

**2002
AMENDMENT
TO THE
MASTER PLAN**



Goals and Policies



Land Use



Conservation, Natural Resources and Agriculture

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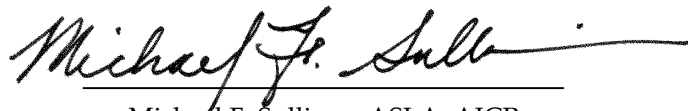
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Affordable Housing Historic Preservation*

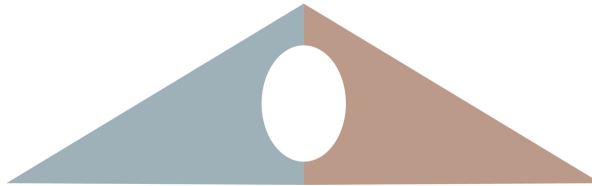
2002 AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER PLAN

Adopted by the Readington Township Planning Board
May 13, 2002

Prepared By:



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*Planning Architecture Landscape Architecture Environmental Analysis
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TOWNSHIP OF READINGTON
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WHITEHOUSE STATION, NEW JERSEY 08889

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GOALS AND POLICIES

The following is hereby added to the Goals and Policies plan element:

2. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Policy: Protect and preserve the scenic viewsheds and scenic edges of public thoroughfares through the classification, location and configuration of land uses.

LAND USE PLAN ELEMENT

This revision focuses specifically on blocks 80 and 94, with respect to rural and agricultural preservation policies, and on block 82, to resolve an inconsistency with respect to the limits of the Senior Citizen-3 zone. This plan amendment does not replace the goals and policies that were developed as part of the 1998 amendments, but augments them.

The impetus for this amendment comes from the Township's planning documents, namely the 1998 Master Plan Amendments and the 2001 Master Plan Reexamination Report. Additional basis is found within the Master Plan Consistency Report, which was issued by the Office of State Planning in January of 2000, and the 2001 New Jersey State Plan. Finally, recent actions of the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board to expand the Agriculture Development Area (ADA) within Readington have warranted an examination of the lands in and around that boundary change to determine if changes are necessary to make the Township's land use plan more consistent with the County's agricultural preservation policies. These have been summarized within the current amendment to the Conservation, Natural Resources and Agriculture Plan Element.

Blocks 80 and 94

The land use plan is hereby amended to include all of blocks 80 and 94 within the AR Agricultural Residential land use classification. The zoning map should be amended to reflect this amendment to the land use plan.

Block 82

Block 82 is a vacant, single lot (lot 1) with slightly over 2 acres. It is isolated from other blocks by the right-of-way of Route 202 and the off-ramp to Railroad Avenue. It is currently zoned as Research Office. In 2000, the adjacent commercially zoned lands on block 81 were rezoned to permit age-restricted residential development. At this time, it development under the Research Office criteria does not appear to be likely. However, the inclusion of this block within the Senior Citizen-3 land use category may prove to make the development of senior housing more viable. Therefore, the land use plan is hereby amended to include block 82 within the SC-3 Senior Citizen housing land use category.

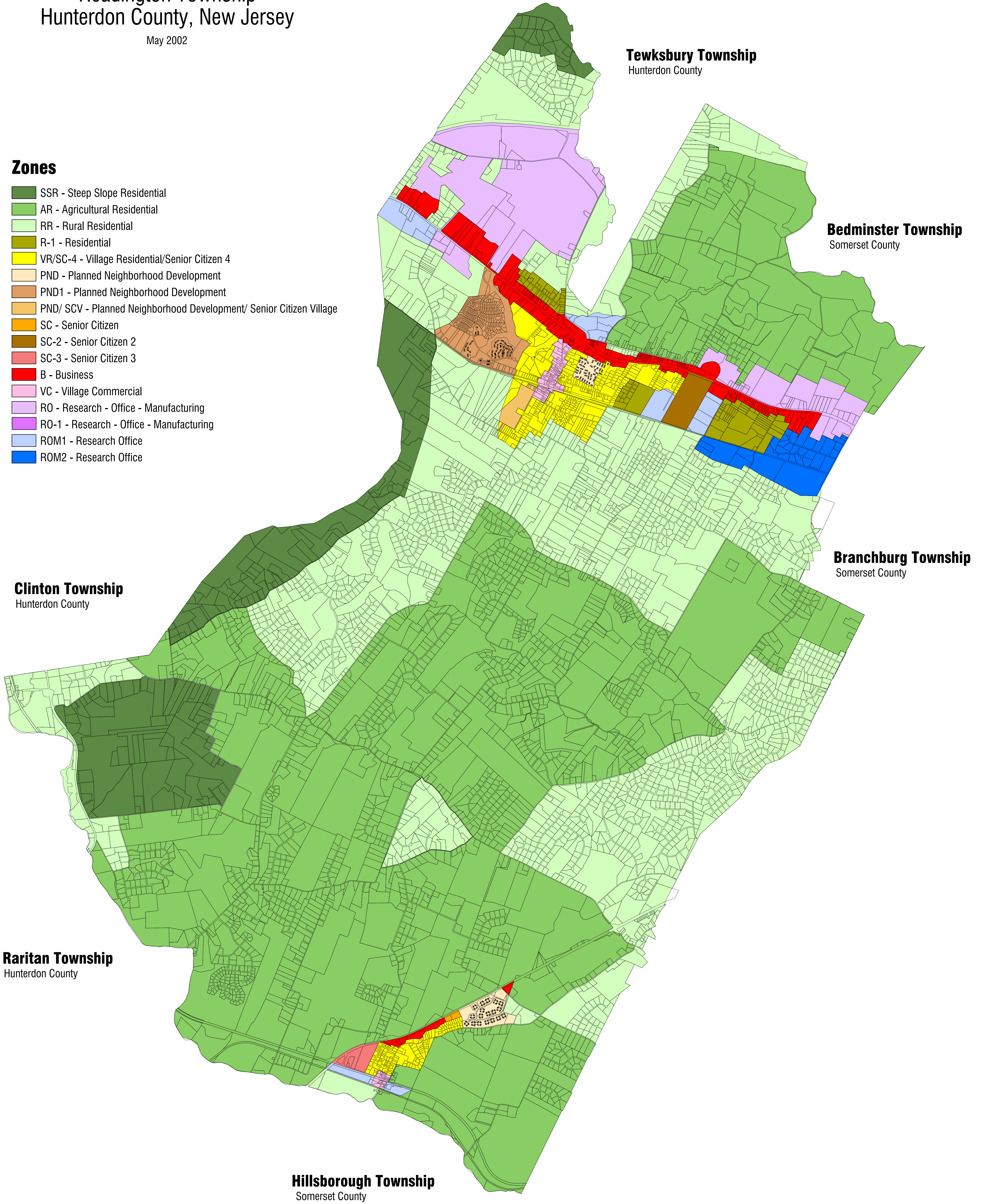
Land Use Plan

Readington Township
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

May 2002

Zones

- SSR - Steep Slope Residential
- AR - Agricultural Residential
- RR - Rural Residential
- R-1 - Residential
- VR/SC-4 - Village Residential/Senior Citizen 4
- PND - Planned Neighborhood Development
- PND1 - Planned Neighborhood Development
- PND/ SCV - Planned Neighborhood Development/ Senior Citizen Village
- SC - Senior Citizen
- SC-2 - Senior Citizen 2
- SC-3 - Senior Citizen 3
- B - Business
- VC - Village Commercial
- RO - Research - Office - Manufacturing
- RO-1 - Research - Office - Manufacturing
- ROM1 - Research Office
- ROM2 - Research Office



Tewksbury Township
Hunterdon County

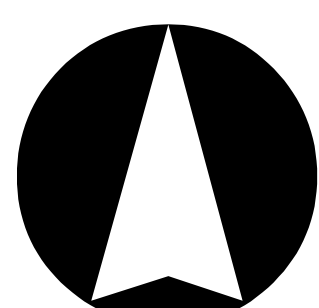
Bedminster Township
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Branchburg Township
Somerset County

Clinton Township
Hunterdon County

Raritan Township
Hunterdon County

Hillsborough Township
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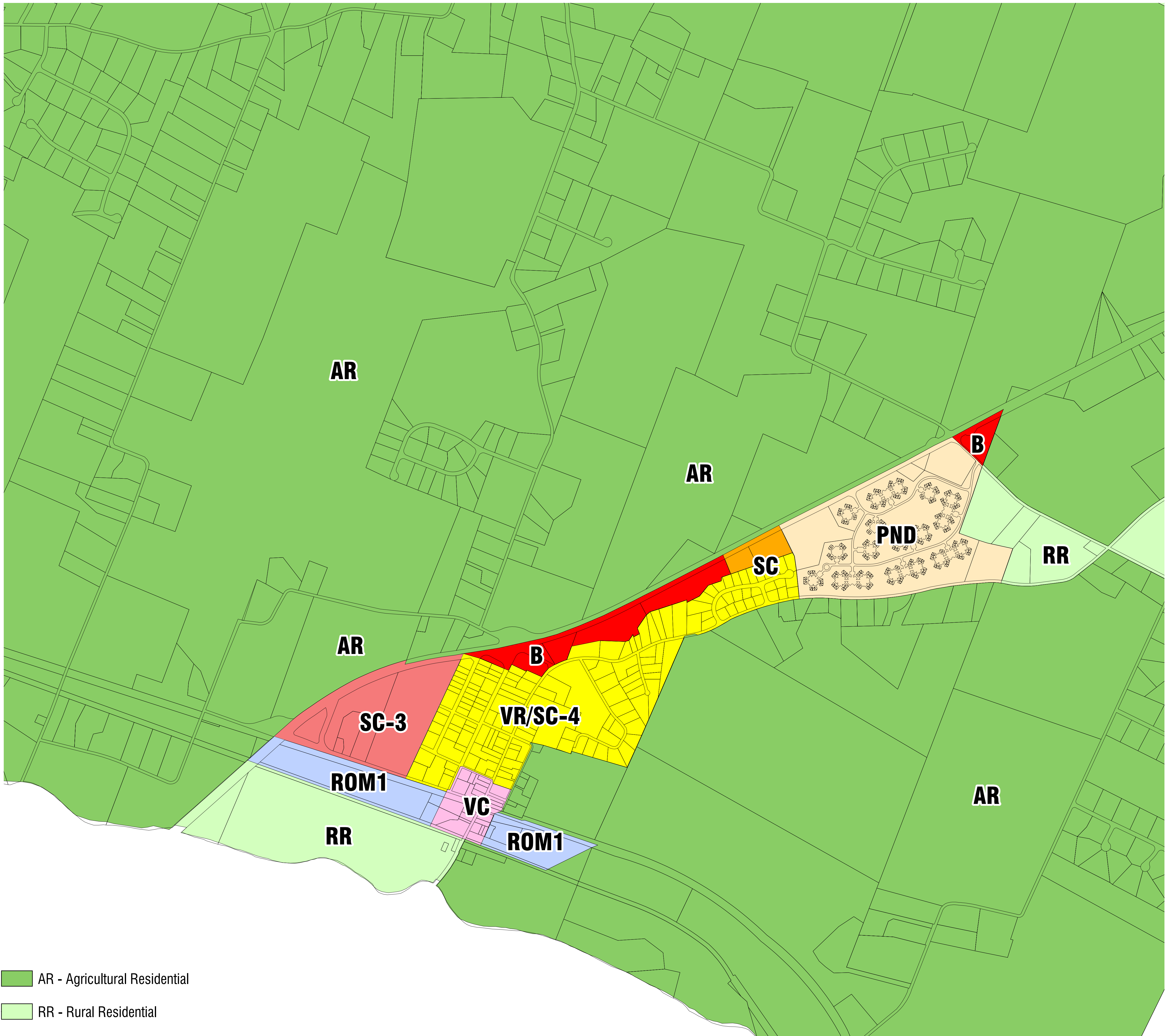
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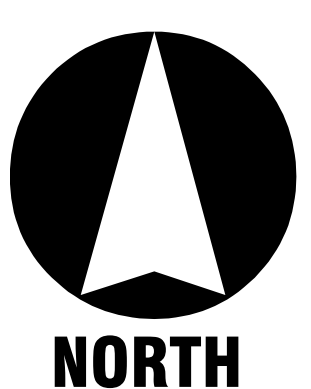
Land Use Plan (Detail)

Readington Township
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

May 2002



- AR - Agricultural Residential
- RR - Rural Residential
- VR/SC-4 - Village Residential/Senior Citizen 4
- PND - Planned Neighborhood Development
- SC - Senior Citizen
- SC-3 - Senior Citizen 3
- B - Business
- VC - Village Commercial
- RO - Research - Office - Manufacturing
- ROM1 - Research Office



0 600 1,200 2,400 3,600 4,800 Feet

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CONSERVATION, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURE

This element of the Master Plan is amended in order to reflect the most recent information regarding farmland use, preserved farmland, open space and the boundary of the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Area. It is primarily focused on blocks 80 and 94. This amendment does not replace the policies contained within the 1998 Master Plan Amendments.

Block 80

Block 80 is a predominantly undeveloped and contains approximately 69 acres of land. All of block 80 is within the ADA. Lots 1 and 2 comprise over 60 acres within block 80. These lots are in the RO Research Office classification and are adjacent to a large tract of State-owned open space. They are currently assessed as farmland and comprise nearly 88 percent of block 80. Lots 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 are presently classified as B Business. These lots range in size from 0.46 to 4.13 acres. These lots are all single-family residential, with the exception of lot 5, which is a commercial office. Block 80 is within the PA-4 Rural and PA-4B Rural Environmentally Sensitive planning areas, according to the State Plan. It is not within a public sewer service area.

Block 94

Block 94 is predominantly maintained in agriculture, with some existing single-family residential uses and three non-conforming, commercial uses along Route 202. Approximately half of block 90 is within the current ADA, but with the recent action by the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board, the entire block is now slated for inclusion in the ADA. Block 94 is within the PA-4 Rural planning area, according to the State Plan. It is not within a public sewer service area.

1998 Master Plan Amendments

In 1998, the Master Plan was amended to create a new land use category, AR Agricultural Residential (AR). The creation of the AR classification was based

upon policies that sought to improve the quality of groundwater, to retain a larger amount of open space and agricultural lands and to preserve the rural agricultural character of Readington. The AR classification achieved these objectives through the clustering of residential lots while reserving 70% of tracts to be set aside as public open space. The boundaries of this classification relied heavily upon the existing Agriculture Development Area (ADA) boundary that had been established by the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board. In creating the AR district, the Master Plan acknowledged that the ADA provided the clearest indication of the lands that were a priority for agricultural preservation, but it also acknowledged that other lands outside of the AR land use category should be examined to determine if expansion of the AR classification would be warranted.

2000 Master Plan Consistency Review

In January of 2000, the Office of State Planning (OSP) issued a report that compared Readington's planning documents to the State Plan, pursuant to a formal request from the Township. This report details several aspects of Readington's policies that are substantially consistent with the State Plan. It also identifies some elements that could be more consistent with the State Plan. The report identified the need to examine the Village of Three Bridges, which is located within PA-3 Fringe Planning Area for reclassification as a *center* within PA-4 Rural Planning Area. In the opinion of OSP, the boundaries of the Three Bridges village center would be the existing sewer service area boundary, which has its northern boundary at Route 202. Coincidentally, the boundary between the PA-3 Fringe planning area and the adjacent PA-4 Rural planning area is coterminous with the boundary of the sewer service area.

Presently, there are no plans to expand the sewer service area and no plans to expand Three Bridges village across Route 202 to the north. However, the land use plan presently contains several land use classifications on the north side of Route 202 that would necessitate revisions to the sewer service area, the creation of additional sewer capacity in the Three Bridges plant and would introduce moderate -to high-intensity commercial development within PA-4 and PA-4B, contrary to the State Plan policies regarding those areas. The State Plan regards these areas as the *environs* of Three Bridges. In order to be more consistent with the State Plan, the land use plan should be amended to remove the commercial

land use classifications from the north side of Route 202, including RO Research Office and the B Business classifications within block 80 and block 94. The reclassification of these lands to the AR category would remove this inconsistency with the State Plan and the sewer service area.

2001 State Plan

The New Jersey State Planning Commission adopted the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (State Plan) on March 1, 2001. This plan is an update to the 1991 and 1997 interim plans and containing statewide policies (those applicable to all lands), resource policies (those applicable to specific natural and cultural resources) and planning area policies (those applicable to certain defined areas, known as planning areas).

Two planning areas are relevant in the discussion of blocks 80 and 94: PA4 Rural and PA4B Rural / Environmentally Sensitive. These planning areas contain nearly identical goals, policies and objectives. The objectives for these areas seek to protect the character of existing communities, accommodate growth and public infrastructure within centers, promote agriculture and maintain large contiguous areas of farmland within the environs. Statewide policies regarding agriculture and open space are also relevant. With respect to these resources, the State Plan seeks to preserve agriculture and locate new development to avoid conflicts with agricultural lands. Both block 80 and 94 each contain Research Office and Business land use classifications, which, if developed according to the current zoning, would channel growth and require infrastructure extensions in lands (outside of a center) where the State Plan specifically discourages such development. Additionally, the development of those lands according to the current zoning would result in the permanent conversion of agricultural lands to commercial uses in an area that is predominantly farmland and open space. Some of these lands contain existing commercial and residential uses, some of which are non-conforming. Development of block 80 and 94 under the current zoning, or expansion of existing commercial uses, would be inconsistent with the objectives of the P A-4 and PA4B planning areas within which they lie. In order to be more consistent with the State Plan, the land use plan should be amended to remove the commercial land use classifications from blocks 80 and 94.

New Jersey State Plan Policy Map

Readington Township
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

April 2002

Legend

- PA5 Environmentally Sensitive
- PA3 Fringe
- PA6 Park 1st Plan
- PA4 Rural
- PA42 Rural Env. Sensitive
- PA8 State Park
- PA2 Suburban

Tewksbury Township
Hunterdon County

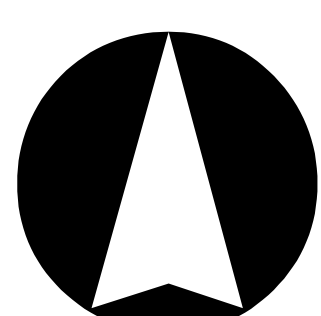
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Somerset County

Branchburg Township
Somerset County

Clinton Township
Hunterdon County

Raritan Township
Hunterdon County

Hillsborough Township
Somerset County



NORTH

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Feet

Information Source: The New Jersey Office of State Planning - State Plan Policy Map April 12, 2001

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2001 Master Plan Reexamination Report

In December of 2001, the Planning Board adopted this report pursuant to the Municipal Land Use Law (*N.J.S.A. 40:55D-89*). This was an opportunity for the Township to take stock of its existing planning policies and ordinances and to identify specific issues that deserved attention. In the report, several recommendations are relevant to the examination of blocks 80 and 94.

The Reexamination identified the need to protect scenic vistas and roadside views. It also specifically addressed Route 202 as having scenic edges and urged the reevaluation of the commercial lands along 202, in the context of land preservation and the preservation of community character. The Executive Director of the Office of State Planning specifically commented on the need to protect this element during a visit to the Township in 2000. This is directly applicable to blocks 80 and 94 (where they abut Route 202) since the bulk of these lands are used for agriculture and exhibit a visual character that is rural/agricultural. The current land use plan, with its commercial categories in this area, presents a distinct threat to the maintenance of this character in the event commercial development did occur. The reclassification of these lands to the AR category would reduce this threat.

The Reexamination Report urges the Township to continue the preservation of agricultural and open space lands since there is ongoing support from the State and the County. The commercial lands within blocks 80 and 94, if developed under current zoning, would result in the creation of no public open space or preserved farmland. The reclassification of these lands to the AR category would increase the opportunity to preserve meaningful farmland or public open space.

As discussed, Readington petitioned for, and received, a Master Plan Consistency Report from the Office of State Planning in 2000. The Reexamination Report recommends the examination of those issues raised in the Consistency Report, and that recommendations be followed where determined to be relevant by the Planning Board.

Agriculture Development Area

New Jersey requires the delineation of Agriculture Development Areas (ADA) within each county to serve as a guide to the channeling of farmland preservation funding. The ADA identifies areas that present the best opportunity for the implementation of the State and County agricultural preservation policies.

Recently, the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board has approved the remaining lots within block 94, which are not presently in the ADA, to be included in the ADA¹. The 2001 Reexamination Report recognized that the ADA boundaries may shift over time and recommended that the boundaries of zoning districts may need to be revised to reflect those changes. Block 80 is entirely within the ADA, but the commercial land use classifications (Research Office and Business) are not consistent with the goals and objectives underlying the ADA. The AR land use classification would be more effective, both on block 80 and 94, at implementing the rural preservation objectives of the Township, the County and the State than the existing Rural Residential, Business and Research Office land use classifications.

¹ minutes of the Hunterdon County Agriculture Development Board at their meeting of March 14, 2002

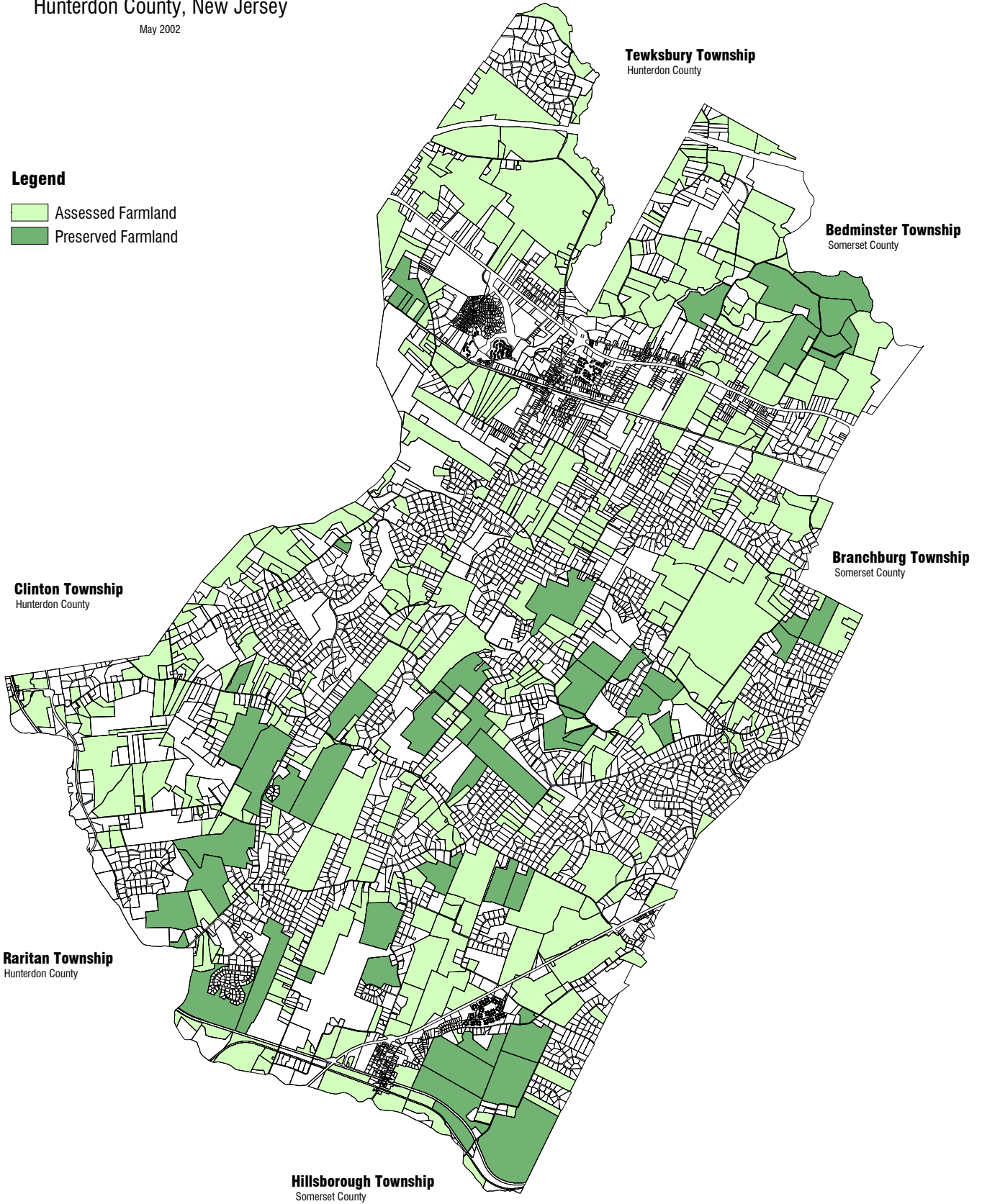
Farmland

Readington Township
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

May 2002

Legend

- Assessed Farmland
- Preserved Farmland



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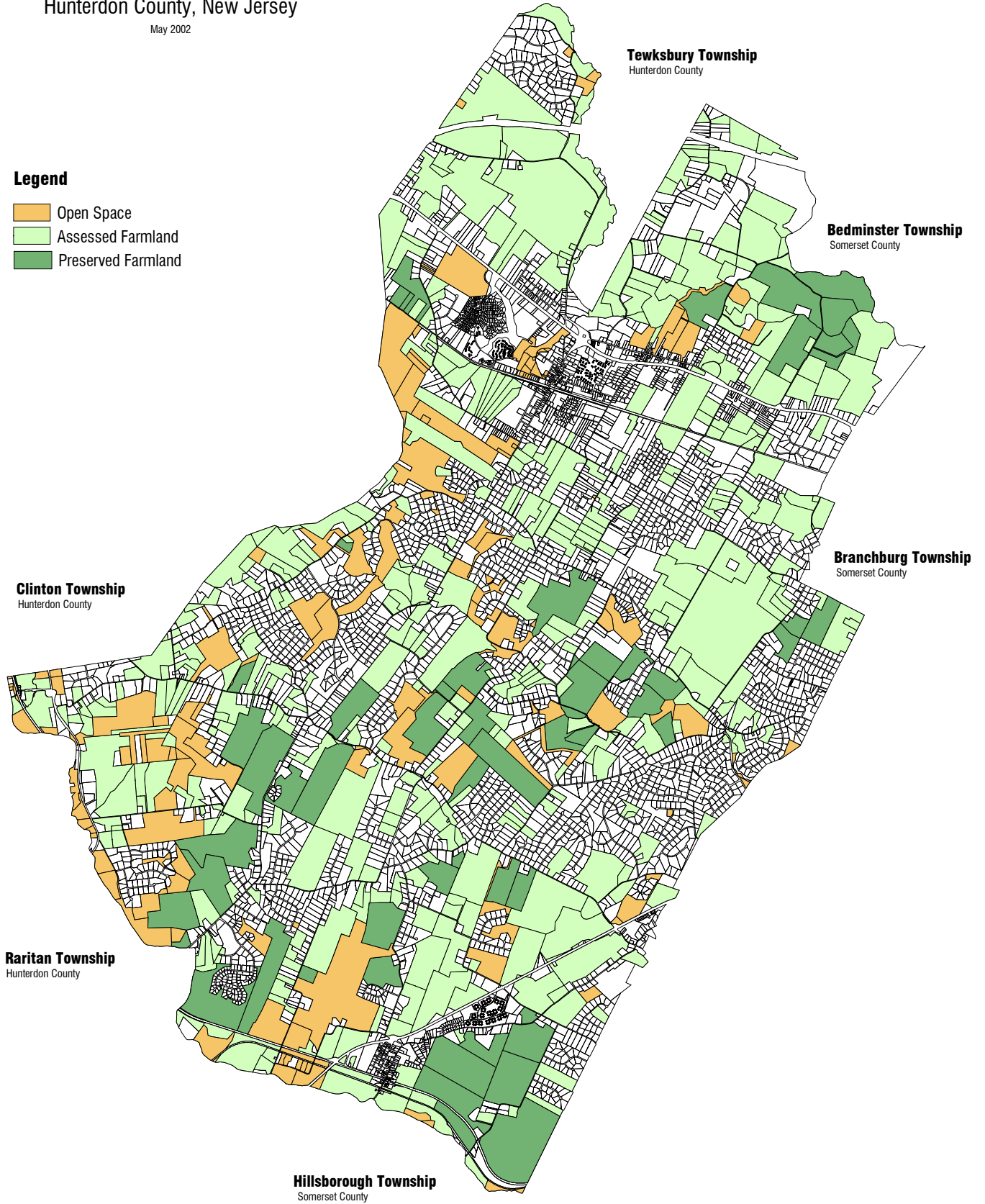
Open Space & Farmland

Readington Township
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

May 2002

Legend

- Open Space
- Assessed Farmland
- Preserved Farmland



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Agriculture Development Area

Readington Township
Hunterdon County, New Jersey

May 2002

Legend

-  Agriculture Development Area - December 2001
-  Proposed additions to ADA - March 2002

Tewksbury Township
Hunterdon County

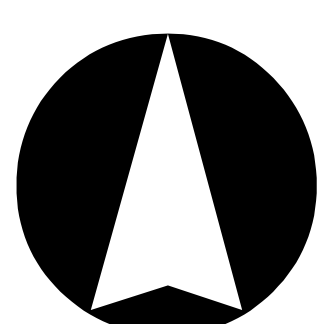
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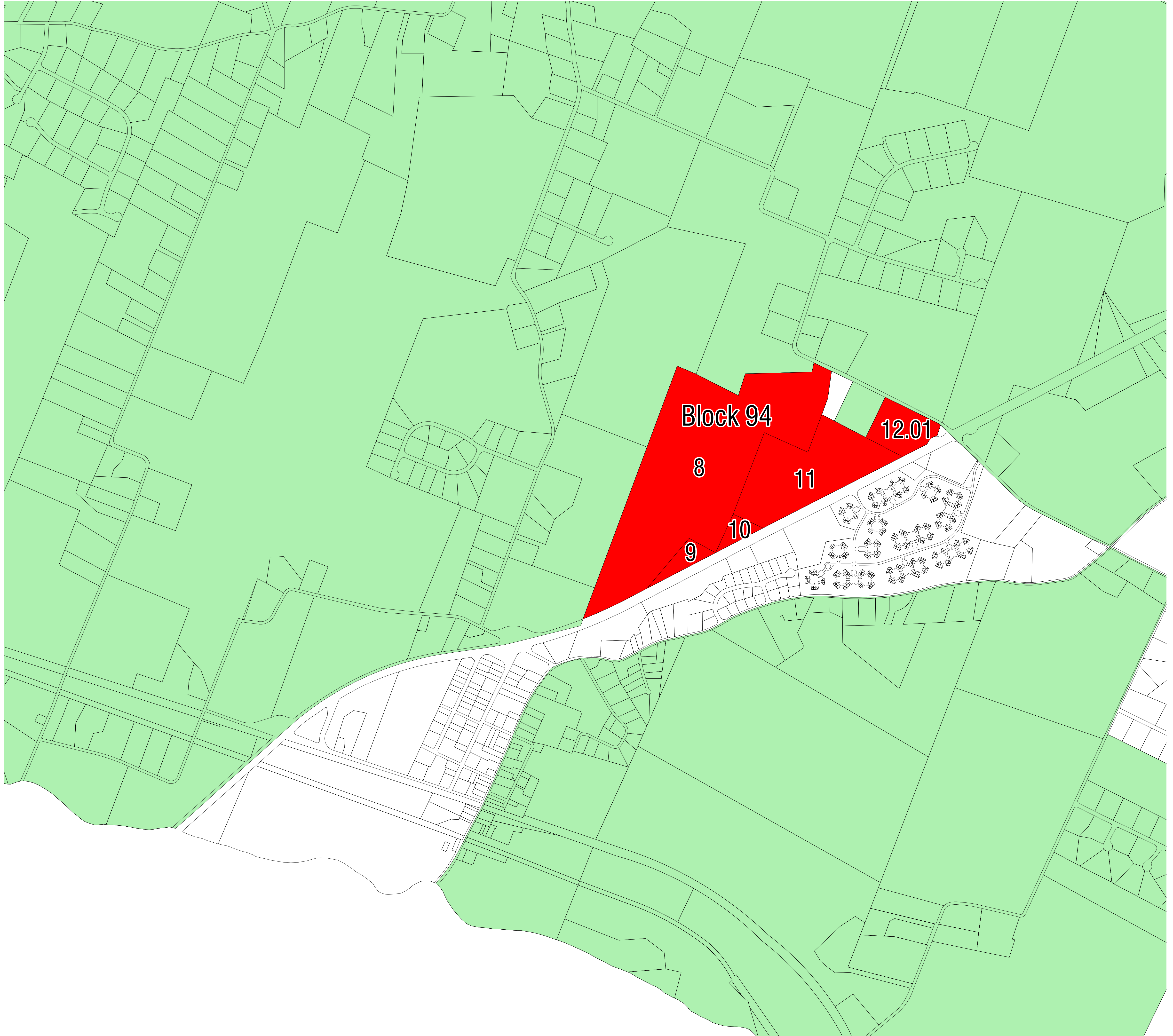
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Agriculture Development Area (Detail)

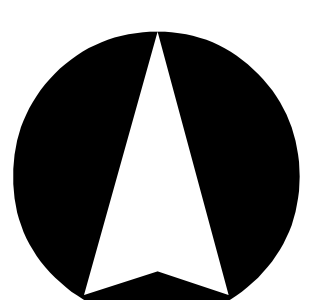
Readington Township
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May 2002



Legend

-  Agriculture Development Area - December 2001
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