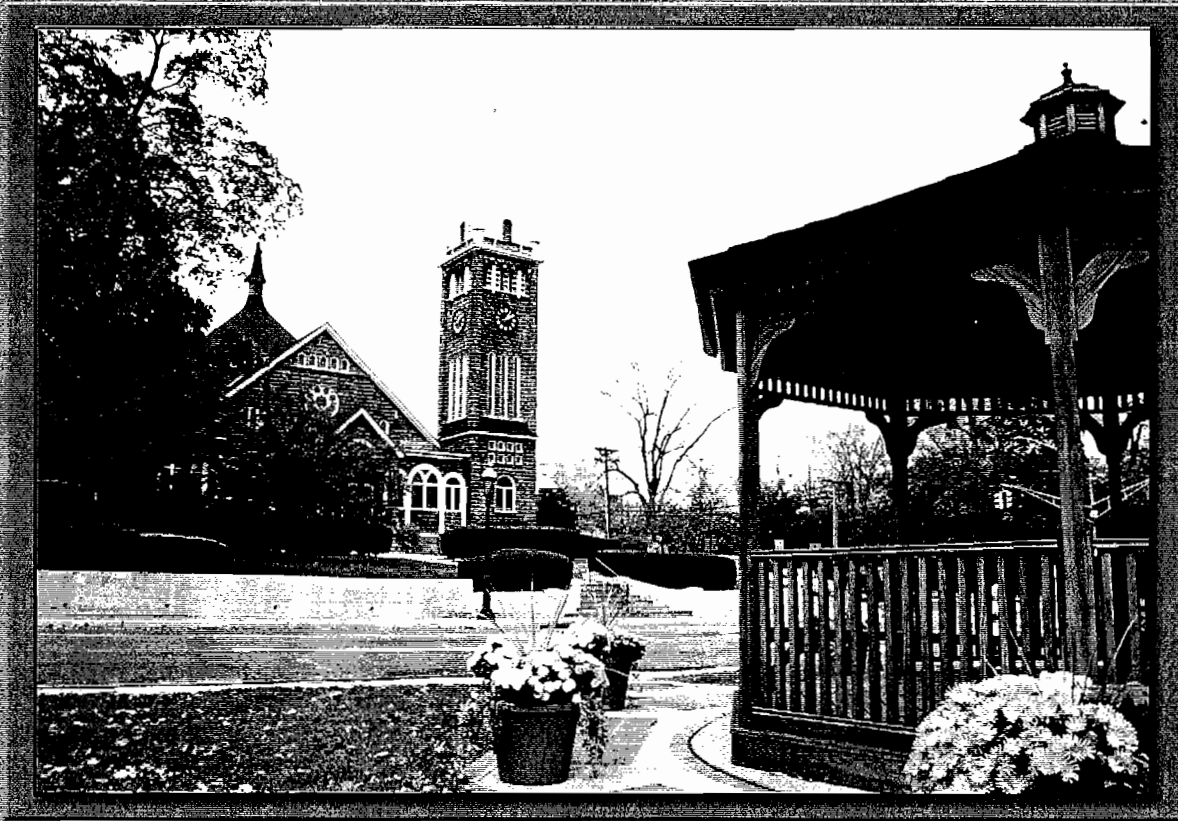


# *Cranford Township*

*Union County, New Jersey*



## *Reexamination Report*

*June 2002*

 *Hoyer, Gravel & Associates, PA*

# Township of Cranford

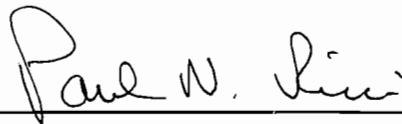
Union County, New Jersey

## Master Plan Reexamination Report

June 26, 2002

**Heyer, Gruel & Associates, PA**  
63 Church Street, 2nd Floor  
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

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



Paul N. Ricci, P.P. # 5570

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## INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) requires that each municipality in New Jersey undertake a periodic review and reexamination of its local Master Plan. The purpose of the Reexamination Report is to review and evaluate the master plan and municipal development regulations on a regular basis in order to determine the need for update and revisions. This report constitutes the Master Plan Reexamination Report for the Township of Cranford as required by the MLUL NJSA (40:55D-89).

The Township of Cranford adopted its last Master Plan Reexamination Report in 1995. This report serves as an amendment to the 1979 Master Plan and an update of the goals and objectives contained in that Plan.

### REQUIREMENTS OF THE PERIODIC REEXAMINATION REPORT

The MLUL requires that the Reexamination Report describe the following:

- The major problems and objectives relating to land development in the municipality at the time of the adoption of the last reexamination report.
- The extent to which such problems and objectives have been reduced or have increased subsequent to such date.
- The extent to which there have been significant changes in 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.
- 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.
- The recommendations of the planning board concerning the incorporation of redevelopment plans adopted pursuant to the "Local Redevelopment and Housing Law," P.L.1992, c. 79 (C.40A:12A-1 et seq.) 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 report that follows addresses each of these statutory requirements.

### MAJOR PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES IN 1995 AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN REDUCED OR HAVE INCREASED

The 1995 Master Plan Reexamination Report identified the following general goals that formed the primary objectives of the Reexamination Report.

**Economic** - Encourage development and improvement of selected industrial, commercial and service uses which are geared toward realistic future growth needs.

**Residential** - Preserve the housing stock and provide a wide range of housing types to meet varied income and age level needs.

**Environmental** - Maintain Cranford's image as a "green-treed" community with adequate open space and provide recreational opportunities equally to all members of the Township.

**Circulation** - Develop a coordinated road and transportation system which will enable the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

**Community Facilities/Utilities/Recreation** - Insure the provision of an adequate range of facilities and services to accommodate existing and future Township needs in a convenient and cost-effective manner.

The following section updates the goals, policies and implementation strategies of the 1995 Reexamination Report.

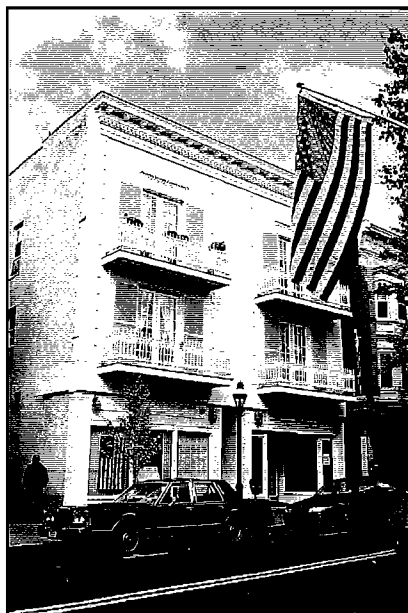
## Township of Cranford

**Economic Goal - Encourage development and improvement of selected industrial, commercial and service uses which are geared toward realistic future growth needs.**

**Policy:** Conserve the economic vitality of the central business district so that the core of Cranford remains healthy and that the periphery of the CBD remains healthy.

**Implementation:** The Township recently prepared a downtown vision plan for the central business district. The process included the preparation of a visual preference survey, which surveys community members design preferences by displaying various images. The outcome is a consensus based process that incorporates the recommendations of all community stakeholder groups in creating a design vision for the Township.

As part of the scope of the visioning plan, an inventory of existing conditions was prepared (i.e., building square footage, use, height, parking, public spaces, etc.) and a build-out analysis under existing zoning and the associated fiscal impact. However, the Visioning Plan does not address the particular suitability of existing uses and design guideline improvements.



It is recommended that a Downtown Center Plan be prepared, which expands upon the desired visual preferences in the CBD to include an evaluation of existing permitted uses and design standards. Moreover, a Downtown Center Plan should identify action strategies for the future development of the CBD and the Special Improvement District (SID).

The Downtown Management Corporation, (DMC) continues to operate the functions of the SID. Several years ago, the SID assessment was decreased from \$0.40 per \$100 assessed valuation to \$0.36. The tax break resulted from new development in the SID, the reduction in the SID rehabilitation budget and the new focus towards business recruitment.

**Policy:** Reinforce the existing pattern of retail sales (dry goods, miscellaneous products, etc.) in the vicinity of North Union Avenue.

**Implementation:** In 1995, the Planning Board determined that it is difficult to rent smaller retail stores. Therefore, the 1995 Reexamination Report recommended permitting first floor retail space less than 1,000 square feet in the B-1 zone. Amendments have been made to the Township's Land Development Ordinance which implements this recommendation. Furthermore, the amendment prohibits the subdivision of existing first floor space to less than 1,000 square feet to prevent abuse of the more flexible land use regulation.

**Policy:** Provide a parking strategy for accommodating commuters, office workers, and retail users in the Central Business District.

**Implementation:** The Township Committee recently approved amendments to the Cranford Crossing Redevelopment Plan, which relates to the construction of a new parking deck. Currently, a surface parking lot with a capacity of 92 parking spaces exists. Under the Cranford Crossing Redevelopment Plan, a new parking deck with approximately 300 parking spaces is proposed.

**Policy:** Incorporate incentive zoning which encourages full-time office employment in the least utilized CBD area near the New Jersey Transit Station and South Avenue.

Implementation: Since 1995, the Township Council adopted the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan in the area between High Street and the River, and South Avenue and Chestnut. The Plan expands upon the policy of providing office space in the least utilized portion of the CBD. The Plan envisions the creation of new shops, a parking garage and an office building on each side of South Avenue adjacent to the train station. Townhouses are proposed at the corner of Chestnut Street and High Street; and a small hotel and restaurant are proposed as a gateway into the project at the intersection of South Avenue and the Rahway River. Additionally, two small residential apartment buildings are proposed adjacent to Chestnut Street and the Rahway River. Together, the aforesaid uses create a desirable office environment.

Policy: Provide pedestrian amenities to link all CBD activities and tie them into the Rahway River Park system.

Implementation: The DMC received a grant for approximately \$65,000 to continue past streetscape improvement efforts, which include: decorative lighting, benches, brick pavers and landscaping in and adjacent to the Riverfront Redevelopment Area. These improvements expand upon recent streetscape decorative improvements of the past and are intended to provide a more pleasant pedestrian atmosphere and consequently increase foot traffic.

Policy: Make the fullest use of CBD second floor spaces to prevent building deterioration but still protect the retail service and retail trades.

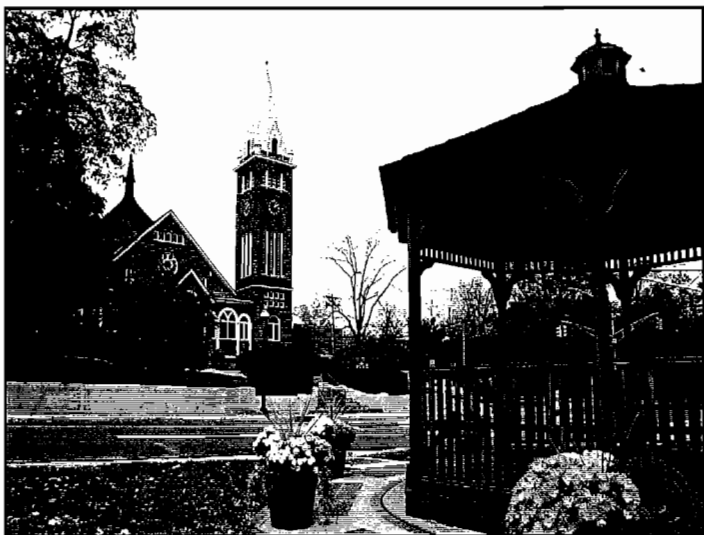
Implementation: This Master Plan Reexamination continues to encourage retail activities on the ground floor and office and service uses as well as residential on upper floors. The past Master Plan Reexamination cited concerns over the inability to rent small stores and the large minimum space requirement for residential apartments in the CBD. Consequently, the previous plan recommended reducing the minimum retail office space size to less than 1,000 square feet and reducing the minimum residential square footage from 1,500 square feet to 800 square feet. Both recommendations have been implemented in the Land Development Ordinance. Therefore, the deterioration of second floor space cited in the 1995 Plan has improved to date.

Policy: Take full advantage of the Garden State Parkway and its easy access for the generation of ratables. Based on regional studies, property demand in the near and long term will be focused more on office/research space and services and less on manufacturing.

Implementation: Since the early 1980's, office uses are replacing manufacturing and warehousing uses in the ROI-1 and ROI-2 districts adjacent to the Garden State Parkway. The 1995 Plan stated that consideration should be given towards limiting warehouses to accessory uses in the ROI-1 and ROI-2 districts. To date, warehouses are still principal permitted uses in both respective zones. This Master Plan Reexamination continues to recommend studying both districts to determine whether this policy should be implemented.

Policy: Give priority to smaller office development in the vicinity of North Avenue East where possible to limit unnecessary traffic through the CBD and optimize the locational advantage of the Garden State Parkway.

Implementation: The Township continues to encourage small office uses on North Avenue East to take advantage of new ratables adjacent to the Garden State Parkway (GSP), while preserving neighborhood character. Office development adjacent to the GSP



is particularly attractive since the majority of anticipated traffic will enter and exit the area from the GSP and therefore not increase traffic in the CBD area.

**Policy:** Maintain the momentum of development in the O-1, ROI-1 and ROI-2 zones.

**Status:** Since 1995, the land use patterns of the O-1, ROI and ROI-2 have remained relatively unchanged. These areas are characterized as primarily built-out. Therefore, rather than maintaining the momentum of development in this respective zones, the new policy is to encourage appropriate reuse of existing obsolete or under utilized facilities and to not allow institutional and public uses in the ROI-1 and ROI-2 zones.

**Policy:** Encourage all activities that will especially utilize Cranford's existing work force (those who are living in Cranford) to minimize travel.

**Implementation:** In addition to changes to the Township's ordinance that permit home occupations in certain zones, the State Assembly modified the Family Home Occupations Act on June 28, 2001. Before adoption, the bill requires state senate approval. If passed, the bill would overwrite existing local ordinances and allow home occupations to exist by right. However, a municipality could change the permitted status of such uses by creating a new ordinance or re-adopting an old ordinance. One of the primary on-going issues of the bill's approval is the status of pre-existing illegal or non-conforming home occupations. Under the current language of the bill, an illegal home based business would become legal and no subsequent ordinance changes would change that condition.

Moreover, while the Township continues to encourage home occupations in certain locations, the consequences of pending legislation should be explored so that the potential outcomes are fully understood.

**Policy:** Increase the tax ratable base which is the primary source of municipal and educational funding for the immediate, foreseeable future.

**Implementation:** The Township continues to encourage new development and redevelopment. As indicated in Table 1, from 1995 - 2001, over 96 million dollars of new construction has occurred.

Table 1  
Value of New Construction  
Cranford Township (1995 - 2001)

1995	\$9,580,000
1996	\$9,126,000
1997	\$12,651,000
1998	\$10,185,000
1999	\$19,852,000
2000	\$15,520,000
2001	\$19,370,000

The majority of new development is anticipated to result from the Cranford Crossing and Riverfront Redevelopment Plans. Accordingly, the redevelopment of the respective areas may create a "snow ball" effect on existing properties to remain attractive in the market place.

**Policy:** Provide continuous review of zoning districts to ensure that they are market sensitive and assist in carrying out other Township goals and objectives.

**Implementation:** A major study was taken of the ROI-2, Selected Research, Office and Industrial districts to ascertain their continued viability. Recommendations from this study, which were included in the 1995 Reexamination Report were to change warehouses to only be permitted as accessory uses in the ROI-2 and ROI-1 districts. To date, this recommendation has not been implemented. The Township should continue to study this issue and consider this revision to the Land Development Ordinance. This Plan also recommends the creation of a new master plan. As part of the Land Use Element, the appropriateness of uses and the delineations of existing districts should be investigated.

**Residential Goals - Preserve the housing stock and provide a wide range of housing types to meet varied income and age level needs.**

**Policy:** Where possible, define residential uses and their boundaries to guard against intrusion from incompatible land uses.

**Implementation:** Since 1995, the Township for the first time hired a full time zoning officer. The zoning officer enforces the residential property maintenance code adopted in 1991. The property maintenance code was implemented to ensure that older homes meet current standards of the building code. This is especially important in Cranford since over 40% of the housing within the Township was constructed prior to 1940.



Additionally, the viability and potential encroachment of incompatible land uses should be investigated as part of a new Land Use Plan Element.

**Policy:** Provide transitional residential density, where possible, gradually, from lower density to higher density in a discernible manner.

**Implementation:** The Land Development Ordinance continues to maintain transition areas to minimize the impacts of incompatible land uses in close proximity to each other. This policy has remained unchanged since 1995.

**Policy:** Maintain the residential uses in the Central Business District because of their lower rent structures, but conditioned on provisions for the health and welfare of those residents.

**Implementation:** Residential uses are continued to be encouraged on upper floors in the downtown. The benefits of a pedestrian friendly downtown having significant foot traffic after 5:00 when most offices and businesses close is well documented in Main Street literature.

Rehabilitation grants are still offered from the community development department to upgrade substandard or deteriorated units occupied by lower income eligible households. These monies are a part of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds received from the federal government each year.

**Policy:** Continue policy of providing a variety of multi-family housing in addition to the traditional single-family home as appropriate policy.

**Implementation:** Both the Cranford Crossing Redevelopment Plan and Riverfront Redevelopment Plan envision the development of various types of housing. Cranford Crossing anticipates a total of 50, one and two bedroom residential apartments located adjacent to the train station.

The Riverfront Redevelopment Plan envisions a mixture of apartments by the river and townhouses at the corner of High and Chestnut Streets.

**Policy:** Continued vigilance of those areas meeting criteria for public assistance to the Community Development Program or other grants as they become available.

**Implementation:** As with years past, the Township continues to pursue and secure Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG). From September 1995 to September 2001, the Township secured over \$2,307,000 in funding. Of this amount, over \$1,700,000 is earmarked towards housing

improvements within the community. The majority of these monies are allocated to the housing rehabilitation program. The program provides grants from 30% to 90% of the rehabilitation costs to bring a housing unit up to code. Typically, such improvements are required when older houses are sold to new owners, which is enforced by the zoning officer.

**Policy:** Promote the expansion of the Cranford senior citizen housing program.

As in past years, the Community Development Department is responsible for administering the Handyman Program and the Senior Citizen Social Services Program. The Handyman Program funds minor repairs at the homes of seniors, while the Senior Citizen Social Services Program provides seniors with various recreational and health programs. The Handyman program has been very successful. Approximately 650 calls are responded to each year.

The Township instituted a new program called the Nutrition Program. This service provides meals – off a menu – for seniors at the Senior Room located on Lincoln Avenue adjacent to Meeker Avenue. The meal program includes social activity and entertainment.

Another new addition is the first computer room for seniors in the County. The program, also located at the senior facility, contains six computers and instruction provided as a inter-generational teaching arrangement between youths and seniors.

**Environmental Goals -** Maintain Cranford's image as a "green-treed" community with adequate open space and provide recreational opportunities equally to all members of the Township.

**Policy:** Conserve treed rights-of-way and institute a tree planting program.

**Policy:** Conserve and protect as many environmentally sensitive areas in the Township as possible, including but not limited to all waterways, wetlands and refuge areas. Require new development to be subject to rigorous performance standards to minimize any potential adverse environmental impacts.

**Policy:** Encourage the development of a Township-wide green belt incorporating natural areas, environmentally sensitive areas and areas of scenic beauty such as the Rahway River to connect various parts of the Township through a unique open space network.

**Implementation:** The Township continues to refer all development applications to the Environmental Commission for their review and recommendations prior to a vote by the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment.

In November of 1998, New Jersey voters approved a constitutional amendment authorizing a stable and dedicated source of funding for open space acquisition and recreational development projects.



Eligible acquisition projects include, but are not limited to, the purchase of water resources, natural areas, unique land types, historic sites, conservation areas, and open space for active or passive outdoor recreation purposes.

The Township should consider preparing an Open Space Plan element to the Master Plan to determine potential parcels for acquisition and the possibilities of instituting a local open space tax.

**Circulation Goals - Develop a coordinated road and transportation system which will enable the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.**

**Policy:** Emphasize short term road improvements in traffic management systems which aid in improving east-west movements (e.g., North Avenue, South Avenue), north-south movements (e.g., Centennial Avenue and Walnut Avenue, selected key intersections and railroad underpasses).

**Policy:** Encourage commuter bus service for local trips.

**Policy:** Seek alternate commuter rail parking to preserve and minimize impacts on Cranford's downtown.

The Riverfront Redevelopment Plan which is adjacent to the train station, proposes structured parking which is intended to accommodate commuter parking.

**Implementation:** Recommendations from the Route 28 corridor study that were implemented include relocating the bus stop for Route #59 from South Avenue and Walnut Avenue to South Avenue and High Street to place the stop directly across from the rail station. This improvement enhances the connectivity between the Raritan Valley stations to the west and the bus to Elizabeth.

Intersections in downtown Cranford such as Walnut Avenue/South Avenue, Union Avenue/North Avenue and North Avenue/Main Streets all have turning and traffic considerations that should closely be monitored and improved.

The County recently improved pedestrian signals in the downtown to provide for safer crossing of roadways. This included checking the "walk" timing to insure proper time is given to pedestrians. Otherwise, jaywalking occurs, which is a safety concern.



**Policy:** Encourage alternate circulation modes and networks such as bicycle pedestrian, and mass transit designed as to minimize auto traffic.

**Implementation:** The Township should support regional efforts to provide light rail service in Union County. As mentioned in the Circulation Progress Report, a regional light rail system is proposed to improve east-west rail service in the County. As Cranford's population increases, rail and other non auto transportation solutions are imperative to providing transit; especially for seniors.

**Community Facilities/Utilities/Recreation Goals - Insure the provision of an adequate range of facilities and services to accommodate existing and future Township needs in a convenient and cost-effective manner.**

**Policy:** Encourage the location of new public facilities (such as parks and senior citizen centers) within effective service areas. Also, make full use of school facilities, both those now being used as schools and those scheduled to be phased out for recreational and community activities.

**Policy:** Continue adequate public service - safety service, police, fire, rescue – with appropriate facilities, manpower, and equipment distributed according to needs.

## Township of Cranford

**Policy:** Encourage the continued use of the public libraries as a positive benefit to the community.

**Implementation:** The Township continues to place a high degree of importance on community facilities. Accordingly, the Township allocated \$6.9 million dollars to construct a 39,300 square foot community center and a 5,650 square foot addition and renovation to the existing library. The community center contains a gymnasium, audio visual room, arts and crafts rooms, game rooms, and more.

**Policy:** Encourage the preservation of historic buildings and landmarks that are significant to Cranford's past.

**Implementation:** The Crane-Phillips House, located adjacent to the municipal building will be renovated to return the building to its Victorian heritage. Anticipated improvements include the updating of the electrical, plumbing, heating ventilation and air conditioning units prior to historic character improvements. Features of the renovation include the renovation of a the original stove with a Phillips range hood, a working pump in the kitchen and a restored bedroom. The museum is expected to re-open in September 2002.

**Policy:** Plan a management strategy for preservation or disposition of municipal vacant land ... based on locational significance and physical characteristics consistent with the physical, social and economic needs and goals of the Township's population.

### **EXTENT TO WHICH THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN ASSUMPTIONS, POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES**

The policies of the 1995 Master Plan Reexamination Report are still valid. The Township continues to implement strategies of the 1995 Plan.



**LAND USE PROGRESS REPORT (1995 - 2001)**

An existing land use map, revised in February 2000 is attached in Appendix A.

*Redevelopment Plans* - The most significant change in the Township's recent history is the creation of two Redevelopment Plans - Cranford Crossing and Cranford Riverfront. These Redevelopment Plans are intended to create a boost to the local economy, establish better urban design standards, and promote the general welfare of the Township through new redevelopment.

The 1995 Union County Strategic Plan states as an objective: revitalize the downtown shopping areas of Union County municipalities. To this end, and to maintaining the economic base of Cranford Township, Cranford Crossing and Riverfront Redevelopment were undertaken (see Appendix B). Both



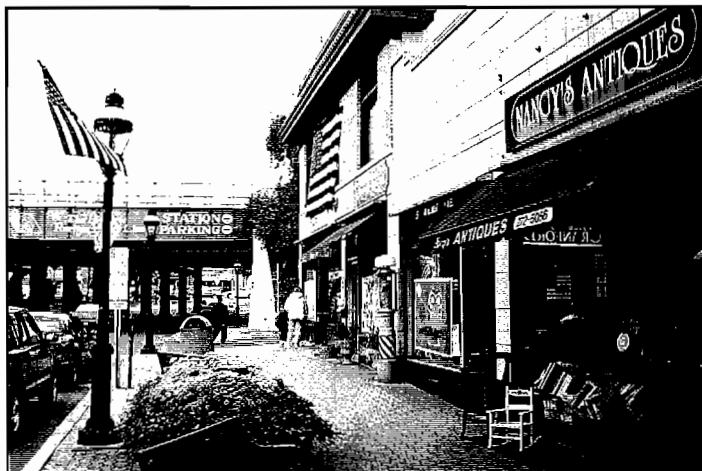
Redevelopment Plans coincide with the goals of the Downtown Management Corporation, which has pursued the revitalization of the Special Improvement District since its inception in 1986.

*Infill Development* - Since 1995, the pressure to subdivide residentially zoned properties in residential neighborhoods has increased. There has also been a trend to demolish



existing older homes and to replace them with much larger houses. Often, the result is the creation of a home which is out of character with a neighborhood. These trends are directly related to the desirability of Cranford as maintaining many stable residential neighborhoods. Accordingly, the Township should continue to review standards that may address the scale of infill development such as increased setbacks, increased lot sizes and elevation standards.

*Central Business District* - Both the vitality of Cranford as a regional center and its desirability as a place to live is directly related to the Downtown. As a result, there continues to



be increasing emphasis on the enhancement of the Township's Central Business District (CBD). One of the key considerations in assessing the viability of any CBD is the amount, location and allocation of parking to all groups using the CBD. Currently, a parking study is being prepared. Recommendations of the parking study and their financial feasibility should be considered by the Township.

In September of 2000, the Downtown Management Corporation, which is the management entity of the Special Improvement District, made recommendations to remedy some of the weaknesses in the sign and facade ordinance as it relates to the Special Improvement District. To date, these recommendations have not been adopted. This Reexamination Report recommends the adoption of new design standards.

*Union County College* - For many years there have been conflicts between Union County College and the nearby residential neighbors. The college – a county run facility – preempts municipal authority and therefore the Planning Board has little or no control over development on the campus. Considering there are no legal standards which permit local intervention of land use disputes between the college and neighbors, it is recommended that both parties practice collaborative planning techniques. Under a collaborative planning scenario, both the college and nearby residents would discuss each others concerns in person. While this is not a concrete solution to an ongoing problem, it attempts to promote the discussion and long range plans of the college with residents.

*Center Designation* - Cranford has been identified as an existing Regional Center in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan, however, the Township has not received center designation to date and therefore benefits offered to centers by the state are potentially lost.

It is recommended that the Township re-petition for center designation and consistency review.

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PROGRESS REPORT (1995 - 2001)

*Recreation and Open Space Inventory* - Cranford Township is an established community with limited land not already utilized as residential, commercial, industrial, open space and recreation uses. Accordingly, in “built-out” communities, the preservation of existing open space is a primary goal. The 1995 Reexamination Report stated that an updated Green Acres inventory of lands protected in perpetuity is of the utmost importance.

In order to update the Township’s Recreation and Open Space Inventory (ROSI), a task force was created in 2001, which consisted of the Township Administrator, Township Attorney, Township Engineer, and Township Planner. Additional assistance was provided by the Township Assessor.

The task force inventoried all past ROSI’s submitted to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP) Green Acres Program, evaluated parcels not on current inventories and searched for new parcels to be added to the 2001 updated ROSI.

The results of the task force was quite positive; over thirty acres (30) of land are proposed to be added to the current ROSI list. At this time, Green Acres is reviewing the ROSI.

The update of the ROSI is important to Cranford as it protects existing open space in the community and provides potential funding from Green Acres for acquisition of new park lands and improvements to existing parks/open space.

According to the 2001 ROSI Task Force, if the ROSI amendments are approved by Green Acres, the Township will have over 100 acres of land protected against development. Additionally, over 200 acres of county park lands are protected in Cranford. It is recommended that the Township should periodically:



- Review existing park and recreation facilities to ensure that they meet the needs of the Township’s growing population
- Review the location of existing athletic fields and recreation facilities and compare these to future needs.

*Union County Open Space Tax* - In 2000, the Union County voters approved and open space tax of 1.5 cents per \$100. This tax is expected to generate 4.9 million dollars per year to preserve open space in the County.

## HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT (1995-2001)

The Township adopted a Housing Plan/Fair Share Plan element dated on May 19, 2000. The Plan concluded that Cranford has met its low and moderate income housing obligation, after rehabilitation credits and a vacant land adjustment. A vacant land adjustment was requested due to the developed nature of the Township.

Cranford has petitioned COAH for substantive certification on June 5, 2000. COAH is currently reviewing the Township’s request for substantive certification.

## PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES PROGRESS REPORT 1995 - 2001

The Township of Cranford has continued to adopt long and short-term capital improvement plans to ensure that the

Township’s public facilities and infrastructure meet the needs of the Township’s population. The Township must continue to assess the impact that new growth and development will have on the Township’s service requirements. New redevelopment



efforts will be undertaken in a “Smart Growth” approach that ensures that new growth in the Township is supported with adequate public services.

*Flooding Improvements* - The Township received \$3.25 million from NJ DEP and \$2.45 million from Union County for a flood control project along the Rahway River. The project will use state, county and local funds (\$2.45 million) to improve existing stormwater facilities. The total cost of the project is \$8.15 million. The project anticipates reducing flooding in an area where 480 homes exist. The following is

a breakdown of the project:

- Construction of express and local service storm sewers
- Construction of a stormwater diversion chamber and pumping station
- Construction of north and south connection to the pumping station
- East side dike modifications
- West side dike modifications and a Park Drive pumping station
- West side storm sewers and pump connections

However, due to the current State budget crisis, it is uncertain whether the Township will receive all or part of previously awarded grant funding.

### CIRCULATION SYSTEM PROGRESS REPORT 1995 - 2001

Since 1995 the circulation network in the Township has remained relatively unchanged. The 1995 Master Plan listed the connection of the defunct Staten Island Railroad from Cranford Junction to the Arthur Kill as a potential future land use concern for Cranford. New Jersey transit purchased the defunct railroad right-of-way for future public transit use. At this time, the line is inactive and is most likely land banked for future passenger or freight needs of the future.

The New Jersey Association of Railroad Passengers (NJ-ARP) recommends the creation of a multi-modal approach to improve rail service in Union County. The vision calls for a inter-modal transfer hub for all of Union County in downtown Elizabeth. The proposed plan envisions the construction of a light rail transit (LRT) line in an easterly direction to Newark International Airport and the establishment of a railroad compatible link via high-tech diesel multiple unit vehicles in a westerly direction to Bound Brook and beyond. The proposed line would vastly improve east-west service in the County, which has been unavailable since 1978.

### SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IMPACTING THE MASTER PLAN

Since the Township of Cranford adopted its 1995 Master Plan Reexamination Report, there have been significant changes at the local, state and county level that have had an impact on the Township’s planning efforts. At the federal, state and county level, a number of new laws, programs and planning initiatives have been adopted that provide new technical and financial resources for the revitalization of New Jersey’s communities. These programs and legislative initiatives have had a positive impact on the Township and support the Township’s own redevelopment efforts. This section analyzes the affect that these changes have had on the assumptions, policies and objectives that form the basis of the Township’s Master Plan.

## CHANGES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

### Demographic Changes

A number demographic changes have been reported since the posting of year 2000 Census figures. Demographic changes can affect the outcome of planning efforts. Below is an examination of population, age, and housing characteristics that affect the current state of planning in Cranford as of the year 2000.

**Population.** Cranford's population has decreased by 55 persons (-0.2%) since 1990. This is not characteristic of the population trends at the county, state, and national levels. While the Township lost 0.2 percent of its population during the ten year period, the county's population increased by 5.8 percent, the state's population increased by 8.9 percent, and the nation's population increased by 10 percent. At this point it is unrealistic to consider a complete turnaround of this trend unless major changes are achieved throughout the Township, primarily through the efforts of redevelopment.

**Age.** Cranford is getting older. The median age in 1980 was 34.3 years. The median age in 1990 was 37 years. By 2000, the median age had risen to 40.4. During this 20-year period, the 65 and over age group grew from 11.5 percent of the population to 17.9 percent. Conversely, the 5 to 24 age group declined from 30.0 percent of the population to 22.1 percent. This indicates that Cranford's population mainly stays in the town, growing older in place.

**Housing.** There were not many significant changes in the housing stock of Cranford over the last 20 years. Average household size stayed relatively stable over the 20-year period. The total number of households decreased by 7.5 percent, keeping relative pace with the population of the Township. The proportion of renter-occupied units to owner occupied units also remained relatively unchanged.

## CHANGES AT THE COUNTY LEVEL

Union County updated its master plan in June 1998. The plan does not earmark individual recommendations by municipality. Rather the plan updates:

- County Goals and Objectives
- Demographics
- Updated (non-municipal specific) Land Use Plan
- Circulation and Transportation Plan
- Public Transportation
- Economic Development Initiatives

However, the objectives and assumptions are county specific and do not make any specific recommendations regarding Cranford.

## CHANGES AT THE STATE LEVEL

### State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The State Planning Commission adopted the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) in June of 1992 and adopted a revised SDRP on March 1, 2001. The SDRP contains a number of goals and objectives regarding the future development and redevelopment of New Jersey. The primary objective of the SDRP is to guide development to areas where infrastructure is available or can be readily extended such as along existing transportation corridors, in developed or developing suburbs, and in urban areas. New growth and development should be located in "centers", which are "compact" forms of development, rather than in 'sprawl' development. The overall goal of the SDRP is to promote development and redevelopment that will consume less land, deplete fewer natural resources and use the State's infrastructure more efficiently.

To achieve these goals, the SDRP proposes a number of statewide policies and objectives. Among these is the redevelopment and revitalization of New Jersey's cities and urban areas. As set forth in the 2001 SDRP:

*"Revitalizing the State's cities and towns cannot be a simple matter of restoring them to their former glory, but rather of transforming them. To be sustainable, a new vision of the economic, environmental, and social role each community will play within a larger region should be developed and pursued cooperatively in the context of a Regional Strategic Plan."*

The 2001 SDRP identifies Cranford as part of the PA 1 Metropolitan Planning Area.

Cranford is identified as a Regional Center in the 2001 SDRP. Regional centers serve as major employment centers and offer regional services for the surrounding area, including higher education, recreation, health and arts and entertainment facilities. The Township’s planning efforts are designed to strengthen and enhance Cranford’s role as a Regional Center.

**Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS)**

The New Jersey Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS) were adopted in January 1997 and revised November 1999. The RSIS governs any site improvements carried out in connection with a new residential development. The RSIS were designed to create uniform standards and ensure predictability in the development process. The rules supersede municipal standards for residential development.

It is recommended that the Township’s Zoning and Land Development Ordinance continue to be evaluated in light of consistency with the RSIS as implemented by the State.

**Group Homes**

In January 1998, the Municipal Land Use Law was amended to address group homes in residential districts. N.J.S.A. 40:55D-66.1 states that:

*“Community residences for the developmentally disabled, community shelters for victims of domestic violence, community residences for the terminally ill and community residences for persons with head injuries shall be a permitted use in all residential districts of a municipality, and the requirements therefore shall be the same as for single-family dwelling units located within such districts.”*

This change should be incorporated into the Zoning and Land Development Ordinance.

**Home Occupations**

In recent years there has been a growing trend towards telecommuting, which has potential land use impacts. In order to address this issue, the State legislature has considered amendments to the Municipal Land Use Law governing home occupations. These proposed amendments should continue

to be monitored by the Township.

**Child Care**

Amendments to the Municipal Land Use Law govern the regulation of child care and day-care facilities. Pursuant to the MLUL, these uses are permitted in any non-residential district. The Township’s Zoning and Land Development Ordinance should be reviewed for consistency with the statute.

**Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act**

The Law establishes a comprehensive program for the financing, design, renovation, repair and new construction of primary and secondary schools throughout the State. The most significant change in the Law is the level of State aid for public school construction. The new Law guarantees construction aid for every school district in New Jersey. The minimum level of aid is forty percent (40%), Abbott districts will receive one hundred percent (100%) of eligible costs. The new law also sets facility efficiency standards.

To qualify for funding, the school district must have a long-range facilities plan and project approval. Benefits of this Law to local districts include:

- Providing the opportunity to make schools safe and conducive to learning the Core Curriculum Content Standards.
- Offering property tax relief by reducing the local share of construction costs.
- Giving districts a strategic capital planning tool
- Aiding facility management and maintenance
- Stimulating a comprehensive district wide needs assessment
- Providing the State with consistent data for all districts
- Improving the exchange of information between the state and local districts

Pursuant to the Act, the Planning Board is required to review and comment on long-range facilities plans.

CHANGES AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

Religious Institutions

In September 2000, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act was approved in the U.S. House and Senate and subsequently signed by the President. The law substantially changes the extent of local review a community has on development applications of religious institutions. The outcome(s) of this new regulation should be continually monitored by the Township.

Wireless Communications

Congress passed the Telecommunications Act (TCA) of 1996 to update the Communications Act of 1934 to reflect advances in modern technology. TCA provides a new national policy framework that relies on competition and market forces to advance the development of communications infrastructures throughout the Country.

Currently, Cranford has not adopted a wireless communications ordinance to govern these uses.

This plan recommends the development of an ordinance to permit such uses in suitable areas and to encourage visually acceptable ways to support this technology.

**SPECIFIC CHANGES RECOMMENDED FOR THE MASTER PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

*Strengthen the role of the Downtown Management Corporation (DMC) regarding the final approval of signs and facades in the Special Improvement District (SID)* - While the DMC is responsible for managing the Cranford's CBD to retain its viability, it currently does not have a stake in the review of downtown development/renovation applications. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Land Development Ordinance be amended to require that development applications be reviewed by the DMC and that the review comments be considered by the appropriate board.

*Updated Sign Ordinances and Design Guidelines (Consistent with Redevelopment Plans)* - On September 21, 2000, the DMC recommended changes pertaining to sign regulations and building facades within the SID. The Land Development Ordinance should be revised to update streetscape and design standards.

*Larger Homes on Oversized Parcels & Expansion of Homes* - The construction of oversized homes adjacent to existing smaller homes continues to be a land use concern within the community. Many new or proposed homes are often perceived as a jarring visual intrusion that changes the character of the neighborhoods.

Traditionally, the majority of oversized homes or "McMansions" occur when existing houses are demolished and replaced with new and often more modern homes that are significantly larger than the previous home. Zoning standards traditionally regulate the opposite of oversized homes. They are designed to protect against undersized homes, which was designed as a means of protecting property values.

Accordingly, this Master Plan Reexamination Report proposes recommendations to create opportunities for infill development, protect existing residential development from encroachment of incompatible infill development and to allow for reasonable additions.

*Illegal Conversions of single-family to multiple-family housing* - Since the last Reexamination report, Cranford has experienced an increased number of illegal residential conversions. An illegal conversion is the creation of one or more additional dwelling units within a home without first receiving the approval of, and permits from the Township. Illegal conversions are frequently done in violation of existing fire and building codes, and constitute a significant danger to tenants and other individuals living in the building. The conversions also alter the quality of life in neighborhoods by crowding more people into an area than originally intended. Potential consequences are reduced parking, greater demands on schools and other municipal services.

Illegal conversions are an enforcement issue rather than a Planning Board function. However, the increase in illegal conversions over the last several years warrants an investigation into greater deterrents. Accordingly, the Planning Board

recommends the investigation of greater fines and penalties for illegal conversions. Fines should increase exponentially for repeat offenders at the same location.

*Parking requirements for restaurants without seating*- Section 136-23(3) determines the required number of parking spaces per use. Currently, one (1) parking space is required for each 2 1/2 seats for restaurants, eating and drinking establishments and catering halls. A problem occurs when an eating establishment does not have seating but a service area and a drive-through. Today, there are many facilities without seating that generate a significant parking demand, e.g., Dunkin Donuts. In order to properly provide parking for such uses, section 136-23(3) regulating restaurants, eating and drinking establishments and catering halls should be amended.

*Creation of a New Zoning District in Flood Delineated Areas* - The Township should study and evaluate the creation of a new zoning district to better regulate flood delineated areas.

*Skateboard Ramps and Recreational Structures* - Skateboard ramps and other similar recreational structures have become a common occurrence throughout the Township. Under the existing Land Development Ordinance (LDO), such structures are neither defined nor regulated. This Reexamination Report specifically recommends defining such structures and creating ordinances to regulate them accordingly in the LDO.

Furthermore, the Township should evaluate the creation of a new recreational and public purpose district, which may allow the use of recreational structures.

*Creation of a new Master Plan* - This reexamination report recommends the creation of a new Master Plan. The last full Master Plan was adopted in 1979. Although, the Township has prepared numerous reexamination reports since that time, a new comprehensive plan should be prepared to create, update and evaluate:

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Economic
- Open Space & Recreation
- Historic Preservation
- Recycling
- Utilities

It is recommended that a new CBD element be added to the Master Plan.

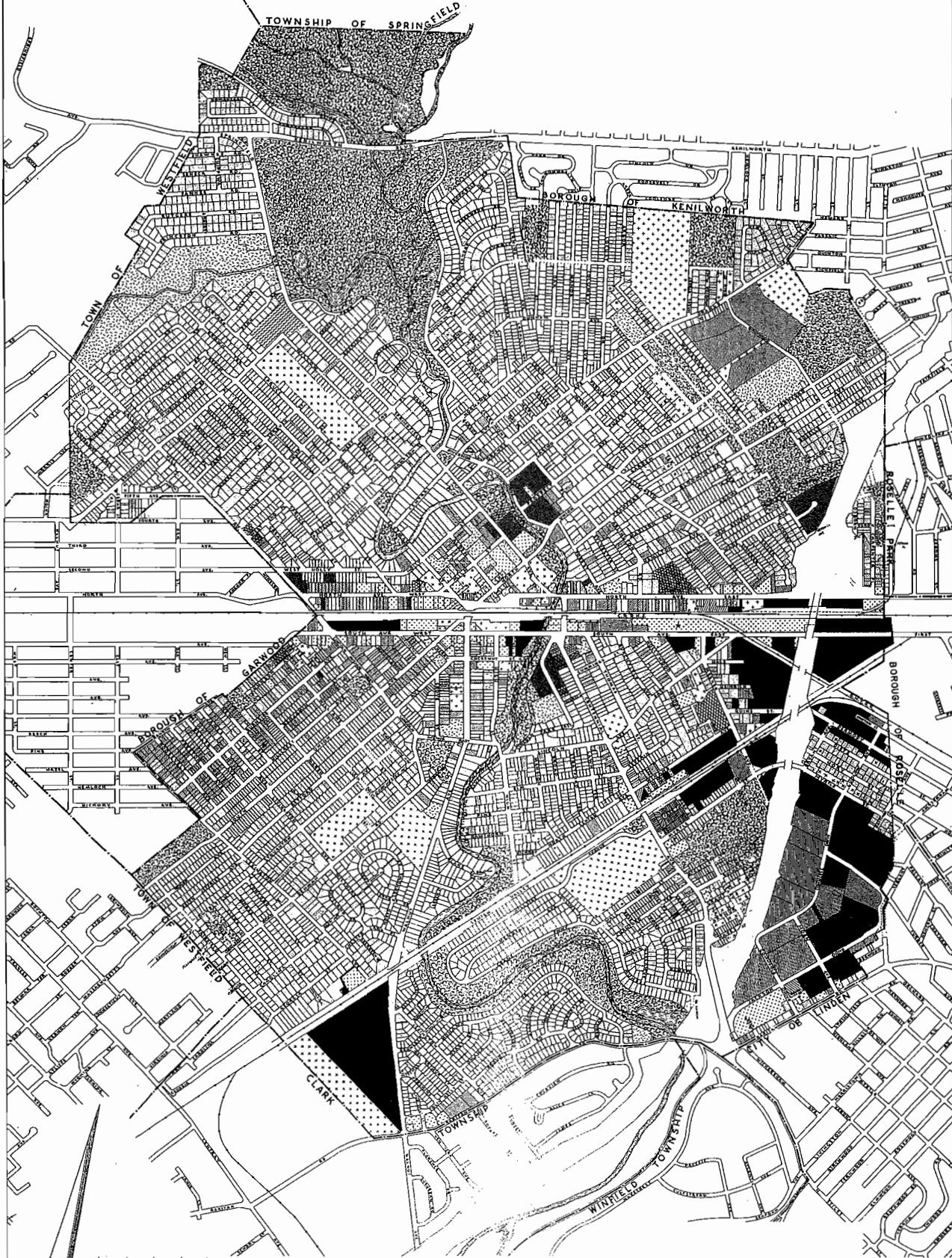
### **RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING REDEVELOPMENT PLANS**

While the Planning Board does not recommend any formal changes to the Redevelopment Plans in Cranford, the Board wishes to stress the importance of pedestrian linkages in Redevelopment Plans. Two objectives of Cranford Crossing are:

- To improve the streetscape through street furniture, paving, lighting, landscaping, pedestrian linkages and parking improvements; and
- To enhance opportunities for a more pedestrian oriented environment.

# EXISTING LAND USE MAP

February 2000



KEY

	SINGLE FAMILY		COMMERCIAL (Under Contract)		VACANT
	TWO & THREE FAMILY		COMMERCIAL		PUBLIC
	FOUR FAMILY		OFFICE		SEMI-PUBLIC
	ROW HOUSES OR TOWNHOUSES		AGRICULTURAL		PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE
	MULTI-FAMILY OR GARDEN APARTMENTS		INDUSTRY		

TOWNSHIP OF  
**CRANFORD**  
 UNION COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Heyer, Gruel & Associates, PA - 2000  
 BASE MAP REVISED: DECEMBER 1997

APPENDIX B

