ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

for:

BLOCK 37.02, LOT 46.03
630 SOUTH MIDDLEBUSH ROAD
FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP
SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Applicant/Owner:

Dada Bhagwan Vignan Institute
630 South Middlebush Road
Somerset, New Jersey 08873

Agent:

The Reynolds Group, Inc.
575 Route 28, Suite 110
Raritan, New Jersey 08869
TRG No. 14-001

November 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

APPENDICES

I. INTRODUCTION

Franklin Township requires preparation and submission of an Environmental Assessment (EA) as part of the overall approval process for preliminary and final site plan approval. As such, this EA has generally been prepared in accordance with the Township's Land Development ordinances, specifically, Article XXV – Environmental and Historic Resource, Section 112-199 – Requirements for Environmental Assessment. Qualifications and Preparers of this EA are presented in Appendix D.

A. Project Location

The parcel that is the subject of this Application is identified as Block 37.02, Lot 46.03, 630 South Middlebush Road, Township of Franklin, Somerset County, New Jersey. It is approximately 15.96 acres in size. The location and approximate boundaries of the subject property are shown on the location (USGS) map (Figure 1), tax map (Figure 2), soil map (Figure 3) and street map (Figure 4) presented in Appendix C.

The property is currently owned by Dada Bhagwan Vignan Institute, 630 South Middlebush Avenue, Somerset, New Jersey, 08873.

The subject property is currently improved with a large single-family residential dwelling with associated patios and decks. Access is from South Middlebush Road via a gravel driveway. The majority of the property is comprised of upland forest; however, the northern side of the site, formerly comprised of an actively farmed agricultural field (planted with winter rye at the time of the original LOI application) is currently comprised of a very large maintained lawn area. One small area of forested wetland occupies the southernmost corner of the property. This wetland area extends off-site to the south.

The subject property is located within a section of the Township primarily comprised of agricultural lands with some residential land use located to the south, fronting on Lenape Drive.

B. Project Description/Site Plan

The project proposes to construct a 21,083 square-foot house of worship with associated site improvements (at-grade asphalt-paved parking lots, infiltration/detention basin, and pedestrian circulation). Access is proposed to be from South Middlebush Road partially via the existing (but widened and paved) site access driveway and partially via a new asphalt-paved driveway. The existing dwelling and parts of the existing gravel access drive are proposed to remain.

Additional documentation regarding the proposed project will be provided by the Applicant's professionals during the public hearing(s).

II. EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

A. Natural Resources

1. Geology/Soils

The Township of Franklin, Somerset County is located within the Piedmont Province of New Jersey. The section of the Piedmont Province in which the project is located is underlain with Triassic sandstone, shale, siltstone, and conglomerate. They are between 230 to 190 million years old. They rest on a large, elongate crustal block that dropped downward in the initial stages of the opening of the Atlantic Ocean. These down-dropped blocks formed valleys known as rift basins. Sediment eroded from the adjacent uplands was deposited along rivers and in lakes within the basins. These sediments became compacted and cemented to form conglomerate, sandstone, siltstone, and shale. They commonly have a distinctive reddish-brown color.

The aquifer system located beneath Franklin Township is primarily associated with the Non-coastal Plain Aquifer System. The principal aquifers are associated with the glacial valley-fill deposits, the fractured shale and sandstone units of the Newark Group, the Valley and Ridge sedimentary units, and the weathered and fractured shale zones of the Highlands crystalline unit. In Franklin Township, Somerset County, underlying aquifers are associated with the Newark Group aquifers. These aquifers are locally important and are commonly interconnected with surface water resources in most New Jersey public water-supply systems.

According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Web Soil Survey, soil data for Somerset County, the following soil types underlie the subject property:

Map Unit: LbtA—Lansdowne silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes
Component: Lansdowne (85%)
The Lansdowne component makes up 85 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 0 to 3 percent. This component is on flats on piedmonts. The parent material consists of fine-loamy till derived from sandstone and shale over residuum weathered from sandstone and shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 54 to 66 inches. The natural drainage class is somewhat poorly drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches is high. Shrink-swell potential is moderate. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. A seasonal zone of water saturation is at 21 inches during January, February, March, April, May, June, October, November, and December. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 4 percent. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 2w. This soil does not meet hydric criteria.

Component: Elkton (5%)
Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Elkton soil is a minor component.

Component: Parsippany, frequently flooded (5%)
Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Parsippany soil is a minor component.

Component: Fallsington, bedrock substratum, rarely flooded (5%)
Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Fallsington

variant soil is a minor component.

Map Unit: PenB—Penn silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes
Component: Penn (85%)
The Penn component makes up 85 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 2 to 6 percent. This component is on hills on piedmonts. The parent material consists of fine-loamy residuum weathered from acid reddish shale, siltstone, and fine-grain sandstone. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 20 to 40 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches is low. Shrink-swell potential is low. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 2e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria.

Component: Readington (5%)
The Readington component makes up 45 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 2 to 6 percent. This component is on hillsides on piedmonts. The parent material consists of fine-loamy residuum weathered from acid red shale, siltstone, and fine-grain sandstone. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 34 to 50 inches. The natural drainage class is moderately well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches is low. Shrink-swell potential is low. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. A seasonal zone of water saturation is at 27 inches during January, February, March, November, and December. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 2 percent. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 2e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria.

Component: Norton (5%)
The Norton component makes up 85 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 2 to 6 percent. This component is on flats on piedmonts. The parent material consists of red fine-silty till and/or colluvium. Depth to a root restrictive layer is greater than 60 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is very low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches is high. Shrink-swell potential is moderate. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 3 percent. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 2e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria.

Component: Klinesville (5%)
Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Klinesville soil is a minor component.

Map Unit: RorAt—Rowland silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded
Component: Rowland, frequently flooded (85%)
The Rowland, frequently flooded component makes up 85 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 0 to 2 percent. This component is on flood plains on piedmonts. The parent material consists of red and brown fine-loamy alluvium derived from sandstone and shale and/or conglomerate. Depth to a root restrictive layer is greater than 60 inches. The natural drainage class is moderately well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches is moderate. Shrink-swell potential is low. This soil is frequently flooded. It is frequently ponded. A seasonal zone of water saturation is at 24 inches during January, February, March, April, May, November, and December. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 3 percent. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 5w. This soil does not meet hydric

criteria.

Component: Raritan, rarely flooded (5%)
Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Raritan soil is a minor component.

Component: Birdsboro (5%)
Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Birdsboro soil is a minor component.

Component: Bowmansville, frequently flooded (5%)
Generated brief soil descriptions are created for major components. The Bowmansville soil is a minor component.

Map Unit: RoyB—Royce silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes
Component: Royce (90%)
The Royce component makes up 85 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 2 to 6 percent. This component is on alluvial flats on piedmonts. The parent material consists of fine-loamy residuum weathered from shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 40 to 72 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches is moderate. Shrink-swell potential is low. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 3 percent. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 2e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria.

Component: Lansdowne (5%)
The Lansdowne component makes up 85 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 2 to 6 percent. This component is on flats on piedmonts. The parent material consists of fine-loamy till derived from sandstone and shale over residuum weathered from sandstone and shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer, bedrock, paralithic, is 54 to 66 inches. The natural drainage class is somewhat poorly drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately low. Available water to a depth of 60 inches is high. Shrink-swell potential is moderate. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. A seasonal zone of water saturation is at 21 inches during January, February, March, April, May, June, October, November, and December. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 3 percent. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 3w. This soil does not meet hydric criteria.

Component: Birdsboro (5%)
The Birdsboro component makes up 85 percent of the map unit. Slopes are 2 to 6 percent. This component is on stream terraces on piedmonts. The parent material consists of old alluvium derived from sandstone and siltstone and/or shale. Depth to a root restrictive layer is greater than 60 inches. The natural drainage class is well drained. Water movement in the most restrictive layer is moderately high. Available water to a depth of 60 inches is high. Shrink-swell potential is low. This soil is not flooded. It is not ponded. There is no zone of water saturation within a depth of 72 inches. Organic matter content in the surface horizon is about 3 percent. Nonirrigated land capability classification is 2e. This soil does not meet hydric criteria.

2. Topography

Slopes on-site range from being nearly flat (entire western property corner) to approximately 5.0 percent – with these "steepest" slopes occurring within the on-site wetland and wetland transition area. There are no areas of steep slopes located on-site nor are there any unique landforms such as rock outcrops / rock ledges.

3. Surface Water Resources

According to the NJDEP's GIS databases, there are no surface water resources located on the subject property; however, the following watercourses are mapped as being located proximate to it:

- Nine Mile Run UNT – FW2-NT, located approximately 285 feet to the northeast;
- Cross Brook UNT – FW2-NT, located approximately 515 feet to the west/southwest;
- Nine Mile Run – FW2-NTC1, located approximately 1400 feet to the southeast.

The subject property is located in the Millstone River (below/incl Carnegie Lk) and the Six Mile Run (above Middlebush Rd) sub-watershed.

Based on completion of the wetland delineation (see below) the above is accurate: with exception of a limited area wetlands (the limits of which have been approved by NJDEP DLUR), there are no surface water resources located on the subject property:

a. Wetlands

The subject property was the subject of a LOI – Line Verification back in 2014. On-site wetlands were delineated by TRG and verified by the Department via the LOI issued on August 4, 2014. Unfortunately, that LOI expired on August 3, 2019 and was inadvertently not made subject of an Extension. The accuracy of the previously-verified wetland boundary line was field-checked during the month of October 2019 and was determined to remain valid. As such, a completely new application for Letter of Interpretation - Line Verification was submitted to the NJDEP DLUR on October 22, 2019. As required by the NJDEP, the Township Clerk was provided with a complete copy of that application. A copy of the original LOI is provided in Appendix B.

b. Floodplains

No portion of the subject property is located within a floodplain area, within a New Jersey Flood Hazard Area, or within a riparian zone.

4. Groundwater Resources

According to the United States Geological Survey Water-Supply Paper 2325 entitled *National Water Summary 1986 - Ground Water Quality*: *New Jersey*, New Jersey aquifers are classified into to two groups - Coastal Plain aquifers and non-coastal plain aquifers. That portion of Franklin Township in which the proposed project is located is above non-coastal plain aquifers, specifically those associated with aquifers in the Newark Group.

Aquifers within the Newark Group are comprised of fractured shale and sandstone units. This aquifer system is generally interconnected with surface water sources (i.e. streams, ponds, wetlands). Aquifer recharge occurs as direct precipitation and seepage from surface waters. Specifically, the project site is underlain with red shale and sandstone associated with the Brunswick Formation, the most important aquifer in the Triassic Basin.

Although there are no specific studies regarding recharge areas, local flow systems are typically recharged at higher elevations (topographically) and discharge at low areas. Within the project site, the naturally vegetated upland areas containing no impervious surfaces are likely well-suited to recharge. Due to presence significant impervious surfaces located on-site (hotel building and associated asphalt-paved parking lots), the majority of the site is not likely suitable for aquifer recharge. Generally, recharge is nearly entirely from precipitation within the aquifer basins.

According to studies done for the Township's Master Plan, the project site is underlain by the Passaic Formation. Average yield for high capacity wells is reported to be between 101 to 250 gallons per minute.

Proposed new impervious surfaces associated with the proposed project will affect pre-construction groundwater recharge. For purpose of compensating for the decreased recharge, some of the runoff generated by the proposed project will be infiltrated. An infiltration/detention basin is proposed to be constructed as part of the project. Refer to the Stormwater Impact Report, prepared by The Reynolds Group and submitted (under separate cover) in support of the proposed project for details pertaining to recharge.

5. Vegetation

The subject property is predominantly comprised of upland forest within which is located the single-family residential dwelling. The northern side of the site, formerly comprised of an actively farmed agricultural field (planted with winter rye at the time of the original LOI application) is currently comprised of a very large maintained lawn area. Limited lawn and landscaped areas surround the dwelling. Vegetation characterizing the upland forest and forested wetland areas is as follows:

<u>Forested Upland</u>

The on-site upland forest is characterized by white and black oaks, shagbark and pignut hickories, American beech, slippery elm, black and choke cherries, flowering dogwood, black birch, and witchhazel. Several areas support dense growths of blackberry. Japanese stiltgrass is also present. Multiflora rose, meadow onion, garlic mustard, and Japanese honeysuckle are also present.

<u>Forested Wetland</u>

This area (delineated by the “A” boundary line) is located within the southernmost corner of the property. It primarily supports pin oak, slippery elm, and Japanese stiltgrass. Also present within the limits of the delineation, but in lesser amounts, is shagbark hickory, multiflora rose, and meadow onion.

a. Threatened and Endangered Species

According to the NJDEP, Division of Parks and Forestry, Office of Natural Lands Management, Natural Heritage Program (NHP)/Landscape Project correspondence dated November 7, 2019 (Appendix C), no rare plants, ecological communities, Natural Heritage Priority sites, or vernal pool habitat were reported to be located on or within the immediate vicinity of the project site.

6. Wildlife

Given its overall size and the number of habitats associated with it, white-tailed deer, raccoon, opossum, red fox, skunk, gray squirrel and eastern chipmunks as well as a number of smaller rodents (i.e. mice and voles) could reasonably be expected to utilize the subject property. It is likely that common reptiles and amphibians are associated with the on-site (and extending off-site) wetland. The number of avian species utilizing the subject property likely fluctuates with migration but it is expected that a number of common species utilize the on-site habitats yearly for foraging, nesting, and cover.

a. Threatened and Endangered Species

According to the documentation provided by the NHP/Landscape Project, dated November 7, 2019, no rare species were identified as being located on the project site (based on a search of Landscape Project 3.3 Species Based Patches). The following species were identified as being located within the immediate vicinity of the project site:

Rare Wildlife Species or Wildlife Habitat Within the Immediate Vicinity of the Project Site Based on Search of Landscape Project 3.3 Species Based Patches

American Kestrel	Nest	State Threatened
Grasshopper Sparrow	Breeding Sighting	State Threatened
Great Blue Heron	Foraging	Special Concern
Northern Harrier	Non-Breeding Sighting	Special Concern
Upland Sandpiper	Breeding Sighting (Confirmed)	State Endangered

B. Man-made Resources

1. Existing Land Use

As previously referenced, the subject property is improved with a large single-family residential dwelling with associated patios and decks and gravel driveway.

2. Zoning

The subject property is located in Zone A - Agricultural Zone. Churches and other similar places of worship are permitted as conditional uses in the Agricultural Zone. Additional documentation regarding zoning and compliance with same as well as requested variances will be provided by the Applicant's professionals during the public hearing(s), as required.

3. Master Plan Delineation

The site is located within Planning Sector 2, according to the 2006 Master Plan, with the subject property identified as qualified farmland. Pursuant to review of the NJDEP's GIS databases, the subject property is located in Planning Area 4 (Rural).

4. Community Facilities and Utilities

The Franklin Township Administrative Offices, Police Department, and Public Library are all housed in the municipal complex on DeMott Lane in Middlebush, with the exception of the Department of Health, Department of Social Services/Welfare, and the Department of Parks and Recreation. These Departments are located more centrally to the most heavily populated portion of the Township.

The Township is served by ten volunteer fire companies. These are administered in four fire districts. The subject property is located within Fire District No. 2 with the Franklin Park Volunteer Fire Company located closest to the subject property, located to the south.

Water Service

The on-site dwelling is serviced via a well and will continue to be serviced by that well. A new well will be installed on-site to service the proposed house of worship. Additional documentation regarding water service and the proposed new well will be provided by the Applicant's professionals during the public hearing(s), as required.

Sewer Service

The existing dwelling is serviced via an on-site individual disposal (septic system) that is proposed to be abandoned as part of the proposed project. Wastewater generated by the dwelling and proposed house of worship will be conveyed into a new on-site individual disposal system (three tanks, pump pit, force main, and new 50-foot by 100-foot disposal field). Additional documentation regarding wastewater treatment will be provided by the Applicant's professionals during the public hearing(s), as required.

Gas Service

Natural gas is not available.

Storm Sewer

There is no storm sewer / stormwater management system currently located on-site or within South Middlebush Road. As part of the proposed project, stornwater runoff generated by proposed impervious surfaces (primarily the proposed at-grade asphalt-paved parking lots but also some of the proposed asphalt-paved driveway and the roof associated with the proposed house of worship) will be collected and conveyed to the proposed infiltration/detention basin. Refer to the Stormwater Impact Report, prepared by The Reynolds Group, Inc. submitted in support of the proposed project for details regarding the proposed stormwater management system and compliance with the stormwater management regulations.

Additional documentation regarding utility service will be provided by the Applicant's professionals during the public hearing(s), as required.

5. Cultural Resources

Pursuant to review of the NJDEP's GIS databases, the subject property is not listed as a historic property; however, it is identified as being located within the Six Mile Run Historic District. Several individually-listed historic properties are mapped as being located adjacent as well as proximate to the subject property. Neither the subject nor

area properties are identified as being located within a mapped historic archaeological grid site.

In accordance with the Freshwater Wetland Protection Act Rules (NJAC 7:7A), the subject property is not expected to contain any significant archaeological resources, pursuant to NJAC 7:7A-19.5(l), as follows:

- The subject property is less than 20 acres in size and does not contain a permanent body of water, nor are there any permanent bodies of water located within 250 feet;
- While the subject property contains a structure (single-family residential dwelling) it is less than 50 years old, the dwelling, and the area located immediately around it is not proposed to be impacted;
- No part of the project involves construction of a new, replacement, reconstructed, or rehabilitated bridge or culvert, or;
- To the best of the Applicant's knowledge, no documentation has been received by anyone concerning the possible presence of historic resources on the subject parcel.

6. Pollution Problems

Under present conditions, no readily-observable signs of issues with on-site polluted/contaminated areas were observed to be located on-site. According the NJDEP's GIS databases, the subject property is not identified as a Registered Underground Storage Tank (UST) facility nor is identified as being listed on the Known Contaminated Sites List (KCSL). There are no areas of historic fill, deed noticed areas, or groundwater contaminated areas located on or proximate to the subject property.

Based on the above, construction of the proposed project would not be affected by or exacerbate any issue with pollution or contamination. Because the project proposes a house of worship, it will not result in the introduction of a land use (i.e. industrial / research) that has the potential to adversely affect the property.

III. REQUIRED APPROVALS

The following licenses, permits, and approvals are required:

STATE

NJDEP DLUR Letter of Interpretation Regulatory Line Verification - pending
Delaware and Raritan Canal Commission (Review Zone B) - pending

COUNTY

Somerset-Union Soil Conservation District - pending
Somerset County Planning Board – pending
Somerset County Health Department (septic system) - pending

MUNICIPAL

Franklin Township Planning Board – in progress

IV. ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL/CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

1. Soils/Water Quality

Impacts to water quality as the result of construction of any proposed project can consist of temporary and permanent impacts. Temporary impacts are those that occur during construction and include soil erosion and sedimentation/siltation. Permanent impacts include runoff generated from impervious surfaces constructed as part of any proposed project.

Because the project results in more than 5000 square feet of overall land disturbance, Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan Certification is required and will be obtained from the Somerset-Union SCD. During construction of the proposed project, measures would be undertaken, such as the installation of silt fencing and/or staked hay-bales, around the limits of construction to preclude the off-site transport of soil by stormwater runoff during construction.

Runoff generated on-site by the proposed project will be managed for both quantity and quality control in accordance with the Stormwater Management Regulations. Refer to the Stormwater Impact Report prepared by The Reynolds Group, Inc. (submitted in support of the proposed project under separate cover) for details regarding on-site drainage.

a. Wetlands

The proposed project has been designed so that no part of the project encroaches into the on-site wetland or associated wetland transition area, based on the original (but since expired) Letter of Interpretation- Line Verification (LOI-LV). As part of preparation of the new application for LOI-LV that has been submitted, TRG noted that the originally-delineated wetland boundary line remained accurate in the field, and, based on some additional research, it is expected that the original wetland resource value classification (Intermediate, with an associated 50-footwide transition area) is also expected to remain the same. As such, it is expected that the project will remain located outside of wetlands and transition areas upon issuance of the new LOI-LV.

b. Floodplains

As there are no streams, rivers, lakes, or ponds or floodplain areas located on the subject property, none will be adversely impacted. No part of the subject property or proposed project is located within a riparian zone.

2. Air Quality

Impacts to air quality as the result of construction of any proposed project can consist of temporary and permanent impacts. Temporary impacts are those that occur during construction and include increased particulates (dust). Permanent impacts include increases of particulates and emissions generated from daily operations of a proposed project.

During construction of the proposed project, an increase of dust may result, however any increase would be temporary and dust levels would recede to normal upon completion of construction.

Because the project does not involve manufacturing processes (i.e. commercial or industrial uses) no stationary emissions associated with the manufacturing process will be discharged to the outside environment. Discharge of emissions associated with on-site operations will be associated with vehicular traffic that would use the proposed facility.

3. Noise

Impacts to the noise environment as a result of construction of any proposed project can consist of temporary and permanent impacts. Temporary impacts are those that occur during construction and include increased noise associated with the operation of construction machinery.

Permanent impacts include an overall increase in ambient noise over existing as a result of daily operations of a proposed project.

Increases in noise levels would be experienced during construction of this proposed project, however these increases would be temporary and would revert to normal upon completion of construction.

Once constructed, noise associated with the project would revert back to passenger vehicles associated with users of the proposed facility. Given that the project is comprised of a religious use/house of worship increase in noise over existing is not expected to be significant.

4. Vegetation and Wildlife

Regarding vegetation, as part of the proposed project, a tree removal plan was prepared. It is identified as the Existing Conditions and Tree Removal Plan (Sheet 3). As shown, a total of 88 trees of various sizes require removal for purpose of facilitating construction of the proposed project. In accordance with the Township's tree replacement requirements, a total of 455 replacement trees are required. As shown on the Landscape Plan (Sheet 6), 107 trees are proposed to be replaced on-site. Contribution, per Ordinance, is proposed to be made for purpose of satisfying the balance of required trees.

Anytime areas of natural vegetation are removed from the landscape and converted to other uses, be it either for relatively passive land uses (i.e. parks, recreational facilities (athletic fields) and even agricultural uses) or for more intensive land use (residential, commercial, industrial uses), certain parts of an areas wildlife population will experience a permanent decrease (mortality) in size. A common misconception is that displaced species will relocate to off-site areas containing similar pre-construction habitat(s) – an idea that is often used to "soften" the impacts to wildlife resulting from a proposed development. Fact is, those off-site habitats are likely at carrying capacity. As such, as it pertains to the proposed project, loss of some of the on-site wooded areas represents a loss of cover (all wildlife species) and nesting habitat (avian species) as well as a source of food (primarily smaller mammals and avian species).

While the proposed project does proposed to remove a significant number of trees, the habitat provided by the on-site wetland as well as its associated transition area will not be adversely impacted. In addition to those habitats to remain, wooded areas located

along the perimeter of the subject property as well as those located around the dwelling that is proposed to remain, will be remain. This will help to off-set those areas proposed to be removed. In addition, species proposed as part of the Tree Replacement and Landscape Plan introduce a number of evergreen species (American holly, Norway spruce, dawn redwood) that previously did not exist on-site (or within the area), thereby increasing species diversity and providing habitats (i.e. cover/nesting for birds) that did not previously exist on-site. Proposed species including the American holly as well as the shadbush serviceberry also provide a native food source that did not previously exist on-site.

Loss of on-site fields also generally represents a loss of a food source for many wildlife species. Although a relatively large disposal field is proposed to be located within the section of the subject property occupied by the "field" area (current large area of maintained lawn), once constructed, the field area will be returned to its original condition. Further, two separate sections of the field are proposed to be converted into natural upland meadows via seeding with a Farm Pollination Buffer Mix. This also greatly increases habitat value for pollinators such as butterflies and various species of bee's.

Because there are no rare species (plant or animal) located on-site, none would be adversely impacted by the proposed project.

5. Undesirable Land Use Patterns

It is expected that the proposed project will not result in the introduction of undesirable land use patterns to the section of Franklin Township in which it is located. Religious uses/house of worship are generally considered to be low impact and this one even more so – it is part of a single and complete use and located on a parcel that far exceeds the required minimum lot size required for the Agricultural Zone. It was designed to comply with the conditional use standards.

6. Aesthetics

Aesthetics/scenic view currently associated with the subject property are consistent with a rural agricultural area with little human-made impacts and surrounded primarily by other agricultural land uses interspersed with naturally-vegetated lands and residential and use. Construction of the proposed project is not expected to adversely impact aesthetic value of the area of the Township in which it is proposed to be located. Parking areas will be buffered from off-site property by existing vegetation proposed to remain and augmented with evergreen species proposed as part of the Landscape Plan. The proposed house of worship is located towards the rear of the parcel, away from South Middlebush Road and existing area residential land use. The proposed building will not exceed height requirements set forth by Ordinance. No new access driveways are proposed – the subject property and proposed project will continue to be accessed via the existing (though improved) driveway entrance.

7. Displacement of People/Business

The proposed project will not result in the displacement of people or business, as none are currently located on-site. The former property owner has willingly entered into a contract with the Applicant to sell their land. The existing on-site residential dwelling is proposed to remain.

8. Displacement of Viable Farms

As referenced previously, the subject property is identified as qualified farmland, according to the 2006 Master Plan; however, the subject property contains no farm structures (i.e. barns, silo's, etc.) and only one section (northeastern edge) was comprised of an actively farmed field (as noted previously, the field was planted with winter rye at the time of completion of the original site work (wetland delineation) back in 2014. Subsequent to that, the field was taken out of regular production and currently exists as a large area of maintained lawn. As such, construction of the proposed project would not result in the displacement of a viable farm.

9. Destruction of Man-made Resources

As previously indicated, construction of the proposed project includes razing of all of the existing on-site improvements, which include the two-story dwelling and associated garage, two outbuildings, and the existing stone driveway.

10. Disruption of Desirable Community and Regional Growth

It is expected that the proposed project would not result in the disruption of desirable community and regional growth. The proposed project represents a single and complete use – it would not generate the need for similar projects in the area. It was designed in accordance with the conditional use standards set forth by Township ordinance.

11. Traffic

Refer to the Traffic Report, prepared by Dolan & Dean Consulting Engineers, 181 West High Street, Somerville, New Jersey, 08876, submitted as part of the application for details regarding traffic associated with the project.

12. Health, Safety, and Well-being of the Public

Health, safety and well-being of the public would not be adversely impacted as a result of construction and operation of the proposed project. It is expected that all areas of construction will be fenced and gated so that those areas are kept separate from the public. Further, during construction, safety measures will be implemented (i.e. orange plastic safety fence) to ensure safety of both employees and passers-by.

13. Employment and Property Tax

As previously indicated, the project consists of a religious use proposing a new house of worship. As such, the project will not result in any type of business/employment opportunities within the Township. The facility will be taxable in accordance with the Township's schedule for taxation of such facilities as permitted by law.

The proposed project does result in any influx of new residents with the potential to introduce additional school-aged children into the Township's school system. It does not result in the creation of new public streets that would require maintenance by the Township's DPW. In this respect, the project would not adversely impact the Township's municipal expenditures.

V. PROJECT ALTERNATIVES

The following alternatives to the proposed project were analyzed:

No-Build Alternative – the no-build alternative is not an option. The Applicant has purchased the subject property approximately five years ago, with the intent of developing it as a house of worship, in accordance with the regulations set forth within the zone district within which it is located.

Reduction in Scope of Proposed Project – project design as presented via the Application has gone through various iterations prior to finalizing the preferred alternative. The proposed project was designed in accordance with the conditional use standards associated with the Agricultural zone in which it is proposed to be located. It has been designed to avoid on-site sensitive resources, including wetlands and wetland transition areas. Testimony will be provided by various professionals as to why the alternative applied for via the application is preferred and why it will not be a detriment to the section of the Township in which it is located.

Alternative Location – this alternative is not an option for the same reasons outlined under the no-build alternative presented above. The subject property is ideal for such a development proposal as it is a conditional use in the Agricultural zone. Additional documentation regarding the proposed project and its suitability for location within the Agricultural zone will be provided by the Applicant's professionals during the public hearing(s), as required, as part of the Planning testimony.

VI. METHODS TO MINIMIZE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Methods to minimize adverse impacts pertain to both temporary (construction) and permanent impacts. Methods employed to minimize adverse impacts include but are not limited to the following:

VEGETATION

Project construction requires a significant amount of tree removal. Tree removal and replacement calculations have been provided on the Preliminary and Final Site Plans (Existing Conditions and Tree Removal Plan – Sheet 3). Loss of on-site trees is proposed to be mitigated via those replaced on-site as part of the proposed landscape plan as well as via contribution, as required by Ordinance.

WILDLIFE

As previously indicated, adverse impacts to area wildlife resources can be minimized to the extent possible, as follows:

The habitat provided by the on-site wetland as well as its associated transition area will not be adversely impacted. In addition to those habitats to remain, wooded areas located along the perimeter of the subject property as well as those located around the dwelling that is proposed to remain, will be remain. This will help to off-set those areas proposed to be removed. In addition, species proposed as part of the Tree Replacement and Landscape Plan introduce a number of evergreen species (American holly, Norway spruce, dawn redwood) that previously did not exist on-site (or within the area), thereby increasing species diversity and providing habitats (i.e. cover/nesting for birds) that did not previously exist on-site. Proposed species including the American holly as well as the shadbush serviceberry also provide a native food source that did not previously exist on-site.

WATER QUALITY

Regarding temporary construction-related impacts, implementation of the Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan and installation of SESC devise will eliminate/reduce/minimize impacts to adjacent properties and areas on-site proposed to remain in their pre-construction existing condition. This includes the installation of silt fencing and/or staked hay-bales around the limits of construction.

Elimination of potential contamination of groundwater could possibly occur as a result of leaking construction equipment and/or accidental spills. Proper maintenance procedures on the construction site would avoid most leaks and mishaps. Any spills (oil, gasoline, brake fluid, transmission fluid, etc.) would be contained immediately and disposed of properly, off-site, in accordance with State (NJDEP) and Federal (USEPA) protocol.

Long-term post-construction impacts to water quality, groundwater recharge, and quantity (runoff) control are addressed via the proposed infiltration/detention basin. Refer to the Stormwater Impact Report for details.

AIR QUALITY

The application of various control measures during construction activities would be employed in order to minimize the amount of construction dust generated. These measures would include applying water or other suitable moisture-retaining agents on dirt roads, covering haul trucks carrying loose material, or treating materials likely to become airborne and contribute to air pollution if left untreated.

To minimize the amount of emissions generated, maintenance and protection of traffic patterns would be implemented during construction to limit disruption of traffic and to ensure that adequate roadway capacity is available to general traffic during peak periods.

Long-term, post-construction impacts to area ambient air quality as religious uses do not create any significant amount of point-source pollutants.

NOISE

Regarding potential noise issues, methods to control the temporary increase in ambient noise generated during construction includes ensuring that construction equipment and motor vehicles meet specified noise emissions standards, construction activities be limited to times permitted by Township ordinance, and that construction material be handled and transported in such a manner as to not create unnecessary noise.

TRAFFIC

During project construction, to avoid unnecessary construction-related traffic within the project area, construction vehicles would be limited to designated routes and would be kept in the designated staging area that would be located on-site, as opposed to along South Middlebush Road.

Refer to the Traffic Report, prepared by Dolan & Dean Consulting Engineers submitted as part of the application for details regarding long-term project traffic associated with the project.

AESTHETICS / VISUAL

Regarding potential temporary visual impacts, construction machinery and materials would be temporary and confined to the interior of the subject property, thereby reducing the unsightliness of these objects to the surrounding area.

Regarding potential permanent impacts, as previously referenced, parking areas will be buffered from off-site property by existing vegetation proposed to remain and augmented with evergreen species proposed as part of the Landscape Plan. The proposed house of worship is located towards the rear of the parcel, away from South Middlebush Road and existing areas of residential land use. The proposed building will not exceed height requirements set forth by Ordinance. No new access driveways are proposed – the subject property and proposed project will continue to be accessed via the existing (though improved) driveway entrance.

VII. REFERENCES

NJDEP Division of Parks and Forestry, Office of Natural Lands Management, Natural Heritage Program. Rare Species Correspondence. November 7, 2019.

NJDEP. GIS Data and Aerial Photography. Accessed November 5, 2019.

Township of Franklin. Land Use Ordinances.

Township of Franklin. Master Plan. 2006 with applicable Amendments.

Township of Franklin. Reexamination of Master Plan and Development Regulations. 2016.

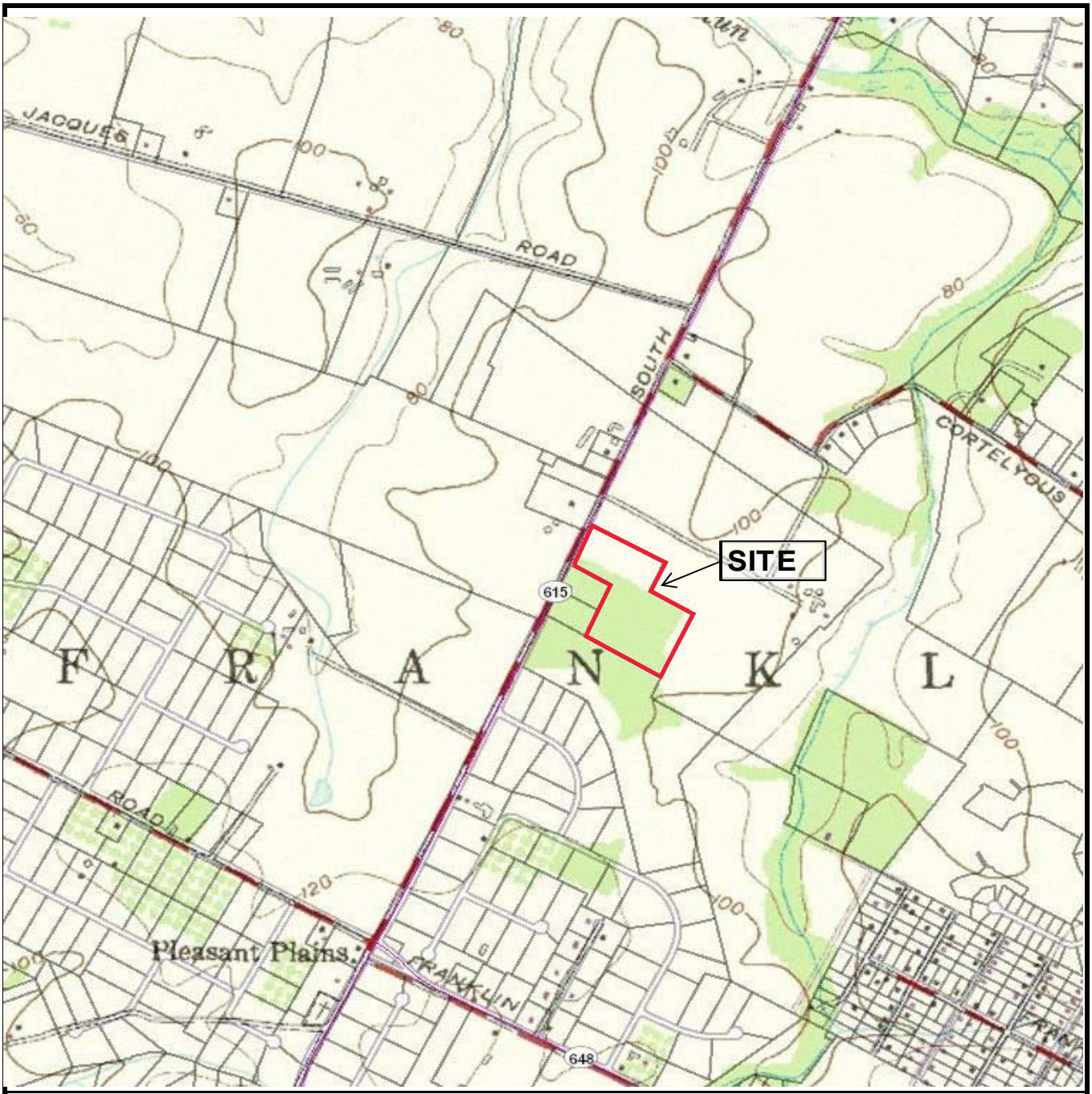
Township of Franklin. Environmental Resource Inventory. July 2008.

Township of Franklin. Tax Map.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Web Soil Survey (WSS). Accessed November 5, 2019. http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/

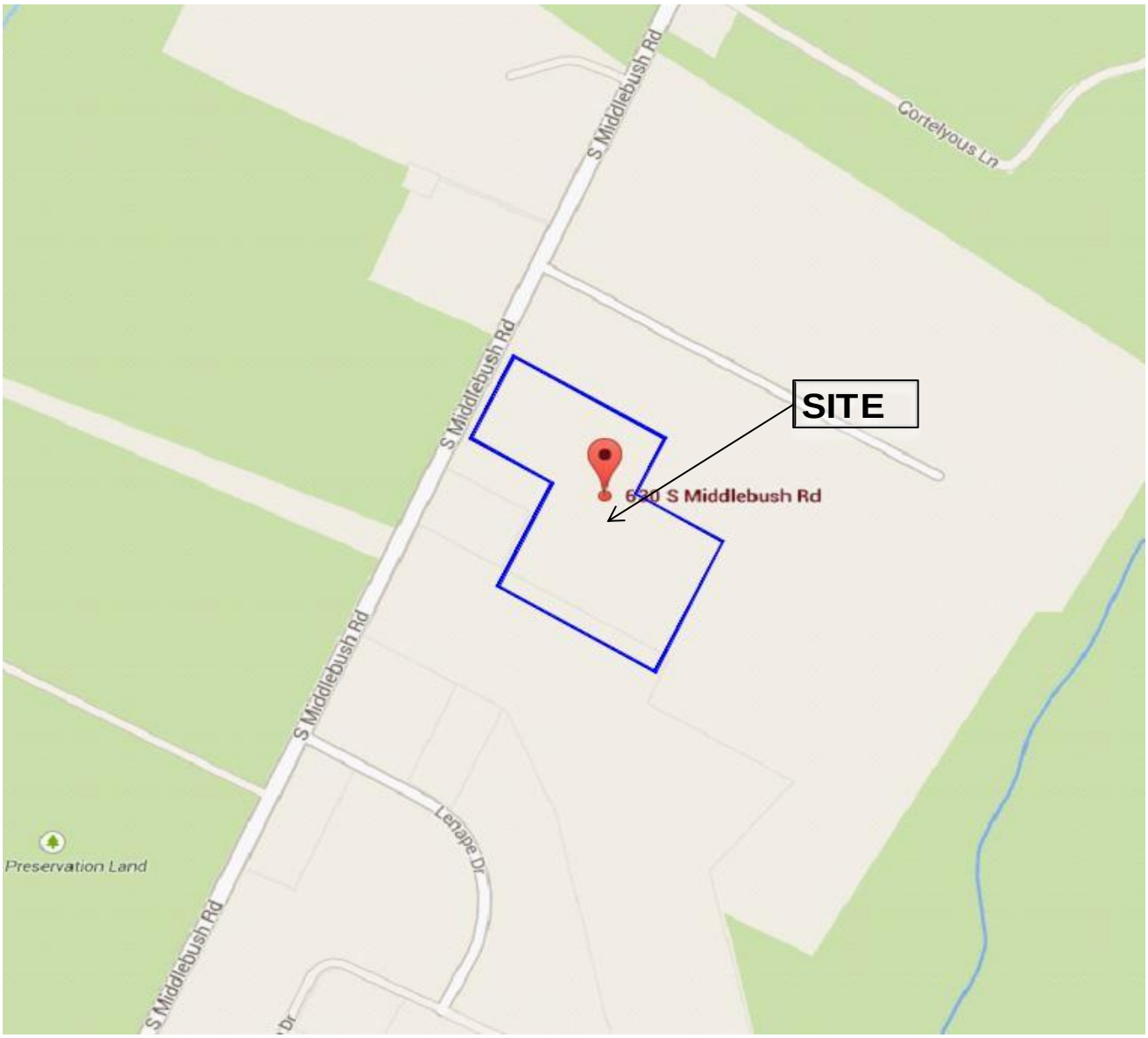
United States Geologic Survey (USGS), 2014, 7.5 Minute Topographic Map, Monmouth Junction, New Jersey Quadrangle

APPENDIX A –
Map Figures



LOCATION MAP

SITE:	***State Plane Coordinates***	*SOURCE:*
	N: 591,003	USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
DVBI	***E: 478,357***	MONMOUTH JUNCTION QUAD
BLOCK 37.02, LOT 46.03		SCALE: 1" = 2000' +/-
TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN		
SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY		**FIGURE: 1**



ROAD MAP

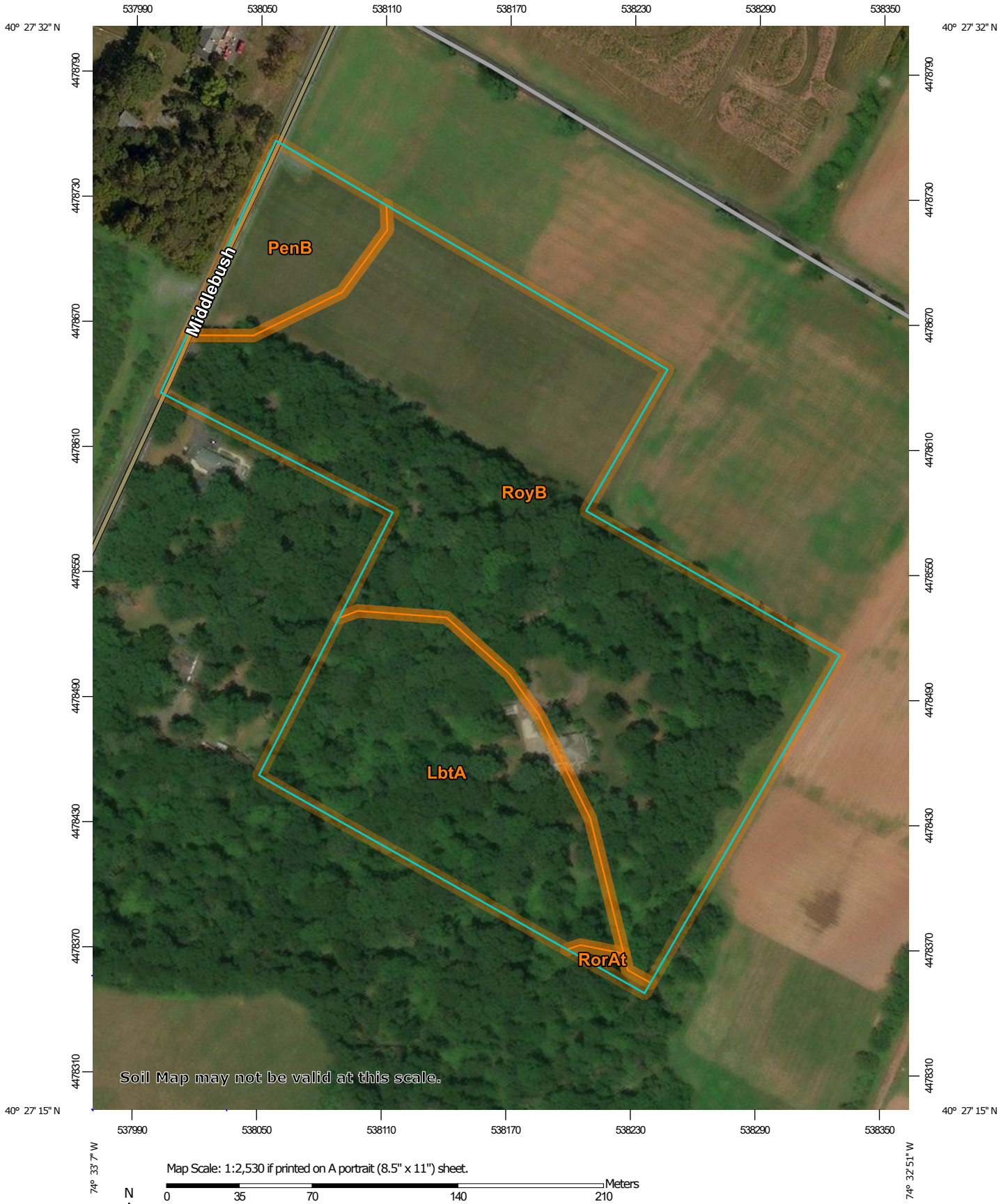
SITE:

DVBI
BLOCK 37.02, LOT 46.03
TOWNSHIP OF FRANKLIN
SOMERSET COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

SOURCE:
GOOGLE MAP

FIGURE: 3

Soil Map—Somerset County, New Jersey



Map Scale: 1:2,530 if printed on A portrait (8.5" x 11") sheet.

N

Meters: 0 35 70 140 210

Feet: 0 100 200 400 600

Map projection: Web Mercator Corner coordinates: WGS84 Edge tics: UTM Zone 18N WGS84

MAP LEGEND

Area of Interest (AOI)

- Area of Interest (AOI)

Soils

- Soil Map Unit Polygons
- Soil Map Unit Lines
- Soil Map Unit Points

Special Point Features

- Blowout
- Borrow Pit
- Clay Spot
- Closed Depression
- Gravel Pit
- Gravelly Spot
- Landfill
- Lava Flow
- Marsh or swamp
- Mine or Quarry
- Miscellaneous Water
- Perennial Water
- Rock Outcrop
- Saline Spot
- Sandy Spot
- Severely Eroded Spot
- Sinkhole
- Slide or Slip
- Sodic Spot
- Spoil Area
- Stony Spot
- Very Stony Spot
- Wet Spot
- Other
- Special Line Features

Water Features

- Streams and Canals

Transportation

- Rails
- Interstate Highways
- US Routes
- Major Roads
- Local Roads

Background

- Aerial Photography

MAP INFORMATION

The soil surveys that comprise your AOI were mapped at 1:24,000.

Warning: Soil Map may not be valid at this scale.

Enlargement of maps beyond the scale of mapping can cause misunderstanding of the detail of mapping and accuracy of soil line placement. The maps do not show the small areas of contrasting soils that could have been shown at a more detailed scale.

Please rely on the bar scale on each map sheet for map measurements.

Source of Map: Natural Resources Conservation Service
Web Soil Survey URL:
Coordinate System: Web Mercator (EPSG:3857)

Maps from the Web Soil Survey are based on the Web Mercator projection, which preserves direction and shape but distorts distance and area. A projection that preserves area, such as the Albers equal-area conic projection, should be used if more accurate calculations of distance or area are required.

This product is generated from the USDA-NRCS certified data as of the version date(s) listed below.

Soil Survey Area: Somerset County, New Jersey
Survey Area Data: Version 16, Sep 13, 2018

Soil map units are labeled (as space allows) for map scales 1:50,000 or larger.

Date(s) aerial images were photographed: Mar 26, 2011—Apr 2, 2017

The orthophoto or other base map on which the soil lines were compiled and digitized probably differs from the background imagery displayed on these maps. As a result, some minor shifting of map unit boundaries may be evident.

Map Unit Legend

Map Unit Symbol	Map Unit Name	Acres in AOI	Percent of AOI
LbtA	Lansdowne silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes	3.9	24.3%
PenB	Penn silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	1.2	7.7%
RorAt	Rowland silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded	0.1	0.5%
RoyB	Royce silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	10.8	67.5%
Totals for Area of Interest		**15.9**	**100.0%**

APPENDIX B –
NJDEP DLUR Letter of Interpretation

APPENDIX C –
NHP/LANDSCAPE PROJECT DATA

State of New Jersey
MAIL CODE 501-04
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
DIVISION OF PARKS & FORESTRY
NEW JERSEY FOREST SERVICE
OFFICE OF NATURAL LANDS MANAGEMENT
P.O. BOX 420
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0420
Tel. (609) 984-1339 Fax (609) 984-0427

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

SHEILA Y. OLIVER
Lt. Governor

CATHERINE R. McCABE
Commissioner

November 7, 2019

Lynne Krauser
The Reynolds Group, Inc.
575 Route 28, Suite 110
Raritan, NJ 08869

Re: Dada Bhagwan Vignan Institute (DBVI)
Block(s) - 37.02, Lot(s) - 46.03
Franklin Township, Somerset County

Dear Ms. Krauser:

Thank you for your data request regarding rare species information for the above referenced project site.

Searches of the Natural Heritage Database and the Landscape Project (Version 3.3) are based on a representation of the boundaries of your project site in our Geographic Information System (GIS). We make every effort to accurately transfer your project bounds from the topographic map(s) submitted with the Natural Heritage Data Request Form into our Geographic Information System. We do not typically verify that your project bounds are accurate, or check them against other sources.

We have checked the Landscape Project habitat mapping and the Biotics Database for occurrences of any rare wildlife species or wildlife habitat on the referenced site. The Natural Heritage Database was searched for occurrences of rare plant species or ecological communities that may be on the project site. Please refer to Table 1 (attached) to determine if any rare plant species, ecological communities, or rare wildlife species or wildlife habitat are documented on site. A detailed report is provided for each category coded as 'Yes' in Table 1.

We have also checked the Landscape Project habitat mapping and Biotics Database for occurrences of rare wildlife species or wildlife habitat in the immediate vicinity (within ¼ mile) of the referenced site. Additionally, the Natural Heritage Database was checked for occurrences of rare plant species or ecological communities within ¼ mile of the site. Please refer to Table 2 (attached) to determine if any rare plant species, ecological communities, or rare wildlife species or wildlife habitat are documented within the immediate vicinity of the site. Detailed reports are provided for all categories coded as 'Yes' in Table 2. These reports may include species that have also been documented on the project site.

The Natural Heritage Program reviews its data periodically to identify priority sites for natural diversity in the State. Included as priority sites are some of the State's best habitats for rare and endangered species and ecological communities. Please refer to Tables 1 and 2 (attached) to determine if any priority sites are located on or in the immediate vicinity of the site.

A list of rare plant species and ecological communities that have been documented from the county (or counties), referenced above, can be downloaded from http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/natural/heritage/countylist.html. If suitable habitat is present at the project site, the species in that list have potential to be present.

Status and rank codes used in the tables and lists are defined in EXPLANATION OF CODES USED IN NATURAL HERITAGE REPORTS, which can be downloaded from http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/natural/heritage/nhpcodes_2010.pdf.

Beginning May 9, 2017, the Natural Heritage Program reports for wildlife species will utilize data from Landscape Project Version 3.3. If you have questions concerning the wildlife records or wildlife species mentioned in this response, we

recommend that you visit the interactive web application at the following URL, https://njdep.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0e6a44098c524ed99bf739953cb4d4c7, or contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Endangered and Nongame Species Program at (609) 292-9400.

For additional information regarding any Federally listed plant or animal species, please contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, New Jersey Field Office at http://www.fws.gov/northeast/njfieldoffice/endangered/consultation.html.

PLEASE SEE 'CAUTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS ON NHP DATA', which can be downloaded from http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/natural/heritage/newcaution2008.pdf.

Thank you for consulting the Natural Heritage Program. The attached invoice details the payment due for processing this data request. Feel free to contact us again regarding any future data requests.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Cartica
Administrator

c: NHP File No. 19-4007445-18034

Table 1: On Site Data Request Search Results (6 Possible Reports)

Report Name	Included	Number of Pages
1. Possibly on Project Site Based on Search of Natural Heritage Database: Rare Plant Species and Ecological Communities Currently Recorded in the New Jersey Natural Heritage Database	No	0 pages included
2. Natural Heritage Priority Sites On Site	No	0 pages included
3. Rare Wildlife Species or Wildlife Habitat on the Project Site Based on Search of Landscape Project 3.3 Species Based Patches	No	0 pages included
4. Vernal Pool Habitat on the Project Site Based on Search of Landscape Project 3.3	No	0 pages included
5. Rare Wildlife Species or Wildlife Habitat on the Project Site Based on Search of Landscape Project 3.3 Stream Habitat File	No	0 pages included
6. Other Animal Species On the Project Site Based on Additional Species Tracked by Endangered and Nongame Species Program	No	0 pages included

Table 2: Vicinity Data Request Search Results (6 possible reports)

Report Name	Included	Number of Pages
1. Immediate Vicinity of the Project Site Based on Search of Natural Heritage Database: Rare Plant Species and Ecological Communities Currently Recorded in the New Jersey Natural Heritage Database	No	0 pages included
2. Natural Heritage Priority Sites within the Immediate Vicinity	No	0 pages included
3. Rare Wildlife Species or Wildlife Habitat Within the Immediate Vicinity of the Project Site Based on Search of Landscape Project 3.3 Species Based Patches	Yes	1 page(s) included
4. Vernal Pool Habitat In the Immediate Vicinity of Project Site Based on Search of Landscape Project 3.3	No	0 pages included
5. Rare Wildlife Species or Wildlife Habitat In the Immediate Vicinity of the Project Site Based on Search of Landscape Project 3.3 Stream Habitat File	No	0 pages included
6. Other Animal Species In the Immediate Vicinity of the Project Site Based on Additional Species Tracked by Endangered and Nongame Species Program	No	0 pages included

Rare Wildlife Species or Wildlife Habitat Within the Immediate Vicinity of the Project Site Based on Search of Landscape Project 3.3 Species Based Patches

Class	Common Name	Scientific Name	Feature Type	Rank	Federal Protection Status	State Protection Status	Grank	Srank
Aves								
	American Kestrel	Falco sparverius	Nest	3	NA	State Threatened	G5	S2B,S2N
	Grasshopper Sparrow	Ammodramus savannarum	Breeding Sighting	3	NA	State Threatened	G5	S2B,S3N
	Great Blue Heron	Ardea herodias	Foraging	2	NA	Special Concern	G5	S3B,S4N
	Northern Harrier	Circus cyaneus	Non-breeding Sighting	2	NA	Special Concern	G5	S1B,S3N
	Upland Sandpiper	Bartramia longicauda	Breeding Sighting-Confirmed	4	NA	State Endangered	G5	S1B,S1N