

2012 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT

LOPATCONG TOWNSHIP

Warren County, New Jersey



LOPATCONG TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD

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JANUARY 27, 2012
Adopted February 8, 2012

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

Prepared by:

LOPATCONG TOWNSHIP
2012 MASTER PLAN REEXAMINATION REPORT

Introduction

The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq.) provides that each municipality within the State of New Jersey periodically reexamine its Master Plan policies and assumptions, and its zoning restrictions and site plan and subdivision regulations, and prepare and adopt by resolution, a report on the findings of such reexamination. The Reexamination Report must include the following components (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89):

1. The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
2. The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
3. The extent to which there have been significant changes in the assumptions, policies, and objectives forming the basis for the master plan or development regulations as last revised, with particular regard to the density and distribution of population and land uses, housing conditions, circulation, conservation of natural resources, energy conservation, collection, disposition, and recycling of designated recyclable materials, and changes in State, county and municipal policies and objectives.
4. The specific changes recommended for the master plan or development regulations, if any, including underlying objectives, policies and standards, or whether a new plan or regulations should be prepared.
5. The recommendations of the Planning Board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the “Local Redevelopment and Housing Law,” into the land use plan element of the municipal master plan, and recommended changes, if any, in the local development regulations necessary to effectuate the redevelopment plans of the municipality.

The current Lopatcong Township Master Plan was adopted by the Planning Board pursuant to Article 3 of the MLUL (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-28) in May of 1989. Periodic reexaminations of the Master Plan were adopted by the Board on April 15, 1996 and September 20, 2000. On November 23, 2004, the Board adopted The 2004 Reexamination of the Lopatcong Township Master Plan, a comprehensive plan that incorporates the policies, goals and objectives of the 1989 Master Plan and intervening reexamination reports. The Board subsequently adopted amendments to the Master Plan on June 22, 2005, December 6, 2005, December 12, 2005 and May 26, 2010, affecting the following Master Plan Elements, respectively: Master Plan Reexamination Report, Housing Element, Fair Share Plan, Housing Element and Fair Share Plan.

Since the time of adoption of the last Master Plan Reexamination in 2005, the assumptions, policies, and objectives upon which the Master Plan is based have changed by virtue of: a) the adoption of the Highlands Regional Master Plan by the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (“Highlands Council”) on July 17, 2008, which became effective on September 8, 2008; b) the requirement of the Highlands Act that municipal Master Plans and regulatory provisions be brought into alignment with the Highlands Regional Master Plan for lands located within the Highlands Preservation Area; c) the authorization within the Highlands Act for voluntary municipal Master Plan and regulatory conformance with the Highlands Regional Master Plan with respect to lands located within the Highlands Planning Area; d) the affirmative decision of the Lopatcong Township Governing Body to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan for municipal lands located in the Planning Area, as set forth by Ordinance #2011-19 adopted on December 29, 2011; and e) approval of the Lopatcong Township Highlands Center by the Highlands Council on January 19, 2012.

As a result of these new initiatives by the State and Township, the Planning Board has reexamined the Township Master Plan and development regulations to determine the specific changes necessary to align the Master Plan and development regulations with the Township’s objectives for growing the industrially zoned lands located south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad. It is the intent of this Report to identify the specific revisions needed to bring the Township Master Plan and development regulations current with the need to guide future land use within Lopatcong Township’s Research Office and Manufacturing Zone (ROM) located south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad:

1. Major Land Development Problems & Objectives

The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the Township at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report:

- a. Address the need for, and encouragement of, nonresidential growth: Provide for a balanced approach between residential and nonresidential development.
- b. Improve vehicular access/circulation to the ROM Zone south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad including upgrades to Strykers Road.
- c. Encourage the redevelopment of the Ingersoll Rand tract comprised of Lots 1 and 1.01 in Block 101.
- d. Provide additional opportunities for development of housing designed to accommodate senior citizens age 55 and up.
- e. Increase opportunities for recreation: Add to the Township's inventory of open space.
- f. Expand the boundaries of the Sewer Service Area so as to include the undeveloped portions of the ROM Zone lying south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad.
- g. Pursue a Center designation for areas of the Township adjacent to the Town of Phillipsburg.

2. Extent of Reduction/Increase in Problems & Objectives

The extent to which the problems and objectives listed in item 1 above have been reduced or have increased subsequent to the date of the last reexamination report, in the same order provided at 1, above:

- a. Since 2005, the Township has approved site plan, subdivision and variance applications for development in the ROM Zone that facilitated the expansion of three existing manufacturing facilities and construction of two new industrial uses, which required amendments to permitted uses and design standards for the district.
- b. Improvements to the segment of Strykers Road that runs through the ROM district, which include realignment, resurfacing, new curbs and drainage infrastructure, were completed between 2005 and 2008. During the same period, the grade railroad crossing just south of Route 57 was removed and replaced; and the traffic signal at the Route 57/Strykers Road intersection was improved.

- c. The Township designated the Ingersoll Rand Site as a Redevelopment Area in 2006 and prepared a Redevelopment Plan for the Area pursuant to the New Jersey Local Redevelopment and Housing Law.
- d. The Township adopted the Active Adult Retirement Community (AARC) Zone ordinance in 2005 to effectuate the recommendations for such in the 2005 Master Plan Reexamination Report; and rezoned Lot 9 in Block 102 from single-family residential to AARC.
- e. The Township has increased its inventory of publicly owned open space and recreation lands by over fifty acres since 2005.
- f. The proposed Highlands Wastewater Management Plan provides for the expansion of the Sewer Service Area that includes most of the developed and unimproved lands within the ROM Zone south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad.
- g. The Highlands Council approved the Lopatcong Township Highlands Center on January 19, 2012, which includes a significant portion of the ROM Zone south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad.

3. Significant Changes in Assumptions, Policies, Objectives

Since the reexamination of the Township Master Plan on June 22, 2005, adoption of the Regional Master Plan by the Highlands Council, the adoption by the Governing Body of its resolution to conform the municipal planning documents to the Regional Master Plan and the establishment of the Lopatcong Township Highlands Center, have had a significant impact on the policies that guide the use of lands in the Township Master Plan, including but not limited to encouragement of increased opportunities for development of the Township's industrially zoned lands within the Highlands Center.

4. Specific Recommended Changes to the Master Plan

The most significant impact of the changes of policy relate to the Township's industrially zoned lands. The expansion of the Sewer Service Area to encompass the vast majority of undeveloped lands in the ROM district south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad; the upgrading of Strykers Road through the district; and establishment of the Highlands Center all contribute to the need for a reexamination of the standards regulating intensity.

The Planning Board recommends that specific changes to the Land Use Plan Element of the Lopatcong Township Master Plan be adopted, including modifications to the underlying objectives, policies and standards, as outlined below:

- a. Provide planning incentives in the form of enhanced design standards that will attract new industrial development requiring expansive ground floor area and high floor to ceiling distance, such as data processing centers, modular housing manufactures and structural steel fabricators, and encourage expansion of existing facilities in the ROM Zone located within the Highlands Center area south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad where sewer service will be available as a result of the expansion of the Sewer Service Area.
- b. Conform to the conditions for a Highlands Center designation as set forth in the Highlands Council Final Consistency Review and Recommendations Report dated January 12, 2012.

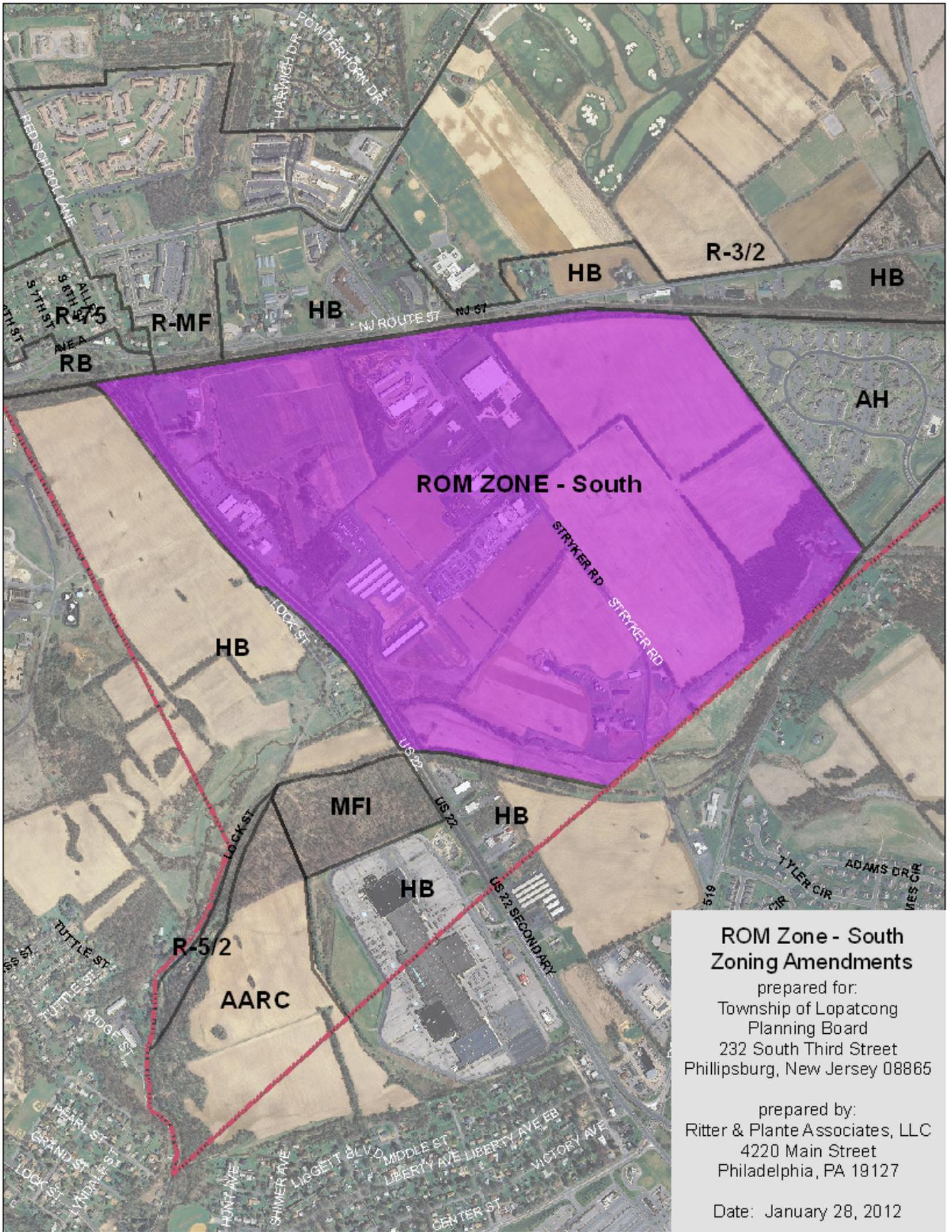
5. Specific Recommended Changes to Development Regulations

Due to the recent improvements to Strykers Road and the availability of public infrastructure to support an increase in industrial activity within the ROM district south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad, the Planning Board recommends that the specific changes as detailed below be considered by the Governing Body to implement the objectives, policies and standards as outlined in the 2012 Master Plan Reexamination Report specifically for the ROM Zone south of the Norfolk Southern Railroad.

- a. Increase allowable height of principal buildings to a maximum of 60 feet and 4 stories.
- b. Increase allowable height of accessory buildings and structures to a maximum of 40 feet.
- c. Increase the allowable Floor Area Ratio (FAR) to 30 percent.

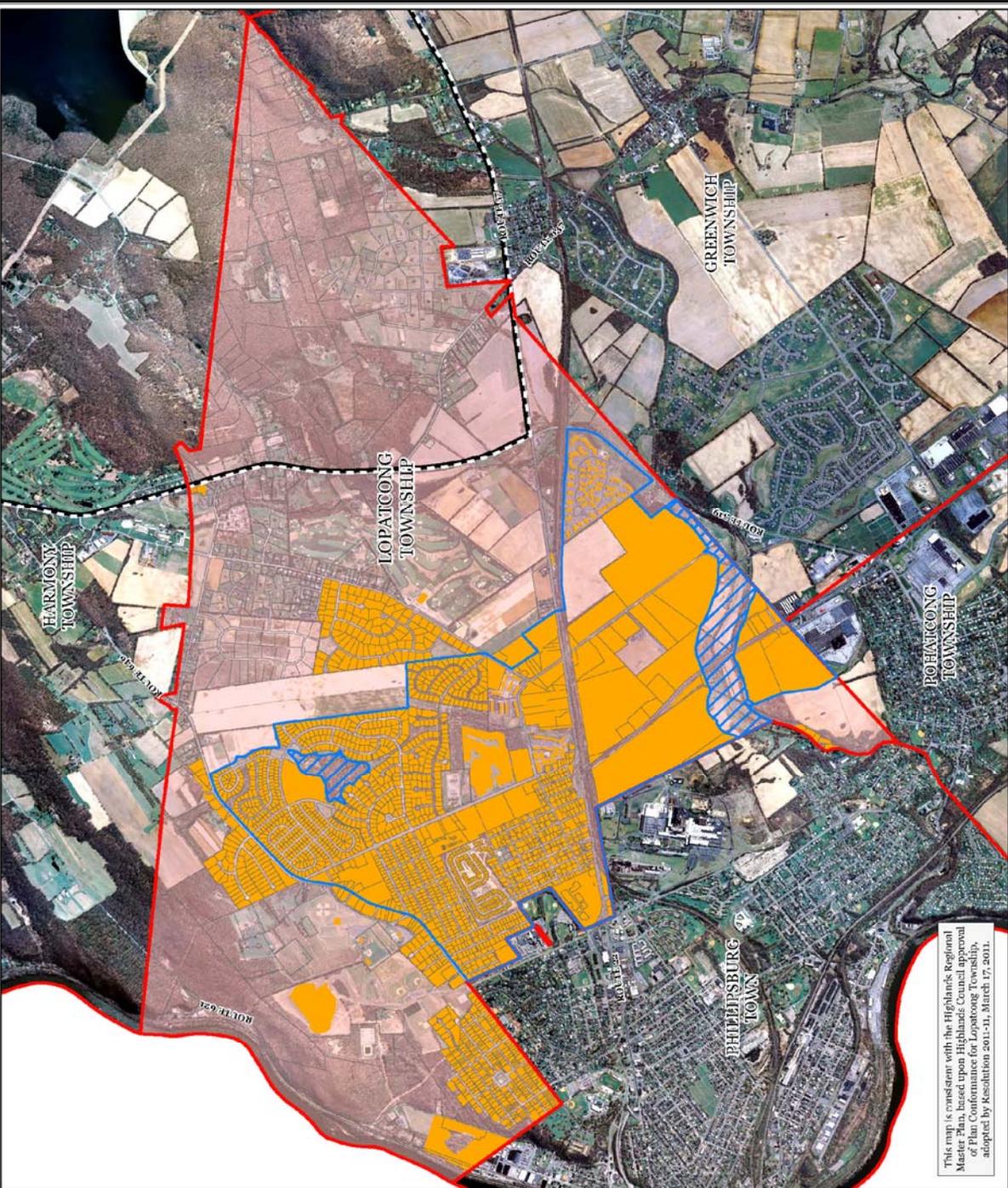
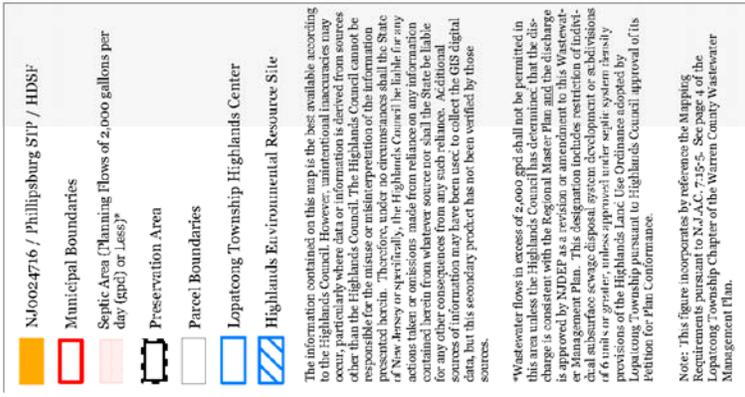
6. Changes Recommended for Incorporation of Redevelopment Plans

At this time the Planning Board makes no findings or recommendations regarding the incorporation of redevelopment plans pursuant to the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, P.L. 11992, c.79 (C.40A:12A-1 et al.).



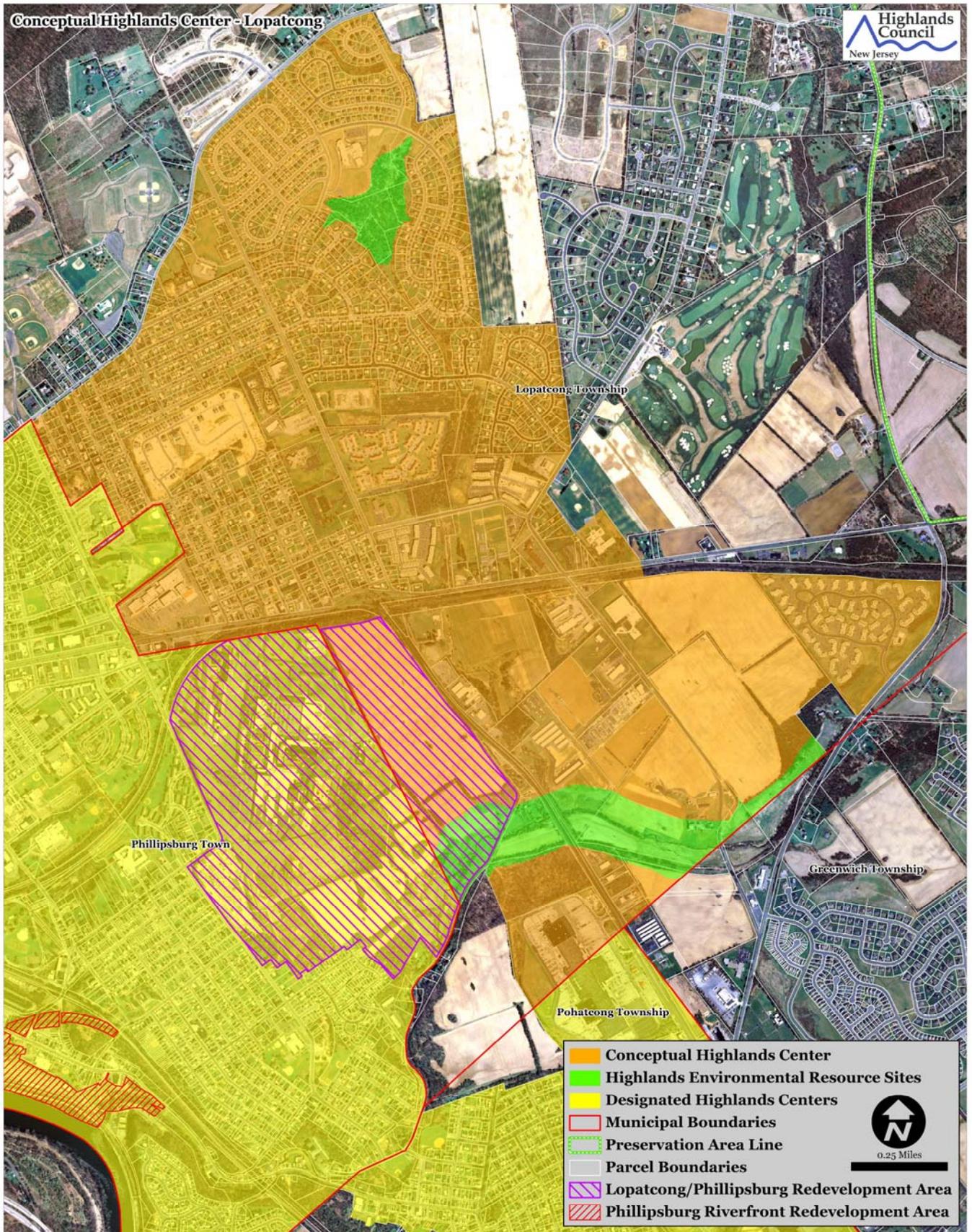
**FIGURE LOPATCONG-2
FUTURE SEWER SERVICE AREAS**

Wastewater Management Plan
Township of Lopatcong, Warren County,
New Jersey - December 27, 2011



This map is consistent with the Highlands Regional Master Plan, based upon Highlands Council approval of Plan Conformance for Lopatcong Township, adopted by Resolution 2011-11, March 17, 2011.

Conceptual Highlands Center - Lopatcong



- Conceptual Highlands Center
- Highlands Environmental Resource Sites
- Designated Highlands Centers
- Municipal Boundaries
- Preservation Area Line
- Parcel Boundaries
- Lopatcong/Phillipsburg Redevelopment Area
- Phillipsburg Riverfront Redevelopment Area