

**Borough of Pennington, NJ
Master Plan**

Element 1. Framing Document

Introduction, Vision, Assumptions and Guiding Principles

Conditionally adopted by the Planning Board, xx/xx/26.

Contents

- A. Introduction to the Master Plan
- B. Legal Basis of the Master Plan
- C. Public Participation in Developing the Plan
- D. The Master Plan
- E. Vision Statement
- F. Forward-Looking Assumptions
- G. Guiding Principles
- H. Elements of the Master Plan
- I. Implementation of the Master Plan

Planning Board

Jim Reilly, Chair
Andrew Jackson, Vice-Chair
James Davy, Mayor
Amy Kassler-Taub, Council Representative
GP Caminiti, Borough Administrator
Mark Blackwell
Kate O'Neill
Jen Tracy
Nazli Rex
Robin Tillou, Land Use Administrator
Paul Christopher, PE, Board Engineer
James T. Kyle, PP/AICP, Borough Planner
Edwin W. Schmierer, Esq., Board Attorney

Master Plan Committee

Andrew Jackson, Chair
Kate O'Neill
Amy Kassler-Taub
Nadine Stern
James Kyle, PP/AICP

A. Introduction

The municipal Master Plan, adopted by the Planning Board, sets the Borough's land use policies and is the principal document that addresses the way development, redevelopment, conservation, preservation and restoration should occur within the municipality. It is intended to guide the decisions made by public officials and those of private interests involving the use of land. Further, the Master Plan, and more specifically its goals and objectives, are critical to the Planning Board when deciding upon development applications where variance relief is requested. Through its various elements, the Master Plan provides a vision for the community in the next 10 to 25 years.

The Master Plan provides the legal foundation for the zoning ordinance and zoning map. New Jersey, among a handful of other states, specifically ties the planning of a community as embodied in the Master Plan to the zoning ordinance and zoning map, which are adopted by the Borough Council and constitute the primary law governing the use of land at the local level. Under New Jersey's Municipal Land Use Law N.J.S.A. 40:55D-1 et seq., (hereinafter "MLUL") a zoning ordinance must be substantially consistent with the Land Use Plan.

It should be noted that this Master Plan is for the Borough of Pennington, not for the larger area covered by the Pennington 08534 Zip Code. As of 2025, Pennington Borough has about 1100 housing units and a population of 2800 whereas Pennington Zip Code 08534, which includes Pennington Borough, has about 5000 units and a population of 13,000. The area of Pennington Borough is about one square mile and is included in the 08534 Zip Code which covers about 20 square miles (<https://www.unitedstateszipcodes.org/08534/>). Pennington Borough is surrounded by Hopewell Township, a separate municipality, and that is where the 3900 additional housing units of Zip Code 08534 are located. If asked, most of the residents of Zip Code 08534 will say they live in Pennington, and this can lead to confusion in terms of planning and governance.

a. Definition of the Master Plan

Municipal planning is a process. One of the primary objectives of that process is adoption of the Master Plan. The Master Plan itself is generally defined as a comprehensive guide for the future development of a community in terms of its physical, environmental, resilience, social, public health, economic and aesthetic needs. The key aspect in defining a Master Plan is its comprehensive approach. The Master Plan considers all factors having an impact on community life and their potential for change. Each of the many aspects to be examined are considered with respect to the whole, and in forming final proposals, all planning considerations are adjusted to each other.

The Municipal Land Use Law, Chapter 219 of the Laws of New Jersey in (40:55D-5) defines a Master Plan as "a composite of one or more written or graphic proposals for the development of the municipality as set forth in and adopted pursuant to Section 19 (40:55D-28) of this act." That section contains a listing of the mandatory and optional elements of a Master Plan.

b. Purposes of a Master Plan

According to the Municipal Land Use Law, the purpose of a Master Plan is to “guide the use of lands within the municipality in a manner which protects public health and safety and promotes the general welfare.” (40:55D-28). The purpose of the Master Plan is to present for all to see and comment on:

1. Fundamental statements of policy in the form of principles and objectives regarding future development of the community
2. Plan text and maps relating the policy statements to a physical design; and
3. General considerations of the ways and means by which Plan proposals can be achieved.

c. The Use of a Master Plan

The uses of the Master Plan are as follows:

1. It provides the basis for zoning. Under the Municipal Land Use Law, a community wishing to control land use by means of a zoning ordinance must first adopt the Land Use Plan element of its Master Plan.
2. It provides the local governing body, agencies, and residents and businesses - both existing and prospective - with the information needed to make intelligent decisions relating to land use and community development, particularly for applications where variances are requested.
3. It is often required for a community to be eligible for certain State (e.g., Green Acres) and Federal funding programs.
4. It serves as a check against any arbitrary action of elected officials. Action by such officials involving the expenditure of public funds for a capital project must be referred to the Planning Board for project review and recommendation in conjunction with the adopted Master Plan.
5. It often provides a wealth of general information about the community for interested parties and, with imaginative proposals, can stimulate public interest in, and support for, community improvement.

B. Legal Requirements for Planning

a. Plan Preparation and Adoption

The responsibility for the preparation of a Master Plan rests with the Planning Board. The Master Plan is adopted (or amended) only by the Planning Board and only after a public hearing. In accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law, the Master Plan must be reexamined at least once every ten years and amended if necessary. The local development ordinances as presented in the Borough Code must be consistent with the Land Use element and the Housing Plan element of the Plan.

b. Plan Content

The Master Plan must include a statement of objectives upon which the Plan is based, a Land Use Plan and additional Plan elements as deemed appropriate for the municipality, and a specific policy statement indicating the relationship of Plan proposals to the Plans of neighboring communities, the County, and other appropriate jurisdictions.

c. Plan Impact on Future Development

The Master Plan, after adoption by the Planning Board, gives the community the legal basis for control over future development. The major means of control are as follows:

1. The official map of the community, adopted by local ordinance, must be consistent with the appropriate provisions of the Master Plan.
2. The official map is deemed conclusive with respect to the location and width of streets and public drainage ways and the location and extent of flood control basins and public areas. (40:55D-32)
3. The location and design of new streets created through the process of land subdivision or site plan approval may be required to conform to the provisions of the Mobility Plan element of the Master Plan. (40:55D-38b(2))
4. Where the Master Plan provides for the reservation of designated streets, public drainage ways, storm water detention basins, or public areas, the Planning Board may require that such facilities be shown and reserved in subdivisions and site plans in locations and sizes suitable for their intended use. The reservation powers are effective for a period of one year after approval of a final plan. The municipality must compensate the owner for such an action. (40:55D-44)
5. Whenever the governing body or other public agency proposes to spend public funds, incidental to the location, character or extent of a capital project, such proposal must be referred to the Planning Board for review and recommendation. No action shall be taken without such recommendation or until 45 days have elapsed after such reference. (40:55D-31).
6. All the provisions of a zoning ordinance, or any amendment or revision thereto shall either be substantially consistent with the Land Use element and the Housing Plan element of the Master Plan or designed to effectuate such Plan elements. (40:55D-62)

C. Public Participation in Developing the Plan

Public participation has been the foundation of the development of the Master Plan. Although Pennington is a wealthy town, its budget is constrained by the lack of any major industries. With property taxes at the upper end of the New Jersey spectrum, there was limited appetite in the Borough for funding Master Plan activities. With a looming deadline of September 2023 for the state-mandated Master Plan reexamination, a Master Plan Committee (MPC) was formed in 2021 within the Planning Board, consisting of four volunteer members, assisted by the Borough Planner. The MPC completed a comprehensive Reexamination Report of the 1998 Master Plan

and its subsequent reexaminations, which was adopted by the Planning Board in a public meeting on May 10, 2023.

A major recommendation of the Reexamination Report was that the Borough should create a new Master Plan to replace the obsolete 1998 Plan. The following steps have been taken to ensure that Pennington residents are informed and involved during the development of the Master Plan and its elements:

1. In all, more than 75 borough residents have been involved in the preparation and writing of the Master Plan elements, which speaks well to direct community involvement.
2. After an appeal for volunteers to assist the Planning Board with the Master Plan, 15 residents stepped forward and were appointed by the Mayor to a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) in October 2023. CAC members have served as community contacts, obtaining feedback as the Master Plan and its elements were developed. Several have been involved in the teams writing element drafts.
3. In the fall of 2023, the MPC and CAC determined that the new Master Plan would consist of 12 elements and worked together to develop the vision and goals for each element for the updated Master Plan. Their report was reviewed, modified and endorsed by the Planning Board in a public meeting on January 10, 2024.
4. The endorsed vision and goals were presented to the public at an Open House at Borough Hall on April 10, 2024. Revisions were made based on feedback from Borough residents. The resulting list of draft goals was distributed to the teams developing the Master Plan elements as a guide for their discussions.
5. In preparing the various Plan elements, the MPC benchmarked the master plans of nearby communities: Hopewell Township, Hopewell Borough, Princeton, Bordentown, Lambertville, Stockton, Rocky Hill, and Hightstown. The MPC also reviewed the elements in the 1998 Pennington Borough Master Plan and the 2005, 2013 and 2023 Reexamination reports and considered the findings and recommendations in the 2002 Route 31 Design Study and the 2013 Route 31 Redevelopment Study.
6. The MPC assigned responsibility for developing initial drafts of 5 of the elements to related Committees and Commissions. These were Economic Development, Historic Preservation, Open Space and Recreation, and the Environmental Commission took on the GBESE (Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability), Conservation of Natural Resources (including the Environmental Resources Inventory) and the Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CCRHVA) for the Land Use Plan.
7. Specialized teams were formed for Mobility, Utility Services, and Community Facilities and Services. The MPC took responsibility for the introductory Framing document and the Relation to Other Plans element. The MPC worked with the Borough Planner on the Land Use Plan and the Housing Plan.
8. At various stages of the preparation of the elements, drafts were posted on the Master Plan page on the Borough website and Borough emails were sent to notify residents. Comments received were considered by the writing teams and changes were made to the elements where appropriate.
9. When elements were released from the writing teams, they were presented for conditional adoption by the Planning Board at their regular public meetings. After nine of the elements were conditionally adopted (not including the Framing, Land Use and Housing

Plan elements), the Master Plan Committee compared the goals in the elements to find conflicts and duplications. Six Plan elements were revised and were presented to the Planning Board on October 8, 2025. The changes were endorsed, and near-final versions of the nine elements were posted on the website to allow additional comments before final adoption.

10. In August 2025, the MPC conducted a web-based survey to seek the input of residents on Housing and Land Use. The survey yielded 550 responses. Interestingly 241 of these came from residents of Hopewell Township which speaks to the Greater Pennington concept described in the Introduction above. The results of the survey are posted on the Borough website and were presented to the Planning Board at a public meeting on January 14, 2026. The results have been used to guide the development of the Housing and Land Use Plan elements.
11. The Planning Board will hold a public meeting on April 8, 2026 to present the Land Use Plan for conditional adoption prior to final adoption of the Master Plan at a public Planning Board meeting on May 13, 2006

[Dates to be confirmed in the past tense for the final version of the Framing Plan.]

D. The Master Plan

The Borough of Pennington has many assets, including its location, charming downtown, established neighborhoods, and historic character. It has also benefited from previous planning efforts, which have shaped the Borough and maintained a high quality of life for the community. With little land available for development, the Borough population has remained stable since the last Master Plan of 1998, with 2655 residents in 2000 and 2784 in 2022. The last large area of undeveloped land in the Borough, the 16 acres previously owned by Capital Health, was rezoned for mixed residences and is now an 80-home development known as the Heritage at Pennington. Few sites remain for development.

However, there are new challenges facing the Borough, including the adverse effects of climate change, housing affordability, diversity, protection of natural resources, and traffic congestion. The Pennington Borough Master Plan Reexamination Report, adopted at a public meeting of the Planning Board on May 10, 2023, recommended that the Borough's 1998 Master Plan needed to be updated. There were three general areas where it was deemed to be deficient:

1. The Plan made no mention of several important current issues, including conservation, renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions reduction, climate change hazard vulnerability and mitigation, green buildings, environmental sustainability, or the current variety of modes of mobility. Nor does it include an Economic Development Plan.
2. Updates are needed to the data and assumptions in the seven elements that were in the 1998 Master Plan: land use, housing, circulation, utilities, historic preservation, community facilities, and regional planning.
3. The 1998 Master Plan and its 2005 and 2013 reexaminations, and 2014 amendment exist only as PDFs on the Borough website. Thus, it is difficult to get a coherent picture of the current Master Plan as revised by recommendations in the reexamination reports. The reexamination reports were generally aimed at specific zoning issues relevant at the time

and did not represent a comprehensive review of the Borough's planning policies and objectives.

To address the first and second issues, the Planning Board recommended that the Borough embark on an update of the Master Plan, creating a process that will allow existing elements to be fully updated and new elements to be written. To address the third issue, the Master Plan will be a living document on the Borough website. Each element will have its own webpage, links to which will be placed on the Master Plan landing page on the Borough website. Some elements may need to be revised more frequently and when an element is revised and publicly adopted by the Planning Board, it will replace the outdated version on the website. In this way, anyone accessing the Master Plan will be directed to the current version of all elements.

The Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) mandates two elements in a Master Plan, an overview of the vision, assumptions, and guidelines upon which the proposals for the physical, economic, and social development of the municipality are based, which we have called the Framework element, and a Land Use Plan element. It also requires in 40:55D-28(4)d that the Master Plan shall include a policy statement on its relationship to the master plans of contiguous municipalities, the County master plan, the State Development and Redevelopment and the District Solid Waste Management Plan. Since these plans may be amended or updated from time to time, this topic has been designated as a plan element entitled Relation to Other Plans.

In addition, the MLUL suggests fifteen optional elements. Of these, nine have been deemed to be meaningful for inclusion in the Pennington Borough Master Plan along with the Framework, Land Use Plan and the Relation to Other Plans elements described above. Elements not considered relevant included farmland preservation, shore access, educational facilities, and development transfer. Recreation was included with Open Space and recycling was included in Utility Services.

The twelve elements in the Pennington Borough Master Plan are:

1. Framing Plan: Vision, Assumptions and Guiding Principles
2. Land Use Plan
3. Housing Plan
4. Mobility Plan
5. Utility Services Plan
6. Community Facilities and Services Plan
7. Open Space and Recreation Plan
8. Conservation of Natural Resources Plan
9. Economic Development Plan
10. Historic Preservation Plan
11. Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Plan
12. Relation to Other Plans

E. Vision Statement

Pennington is viewed as a welcoming, healthy, safe and resilient community with friendly, supportive neighborhoods, a diverse downtown that is inviting to residents and visitors of all

ages and interests. Historic preservation remains key to the Borough's character and pride. There will be open spaces and parks that offer both passive and interactive recreational resources for all. The Borough of Pennington responsibly supports affordable housing, while balancing development and preservation opportunities that enhance the quality of life for those of all ages who live, work, and play in the community. Pennington strives to be a sustainable, climate-resilient community.

F. Forward-Looking Assumptions

The following assumptions have guided the development of the Master Plan:

1. Given a lack of vacant land, much of the Borough's future growth will be in the form of redevelopment.
2. Traffic volumes in the Borough will continue to increase as new development is constructed in surrounding Hopewell Township.
3. At the global, national, state, and local level, there will be a growing focus on mitigation and adaptation to the effects of climate change.
4. The Borough will need to comply with federal, state and county mandates regarding climate change, environmental sustainability, and green building.
5. The Borough will continue its efforts to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) in its operations to zero by 2035 and will encourage borough residents and businesses to seek ways to reduce their GHG emissions.
6. Local installation of renewable energy generation facilities and the ability to choose from a variety of emissions-free electricity suppliers will be necessary to help meet emissions reduction goals.
7. Reducing transportation GHG emissions will require zero-emissions electric, or hydrogen powered vehicles, which in turn will require charging and fueling infrastructure.
8. Funding will be needed for infrastructure improvements (including natural infrastructure e.g., restoration, tree planting and stormwater green infrastructure) to reduce flooding from heavy rain, minimize damage from strong winds, and cope with temperature extremes.
9. The Borough will need to continue to provide its fair share of the region's housing that is affordable to low-income and moderate-income households.
10. The trend to expand the safe use of rights-of-way to pedestrians, bicyclists and other personal vehicles will continue, with support at the state and county level.
11. Wireless communication technology will continue to improve, and the Borough will need to monitor the installation of new infrastructure.
12. Borough support for the preservation of its historic and iconic buildings will continue.
13. Support for the purchase of open space and its use for recreation will remain a focus.
14. The Borough is proud of being a Tree City and will continue to maintain its shade trees.

G. Guiding Principles

Guiding principles reflect the values of community and stakeholders expressed through the Master Plan outreach process, and by analysis of existing conditions, trends and best practices.

They provide clarity for achieving the vision, and the community should look to these guiding principles when making planning and land use decisions.

Pennington recognizes the importance of:

1. Being a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible community for people who are diverse in age, race and ethnicity, gender identity, religion, abilities, and socioeconomic status.
2. Equitable access to housing, transportation, civic participation, parks, services, and other amenities.
3. Being a close-knit neighborhood that is also engaged in our wider communities of greater Pennington (08534 Zip code), Hopewell Township and Mercer County.
4. Maintaining attractive and caring residential neighborhoods while recognizing the need for more housing at lower price points.
5. Providing first class public services, and safe water and sanitary systems.
6. Supporting physical and mental wellness for its residents by recognizing the important health and equity implications of land use policy and planning decisions.
7. Pursuing age-friendly policies and programs so that residents can age in place and retain social connections, health, and well-being.
8. Having both a thriving town center that brings together residents, small businesses and Borough government operations, and a vibrant commercial sector along Route 31.
9. Becoming more sustainable and resilient to climate change-induced hazards and a model for energy efficiency and energy choices with a goal of becoming carbon neutral.
10. Observing best practices for designing parks, streets, public spaces, and open spaces to provide opportunities for social connection and a sense of community.
11. Having roads and sidewalks that safely accommodate walking, bicycling, and personal micromobility vehicles, while accommodating cars and commercial vehicles.
12. Preserving, honoring, and understanding its history, while embracing possibilities for new ways of living, working, communicating, and enjoying life.
13. Creating meaningful opportunities for social interactions, culture, learning, and leisure, by engagement with public and commercial facilities in the community.

H. Elements of the Master Plan

The Master Plan is more than a planning document – it is the community's collective vision for the future. It acknowledges the challenges to be faced (climate change, regional development pressures, aging infrastructure, changing transportation needs, affordable housing obligations) while celebrating the assets that make Pennington special (historic character, engaged residents, natural beauty, and strong partnerships). The Master Plan does not prescribe every detail but establishes principles and priorities to guide decisions over the next 10 to 25 years. It balances preservation with progress, local character with regional collaboration, and current needs with future sustainability. The following are brief summaries of what can be found in the other eleven plan elements that follow this Framing Plan, which is element 1.

2. Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan brings together the various land needs or uses suggested in the goals of the other elements of the Master Plan and develops recommendations for the modification of zoning ordinances or boundaries to accommodate them. The Land Use Plan summarizes the vision and goals of each Master Plan element and presents the land use issues identified. The Land Use Plan includes the existing and proposed land use and zoning maps, and descriptions of the proposed changes recommended.

Significant zoning changes were requested by the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan to accommodate the affordable housing obligations mandated by the state. These were largely accomplished by combining multiple business-only zones in both the Route 31 corridor and along North and South Main Street into two zones and allowing mixed business and residential uses in both. The new zones are Highway-Mixed Use (H-MU) for the Route 31 corridor and Mixed-Use (M-U) for other areas in the Borough. These new designations are supported by the Economic Development Plan, which also recommended elimination of the little-used Town Center Buffer (TCB) zone.

To meet the goal of the Mobility Plan to improve safety, reduce congestion and eliminate flooding at the intersection of Route 31 and West Delaware Avenue, a new Crossroads-Business (C-B) zoned is recommended to prioritize the use of land to create solutions to the problems at the intersection. The Mobility Plan also suggests that creative thinking on land use is needed to provide safe routes for bicycle and other personal mobility vehicle users, and for pedestrian walkways.

The Historic Preservation Plan recommends the creation of a Historic District Overlay to cover both the contiguous Historic District in the Town Center and other lots outside the Historic District that are deemed historic and should be preserved. It also recommends that Toll Gate Grammar School and the HVRSD Administration Building be zoned as E-3 Educational to allow preservation of the two 100-year-old structures.

The Land Use Plan concludes with the Climate Change-Related Hazard Vulnerability Assessment (CCRHVA) required by Municipal Land Use Law. This gives an analysis of current and future threats and vulnerabilities associated with climate change, a build-out analysis of future development, and an assessment of threats and vulnerabilities. It identifies critical facilities, utilities, roadways, and other public infrastructure necessary for evacuation and sustaining quality of life during a disaster and associated emergency response and management plans, and post-disaster recovery plans.

3. Housing and Fair Share Plan

This Plan addresses the Borough's fourth-round affordable housing obligation, which consists of a present need (rehabilitation) of 4 units and a prospective need (new construction) of 58 units. It also addresses the third-round obligation unmet need of 125 units. According to the Plan, the Borough will meet all its fourth-round obligation, plus 37 of its third-round unmet need, which is

higher than the realistic development potential based on an analysis of vacant land in the Borough.

Because there is little vacant land available, the Borough has focused on areas that can potentially be redeveloped. Eleven properties have been identified and are described in the Plan. Each currently has structures on them, with a variety of uses, but there is opportunity to develop them more efficiently, and with multifamily housing. As of 2026, two of the properties are in various stages of the redevelopment process as areas in need of redevelopment. As described under the Land Use section above, new draft zoning ordinances (H-MU and M-U) are presented in the Housing Plan along with five other draft ordinances, AH1 to AH5, that address the particulars of individual sites.

It is determined that the Plan is consistent with the 2025 State Development and Redevelopment Plan. All proposed sites to meet the fair share obligation are within existing sewer service area and have access to public water. All promote the goal of providing housing with access to transit, jobs, education, services and amenities as they are located close to NJ Transit bus stops and have ready access to a multitude of commercial services and amenities.

4. Mobility Plan

Pennington Borough's visions for mobility are to have transportation policies that reduce automobile use in the Borough and to provide safe sidewalks for pedestrians of all ages and abilities, and safe routes for bicycles and other low speed personal vehicles. The Borough also strives to improve highway access and crossing management for Route 31 with a strong emphasis on safety, and to eliminate flooding on all roads in the Borough. It aims to minimize the impacts of transportation on the environment, including greenhouse gas emissions, and air and noise pollution, and to implement Complete & Green Streets, and Vision Zero policies. It will work to provide adequate parking for customers of businesses in the town center while meeting the parking needs of employees and residents. It will also promote public and other transit alternatives to reduce traffic congestion and provide services to young and senior residents and to people with disabilities.

Nine goals and associated strategies can be found in the Plan, and a comprehensive review of the background to the goals is given in five additional sections covering Route 31 and its issues, Complete & Green Streets and Vision Zero policies, Borough parking needs, zero-GHG-emission vehicles, and public transit options. It recommends that the Borough should arrange for regular traffic and parking studies in and around Pennington and monitor changes to gauge the effectiveness of actions taken in response to the Mobility Plan. The Plan also discusses the Borough's dependence on the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) for improvements to State Route 31 and on Mercer County for the various County roads in the Borough.

5. Utility Services Plan

Pennington Borough's vision for utility services is to provide first-class, cost-effective services in Borough public areas and rights-of-way such as stormwater management, tree management, infrastructure maintenance and upgrades, snowplowing, and road repairs. It will also maintain and improve water and wastewater systems to ensure uninterrupted service, maximize system capacity, and reduce the long-term cost of municipal ownership. It will work to protect water quality for drinking, recreation, irrigation, and natural habitat, to maintain Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit compliance, and to reduce the impact of severe storms on flooding in the Borough.

The Plan gives six goals and associated strategies for services provided by the Department of Public Works as described above and four goals and associated strategies for working with other entities that provide critical services to the Borough. These are recycling through the Mercer County Improvement authority and other entities, reliable and adequate electricity supply by Public Service Electric and Gas, delivery of natural gas by Elizabethtown Gas, and world-class telecommunication services provided by a variety of providers.

A comprehensive review of the background to the goals and strategies can be found in the Plan.

6. Community Facilities and Services Plan

Pennington Borough works to ensure equitable access to community facilities and services, and to provide these for people of all ages, races and ethnicities, gender identities, religions, abilities, and socioeconomic status. The Borough's vision is to enhance the physical and mental wellness of its residents by creating meaningful opportunities for social connections, culture, learning, and leisure, and by supporting the availability of public and private facilities and services in the community.

This Plan catalogs the public and private facilities and services provided for the residents of Pennington Borough. Borough-owned facilities include the Municipal Building, the Public Works Department, the Senior Center and four parks. Services provided by the Borough in addition to those covered in the Utility Services Plan above include police, emergency management, health and recreation. Services provided by others include fire and rescue, first aid, the library and the Post Office. There are five churches and two active cemeteries, a public grammar school and two private schools.

The total area of open space available for recreation, including parks, school grounds and other facilities is 53 acres. The National Recreation Association recommends that 10 acres of space is needed for every 1000 people in a community. With a population of 2,800, the Borough should have 28 acres and so is well served by these 53 acres. In addition, the Borough is surrounded by large tracts of open space including Baldwin Lake Wildlife Management Area, the Watersheds Institute, and the Mercer County Park – Rosedale, Mercer Meadows and Curlis Woods. Many of these areas are connected via trails such as the Lawrence Hopewell Trail, which also connects to additional open spaces throughout the County. Nine goals for community facilities and services are given in the Plan.

7. Open Space and Recreation Plan

The Open Space and Recreation Plan was developed through the collaboration of two advisory bodies, the Open Space Committee and the Parks and Recreation Commission. The open space preservation mission is to retain the “village” identity of Pennington and the semi-rural character of nearby surrounding areas. The recreation vision is to maximize participation in outdoor and indoor activities, and to collaborate with other Borough committees to create synergies between recreation, education, and economic development.

The Borough works in collaboration with Hopewell Township, Mercer County and the State of New Jersey, and with non-profit land preservation organizations D&R Greenway Land Trust, Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, to permanently protect open space in and near Pennington. The Plan reviews existing open space and recreational resources and assesses potential preservation opportunities near the Borough. Prioritized corridors extend west to Washington Crossing State Park, east to Mercer Meadows, and north to Baldwin Lake. Specific improvements proposed include the Stony Brook - Presidential Hills Connector, bike lanes connecting to the Great Western Bikeway, and safer bike paths around town.

The Plan presents four goals for open space preservation and four objectives for recreational enhancements. It also presents an extensive action plan for open space acquisition, woodland preservation, safe biking routes, pedestrian trails, parks, and potential synergies with economic development in the Borough.

8. Conservation of Natural Resources Plan

This Plan was developed by the Pennington Environmental Commission. It incorporates the comprehensive 2024 Environmental Resources Inventory (ERI) developed by the Commission. The ERI describes the Borough’s natural resource characteristics and environmentally significant features, including manmade features such as historic sites and contaminated sites. It provides baseline documentation for evaluating resource protection and is a dynamic document that will be periodically revised to capture changes in conditions. Together the ERI and the Conservation of Natural Resources Plan element form a basis for land use and other policy decisions, plans, and municipal functions.

While much of Pennington is developed, its natural resources remain critical to health, wellbeing, and resilience. This element presents ten goals for protecting water quality, managing invasive species and promoting native vegetation, preserving contiguous natural lands, enhancing riparian zones, building climate resilience, protecting sensitive lands, and preserving scenic corridors.

9. Economic Development Plan Element

Commercial development is an indispensable part of Pennington. It is a source of goods and services for the residents of the Borough and the nearby area and is also part of Pennington’s

brand promise for potential residents and visitors and identifies what the businesses should reinforce. The vision is that Pennington is, and will continue to be, a welcoming, walkable, authentic, safe and prosperous hometown for a diversity of households and for small businesses that seek to join and support an optimistic and entrepreneurial community.

The Plan provides a strategic framework for supporting Pennington's businesses across two distinct locations, the Route 31 corridor and the historic Town Center at Main Street and Delaware Avenue. Six comprehensive recommendations address business-centered issues, density, mobility and parking, signage and promotion, and new development opportunities. The Plan recommends simplification of the zoning in the Route 31 corridor and extending it to mixed uses. It also aims to encourage foot traffic by reducing on-site parking requirements for businesses, to improve wayfinding signage in the Borough, and to support entrepreneurship through home-based business development.

10. Historic Preservation Plan

This Plan was prepared by the Historic Preservation Commission. It presents a comprehensive framework for preserving Pennington's remarkable collection of 19th and early 20th century structures through the Crossroads Historic District, which contains approximately 160 buildings at the borough's historic core. The Commission, established in 2011, has successfully saved at least 10 historic houses from demolition and many now serve as affordable rental and owner-occupied housing. The vision is to safeguard Pennington's varied architectural heritage through regulatory protection that discourages demolition, encourages appropriate alterations and adaptive reuse, promotes energy-efficient retrofits for historic structures, and integrates preservation efforts with smart growth, housing choice, sustainability, and economic development goals. The Plan pursues Certified Local Government status, recommends the establishment of a Historic District Overlay Zone, and emphasizes public education about historic resources.

The Plan presents eight goals and eight specific recommendations to ensure Pennington's historic assets remain a living, evolving part of the community while maintaining the unique character that defines the borough. It promotes the preservation of threatened historic resources, such as the Railroad Station and the HVRSD Administration Building, including identification and documentation where needed.

11. Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Plan Element (GBESE)

The GBESE was developed by the Environmental Commission with an overarching aspiration for Pennington to be a community that thrives socially and economically, while minimizing any detrimental impact on the environment. The Plan envisions a sustainable, healthy, and resilient Borough where the quality of life of both current and future residents is preserved and enhanced through the protection of our natural resources, dedication to sustainable development practices, reduction of our impact on the local and global environments, and restoration of previously damaged resources, sites, and waterways.

The Plan presents 14 goals and associated strategies. It strongly encourages LEED certification (or comparable standards) for new construction and renovations, with goals for energy efficiency, electrification of buildings and transportation, renewable energy installation (solar, geothermal), water conservation, green infrastructure, and smart growth principles. Specific strategies include installing solar panels on municipal buildings, facilitating EV charging, updating building codes for sustainability, expediting green permits, regulating lawn equipment to reduce emissions/noise, harvesting rainwater, and treating redevelopment as opportunity to restore sites.

12. Relation to Other Plans

Four regional plans have a direct impact on Pennington Borough: the Hopewell Township Master Plan, the Mercer County Master Plan, the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) and the District Solid Waste Management administered by the Mercer County Improvement Authority (MCIA). The Plan details each of these external plans, focusing on those components that have an impact on the Borough. It establishes a proactive framework for monitoring and responding to current and future versions of these plans. The Planning Board will actively track developments in the plans and provide timely recommendations to Borough Council to protect the Borough's interests and capitalize on opportunities for beneficial collaboration.

The wide range of topics addressed by the external plans can influence any of the elements of the Pennington Borough Master Plan. The monitoring process may trigger amendments to Master Plan elements and the Borough Code to meet mandated sections of County, State or MCIA plans. In some cases, this may trigger an update and readoption of an element. The monitoring process will allow a proactive response by the Council and Planning Board, rather than a reactive one. The Plan also suggests that Pennington should have a strong voice during proceedings regarding updates to these plans.

I. Implementation of the Master Plan

Within the individual Master Plan elements, goals range from near-term, inexpensive quick fixes to longer range ones that may require substantial funding from internal or external sources. Some goals may involve the development of new ordinances, or revisions to existing ones. Although the Planning Board creates the Master Plan in consultation with the community, implementation is the responsibility of Borough Council

Borough Council's Implementation Authority -- Borough Council has primary responsibility for developing a Master Plan implementation plan. Council may delegate implementation plan development tasks to the Planning Board. Final authority for implementation plan adoption rests with Borough Council.

Collaborative Implementation Planning Process --When Council delegates implementation planning tasks to the Board: joint development between Borough Council and Planning Board is required, robust public participation must be incorporated throughout the process; regular Council review of implementation plan development progress; public hearings and comment

periods at key implementation planning milestones; and community input sessions to ensure resident voices are heard in implementation priorities.

Implementation Plan Integration with External Monitoring --The implementation planning process shall coordinate implementation priorities with external plan monitoring findings, adjust implementation strategies based on identified external threats or opportunities, align implementation timing with regional planning cycles when beneficial to Borough interests, and incorporate defensive measures into the implementation plan to protect against adverse external impacts. The Relation to Other Plans element gives details on the monitoring process.