

AMENDMENT TO THE LAND USE PLAN

Arts & Culture



SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

HAMILTON TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD
MERCER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Amendment to the Land Use Plan

TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON

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

Adopted by the Hamilton Township Planning Board
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A signed and sealed original is on file with the Township Clerk's office

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INTRODUCTION

Art and culture can positively contribute to a community in a variety of ways, including economic, aesthetic, educational and by enhancing civic pride. This Land Use Plan Amendment will promote Hamilton Township, through zoning and redevelopment initiatives, as a destination for arts and culture. Fortunately, the Township has assets upon which it can build this promotion. The primary asset is the Grounds For Sculpture, a renowned art facility that features an outdoor sculpture garden with associated galleria, studios, education and entertainment facilities. The Grounds For Sculpture is already successful at promoting the arts in the surrounding area, primarily with sculpture placements along East State Street and on the NJ Transit Hamilton Station property. These art placements not only increase public awareness of the facility but also beautify the area. Additionally, the Grounds For Sculpture, and the Township, enjoy excellent vehicular and mass transit access via the NJ Transit Northeast Corridor line, Interstate 295 and State Highway Route 33.

The promotion of arts and culture can have a positive economic impact since the arts and culture are a magnet for local and regional tourism. Township businesses, such as restaurants and hotels, prosper when in proximity to arts and culture destinations. Nationally, arts and culture spending increased 24% between



Sculpture along Klockner Avenue, north of East State Street

2000 and 2005¹. The promotion of arts and culture in Hamilton Township will support existing businesses and the creation of new ventures. These new art and culture organizations will bring jobs as well as investment to the Township. Increasing the presence of art and culture amenities in a community can also result in a positive increase in property values, including residential property values, as the area becomes more desirable to live, work and play².

Through creation of an Arts and Culture Overlay Zone District, the Township will encourage mixed use and commercial development and redevelopment which promotes arts and culture. Additionally, the Master Plan Amendment will provide the foundation for revisions to zoning and

¹ Americans for the Arts. “Arts and Economic Prosperity III. The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and their Audiences Summary.”

² Sheppard, Stephen; Oehler, Kay; Benjamin, Blair. “Buying into Bohemia: the Impact of Cultural Amenities on Property Values”. Center for Creative Community Development.

design regulations that will promote public art placement and design standards which will further enhance the arts and culture in the Township.

Art and culture can be a major source of aesthetic improvement and civic pride. This will likely be particularly so in the Overlay District since many parts of the District consist of underutilized properties that are in need of repair. It is anticipated that as arts and culture organizations expand their presence in the District that the buildings on these underutilized properties will be improved or replaced. Furthermore, the presence of public art in the District will continue, at a minimum, with the placement of additional sculpture pieces. These art installations add visual interest to an area, are a tourism draw and serve as a source of civic pride.

ARTS AND CULTURE DISTRICT OVERVIEW

An overlay zoning district of the nonresidential districts (Industrial, Highway Commercial, Community Commercial and General Commercial) generally stretching from the Hamilton Train Station in the north to the Mill One site to the south in the Bromley neighborhood is intended to promote development and redevelopment of land uses which advance the arts and culture. The Arts and Culture Overlay District will also promote investment in the area through mixed use and commercial development that enhance and support arts and culture.

The character and existing conditions within the overlay district vary widely. However, access to regional transportation and proximity and connection to the heart of the district – the Grounds For Sculpture – are shared characteristics that support the district. Use of an overlay district, rather than a rezoning of the area will provide incentives for development and redevelopment that are consistent with arts and culture without removing the underlying zoning upon which the existing development is based. The overlay approach offers new development incentives to property owners which are in addition to current zoning.

The portion of the district north of East State Street hosts the district's most recent development, including the Hamilton Train Station. The Hamilton Train Station is one of the busiest stops on NJ Transit's Northeast Corridor line, which runs from Trenton to New York City. The train station not only serves as a regional transit hub which gives tourists access to the district, but it already promotes arts and culture through the many sculpture placements on the property. Other noteworthy land uses north of East State Street include the AMC movie theaters, which contribute to arts and culture, as well as office and residential development. While located in the Industrial zone district, the majority of recent development in this area is consistent with the Cyberdistrict Redevelopment Area Plan which encompasses much of the overlay district.

Much of the central and southern portions of the district, along the East State Street Extension, consist of Industrial and Manufacturing zone districts within the Cyberdistrict Redevelopment Area. This area has been dominated by industrial and manufacturing uses for years; however, vacancy rates and underutilization in the area have been rising consistent with the decline of manufacturing in New Jersey and the country as a whole. For this reason, it is important to provide viable alternative land uses that will promote full utilization of the properties. Additionally, many art and culture uses, such as studio, gallery and performing arts space, are well suited to adaptively reuse existing industrial buildings.

Included to the south is that portion of the Bromley neighborhood which is within the General Commercial zoning district. This community along the border with the City of Trenton consists of a compact residential neighborhood and a variety of commercial and service uses, predominantly, along Route 33. Within the Bromley neighborhood is the Mill One redevelopment site at the intersection of North Johnson Avenue and Nottingham Way. Formerly the site of a luggage manufacturer, the redevelopment of the Mill One property is expected to include space

devoted to arts and cultural uses and will otherwise fulfill the arts and culture district Goals and Objectives.

The Overlay District will also include areas within the Highway Commercial, General Commercial and Community Commercial districts which are located primarily along Nottingham Way but also at the intersection of Klockner Avenue and East State Street. These districts consist of small to moderate sized retail, restaurant and service uses. Also included in the Overlay District given its proximity to the area is the Hamilton Township municipal building and the Community Commercial corridor along Greenwood Avenue. This commercial corridor has a mixed character, with many viable businesses interspersed with under utilized properties such as the Suburban Plaza shopping center and the undeveloped property near the intersection of Nottingham Way and Klockner Avenue. The Suburban Plaza center has suffered from high turnover and vacancy rates for over a decade. The property to the east previously received a development approval for a retail center but construction has yet to begin.

The Grounds For Sculpture – the use which anchors the district and is the largest tourism draw – suffers from a lack of visibility and integration with the surrounding area. Recent actions by the sponsoring organizations at the Grounds for Sculpture have begun to enhance its presence, including the extension of its distinctive fencing around an expanded garden area at the corner of Nottingham Way



Grounds For Sculpture entrance along Sculptors Way

and Sculptors Way. The Grounds For Sculpture has installed distinctive wayfinding sculptures along Interstate 295, the northern portion of Klockner Avenue, East State Street Extension and Sculptors Way. These placements not only provide visual cues to motorists that they are approaching the Grounds For Sculpture but create an arts and culture character in the area and make the streetscape more visually pleasing. However, apart from the sculptures themselves, there is little way-finding signage to lead visitors to the site and minimal connections to shopping and dining facilities in the area. Consequently, there is an opportunity for the Township to capitalize on the presence of the Grounds For Sculpture and more fully leverage its regional appeal as a focal point for arts and culture to also enhance the entertainment, shopping, recreation and dining uses in the district.

ART AND CULTURE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Goals and Objectives set forth below are intended to foster the arts and culture in Hamilton Township.

- Goal 1. Incentivize development and redevelopment which is supportive of arts and culture within the Arts and Culture Overlay District and Hamilton Township as a whole. Such uses should have an inviting character that will attract residents and regional visitors to the area.
- Objective 1.a. Adopt zoning incentives for the development and redevelopment of arts and culture uses in the Arts and Culture Overlay District. Arts and culture uses should include but not be limited to indoor and outdoor gallery space, performing arts space, lecture halls or related training facilities, artist studio space and artist live/work space.
 - Objective 1.b. Adopt zoning incentives for development and redevelopment within the Arts and Culture Overlay District that will provide for mixed use and various commercial uses in order to foster the following:
 - i. An expanded customer base in the immediate area;
 - ii. A variety of uses that will attract local and regional visitors, such as dining, shopping and entertainment uses;
 - Objective 1.c. Promote development of office, rehearsal and meeting spaces for cultural organizations, spaces for the creation of art and theater spaces within the Arts and Culture Overlay District; and
 - Objective 1.d. Promote the adaptive reuse of the Township's vacant and underutilized industrial and manufacturing buildings in the Arts and Culture Overlay District for uses that are consistent with or complementary to arts and culture.
- Goal 2. Enhance the built environment of the Arts and Culture District through the installation of public art.
- Objective 2.a. Support the installation of public art including but limited to sculpture within the Arts and Culture Overlay District. Other types of public art may include murals and decorative art integrated into the built environment.
 - Objective 2.b. Adopt zoning and design regulations that support the installation of public art.
 - Objective 2.c. Incentivize private development projects to include art which is visible from public areas by adopting relaxed standards and/or incentive zoning where development is accompanied by art.

- Objective 2.d. Create a network of wayfinding art installations and signage to achieve the following:
 - i. Raise awareness of art and culture in the community;
 - ii. Provide direction to art and culture facilities in the Township;
 - iii. Create/reinforce connections between regional transportation systems, such as the Hamilton Train Station and Interstate 295, and art and culture facilities, such as but not limited to the Grounds For Sculpture; and
 - iv. Leverage art and culture activities to boost tourism in Hamilton Township and increase civic pride.

- Goal 3. Foster community art and cultural events within the Arts and Culture Overlay District and Hamilton Township as a whole.
 - Objective 3.a. Consider parks, libraries, schools, community centers and historic buildings as venues for arts and cultural activities;
 - Objective 3.b. Explore ways the municipality can partner with area schools to promote the presence of art in the community as well as arts and culture education and activities; and
 - Objective 3.c. Explore partnerships with arts and cultural organizations in order to foster the increased presence of art and culture in Hamilton Township.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arts and Culture Overlay District

An overlay zoning district of the nonresidential districts (Industrial, Highway Commercial, Community Commercial and General Commercial) and the Hamilton Township Municipal Building (R-5 district) stretching from the Hamilton Train Station to the Mill One redevelopment site will promote development and redevelopment that support arts and culture. The Overlay District will promote investment in the area through mixed use and commercial development that adds to the presence of and/or supports arts and culture.

Design standards should be adopted for architecture, site planning and streetscape designs, including facilities for safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation and complementary parks and open space. Such development will be critical to supporting the commercial uses within the district and creating an inviting character for tourists as well as residents. Key components of the Overlay District zoning amendments are listed below:



Sculpture in the front yard of a commercial use along East State Street Extension

- a. Permit additional nonresidential uses within the existing districts via the zoning overlay, such as but not limited to art galleries, art schools, performing art space, artist and dance studio space, hotels, limited retail and restaurants.
- b. Promote development/redevelopment and conversion of the existing industrial buildings to nonresidential uses which draw people to the district. Such uses include but should not be limited to health and fitness centers and commercial recreation facilities.
- c. Promote development/redevelopment and conversion of the existing industrial buildings to mixed use space, including artist live/work space.
- d. Convey a Floor Area Ratio and impervious coverage bonus to development or redevelopment which incorporates public art, museums, art galleries, art schools, performance or exhibition space, theaters, artist and dance studio space, libraries, parks and other art and/or cultural facilities of a similar nature.
- e. Eliminate the need for zoning relief associated with the placement of public art. A property owner who is planning to permit an outdoor sculpture to be placed on his property should not have to apply for zoning relief from Township standards relating to impervious cover, setbacks, parking, etc. unless public safety is jeopardized.

- f. Establish design standards for signs with a specified scale and setback in order to improve the appearance of the area, add some regularity to the streetscape and ensure that new signs compete less for visibility with public art.
- g. Establish architectural design standards that will ensure buildings with architectural interest are developed which positively contribute to the appearance of the area.
- h. Promote development/redevelopment that is sensitive to the residents and property owners within the surrounding neighborhoods. Development/redevelopment should be sensitive to the traffic, visual and lighting impacts on the area and should be compatible in terms of scale and character with that which has been established in the neighborhood.

Redevelopment of Nottingham Way between Klockner Avenue and Sculptors Way

Rezoning and/or the redevelopment process should be used to enhance visibility of and create access to the Grounds For Sculpture from Nottingham Way and to transform Nottingham Way into a second arts gateway/corridor between the Grounds For Sculpture and Interstate 295. Notwithstanding the proximity of the Grounds for Sculpture to the Nottingham Way interchange with Interstate 295, there is little evidence of the regional tourist attraction along this major commercial corridor. Rezoning and/or redevelopment of this area should include public art placements and streetscape furnishings to add visual interest and to indicate to travelers along Nottingham Way that they are within the Arts and Culture Overlay District and that they are approaching a major arts and culture facility – the Grounds For Sculpture.



Vacant storefront in Suburban Plaza along Nottingham Way

This commercial corridor is in need of greater private sector investment and providing development incentives through a rezoning or redevelopment plan would not only encourage that investment but would likely provide an improved destination for visitors. The most critical properties in this respect are the Suburban Plaza shopping center and the large wooded parcel to the east on Klockner Road, which previously received development approvals for a retail center. Rezoning and/or redevelopment of this area could also facilitate the coordination of street access, storm drainage, signage and design standards along this prominent stretch of Nottingham Way. Mixed use development in this area would provide financial support to the existing and planned commercial uses.

Rezoning and/or redevelopment that will provide for mixed use development and/or commercial development which will attract regional visitors should be adopted. The standards put in place should reflect new urbanist design principles with parking at the rear or side of multi-story buildings and pedestrian access throughout the site and along Nottingham Way. Commercial development plans must be sensitive to the existing adjacent residential neighborhoods located to the north, east and south through compatible architecture, lighting and planting requirements that will reduce the visual impact of the development/redevelopment on these areas.

Streetscape Designs

A cohesive streetscape design for East State Street, Nottingham Way and Sculptors Way will help “brand” the District, will beautify the area and encourage tourists, as well as residents, to visit the Grounds For Sculpture and the surrounding District on foot and on bicycle. These improvements can be implemented by future developers and also by the public sector to the extent funding is available.

A streetscape design in this area could include public art, street trees, lighting, benches, paving, sidewalks, bike lanes and signage. East State Street (a County Road) and Sculptors Way have wide right-of-ways that could accommodate two vehicular travel lanes, bicycle lanes, on-street parking (likely East State Street only) and sidewalks. The purpose of these improvements is to not only beautify the Arts and Culture District, but to encourage people to walk or bike through the area to see the sculptures that have been installed and to create a more pleasant approach to the Grounds For Sculpture. Unique and/or locally designed streetscape furnishings would also offer an opportunity for the integration of art. Streetscape improvements should give special prominence to the East State Street intersections with Klockner Avenue and Sculptors Way.

Related Initiatives

The following additional initiatives would further promote arts and culture in Hamilton Township but are not reliant upon changes to the Land Use Code:

1. *Bicycle and Pedestrian Arts and Recreation Route.* A bicycle and pedestrian trail that links the Grounds For Sculpture with Mill One, surrounding open space (including Klockner Woods), the AMC Theatre and the Hamilton Train Station would provide a valuable source of recreation and would encourage Grounds For Sculpture tourists to visit the surrounding District.
2. *Trolley to Points of Interest.* A “trolley” linking the Ground for Sculpture with the Hamilton Train Station, the Township’s historic sites and the Township’s cultural and recreation sites would provide convenient access to the Township’s various points of interest.
3. *Arts Placement Program.* The Grounds For Sculpture should be encouraged to continue placing sculpture in the surrounding area. It serves both as a “wayfinding” device and to establish an artistic character within the District.
4. *Mural Arts Program.* A concentration of murals in the Overlay District - particularly along East State Street - would bring life to vacant and underutilized buildings, promote the visibility of arts in the District and make it more inviting for the pedestrians and bicyclists seeking to enjoy the area surrounding the Grounds For Sculpture.
5. *Arts and Culture Organization Facility.* An arts and culture facility located in proximity to the Grounds For Sculpture could be created to provide space for a historical museum and/or office space for art and cultural organizations, possibly in conjunction with studio space. There may be an opportunity to partner with an area arts and culture organization to create such a facility.
6. *Partnership Programs.* Partnerships could be created to promote arts and culture in the District and the Township. Potential partners for the Township include area schools, Hamilton Township Historical Society, the Grounds For Sculpture, the Hamilton Restaurant Association, the Hamilton Partnership, the Mercer County Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood associations, adjacent municipalities and other arts and culture organizations and facilities in the Township. Such a partnership should focus on marketing Hamilton Township as a destination that includes not only the Arts and Culture District but also the Township’s other arts, culture, recreation, dining and shopping opportunities.

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