variances have been heard by the zoning board of adjustment for properties in this area.

In response to the public input and in consideration of the multiple requests for zoning relief, the planning board proposes an overlay district to expand the uses in the area to include small scale industrial and well planned developments for limited retail, service, office, and restaurant uses.

The Planned Overlay Zone is proposed to be located along the south side US Highway Route 22 from County Line Road to the Intersection with Easton Turnpike, CR 614. The current I-1 zone will continue as the underlying zone. Access should be controlled from Rt.22 and turning movements reduced on Rt. 22. This should be accomplished by the interconnection of Meister Avenue and a new controlled intersection with Rt. 22 at France Drive and at the point where CR 614 and Rt. 22 join currently. The result would be increased safety and predictability in turning on Rt.22. The development of an internal circulation and parking network within the overlay zone must be included in the planned development and provision of lot inter-connections is essential to minimize impacts from increased traffic on Rt. 22 and conflicts with residential access to the north.

5.2.1 A. Permitted Uses

The Planned Overlay, PO, Zone will serve as optional zoning for the underlying lands in the I-1 Zone. All I-1 uses should be permitted in the respective overlay zone. The PO overlay zone should permit a variety of small footprint, low floor area ratio (FAR), uses including services, offices, and limited retail uses, and customary accessory uses. Medical offices, testing centers and associated laboratories; banks, finance offices, insurance, real estate offices; legal services, engineering, architecture, surveying, accounting and public relations offices should be permitted uses. Restaurants, excluding drive through and fast-food restaurants, which feature primarily sit down service with limited “take-out” capabilities should be permitted. Retail and restaurant uses should be limited to a maximum of 50% combined. Careful attention should be focused on shared parking and limited access to Rt. 22. In order to limit the development of traffic inducing uses, drive through facilities should be prohibited and automobile service and sales facilities should be prohibited. Individual buildings should not exceed 25,000 square feet. Outdoor storage should be prohibited. Entertainment uses such as theaters and golf driving ranges should be prohibited.

5.2.1 B. Site Design

The planned development must begin with the creation of a strong sense of place not simply a haphazard accumulation of stores and shops. The buildings should be visually attractive and easily discernable to motorists without prolific signage. In

the interior of the development, building layout should define the space instead of being designed to surround a large parking lot. The planned developments should have a minimum tract size of 20 acres with reductions for resource conservation calculations such as steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains etc. The maximum floor area ratio (FAR) should be 0.20 with reductions for critical areas.

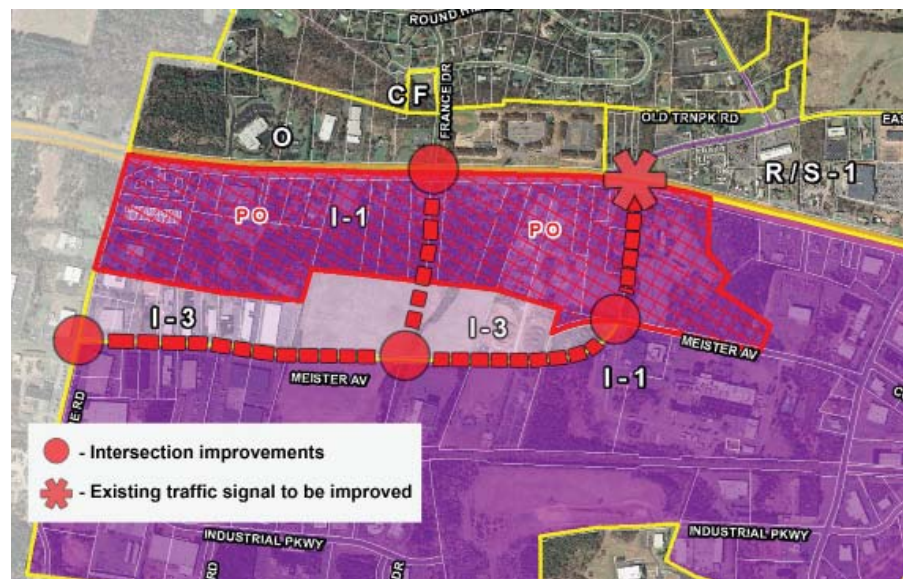
5.2.1 C. Parking and Circulation

Traffic reduction should be maintained as the utmost priority in the design of the site. As far as is practicable, parking should be located in the interior of the developed retail center and access to the highway should be limited. Any parking located in the frontage should be screened from view. Internal circulation and building layout should be designed for the entire site at the outset and should maintain primary focus on reducing additional traffic and simplifying turning maneuvers into and out of Rt. 22. Transit stops or drop off points for children and for senior shuttles should be integrated. Pedestrian crossing within the site should be clearly recognizable to motorists, at least 10 feet wide, and constructed of a different paving material and texture for visual discernment. Pedestrian circulation should be arranged in a continuous circuit along and between buildings. Way finding through signage and site design should be clear and easy to comprehend to both motorists and pedestrians.

5.2.1 D. Architecture

Strict architectural design controls should be adopted and ap-

Proposed PO Overlay
Zone



proved as part of the overall site plan. Building design should have a common theme in each tract and should be compatible throughout the zone. Outdoor activities such as seating and dining should relate to the buildings and be encouraged. Buildings should have overhangs or porch type roofs to provide comfort to patrons. Architectural proportions should be appropriate for the scale of the building and windows should be appropriately scaled to the facades of the structure.

5.2.1 E. Lighting, Signage, and Plantings

Outdoor lighting should be subdued. Sign design should be consistent throughout the site and should be simply constructed, clearly legible, and complimentary to the design and architecture of the buildings. Signs should not be internally illuminated. Shade trees should be provided in a double row along Rt. 22 and one tree should be provided for every 3 parking spaces in parking areas. Specimen trees should be identified and protected to the extent practicable, or replaced on site, or replaced off site if on site replacement is infeasible. Replacement tree requirements should specify the number of smaller trees to be planted based on the diameter of the removed specimen.

5.2.2 I-3 - Industrial 3 Zone

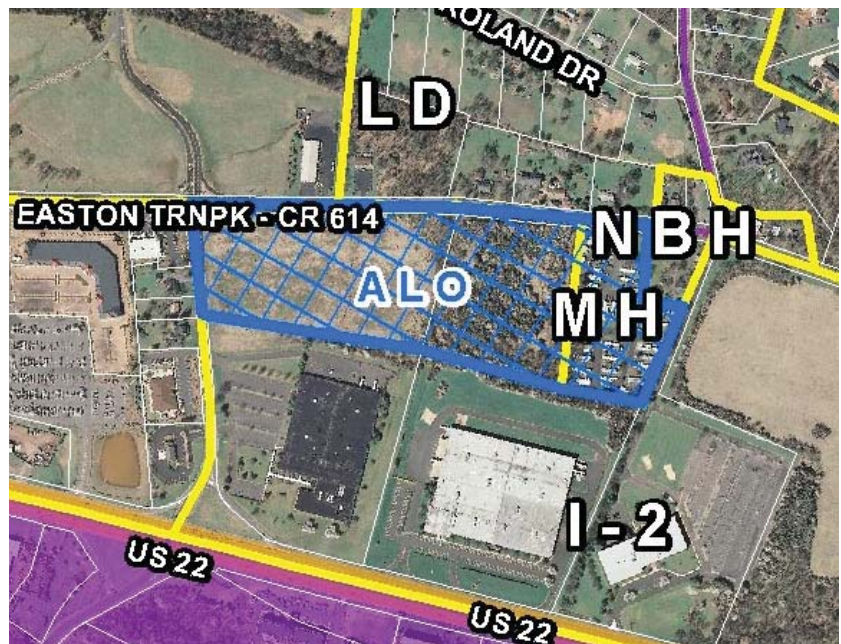
A new Industrial -3, (I-3) Zone is proposed which would extend south of the proposed PO zone and front on Meister Avenue. The purpose of the new Industrial -3 zone is to provide for smaller industrial lots which could be utilized for start-up industrial businesses and private incubator facilities. The purpose of the I-3 Industrial zone is to provide for the development of private incubator facilities as well as a wide variety of industrial uses on two (2) acre or larger lots. Private business incubators are business models designed to accelerate the successful development of start-up and early-stage companies by providing a physical location for the business and an array of business support resources and services. The services are developed and coordinated by the incubator management. Incubators are usually designed as flexible spaces which can be quickly fitted out and wired to accommodate multiple types and sizes of client companies. The client companies locate in an incubator and share resources and services offered by the management. It is not intended that any public subsidy should be given to incubator businesses.

5.2.2 A. Recommended Principal Permitted Uses.

Recommended principal uses should include uses such as fabrication, manufacture and packaging, warehousing or storage of materials and products. No retail sales, no open storage, and no “mini-storage” should be permitted. Office buildings for medical, executive, engineering and administrative purposes should be permitted. Scientific and research laboratories and private business Incubators should be permitted. Agricultural uses should continue to be permitted. Extraordinarily hazardous substances should be prohibited due to small lot sizes.

5.2.3 ALO - Assisted Living Overlay Zone

The Somerset County Planning Board conducted a study of demographic projections in 2008. Age group trends indicate that the senior population is increasing as senior housing options expand within the County. The Baby Boom Generation dominates the County’s age structure. Projections indicate that the County’s population of those persons age 65 and over will reach 14.4% by 2020. Both the Planning Board and the Council on Aging indicated that the projections were too low and that the 65+ population would exceed the 14.4% projected by 2020. In response to these demographic trends and in anticipation of the continued need for the “next step” in senior care after the age



ALO Zone

restricted single family residential stage, a zone district which will accommodate assisted living and nursing home facilities as well as support medical and laboratory offices is needed. An area located in close proximity to Raritan Valley Community College consisting of all or a portion of three lots (Block 7 Lot 1.03, Lot 2, and part of Lot 1.01) near the intersection with Burnt Mill Road is an ideal location for an Assisted Living Overlay Zone District, ALO. The location is convenient to the college and will serve for efficient placement of health care interns in the assisted living/ nursing home facility and associated medical offices and laboratories. There are several retail and service establishments located in the area which could serve visitors to the care facilities and their staff as well as providing for personal care services to the residents of the facilities. Lots in the overlay zone should have a five (5) acre minimum lot area. The floor area ratio, FAR, of structures in this zone should not exceed 0.20, and the building height for an assisted living or senior housing facility should not exceed one-story , and medical offices should not exceed two-stories in height.

5.2.4 U - Expanded Public Utility Zone

Approval of the expanded sub-station for Public Service Electric & Gas, PSE&G, included a recommendation from the Planning Board that the applicant apply to the Township Committee for a rezoning of a portion of the PSE&G property as Public Utility zone and to provide for limited future expansion of the sub-station. Block 70 Lot 29 which is adjacent to the current PSEG Switch Station and is currently zoned R3, Residential Zone, has existing residential uses surrounding. During the hearing for the PSE&G expansion, residents expressed concern over locating residential uses near the substation. If the zone change is approved by the Township Committee, the interior portion of Lot 29 would be re-zoned as Utility Zone. The exterior of Lot 29 in proximity to the residential uses would be deeded to the Township and would remain as R-3. In the event the Township Committee does not approve the re-zoning, a 300 foot buffer is required adjacent to the existing residential uses and Lot 29 will remain R3 Residential Zone.



PSE&G Facility



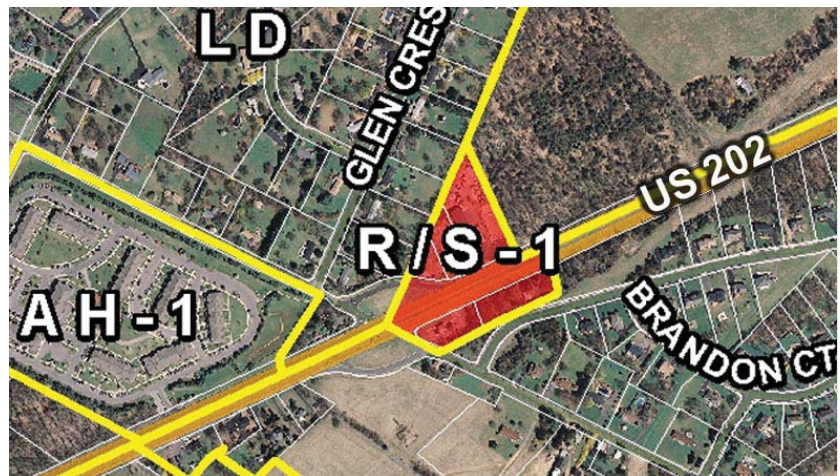
Possible New U Zone Location



Non-Conforming Commercial Uses

5.2.5 RS-1 - Retail Service Zone Revisions

Several small lots along the frontage of Rt. 202 in the western portion of the Township contain long-standing, existing non-conforming commercial uses or small residences in the Low Density, LD, residential zone. In order to decrease the non-conformity of these existing businesses and reduce the requirement for the operators to seek zoning board of adjustment approval for changes in the business use, or for homeowners to convert residences along the busy highway to commercial uses, it is recommended that the LD zoning for Block 69 Lots 1 & 2 Block 70 Lots 16 & 17



RS-1 Zone - Proposed Zone Changes

be changed to RS-1 which permits retail, service and office uses, but does not permit automobile sales or service or public garages.¹

5.2.6 LD/C2 , Low Density Cluster Zone-2

Five oversized lots (Block 67, Lots 1,2,3,04, and Block 68.05 Lots 6 & 7) totaling approximately 50 acres are currently zoned for low density residential uses. These lots, located near the intersec-

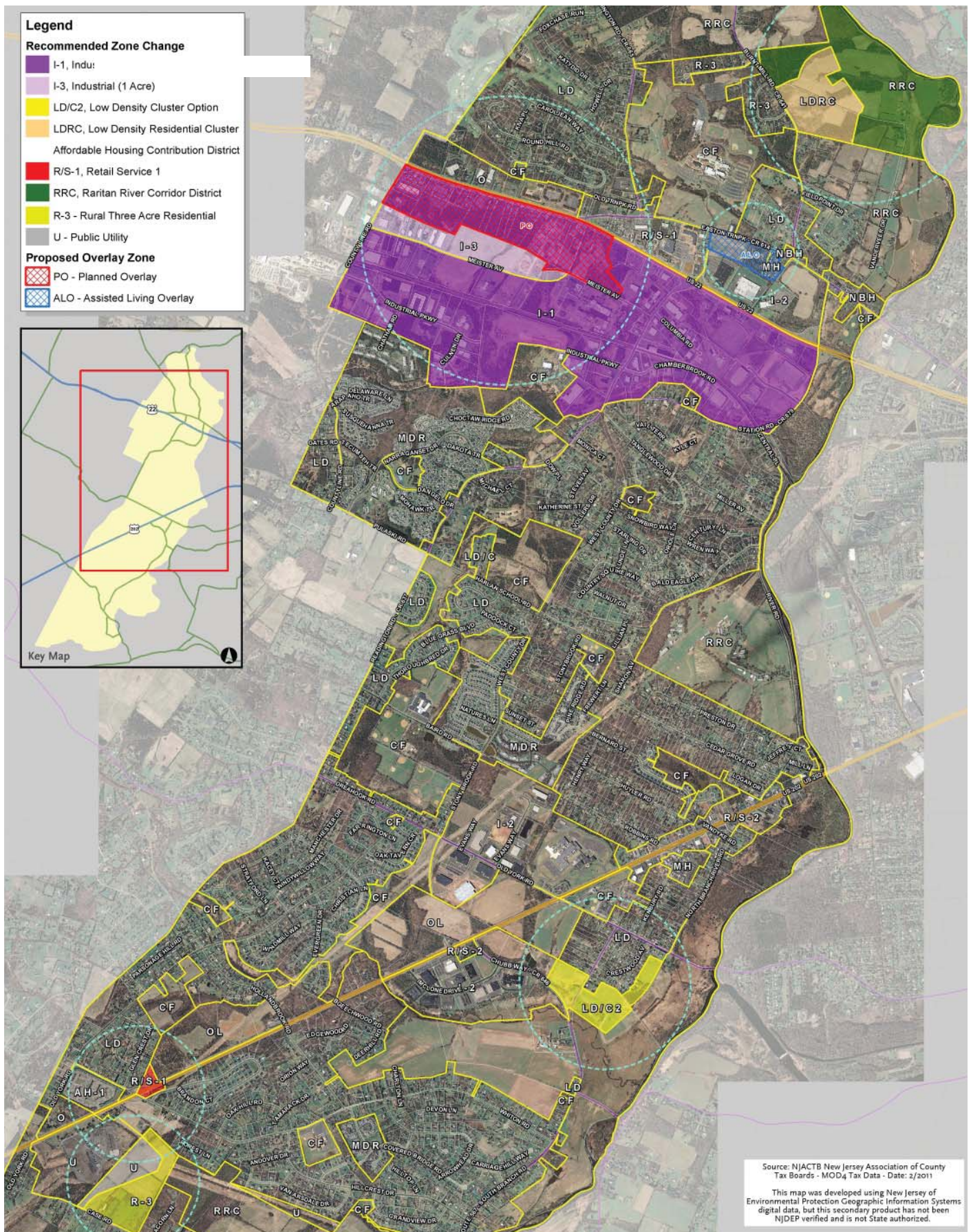
1. Block 76 Lots 1,2,3 and 3.01 which front on the north bound side of Rt. 202 may be considered for a new RS-1 zone in the future.

tion of CR 646 and CR 567, are included in the township's sewer service area between the existing small residential lots to the north, and the Resource Conservation District to the south. In order to create a transition zone between the sensitive environmental areas in the river corridor and the existing residential zone to the north, development of these parcels should be clustered with the required open space set aside positioned near the river corridor to provide access and additional buffering. Existing lot



LD/ Cluster Zone 2

sizes in the adjacent LD zone range from .28 acres to 1.8 acres. Lots in the vicinity are traditionally shaped with frontages ranging from 70 to 100 feet. A new cluster zone option for the LD residential zone in this vicinity and bulk standards should be created for the area. The purpose of the LD/Cluster Zone-2 is to provide for compatible clustered development in an area served by sanitary sewers where the established pattern of development is clustered. It is the intent of this zone to provide for residential development at densities not to exceed those permissible in the conventional LD zone while providing for connection to and extension of open space into the existing open space network along the North Branch of the Raritan River. Minimum cluster tract size should be 10 acres with minimum lot lot area 0.33 acres. Critical environmental areas and cemeteries shall not be included in areas utilizing the cluster option. Open Space shall be set aside in areas which will extend the river corridor protection and provide public access to the river corridor.



Section 6

Relationship to Other Plan Elements and Public Policy Documents

The following chart describes the status and relationship of Branchburg's Master Plan Elements and other Public Policy Documents.

Document	Type	Status	Relevance	Comments
1988 Land Use Plan Element	Municipal	Adopted	Reference	This document has been amended by the 1993 Land Use Plan and is to be replaced by the new 2011 Land Use Plan. The environmental mapping from the 1988 remains in force.
1988 Housing Element	Municipal	Superseded	-	This housing plan has been superseded by the 2008 Housing plan.
1988 Historic Preservation Plan Element	Municipal	Adopted	In force	The element does not satisfy the current MLUL requirements and should be updated. A more recent plan was prepared, but that document does not fully satisfy the MLUL requirements either.
1988 Utilities Plan Element	Municipal	Adopted	In force	The sewer service area in the Township has changed since this element was adopted in 1988. We recommend that this element be updated.
1988 Recreation and Community Facilities Plan Element	Municipal	Adopted	In force	This document has been updated by more recent documents. We recommend that this element be updated.
1988 Traffic and Circulation Plan Element	Municipal	Adopted	In force	While portions of the Circulation Plan may still be relevant, current traffic conditions, accident data and road conditions outdate this document. We recommend that this element be updated.
1988 Conservation Plan Element	Municipal	Adopted	Possible re-adoption	The Conservation Plan includes a general mapped inventory of critical areas in the Township, references the EIS requirement and offers different types land conservation techniques. The open space areas on the map are now outdated. An updated Conservation Plan would offer a more precise palette of conservation techniques given current laws, public policy and land use conditions. However, the techniques and overall substance in the section are still valid and the Board may want to consider re-adopted it as an element in the Master Plan.
1988 Fiscal Implications	Municipal	Adopted	-	This is a report, not a master plan element authorized by the MLUL. The information in the report is no longer valid given the extent of build-out in the Township and current fiscal data.
1988 Consistency with other plans	Municipal	Adopted	-	The "consistency with other plans" is outdated because of the many plans that have since been adopted by local, regional and state agencies since the 1988 Master Plan.
Land Use Plan Element (1993)	Municipal	Adopted	Pending Amendment	This Land Use Plan Element amends the 1988 Land Use Plan Element. The primary content of this amendment is a revised series of goals and objectives, which remain the

Document	Type	Status	Relevance	Comments
				most current master plan goals and objectives. The goals have been updated with a revised set of goals and objectives developed during the current master planning process.
1999 Historic Preservation Plan	Municipal	Not Adopted	Reference	This plan amends the 1988 Historic Plan Element but was never adopted. It requires some revisions to satisfy the Municipal Land Use Law requirements. The inventory of historic resources makes this plan a good reference document.
1999 Re-Examination Report	Municipal	Superseded	-	This Report was superseded by the 2006 Re-Examination Report.
Recreation Plan (2000)	Municipal	Not Adopted	-	This document appears to have been superseded by the 2004 Recreation Plan.
Recreation Plan (2004)	Municipal	Not Adopted	-	Current draft
Open Space and Recreation Plan (2002)	Municipal	Not Adopted as a Master Plan Element	Reference	This plan includes the Recreation & Open Space inventory (ROSI) and criteria for open space acquisition, as well as a map and text of existing and potential recreation and open space areas. While the recreation data may have been superseded by a 2004 plan, the open space data, mapping and acquisition criteria are still valid information. The Board may want to adopt this document as a master plan element, pending the input of the Parks and Recreation Committees.
Smart Growth Assessment for Route 22 and Route 202 (2002)	Municipal	Not adopted	Reference	This plan is a general assessment of land use types and development trends along the Route 22 and Route 202 corridors and offers recommendations for new uses and design guidelines. Many of the suggestions were incorporated into the 2006 guidelines, although those guidelines rely mostly on text and do not provide illustrative vision. The document remains a good reference for the future development of the highway.
2006 Re-Examination Report	Municipal	Adopted	In force	Current Re-Examination Report.
Draft Farmland Preservation Plan (2003 rev. 2007)	Municipal	2007 revision not adopted	Reference	The 2003 plan does not comply with new SADC regulations. The 2007 Plan has been under the review of the State Agriculture Development Committee staff who have placed the document on hold until the Township expresses further interest in its completion.
2008 Housing Element	Municipal	Adopted	In force	Current Plan

6.1 Regional Consistency

This component of the Master Plan provides an analysis of the consistency between Branchburg Township's planning policies and those of surrounding municipalities, the County and State. In general, the Township's planning policies are compatible with those of the surrounding municipalities, County and State.

6.1.1 Bedminster Township

Bedminster's boundary with Branchburg consists of the R-10, Rural Residential Zoning District and the P, Public Zoning District. The R-10 Zone permits detached dwellings on 10 acre lots, farms, and houses of worship, parks and conservation areas. The R-10 Zone has a lot size averaging provision which permits modification of the minimum lot size requirement, provided the overall intensity of permitted development is consistent with that which would result from conventional development of ten (10) acre lots. The land in Branchburg which abuts Bedminster's R-10 district is zoned RRC, Raritan River Corridor. The RRC zone has a minimum lot area of 6 acres or 1.5 acres with a lot size-averaging. Maximum Impervious coverage is 15%. The use of lot-size averaging for subdivisions is be permitted. The goals and standards of these two zones between Branchburg and Bedminster are consistent with one another.

Bedminster's P Zone is established to include lands owned by Bedminster Township, Somerset County or the State of New Jersey. This zone is also consistent with the adjacent RRC zone in Branchburg.

6.1.2 Bridgewater Township

Bridgewater Township's boundary with Branchburg includes the P, Public Zone which includes public lands and single detached residential development on 30,000 square foot lots. The R-20 Residential Zone which permits detached dwellings on 20,000 square foot lots, churches, and schools and the R-40 Residential Zone which permits detached dwellings on lots of 40,000 square feet. The C3A Limited Office Zone abuts Branchburg near the border at Rt. 202. Permitted uses in the Limited Office zone include office uses but specifically prohibit retail uses, automobile service stations. Minimum lot size in the zone is 30,000 square feet. This zoning is compatible with the adjacent Low Density Residential and Raritan River Corridor Zones in Branchburg.

6.1.3 Hillsborough Township

Hillsborough abuts Branchburg in the southern section of the municipality near Neshanic Station. Hillsborough's zoning in the area includes the AG, Agricultural Zone and the RS, Residential Zone. The RS Zone includes an innovative planned cluster option called the planned residential cluster and farmland/open space preservation development. The purpose of this zone is to preserve open space, farmland and the rural characteristics of the landscape in the RS Zone. The planned residential cluster option, a planned residential form of development, may be used to receive dwelling units transferred from properties elsewhere in the RS District with the preserved land to be dedicated to the Township of Hillsborough or permanently deed-restricted for farmland preservation, open space or public park use.

The AG, Agriculture Zone also abuts Branchburg. The purposes of the Agricultural District are to:

- Encourage land use patterns and development practices which enhance Township, county and state efforts to retain farmland and protect and preserve agricultural activity within the Township.
- Protect the substantial public investments in farmland preservation by limiting the extent of nonfarm development in the Agricultural District.
- Promote the continuation of farming in the Agricultural District as a valuable component of the local economy.
- Protect prime soils, soils of statewide importance and soils of local importance for their long-term value as an essential natural resource in any agricultural or horticultural pursuit.
- Permit limited nonfarm residential development in a manner and at locations that will be consistent with the continuation of farming.
- Support the preservation of existing farm operations and limit conflicts between agricultural and nonagricultural uses by encouraging the separation of residential development from active farms.
- Impose lot suitability requirements upon residential lots in order to accommodate individual well and septic disposal systems, which are required in the Agricultural District.

- Advance the goals of the Master Plan for the Agricultural District by protecting agricultural lands and promoting agriculture as a valuable component

These goals exhibit a high degree of consistency with the goals of the RRC Zone which is adjacent in Branchburg.

6.1.4 Readington Township

Readington Township shares a long western border with Branchburg Township. Readington's border with Branchburg includes the, Rural Residential Zone (RR) the Agricultural Zone(AR), and the Research Office Manufacturing 2 Zone (ROM 2). In Branchburg the zoning includes the LD, Low Density Residential Zone, R3, Residential Zone, the RRC, Raritan River Corridor Zone, and a small area of I-1, Industrial -1 Zone and O, Office Zone near Rt. 22 at County Line Road. Readington's AR zone closely resembles the RRC zone in Branchburg and permits farms and detached single family residences. The AR Zone permits lots of 8 acres on tracts less than 24 acres in size. For tracts of 24 acres or greater, Readington has a mandatory cluster provision which permits development on 1 ½ acre lots with 80% of the tract set aside for open space. The RR zone in Readington has a similar cluster provision. For lots less than 20 acres, the minimum lot size is 5 acres. For tracts greater than 20 acres, the standards require a mandatory cluster of 1 ½ acre lots with 60% open space set aside. Branchburg permits but does not require clustering in the RRC Zone. The ROM2 Zone in Readington abuts Branchburg along Rt. 22 at County Line Road. This district is intended to permit the development of small research, office and manufacturing uses on smaller size lots within a planned park. Retail sale of goods and services to the general public, except where accessory to a permitted use, and all residential uses are prohibited in the ROM2 Zone. Branchburg's I-1 and Office Zoning is similar in regulation and purpose and is compatible with Readington's zone districts in the area.

6.2 State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) Policy Map divides Branchburg among five "Planning Areas", which reflect the intent of the State Plan. These include:

- **Planning Area 2 (PA2).** Suburban Planning Area (generally south of Deerfield Trail and north of Forest Lane throughout central Branchburg)

- **Planning Area 3 (PA3).** Fringe Planning Area (small area along Windy Willow Way)
- **Planning Area 4 (PA4).** Rural Planning Area (generally south of Forest Lane throughout the southern portion of Branchburg)
- **Planning Area 4B (PA4B).** Rural/Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (extreme northern portion of Branchburg)
- **Planning Area 5 (PA5).** Environmentally Sensitive Planning Area (along the river and stream corridors)

Throughout the various Planning Areas, the intent of the SDRP seeks to revitalize cities and towns and confine public sewers and water systems to “centers” (cities, towns, villages and hamlets), where growth is to be directed. Within each Planning Area, however, the State Plan targets distinct objectives for the use and conservation of land and water resources. In PA2, protecting natural resources and community character and redesigning areas of sprawl are primary goals. The sewer service areas of the municipality conform generally to the PA 2 boundaries.

Throughout the remainder of Branchburg, however, in PA4, PA4B and PA5 are areas that are not intended to become suburban. Rather, the SDRP promotes the retention of large contiguous areas of farmland and other open lands in PA4, to help maintain a viable agricultural economy. PA5 seeks to retain large contiguous areas to protect environmental resources, while PA4B has the combined intent of PA4 and PA5. Branchburg has significant areas of preserved open space along the riverfront greenway and preserved farms in both the northern and southern sectors of the Township that serve as anchoring elements in the Township’s linear open space network.

6.3 Somerset County Solid Waste Management Plan

Somerset County adopted a Solid Waste Management Plan in accordance with state law. The Solid Waste Management Act established a comprehensive system for the regulation of solid waste collection, recycling and disposal. The Act authorizes counties to develop and implement comprehensive solid waste management plans which meet the needs of municipalities within the County.

Section 7

Summary of Recommendations

7.1 PO - Planned Overlay Zone

- 7.1.1 The Planned Overlay Zone is proposed to be located along the south side US Highway Route 22 from County Line Road to the Intersection with Easton Turnpike, CR 614. This should be accomplished by the interconnection of Meister Avenue.
- 7.1.2 Architectural design controls, lighting, signage, and planting standards should be adopted as part of the Planned Overlay Zone.

7.2 I-3 - Industrial 3 Zone

- 7.2.1 A new I-3 zoning district should be created to provide for smaller industrial lots which could be utilized for start up and private incubator businesses. The I-3 Zone should not permit extraordinarily hazardous substances.

7.3 ALO - Assisted Living Overlay Zone

- 7.3.1 An overlay zone district which will accommodate assisted living and nursing home facilities as well as support medical and laboratory offices is needed and is recommended for Block 7 Lot 1.03, Lot 2, and a portion of Lot 1.01.

7.4 LD/C2 - Low Density Cluster Two Zone

- 7.4.1 In order to create a transition zone between the sensitive environmental areas in the Raritan River corridor in the eastern section of the municipality and the existing residential zone to the north a new Low Density Cluster Zone, LD/C2, should be created. Development of five oversized lots (Block 67, Lots 1,2,3,04 and Block 68.05 Lots 6 &7) totaling approximately 50 acres parcels should be clustered with the required open space set aside positioned near the river corridor to provide access and additional buffering.

7.5 RS-1 - Retail Service One Zone Expansion

- 7.5.1 In order to decrease the non-conformity of these existing businesses and reduce the requirement for the operators

to seek zoning board of adjustment approval for changes in the business use, or for homeowners to convert residences along the busy highway to commercial uses, it is recommended that the LD zoning along Rt.202 for Block 69 Lots 1,2 Block 70 Lots 16 & 17 be changed to RS-1 which permits retail, service and office uses, but does not permit automobile service stations or public garages.

7.6 U - Public Utility Zone Expansion

- 7.6.1** If a zone change is approved by the Township Committee as part of the conditions of approval for the PSE&G sub-station expansion, the interior portion of Block 76 Lot 29 would be re-zoned as Public Utility Zone. The exterior of Lot 29 in proximity to the adjacent residential uses would be deeded to the Township.

7.7 Design Standards

- 7.7.1** It is recommended that design guidelines be developed for the Rt. 202 and Rt. 22 corridors which could be implemented through new infill development and redevelopment of older uses.
- 7.7.2** The Township Code should be revised to require compliance with the ANSI/ASHRAE/IESNA lighting and power standards. of lighting for streets, pedestrian, and parking areas and should specify full cut off fixtures.
- 7.7.3** Design guidelines including landscape design, parking lot screening, street trees, architectural standards, sign and lighting standards, should be developed for the RS-2 zone along US Rt. 202.
- 7.7.4** Design standards in the OL district also need to be upgraded. It is recommended that no parking or loading be visible from any off-site public streets. Adequate buffering between this type of development and adjacent residential uses should be provided. Buffers on the order of 100 feet or more should be provided, given the large minimum lot size.

- 7.7.5 Cross access agreements for parking , vehicular, and pedestrian access to increase interconnections between properties and reduce inward and outward movements onto Route 202 in the RS-2 Zone should be required.

7.8 Plans and Studies

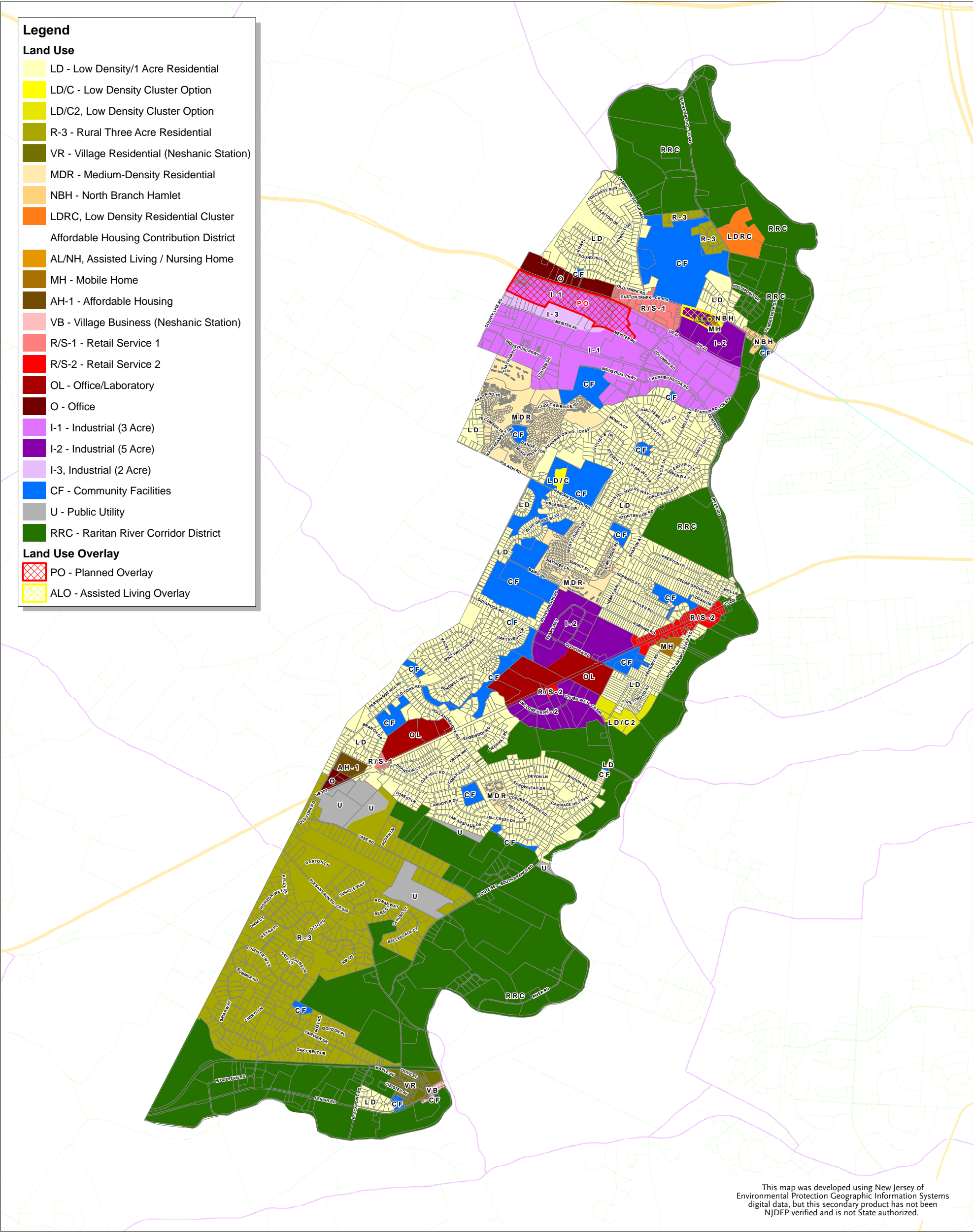
- 7.8.1 It is recommended that Branchburg Township create a comprehensive Circulation Plan including bicycle, pedestrian, and public transportation components in collaboration with the NJ Department of Transportation and Somerset County to address traffic and circulation in the entire municipality.
- 7.8.2 Long term planning for the acquisition and protection of the sensitive environmental areas associated with the river, its floodplain, and associated wetland resources is recommended through the creation of an Environmental Resource Inventory and updated Conservation Plan Element.
- 7.8.3 It is recommended that the recreation planning process be reinvigorated by reviewing the current plan and making any necessary revisions to meet with the parameters for an adopted Recreation Plan Element of the Master Plan.

7.9 Alternative Energy Generating Permitted by Statute in Industrial Zones

- 7.9.1 The list of permitted uses in the Industrial zones should be amended to include solar, photovoltaic, and wind energy generating facilities as permitted principal and accessory uses pursuant to P.L. 2009 c.35.

7.10 A- Agriculture Zone Deletion

- 7.10.1 The Branchburg Township Land Use Ordinance continues to include the A - Agricultural 3 acre residential zone. This zone was replaced by the R3 and RRC zones in 2006. The Code should be revised to delete the reference to the A zone district.



LAND USE PLAN ELEMENT

Proposed Land Use

Branchburg Township, Somerset County, NJ December 13, 2011

1,500 750 0 1,500 3,000 4,500

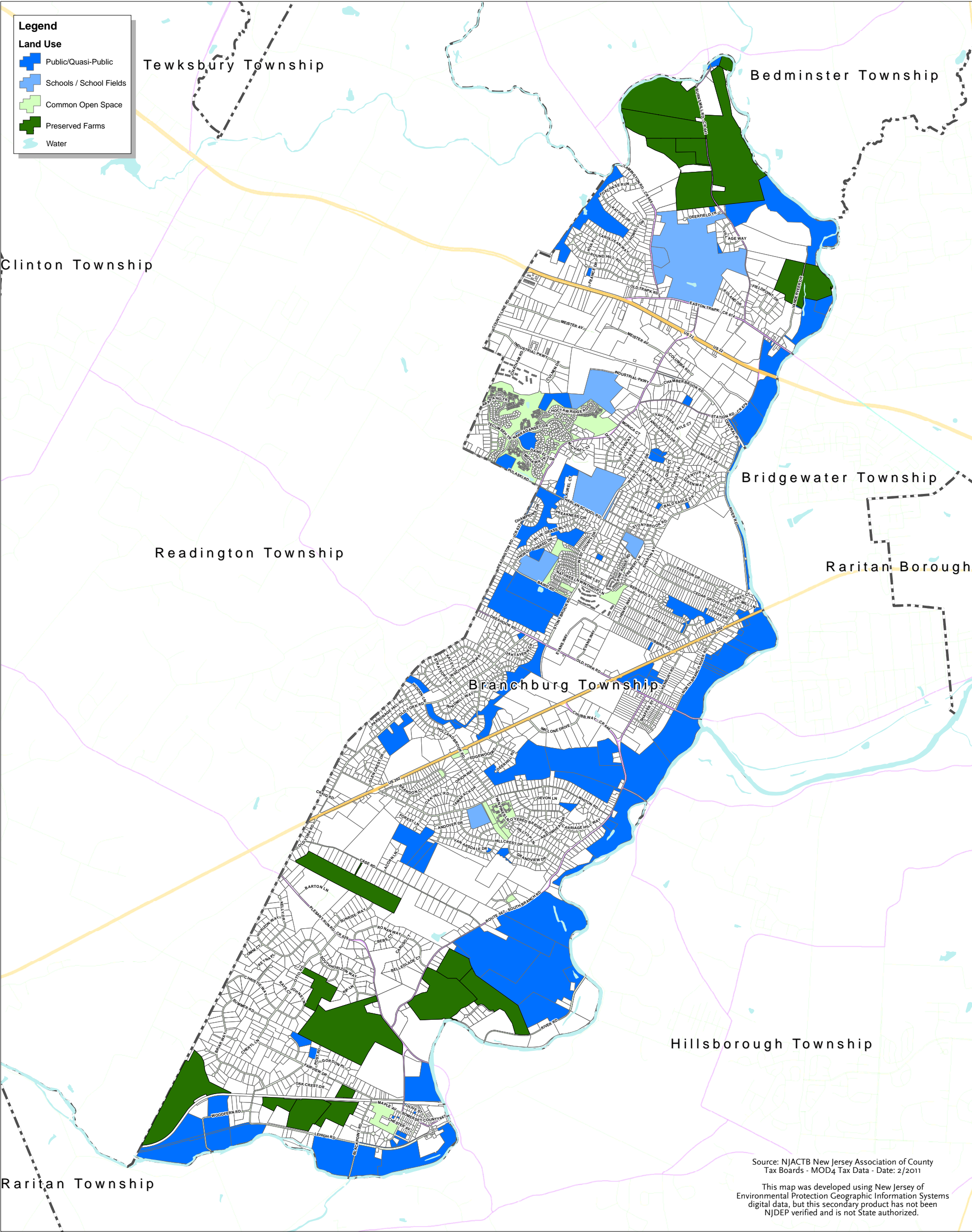
Feet

Clarke Caton Hintz

Architecture

Planning

Landscape Architecture



LAND USE PLAN ELEMENT

Open Space and Public Lands

Branchburg Township, Somerset County, NJ December 13, 2011

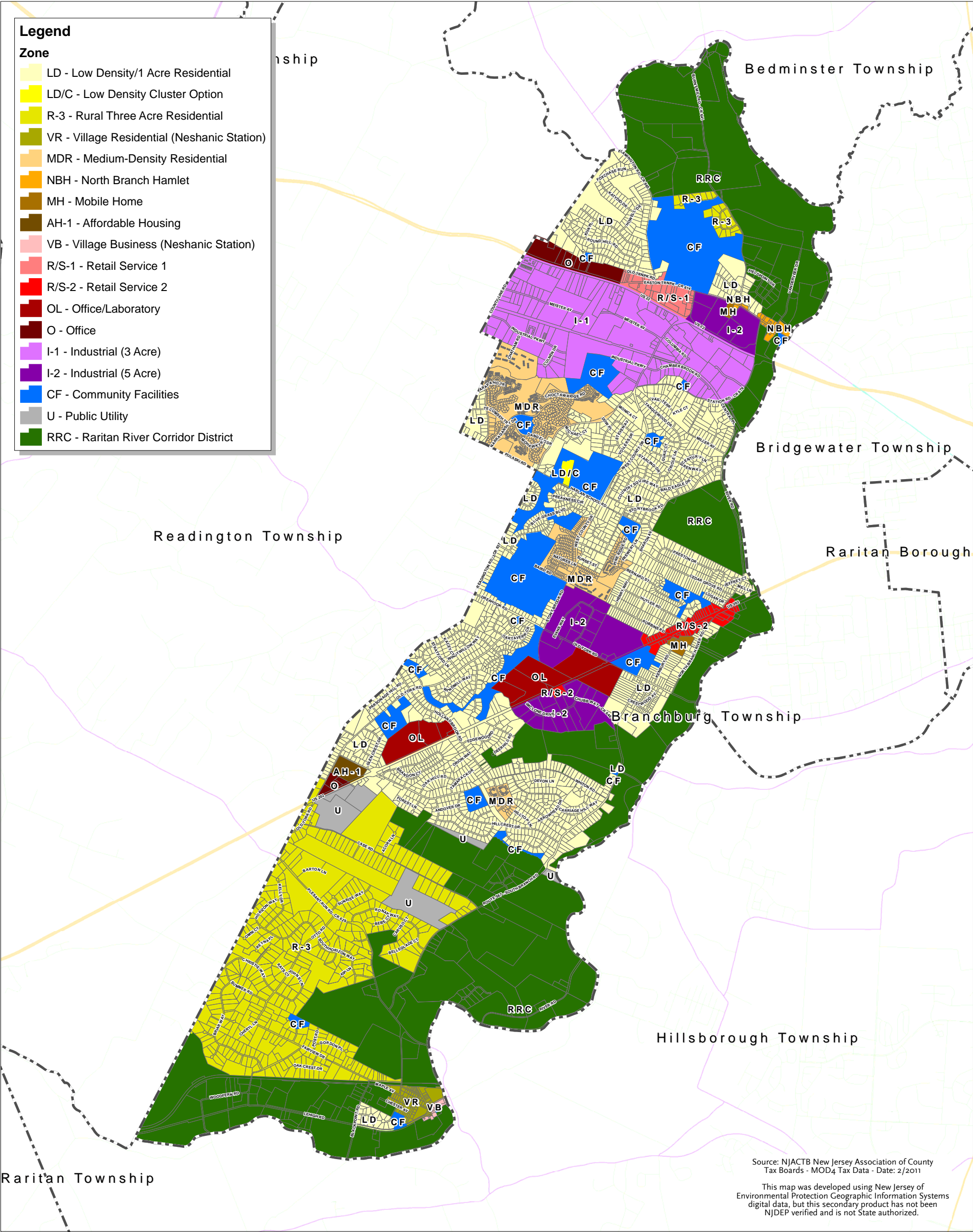
1,500 750 0 1,500 3,000 4,500 Feet

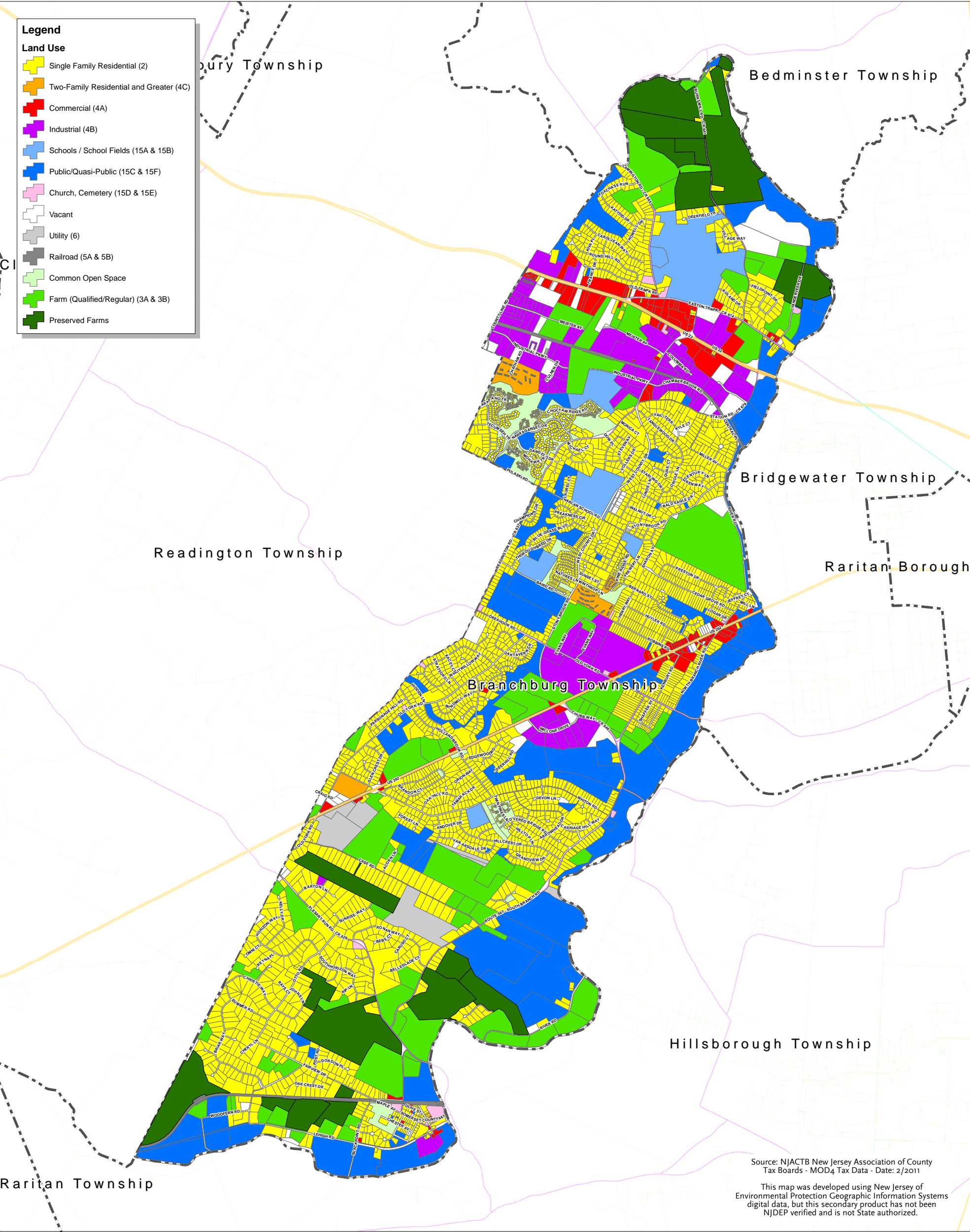
Clarke Caton Hintz

Architecture

Planning

Landscape Architecture

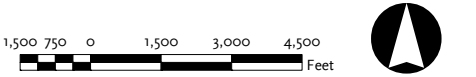




LAND USE PLAN ELEMENT

Existing Land Use

Branchburg Township, Somerset County, NJ December 13, 2011



Clarke Caton Hintz

Architecture

Planning

Landscape Architecture

RESOLUTION
LAND USE ELEMENT OF THE
TOWNSHIP OF BRANCHBURG MASTER PLAN

WHEREAS, the Township of Branchburg, County of Somerset has adopted a Master Plan providing for the appropriate use and development of lands in the Township in a manner which will promote the public health, safety and general welfare; and

WHEREAS, The Township of Branchburg Planning Board (the "Board") has thoroughly evaluated the existing Land Use Element of the Township's Master Plan and determined that it should be updated; and

WHEREAS, the Board's Planning Consultants, Clarke Caton Hintz, and prior Planning Consultant, Linda Weber, held public workshops on December 9, 2010, December 11, 2010, March 30, 2011, June 9, 2011, June 20, 2011, July 12, 2011 and August 9, 2011 to solicit input from Township residents and stakeholders and also developed a website to encourage additional public participation, disseminate information and announce meetings; and

WHEREAS, on November 29, 2011 and December 13, 2011, public meetings were held which included the opportunity for input and questions from members of

the public; and

WHEREAS, at the public meetings and at the workshops the Board and its professionals considered the input and comments from the public on the proposed Land Use Element; and

WHEREAS, the Board based its review of the proposed Land Use Element of the Master Plan upon the testimony presented, the public comment received and their own knowledge and expertise of the subject matter, and after due deliberation, made the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

A. Proper notice has been given and the Board has jurisdiction to hear this matter;

B. The Planning Board reviewed the draft Land Use Element at the last public hearing on December 13, 2011 and decided to include a limitation in Section 5.2.1A (Permitted Uses in the Planned Overlay Zone) that retail and restaurant uses should be limited to a maximum of 50% combined of the proposed uses in the Planned Overlay Zone.

C. The Planning Board has determined that the recommendations set forth in the Draft Land Use Element of the Master Plan, prepared by Clarke Caton Hintz, as amended at the last Public Hearing held on December 13, 2011, promotes the interest of the public, protects the public health and safety and promotes the general welfare.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the Township of Branchburg that the Board hereby adopts the proposed Land Use Element of the Master Plan and Appendices, prepared by Clarke Caton Hintz, as amended on December 13, 2011.

On motion by Mr. Hay, seconded by Mr. Bouwman, the Planning Board voted to adopt the Resolution.

ROLL CALL

ADOPTION BY THE PLANNING BOARD
OF THE LAND USE ELEMENT
TO THE BRANCHBURG TOWNSHIP MASTER PLAN

Element Approved by Planning Board: December 13, 2011

Resolution Adopted: December 20, 2011

MEMBER	Y	N	NE	NV	ABS	MEMBER	Y	N	NE	NV	ABS
BOUWMAN	X					IHLING	X				
DEVLIN	X					McGRATH		X			
GRENCI	X					MELITSKI	X				
HAY	X					YOUNG					X
HOLZMANN	X										

X – indicates vote
NE – not eligible to vote
NV – not voting (abstained)
ABS – absent


JAMES MELITSKI, CHAIRMAN


SARAH McGRATH, SECRETARY