

To: Borough of Haddonfield
From: Todd W. Bressi
Date: October 23, 2006
Project: Haddonfield Downtown Vision Plan
Re: Draft for Commission Review:
Executive Summary
Downtown Master Plan
Zoning Framework
Design Guidance for Kings Highway

Enclosed in this package are “Drafts for Commission Review” of the Downtown Haddonfield Master Plan, Zoning Framework and Kings Highway Design Guidance that have been developed through the downtown visioning process.

These drafts are prepared and circulated in preparation for an information session with the Planning Board, Zoning Board and Historic Commission on October 26 and a public presentation at the Haddonfield Civic Association November 6. The citizen leaders of this effort will also be available to make presentations to other groups.

These recommendations are based on extensive public input, which consisted of:

- “Community conversations” in which the planning consultants met with more than 100 residents in small, “kitchen-table” discussions.
- A community survey that elicited more than 250 responses.
- Two public workshops, one of which was attended by about 60 people, another attended by about 100 people.
- Two meetings with the “Parking and Access” committee.

Following is an Executive Summary of the material we are providing.

Downtown Master Plan

The Downtown Area Master Plan is an element of the Borough's overall master plan. It provides an overall policy framework for downtown, setting the stage for stronger, clearer tools for managing the design and scale of new projects that are proposed downtown. The plan sets out directions, rather than end goals, and will enable the Borough to make more specific policy decisions in the future.

The Master Plan enunciates goals of:

- Maintain and enhance the liveliness, activity and success of the Downtown Area. This means allowing for a healthy mix of housing, shopping, offices and civic uses downtown.
- Conserve and enhance the features of downtown's core, King's Highway. This means emphasizing ground-level retail, providing for a variety of uses on upper levels, and maintaining careful controls on the scale, articulation and architectural expression of new or renovated buildings so they fit into the historic context. This means considering the possibility of a "western retail anchor" along Kings Highway in the area of Chestnut Street and the PATCO line.
- Identify other parts of the Downtown Area, such as Allen Avenue (including the PATCO site) and North Haddon Avenue, where infill residential and office development may be more appropriate, and establish urban design parameters that would configure new development as an extension of the pattern of the existing town.
- Establish development regulations and design guidelines that ensure more predictability about the form and character of alterations and new construction, and reduce the need for waivers and variances.
- Provide for circulation improvements and parking policies that support enhanced walkability throughout the Downtown Area; make bicycling more practicable; make parking in Downtown Area more user friendly for shoppers, residents and workers; and make the best possible use of existing parking resources.
- Ensure that green spaces permeate downtown, and make more of them usable.
- Provide for the development of both market-rate housing as well as housing for low-income households, middle-income households and seniors.
- Provide for more appropriate transitions to residential neighborhoods adjacent downtown.

Zoning Framework

The Zoning Framework provides detailed guidance about how to revise the Land Development Ordinance. The proposed zoning framework incorporates the following basic approaches and assumptions.

Districting Strategy

There are eight districts proposed to occupy the areas now generally zoned CBD, Commercial or Office. Each new zoning district is based on the existing, underlying character of different areas of downtown — block, lot and building patterns — not land-uses. Each district tends to be defined by a street, such as Kings Highway or North Haddon Avenue.

Taken together, the eight zones reflect subtle shifts of character as one approaches downtown from surrounding neighborhoods — subtle, block by block intensification of scale and use until one reaches the “100 percent” corner at Haddon and Kings Highway.

Use Strategy

The land-use recommendations are made on the basic assumption that Kings Highway is Haddonfield’s primary downtown retail corridor. This means that the best use of street-level space along Kings Highway (between the PATCO line and Borough Hall) is retail and personal services, and that retail space should be focused on Kings Highway, with the exception of (a) Tanner Street, (b) the Acme site and (c) small pockets of neighborhood- or transit-serving commercial in appropriate areas. Retail development that undermines the retail environment of Kings Highway should not be permitted.

The second basic land-use assumption is that office and residential space should be permissible in just about every other downtown area. That space can be developed based on the market demand.

Most districts allow a range of housing types, such as twins, row houses or multiple dwellings. Affordable housing is required through continuation of the Borough’s inclusionary housing ordinance, and is encouraged on particular sites, such as the PATCO site.

Density Strategy

The proposed zoning framework manages development much as a form-based code would — prescribing the desired envelope for buildings, rather than a “floor area ratio.”

Under the current zoning, an additional 700,000 s.f. of development could occur downtown — bringing total built space from 1,300,000 s.f. to 2,000,000 s.f. (not including any development that might occur on the PATCO site, which is currently zoned for “public use”).

The proposed “zoning framework” would yield approximately 400,000 s.f. of additional space throughout the downtown, depending on actual development decisions that are made. An additional 145,000 s.f. of development could be built on PATCO’s east parking lot. This calculation is based on analysis of the building forms allowed on each property, taking into account open space and parking requirements.

In reality, the Borough is not likely to see anywhere near this level of development, not for

decades, if ever. Rather, the Borough will probably probably see a steady flow of small, incremental additions to its built fabric (except for large-scale sites such as the PATCO lot) over time. Therefore, the scale and texture of development that is permitted on any given site will have a more immediate impact on the Haddonfield's character than the overall development capacity of downtown. That is why the emphasis of the "zoning framework" is to provide the Borough with much more clarity about, and control over, the scale and appearance of new buildings or additions. The slow pace of change will enable the Borough to plan for any impacts on municipal infrastructure or services.

Urban Design, Massing and Height Strategy

Stronger urban design controls are key to keeping the character and scale of downtown recognizable and livable.

The general height limit for buildings downtown will be three stories, except for in a small area along the PATCO right-of-way, north of Euclid Avenue. In only one area, the west side of north Haddon Avenue, could a building rise three stories straight up; elsewhere, the third story will have to be set back, or be constructed underneath a pitched roof.

The massing of buildings follows existing patterns. Front and side setbacks generally follow the existing texture; maximum building and lot dimensions are established in places where long buildings could be built (such as the depth of lots south of Kings Highway, or the new blocks proposed west of Allen Street). Impervious coverage ratios are reduced, in order to accommodate on-site stormwater management and add to downtown's sense of greenery.

In no area would private parking be allowed in front of or alongside a building; all parking must be placed in the rear or to the side of buildings. All private parking must be screened from the view of public streets. Parking would not be allowed as a primary use of a lot, and buildings could not be demolished to make room for parking.

Parking Strategy

In most cases, parking ratios for new development should be reduced, and reliance on "shared parking" should be increased. This will have little or no impact on parking supply, based on our analysis of existing automobile ownership in Haddonfield (U.S. Census), parking usage in Haddonfield (surveys), and current standards (ITE) for town centers like Haddonfield. More specifically:

- Residential ratios are reduced to 1.5 per unit, with a half-space achievable through counting on-street parking, off-site parking or shared parking.
- Retail and office parking ratios are reduced to 3 per 1,000 s.f. of space, to reflect contemporary standards and our surveys that found that large numbers of public and private parking spaces are generally vacant downtown, except for in one core block. The retail parking requirement could be achieved through off-site parking or shared parking.
- Restaurant parking ratios are reset to 3 per 1,000 s.f. of space. This will help reduce the impact that restaurant trade has on midday parking supply, which our analysis has shown is the peak parking period and when localized shortages exist. This parking could be achieved through off-site or shared parking.

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- The near-term focus should be on implementing off-site parking and shared-parking arrangements, Increases to parking supply should be entertained only if it can be documented, after implementing off-site and shared policies, that more widespread shortages exist, and new spaces should be allocated for shared or off-site use.

We are continuing to develop recommendation for shared parking that would generally include a strategy for a centrally managed pool of downtown parking, and for agreements between individual property owners, that would allow for more effective use of existing parking resources.

Design Guidelines / Visual Character for King’s Highway

King’s Highway, clearly the heart of downtown, visually and in terms of its retail focus, will be the subject of detailed urban design and architectural guidelines, which are meant to guide equally the discussions of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning Board.

The urban design guidelines will cover building heights, setbacks and maximum facade dimensions, and are described above. The goal is to produce buildings whose massing is in keeping with the existing pattern of the town.

Further guidelines will cover the following basic features, but will not address issues of specific architecture genre or style: Scale and Rhythm, Height and Setback, Fronts and Sides, Materials, Details, Storefronts, Windows.

In the future, additional guidelines should be developed for the following topics:

- Signage design for parking and pedestrian wayfinding
- A comprehensive strategy for streetscape elements — benches, planters, lighting, waste receptacles, tree grates — that are part of the public realm. In addition, there should be guidelines for street elements placed by private businesses, particularly café tables and chairs.
- A comprehensive landscape strategy for streets, pedestrian connections and public spaces
- A comprehensive lighting strategy for streets, pedestrian connections, public spaces and facades.
- Guidelines for the design of signs, beyond the dimensional and locational requirements included in the zoning framework.
- Design guidelines for the design of facades, storefront lighting and window displays.
- Architectural guidelines for specific types and styles of historic buildings.

