

**The Redevelopment of the Union Hotel Site**  
**Main Street, Flemington, NJ**

**The Flemington Historic Preservation Commission**  
**May 24, 2016**

**A. Introduction:**

The Flemington Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) appreciates the opportunity to provide input and recommendations to the Flemington Redevelopment Committee (RC) on a project of tremendous importance, scale, and impact to the future of the Borough. As this project will have profound effects on some of Flemington's most important historic resources, it is the obligation of the Commission, per Borough Ordinance, to provide this input.

The HPC fully supports the Borough's Master Plan and Hunterdon County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), and agrees that historic preservation is an integral component to achieving the goals of both documents. The HPC clearly recognizes that the Borough of Flemington is in need of economic revitalization and understands that a portion of the Main Street area has been deemed an "Area in Need of Redevelopment." Like the Master Plan and the CEDS, the HPC believes that a combination of new construction, new uses and the rehabilitation of the existing historic structures that give Flemington its unique character provides the best opportunity for long-term, sustainable redevelopment and economic growth.

The HPC was established in accordance with Section 1404 of the Borough's Zoning Ordinance. The HPC is an advisory body that encourages the retention and repair of the historic design elements on all significant and contributing buildings in the Flemington Historic District, and seeks to ensure that changes in exterior appearance through renovation, alternation, addition, demolition, new construction/addition or replacement are accomplished with respect and consideration for the building and its context. Because of the important history of the Borough and the striking array of architectural styles and building types, sixty-five per cent (65%) of Flemington is included in the Historic District and is listed on both the State of New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places. This is an extraordinary acknowledgement of Flemington's unique and important place in New Jersey's history.

The HPC is aware of the preliminary plans presented by the designated redeveloper of the Union Hotel site. Because these initial, conceptual plans have such a negative impact on some of the most historically and architecturally significant structures along Main Street in the heart of the Flemington Historic District, the HPC is providing its input at this crucial time.

**B. Summary of Principles:**

Using Flemington's Historic Preservation Ordinance, as well as the Master Plan and the County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, as our guide, the Flemington Historic Preservation Commission asks that the Redevelopment Committee include the following principles when preparing the Redeveloper's Agreement and Plan:

1. Flemington has a unique character defined by its extraordinary history and extraordinary architecture. This character is what retains our existing residents, attracts new residents and brings visitors and shoppers to the downtown. This character should be preserved and enhanced.
2. The best redevelopment that supports long-term, sustainable economic growth in the Borough includes a combination of renovated historic buildings combined with new buildings and uses that fit the character of the downtown.
3. The Union Hotel, the Lynn Building, and 90-100 Main Street should be preserved and given new functions. These significant and contributing structures, "...are the heart of historic downtown Flemington, comprising the streetscape that gives Flemington its special character." (From Preservation New Jersey's 10 Most Endangered Historic Places in New Jersey 2016). The redevelopment plan should use the Borough's existing Historic Preservation Ordinance 2010-17 (detailed below) as the guide for how to treat these historic resources.
4. New construction should fit with the existing character of the downtown, both regarding scale and character. New buildings should not overwhelm the existing streetscape in terms of height and overall bulk, and exterior details and material should relate to the historic character of Flemington. Again, Ordinance 2010-17 provides extensive relevant guidelines for new construction in the Historic District.
5. Because the Flemington Historic District is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, properties designated as "contributing" or "significant" are eligible to receive a 20% Federal Historic Tax Credit, if proposed work meets the requirements of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The Redeveloper should explore these and other incentives that will make the preservation of Flemington's most important historic buildings more feasible.

### **C. Background:**

The Borough's Historic District Review Ordinance 2010-17 was established for the following purposes:

1. Safeguarding the heritage of Flemington Borough by preserving its historical, cultural, social, economic and architectural resources;
2. Encouraging the continued use of historic buildings, structures and sites and to facilitate their appropriate re-use;
3. Maintaining and developing a harmonious setting for the historically significant buildings, structures, sites, objects and district;
4. Preventing the unnecessary demolition or relocation of historic resources;
5. Preventing new construction or development which is not in keeping with or that negatively impacts the ambience and character of the Historic district;
6. Encouraging the proper maintenance, per the Borough's existing Property Maintenance Code Chapter IXB, and preservation of buildings, structures and sites within the Historic District so as to promote Flemington Borough as an attractive area to live, work and visit;
7. Protecting and enhancing property values;
8. Promoting civic pride in and appreciation of Flemington Borough's historic resources for the education, pleasure and welfare of its citizens and visitors; and
9. Fostering beautification and private reinvestment.

These are all worthy goals that were formalized by the Borough Council in the Historic Preservation Ordinance as important to the future of Flemington Borough. The HPC recognizes that the area between the Union Hotel and Chorister Place has been designated as an “Area in Need of Redevelopment”, and as such, the redevelopment efforts may be subject to a different set of criteria than other development efforts within the Borough, depending on the specifications of the approved Redevelopment Plan. The HPC recommends that the Redevelopment Committee incorporate the Borough’s existing Historic District Review Ordinance into the Redevelopment Plan. Further, the HPC recommends compliance with the “Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties” when dealing with the existing, historic buildings.

#### **D. Project Recommendations:**

As the Redevelopment Committee prepares the Redevelopment Plan, the HPC recommends the following standards/goals be incorporated into the plan:

##### **Regarding Demolition:**

The HPC strongly discourages the demolition of the Borough’s historic resources, particularly those designated as “significant” and “contributing” to the character of the Borough’s Historic District. Once demolished, historic resources are lost forever. The demolition of any of the historic buildings on Main Street, and particularly the Union Hotel, would create a major gap in the District and would be regretted far into the future:

- a. 70-74 Main Street (Union Hotel): This property is designated as “significant” according to the Borough’s Historic District Map. This is one of the most important building in the Historic District and should be preserved. The interior of the building is not as significant and can be reconfigured for new uses.
- b. 78 Main Street: This property is designated as “contributing” and should be preserved and rehabilitated.
- c. 80-82 Main Street: This property is designated as “non-contributing” according to the Borough’s historic district map. Demolition of this property is not an issue, as long as new, infill construction is designed to fit the character and scale of the historic district.
- d. 90-104 Main Street: A portion of this property (along Main Street) is designated as “significant.” This part of the building should be preserved and rehabilitated. A portion is designated as “non-contributing” and can be replaced.

As stated in Ordinance 2010-17, “The integrity of historic districts depends on the preservation and retention in situ of the original historic structures. Therefore, the review of applications for the demolition or partial demolition of any structure within the Flemington historic district will be undertaken with the greatest care. The demolition or partial demolition of any structure deemed Contributing or Significant in the Historic district is not permitted, except when public health or safety is at risk, as certified by a licensed structural engineer” (2010-17.G.1).

The four buildings in question for redevelopment were included in the Borough’s 1980 application to the National Park Service for designation of Flemington’s Historic District. As described above, most are contributing or significant structures in the Historic District. *Note: extensive demolition within the Borough’s Historic District has the potential to trigger a review*

*by the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office and/or the National Park Service to evaluate whether the integrity of the Borough's Historic District has been altered in such a way as to impact the integrity of the historic designation.*

The HPC requests that applications to demolish any structure within the Historic District as part of the proposed redevelopment be presented to the HPC, and address the following issues:

- a. The structure's historic, architectural and aesthetic significance;
- b. It's current use;
- c. It's condition;
- d. It's importance to the municipality and the extent to which its historical or architectural value is such that its removal would be detrimental to the public interest;
- e. The extent to which it is of such old, unusual or uncommon design, craftsmanship, texture or material that it could not be reproduced or could be reproduced only with great difficulty;
- f. The extent to which its retention would promote the general welfare;
- g. The extent to which its retention would encourage study and interest in Flemington's history, stimulate interest and study in architecture and design, educate citizens in American culture and heritage, or make the municipality a more attractive and desirable place in which to live; and
- h. The probable impact of its removal upon the character and ambience of the Historic District (2010-17.G.2).

**General Guidelines for Both Adaptive Reuse and New Construction:**

As the proposed Redevelopment Project will likely include a significant amount of new construction, the HPC recommends that the following guidelines included in the Historic Preservation Ordinance be used to govern this new construction, as well as the adaptive reuse of the existing buildings:

- a. "All development shall be designed to reflect the design vocabulary, massing, proportion, directional expression, height, width, scale, orientation, windows, roof, details, and materials of vernacular 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century styles found in the Borough of Flemington. These styles include Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Second empire, Queen Anne, Shingle, Romanesque Revival, Neoclassical and Tudor Revival styles" (2010-17.C.10).
- b. "Alternative Materials. The use of nonhistoric, alternative materials may be considered under certain circumstances. These materials include, but are not limited to: vinyl or composite siding (smooth finish only); vinyl, fiberglass or composite railings and porch columns, particularly when these materials are paintable; fiberglass or composite trim, brackets or moldings; composite porch floor decks; vinyl, clad, or aluminum windows and doors; fiberglass/asphalt shingle roofing; etc. The use of these materials will be limited on all buildings or structures deemed to be "Significant" on the Flemington Historic District Map, or that are located along Main Street, from the Traffic Circle to the Monument, along East Main Street to Hopewell Avenue, as well as North Main Street from the Monument to Hopewell Avenue, as indicated in Subsection C,10 above. Specifically, the use of vinyl siding or windows and doors of alternative materials will be prohibited on the public sides of "Significant" structures. Where visible roofs need to be replaced on "Significant" structures, using replacement materials and

methods that match the historic materials is preferable. If the use of historic materials is not feasible, particular care will be taken in selecting alternative materials that match the historic appearance as closely as possible. Composite materials that are painted and that match the configuration of the historic materials are considered to be more acceptable than other replacement materials” (2010-17.C.17).

- c. The HPC is “particularly concerned with elevations of buildings that are visible from public ways. Rear and side elevations that are not visible will have greater flexibility in terms of design and materials” (2010-17.E.1).
- d. “Signage: Appropriately designed signage can be an important design feature on commercial buildings in the Historic District. The Historic Preservation Commission reviews all proposed signage on properties within the Historic District, whether or not they will be attached to a structure. Relatively small, painted signage either mounted to the face of the building as part of the storefront design, or perpendicular to the face of the building, is encouraged. Large, contemporary, lighted, neon, or plastic signs are not permitted, as are signs that conceal important architectural features. In addition to the review by the Flemington Historic Preservation Commission, all signs must meet the requirements of the Flemington Land Development Ordinance, Chapter XXVI, Zoning” (2010-17.J.1).
- e. “Awnings. Appropriately designed awnings may be acceptable on residential and nonresidential buildings. All awnings shall be constructed and installed so that the frame and fabric of the awning is integrated into the overall building design. Awnings shall not extend beyond a dimension appropriate with the size and scale of the subject building. Awnings shall not be placed so as to conceal or disfigure any architectural feature or detail. Awning materials shall be limited to cloth, canvas and similar materials; metal and aluminum awnings are prohibited. Plastic and/or internally illuminated awnings are also prohibited. Awnings may be solid or striped, but colors shall complement the façade colors. If the building has several tenants, the overall awning design should be consistent and compatible across the entire façade.” (2010-17.J.2).
- f. “Street Furniture. The installation of all street furniture, including benches, fencing, trash cans, lighting, planters, etc., that is visible from public ways must be reviewed by the Flemington Historic Preservation Commission. The items should be selected to fit the scale, materials and character of the Historic District.” (2010-17.J.4).
- g. “The use of overly dramatic and/or intrusive lighting designs and fixtures is not permitted” (2010-17.E.7).

#### **Specific Recommendations Regarding Adaptive Reuse:**

The HPC strongly advocates redevelopment through adaptive reuse, particularly with respect to those properties that have been designated as “significant” and “contributing” to the character of the Borough’s Historic District.

To the extent that existing historic resources are rehabilitated for adaptive reuse, the HPC recommends the following design guidelines:

- a. “Exterior alterations should not destroy the distinguishing qualities or character of the property and its environment, and the removal or alteration of any historical material or architectural features is not permitted” (2010-17.C.13).

- b. “Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible, and in the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities” (2010-17.C.14).
- c. “Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplication of original features, substantiated by physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural features from other buildings” (2010-17.C.15).
- d. On existing buildings, original materials shall be retained wherever possible. No existing brick or stone shall be covered for cosmetic reasons, and the repair and restoration of existing materials deemed of architectural value is strongly encouraged. Great care shall be taken in the cleaning and repair of existing materials. The gentlest, effective means shall be used in all cases. “Sandblasting” and other abrasive cleaning techniques, as well as harsh chemical cleaning methods are not to be used under any circumstances (2010-17.F.1).
- e. Where appropriate, building renovations shall incorporate elements of the original structure into the renovation design” (2010-17.F.2).
- f. Flat, metal panels and mirrored glass surfaces are prohibited on all existing, historic buildings, as are flush metal, composite or wood doors on visible facades. On buildings indicated as “Significant” on the map of the Flemington Historic District or buildings located along Main Street, from the Traffic Circle to the Monument, along East Main Street to Hopewell Avenue, as well as North Main Street from the Monument to Hopewell Avenue, the use of vinyl or aluminum siding on facades visible from public ways shall also be prohibited (2010-17.F.4).
- g. “Facade renovations should be consistent with the original architectural style of the building. Original details should be retained; when it becomes necessary to introduce new features, they should harmonize with existing features. If windows and doors must be replaced, new windows and doors that match the original design should be used. Window and door sizes and shapes should not be altered by any building renovation. Changes to window and door sizes and configurations may be considered if a building is being restored to an earlier, documented, historic appearance. In buildings that are listed as Significant or which are located along Main Street, from the Traffic Circle to the Monument, along East Main Street to Hopewell Avenue, as well as North Main Street from the Monument to Hopewell Avenue, replacement doors, windows and trim on the visible facades should match the original materials.” (2010-17.E.6).

**Specific Recommendations Regarding New Construction:**

To the extent that any new construction is incorporated into the historic district, the HPC recommends that “...all development shall be designed to reflect the design vocabulary, massing, proportion, directional expression, height, width, scale, orientation, windows, roof, details, and materials of vernacular 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century styles found in the Borough of Flemington” (2010-17.C.10). Further, “...new buildings are not required to copy historic examples. Individual architectural expressions that incorporate the stylistic tenets of historical buildings are acceptable, provided that the design principles in the above references are adhered to. New buildings shall show a harmony of design with their surroundings, and any shapes, massing, materials, signs, lighting, colors, and other characteristics that might cause a

new building to call excessive attention to itself and create disharmony within the historic district, shall be avoided' (2010-17.C.2).

**With respect to scale, HPC recommends the following:**

- a. **Scale of Building.** The size of a proposed building or addition and the mass of a proposed building or addition in relation to open spaces, the windows, door openings, porches and balconies shall be visually compatible with the other buildings and built features to which it is visually related, if possible.
- b. On proposed buildings and additions, long, horizontal facades should be broken down into segments having vertical orientation and tall vertically oriented facades shall be broken down into horizontal components through use of appropriate design features in proportions complementary to the overall architecture and design.
- c. New buildings or additions with expansive blank walls are prohibited, particularly on sides of the building facing public ways.
- d. New buildings and additions should be designed so that facades are the prominent architectural feature and the roofs are visually less dominant in the total design. Architecturally accurate roof styles shall be consistent with the surrounding historic context.
- e. A pedestrian scale should be achieved at ground level and along street frontages and entryways through the use of such scale elements as windows, doors, columns, plazas, awnings, canopies, and site furnishings.
- f. In new infill construction, the alignments of proposed facades shall be consistent with the existing setback of nearby buildings to the extent permitted by this Ordinance.
- g. **Height.** The height of any proposed structure and landscaping shall be visually compatible with adjacent structures.
- h. **Proportion of Building's Front Façade.** The relationship of the width of any new building or addition to the height of the front elevation shall be visually compatible with the nearby buildings and structures.
- i. **Proportion of Openings.** The relationship of the width of windows to the height of windows in a new building or addition shall be visually compatible with the nearby buildings and structures.
- j. **Rhythm of Solids to Voids on Facades Fronting on Public Places.** The relationship of solids to voids in facades of new or altered buildings shall be visually compatible with the nearby buildings and structures.
- k. **Rhythm of Spacing of Structures on Streets.** The relationship of any new structure to the open space between it and adjoining structures shall be visually compatible with the nearby buildings and structures.
- l. **Rhythm of Entrance and/or Porch Projection.** The relationship of new or renovated entrances and porch projections to the street shall be visually compatible with the nearby buildings and structures.
- m. **Roof Shapes.** The roof shape of a new building or addition shall be visually compatible with nearby buildings and structures.
- n. **Walls of Continuity.** Features of a proposed building or addition, such as walls, open-type fencing, evergreen landscape masses, shall form cohesive walls of enclosure along a street, to the extent necessary to maintain visual compatibility of any structure with the nearby buildings and structures.

- o. Directional Expression of Front Elevation. A new or altered building shall be visually compatible with nearby buildings and structures, whether this is a vertical, horizontal or non-directional character” (2010-17.D.4).

**With respect to façade treatment, HPC recommends the following:**

- a. Incorporation of historically appropriate 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century decorative elements, including but not limited to brackets, corbels, bargeboard, and lintels that are sympathetic with existing decorative elements on Main Street’s historic buildings. New decorative elements are recommended to be made of historically appropriate materials.
- b. Multi-tenant buildings shall provide uniform store fronts, doorways, windows, awnings, and other design features for all ground floor tenants. Upper floors of said buildings shall at a minimum be coordinated with the ground floor through common materials and colors (2010-17.E.2).
- c. New buildings should use windows of similar sizes and shapes or incorporate other façade elements that establish the same pattern as other buildings in the immediate area (2010-17.E.3).
- d. Design elements that carry through a block such as store front patterns, window spacing, entrances, canopies or awnings, etc., should be incorporated into new or renovated façade (2010-17.E.4).
- e. Exterior mounted mechanical and electrical equipment (e.g. air conditioning units, satellite dishes, etc.) shall be located so that they are not visible from public ways, or shall be completely screened from public view with opaque architectural elements that are unobtrusive and visually compatible with the character of the Historic District and the nearby structures (2010-17.E.5).

**With respect to building materials, colors and texture, the HPC recommends the following:**

- a. The use of brick, stone, clapboard, shakes and other façade materials of a traditional and vernacular nature is strongly encouraged. In general, a maximum of 2 principal facade materials shall be permitted for new structures (2010-17.E.3).
- b. The painting of buildings in patterns, checks, stripes or overly bold colors is not permitted (2010-17.E.5).
- c. The use of colors generally associated with traditional building design is required on all buildings. Accent or complementary colors which harmonize with the main façade colors shall be permitted for trim, awning and other building details (2010-17.E.6).
- d. Relationship of Materials, Texture and Color: The relationship of materials, texture and color of the facade and roof of a building shall be visually compatible with the predominant materials used in the buildings to which it is visually related, especially those immediately adjacent (2010-17.E.7).

**With respect to any approved demolition required, the HPC recommends the following:**

- a. The Redeveloper should complete an archeological survey on the site of any demolition to identify and retain all historically significant items as found on the site before new construction takes place.



## **E. Conclusion:**

As stated by Preservation New Jersey in its list of the 10 Most Endangered Historic Places in New Jersey for 2016, "PNJ welcomes this effort to reestablish Flemington as a civic and commercial center in Hunterdon County and western New Jersey. But we see no reason why redevelopment must destroy a community in order to save it. There are many cases where smart, preservation-minded redevelopment schemes have worked. In New Jersey, Clinton, Frenchtown and Hopewell are good examples. Elsewhere, Savannah, Georgia; Newburyport, Massachusetts; and Portland, Maine showcase economically successful revitalization centered around historic downtowns... With a smart, preservation-minded redevelopment scheme, these buildings can be the centerpiece of a successful and lively business and entertainment district reflecting both the past and future of Flemington. If these buildings are demolished, this link to Flemington's past will be lost forever."

The members of the Flemington Historic Preservation Commission strongly believe that this Redevelopment Project needs to be a harmonious balance of maintaining the historic character and beauty of Main Street and development of the critically needed business opportunities for the future economic viability of Flemington. The new uses should take advantage of the beautiful existing structures, and the new construction should naturally complement the character of the town. We strongly believe that, with careful consideration and respect for Flemington's history and architectural beauty, this plan can go forward to create a vibrant and dynamic downtown that will be attractive to our local community and an attraction for building tourism, a vibrant retail center, additional housing options and a center for higher education. If the preservation of these beautiful and important structures is not part of the plan, the character of Flemington may be lost forever.