Township of Byram

Municipal Planning Partnership Program (MP3) Grant

Village Center Study

Submitted to the
New Jersey Highlands Council
2006
BYRAM TOWNSHIP VILLAGE CENTER STUDY
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PREAMBLE
For a long time the impression of Byram Township has been as a place en route to somewhere else. US Highway 206, with its typical automobile-oriented commercial development, has set the tone for what visitors see when they drive through Byram. This tone is intrinsically tied to the volume of traffic traveling between Interstate 80 and all the towns north of Byram that dot the length of Route 206.

However, Route 206 is not just a route to somewhere else; it is also the only road to take to navigate within Byram. The mobility of the township is dependant on Route 206, so much so that the residents of the township have to think twice before venturing out during periods of the day when Route 206 becomes clogged with rush hour commuters on their way to somewhere else. Children’s play dates don’t happen, sporting events don’t happen, and business meetings don’t happen unless they are carefully planned to avoid certain times of the day.

Over several years, Byram Township has had many public meetings, focus sessions, and planning studies to address issues facing the community. Most of these inevitably settle upon one topic: what to do with Route 206. It is fair to say that Route 206 in its present condition is generally regarded by all to be a “necessary evil” – it’s sorely needed and it’s sorely unwanted.

PROBLEM
Probably the single biggest boost to finding a solution to the conundrum that Route 206 presents came from an unlikely outside source: the State of New Jersey Highlands Preservation Act. The goals of this legislation are not traffic related, but aimed toward protecting, restoring and enhancing the water quality and quantity for New Jersey by setting limits on further development of the Highlands Region. This Act recognizes the unique value of the Highlands Region in the conservation of water resources. Byram’s moniker “Township of Lakes” points to its role in this region: it is the township within Sussex County that is most heavily impacted by the Highlands Preservation Act. The effect of this legislation upon Byram Township has been to halt future development on 98% of all the township land. The remaining 2% is comprised of the narrow strip of existing commercial properties that line the two sides of the southern portion of Route 206. In other words, the same Route 206 that has been the subject of so much examination of traffic congestion over the last several years now impacts the only property in the entire township that is available for further development. All future economic development, all future retail and commercial growth and all future demographic growth can only happen in this small area. Thus, efforts to expand the highway to relieve congestion removes an extremely high percentage of developable land and limits development on remaining land available.

PURPOSE OF STUDY
Through all the planning studies conducted by Byram Township over the past decade, Smart Growth has emerged as the one direction upon which most parties could agree. The Highlands Preservation Act reinforces this direction by recognizing that “future growth should be consistent with Smart Growth strategies and principles.” Therefore, the purpose of this study is to envision future development along the Route 206 corridor in Byram Township through the principals of Smart Growth. By applying the principles of Smart Growth, the considerable quantity of land currently devoted to parking and automobile circulation can be reconfigured into diverse, vibrant and compact neighborhoods supportive of economic development, of retail and commercial growth and of demographic growth. In addition, the Route 206 corridor, reconfigured by the principals of Smart Growth and context-sensitive design into a tree-lined Boulevard with express lanes and local traffic lanes, can become a pleasant experience for the passing-through motorists as well as for the local Byram resident. The Route 206 corridor in Byram Township can be transformed into a place where people want to live, shop, work and learn.

OUTCOME
While demonstrating the growth potential for the Route 206 corridor in line with the Highlands Preservation Act and the principals of Smart Growth, this study brings to light the dramatic changes needed for the highway: changes that engage the need for better traffic volumes while addressing the inevitable shift to a more dense, walkable, pedestrian-oriented community. Whereas the current congestion of Route 206 suggests a poor candidate for context-sensitive traffic design, the projected growth mandated by the unique availability of this section of the township clearly demonstrates that the future patterns make context-sensitive traffic design appropriate. The pedestrian will figure highly in all future planning for this section of Route 206. At the same time, the absence of any alternatives means that Route 206 will remain a primary artery for traffic moving to northern Sussex County. Therefore, the optimal solution will be to combine context-sensitive design that is compatible with Smart Growth while maintaining or even exceeding traffic volumes currently projected by the NJDOT improvements. This study launches investigation into that solution by envisioning the outcome of Smart Growth development patterns. The challenge moving forward is to engage this vision within the current improvements that have been developed by the NJDOT.

NEXT STEPS
Further areas of study should include:
1) Adding and strengthening connections within and between neighborhoods in Byram Township to enable the mobility of local residents separate from the Route 206 corridor.
2) LEEDS and Green Building principles as requirements for future development.
3) Mass-transit opportunities to further alleviate congestion, including:
   i) Review of current and proposed bus stops along Route 206 and elsewhere
   ii) A local trolley system to connect the various commercial centers in the region and to take commuters to the two local train stations in Netcong and the Mount Olive Trade Zone.
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**BYRAM TOWNSHIP TRANSECT ZONES**

**T1 NATURAL**
The T1 zone consists of the natural and preserved open space areas within Byram Township that are intended for preservation. The Highlands Preservation Act and comparable local preservation act regulations within the T1 zone apply.

**PROPOSAL:** Keep all T1 areas intact. In addition, allow the wetlands areas along Lubbers Run to become housing amenities as follows:
- Create a walking path along the edge of the wetlands.
- Create a lakefront setting.

**T2 RURAL**
The T2 zone consists of areas of Byram Township that are intended for preservation. The T2 zone is designed to allow the development of lower density, open residential areas and open space areas. The T2 zone is intended to have a rural character and sparsely settled. All such areas in Byram Township are outside the study area.

**PROPOSAL:** None.

**T3 GENERAL URBAN**
The T3 zone consists of areas of Byram Township that are of open "country road" character and sparsely settled. All such areas in Byram Township are outside the study area.

**PROPOSAL:** None.

**T4 GENERAL URBAN**
The T4 zone consists of a primarily residential fabric on small lots, with some mixed-use. Blocks vary in size, and some roads are of irregular alignment to accommodate natural conditions. The T4 zone generally consists of single family live/work units where the first floor can be used for either residential or commercial activity. The T4 zone is intended to have a low density, low intensity development character with wide sidewalks and streetscapes.

**PROPOSAL:** None.

**T5 URBAN CENTER**
The T5 zone is characterized by stronger density, mixed-use, and higher building heights. The T5 zone consists of higher density, mixed-use building types that accommodate retail, offices, row houses, apartments, and single-family live/work units where the first floor can be used for either residential or commercial activity. The T5 zone is intended to have a richly mixed use, with specialty retail, offices, row houses, apartments, and single-family live/work units where the first floor can be used for either residential or commercial activity. The T5 zone is intended to have a high density, high intensity development character with wide sidewalks, steady street tree planting, and buildings set close to the street frontages. Buildings are attached and streetscapes are intended to include wide sidewalks with steady street tree planting. Currently, there is no T5 Zone in Byram Township.

**PROPOSAL:** Change coding along Highway 206 according to the regulating plan to allow mixed use and subdivision of existing properties to T5 standards.

**T6 URBAN CENTER**
The T6 zone is characterized by higher density, mixed-use, and higher building heights. The T6 zone is intended to have a richly mixed use, with specialty retail, restaurants, offices, and row houses or apartments. The T6 zone is intended to have a high density, high intensity development character with wide sidewalks, steady street tree planting, and buildings set close to the street frontages. Buildings are attached and streetscapes are intended to include wide sidewalks with steady street tree planting. Currently, there is no T6 Zone in Byram Township.

**PROPOSAL:** Change coding in specific areas according to the regulating plan to allow more mixed use and subdivision of existing properties to T6 standards.

**T7 SPECIAL DISTRICTS**
The SD zone identifies areas of the Township where sites with existing specialized uses or functions are located and where development is intended to accommodate those uses or functions. The SD zone is intended to have a unique community character require individualized development standards. Currently, there is no SD Zone in Byram Township.

**PROPOSAL:** Where possible, allow lot subdivisions at backs of large commercial properties along Highway 206. Areas in Byram Township are outside the study area.

**T8 GENERAL URBAN**
The T8 zone is characterized by higher density, mixed-use, and higher building heights. The T8 zone is intended to have a richly mixed use, with specialty retail, offices, row houses, apartments, and single-family live/work units where the first floor can be used for either residential or commercial activity. The T8 zone is intended to have a high density, high intensity development character with wide sidewalks, steady street tree planting, and buildings set close to the street frontages. Buildings are attached and streetscapes are intended to include wide sidewalks with steady street tree planting. Currently, there is no T5 Zone in Byram Township.

**PROPOSAL:** Change coding along Highway 206 according to the regulating plan to allow mixed use and subdivision of existing properties to T8 standards.

**T9 SPECIAL DISTRICTS**
The SD zone identifies areas of the Township where sites with existing specialized uses or functions are located and where development is intended to accommodate those uses or functions. The SD zone is intended to have a unique community character require individualized development standards. Currently, there is no SD Zone in Byram Township.

**PROPOSAL:** Change coding along Highway 206 according to the regulating plan to allow mixed use and subdivision of existing properties to SD standards.
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Township of Byram, NJ
Robert Orr & Associates, LLC
109 Chapel Street
New Haven, Connecticut 06510
203-367-5000

Town Center Development
Byram, NJ

ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN (NORTH)

LEGEND:
- TRANSECT 6 DEVELOPMENT
- TRANSECT 5 DEVELOPMENT
- TRANSECT 1 NO DEVELOPMENT

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T6, or the "urban core," which contains the most dense construction with the tallest buildings, often occurs along major thoroughfares. This zone consists of the highest density, with the greatest variety of uses, and civic buildings of regional importance. Like the urban center, its streets have steady street tree planting and buildings set close to the frontages, though it may have larger blocks. The urban core is either thoroughly mixed use or within walking distance of a mixed-use urban center.

T5, or the mixed-use "urban center" is composed of two (2) to three and one-half (3.5) story buildings with retail at street level and commercial and residential uses above. The alignment of storefronts forms a continuous street wall, and open space takes the form of regularly shaped streets, squares, greens and plazas. This zone has a tight network of streets, with wide sidewalks, steady street tree planting and buildings set close to the frontages.
### Boulevard Section

The boulevard functions both as a carrier of relatively rapid and nonlocal traffic as well as local automotive and pedestrian traffic. Boulevards allow for easier and calmer through-travel than on city streets that give direct access to abutting property, because the center lanes of multiway boulevards are less subject to interference from parking and from service vehicles. The establishment of a strong pedestrian realm is of primary importance to the creation of a well-functioning, safe boulevard, as well as a balance between the central and side realms.

The tree-planted median forms a boundary for the pedestrian realm, protecting it from the central roadway's fast-moving traffic. The trees should form an uninterrupted, closely spaced line with a continuous overhead canopy. The pedestrian realm includes the access roadway, where movement of vehicular traffic will be slow and drivers will respect the presence of pedestrians. The access roadway will have on-street parking, both to encourage pedestrian use and give access to abutting properties.

### Urban Standards

#### Boulevard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Two-way</th>
<th>One-way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B-O-W Width</td>
<td>60 ft</td>
<td>40 ft or 40 ft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curb Type</td>
<td>6&quot; Head</td>
<td>S Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radius</td>
<td>15 ft</td>
<td>10 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Crossing Time</td>
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<td>18 seconds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planter Width</td>
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<td>10 ft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planter Type</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tree Pattern</td>
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<td>10 ft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tree Species</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ground Cover</td>
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#### Commercial Street

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<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parking Lanes</td>
<td>Both sides</td>
<td>One side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-O-W Width</td>
<td>56 ft</td>
<td>34 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curb Type</td>
<td>6&quot; Head</td>
<td>S Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radius</td>
<td>15 ft</td>
<td>10 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Crossing Time</td>
<td>5 seconds</td>
<td>11 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planter Width</td>
<td>4 ft</td>
<td>Individual, with grate cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planter Type</td>
<td>Tree Pattern</td>
<td>Tree Pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree Species</td>
<td>Tree Species, with grate cover</td>
<td>Tree Species, with grate cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground Cover</td>
<td>Lawns</td>
<td>Lawns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### One-Way Street

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>One-way</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parking Lanes</td>
<td>One side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-O-W Width</td>
<td>36 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curb Type</td>
<td>6&quot; Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radius</td>
<td>15 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian Crossing Time</td>
<td>4 seconds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planter Width</td>
<td>Not required</td>
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<td>Planter Type</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tree Species</td>
<td>Not required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground Cover</td>
<td>Lawns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Commercial Streets

Commercial streets are appropriate for commercial buildings in the urban center and urban core. Trees are confined by individual planting areas covered by grates, creating a sidewalk of maximum width, with areas accommodating street furniture. Clear trunks and high canopies are necessary to avoid interference with shopfronts, signage and awnings.

### One-Way Streets

One-way streets are appropriate for minor connections within the urban center and urban core, to alleviate congestion on larger streets and the boulevard. Since most of these streets are bound on one side by a park or green space, trees are not required on the opposite side, but sidewalk widths will allow for them. If desired, tree placement would be similar to the commercial street.
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BROOKWOOD GREEN

BOULEVARD VIEW TOWARDS MAIN STREET

PERSPECTIVE VIEWS

Township of Byram, NJ
Town Center Development
Byram, NJ

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ALONG THE BOULEVARD (ROUTE 206)

T-5 EXAMPLES

AT BROOKWOOD GREEN

ON BROOKWOOD ROAD

ON WATERLOO ROAD

T-5 EXAMPLES

T-6 EXAMPLES

AT MAIN STREET

T-6 EXAMPLES

INSPIRATION IMAGES

CLIENT: Township of Byram, NJ

ARCHITECT: Robert Orr & Associates, LLC

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Town Center Development
Byram, NJ

ARCHITECTURE + TOWN PLANNING
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